

**New Maritime Labour?
Catering Personnel on British Passenger Liners, 1860-1938**

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This thesis offers a profile of sea-going catering personnel on British passenger liners 1860-1938. The development of passenger shipping and the rapid technological changes increased the number of catering personnel in the maritime workforce. This in turn changed the composition of seafaring labour. Catering departments grew considerably during the period under consideration: in 1891 every eighth seafarer of all UK registered trading vessels belonged to the catering sector and by the end of the period they formed almost one fourth of the maritime workforce. The sudden expansion of catering personnel and the appearance of the engineers below deck made the deckhands into a minority, whereas before the transition from sail to steam they had formed almost the entire crew. The catering personnel consisted mainly of men, who were considered as effeminate and not regarded as 'real seamen' because they were engaged in domestic duties.

The minimum number of catering personnel was first stipulated by the 1849 and 1852 Passenger Acts, which were brought about to regulate the carrying of emigrants. Later in the period, the catering departments expanded particularly on transatlantic passenger liners and cruise ships, where luxurious conditions were provided for the first class passengers. Compared to the overall national composition of maritime labour, catering personnel on North Atlantic passenger liners was predominantly white and English, whilst the Chinese and Lascars dominated in the eastern trade. This thesis demonstrates, using Cunard as a sample, that the majority of catering personnel came from big port cities such as Liverpool, which had a very large seafaring population. Their recruitment, as was the case with the rest of the seafaring labour, was very local, except in the end of the period, when the recruitment base remained in Liverpool despite the Cunard's change of its main ports of departure to Southampton and London.

As the size of the catering departments grew and the new ideas on management gained foot in British industries, the work structure on liners started to resemble the land based workplaces, such as restaurants and hotels. The big liners simply imitated existing shore-based practise in their work organisation. However, the working *conditions* of the catering personnel remained very much the same as for the other seafarers: the maritime element remained dominant at the workplace. They also remained subject to maritime legislation: their wages, working hours, and other industrial bargaining methods were regulated by the shipping acts and later, the National Maritime Board. The National Maritime Board was a joint industrial council for shipping, in which catering personnel lost representation in 1921. The National Union of Seamen, led by Wilson, did not represent catering personnel on passenger liners before 1938, when obligatory membership was implemented. However, it managed, together with NMB, to actually worsen catering personnel's working conditions.

Special attention is paid to women's employment at sea, since women at sea were almost exclusively found in the catering department. Women's employment at sea remained marginalised throughout the period, which meant that few new employment opportunities became available for them.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Able Bodied Seaman
AMWU	Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union
BIS	British India Steam Navigation Company
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
BSU	British Seafarers' Union
BT	Board of Trade
CA	Cunard Archives
ILO	International Labour Organisation
LRO	Liverpool Record Office
MMM	Merseyside Maritime Museum
MRC	Modern Records Centre
MUN	Memorial University of Newfoundland
NMM	National Maritime Museum
NMB	National Maritime Board
NSFU	National Sailors and Firemen's Union
NUS	National Union of Seamen
NUSSCBB	National Union of Ship's Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers
PRO	Public Record Office
SRO	Southampton Record Office
UL	University of Liverpool
UW	University of Warwick

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My interest in catering personnel and seafarers in general awoke through my own work experience at sea, mainly as part of the catering crew but also in the engine room. I often heard notions that only deckhands were real seafarers. I used to be irritated by it, but later became interested in the issue of catering personnel's status in the ship board hierarchy. Why was it such an unappreciated part of seafaring work? Was the connection with women's work the reason why it was not regarded as very manly and heroic to be part of the catering crew? Or was it the customer service factor that made their work less seafaring? How was I as a woman understood (or rather, excluded) as a seafarer? These questions constitute the main themes explored in this thesis.

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1. Iron men, wooden servants? The exclusion of catering personnel from maritime history

1.1. Introduction

During the years from 1860 to 1938 passenger shipping changed dramatically. The industrial revolution transformed the shipping industry and the labour of men and women at sea. Technological change and international competition also brought about changes in onboard working conditions. New methods of supervision and a more precisely-defined division of labour were introduced along with the segmentation of tasks into smaller units. Technological innovations -particularly the transition to steam - and increasingly restrictive US immigration legislation shifted the focus of the Atlantic liner companies from emigration to tourism. Travelling for pleasure was a new phenomenon and it created a demand for new service jobs on the ships. Stewards' departments grew considerably in the beginning of the twentieth century on passenger liners: stewards, stewardesses, waiters and cooks accounted for less than 43 per cent of crew members in 1894, but constituted over 70 per cent in 1921.¹ This thesis focuses on the formation and development of this rapidly expanding occupational group within the shipping industry. This chapter introduces catering personnel as part of the maritime labour force. Section 1.2 analyses the previous interpretations of the nature of sea-going catering personnel's work by exploring the historiography of maritime labour. The following section (1.3) provides a background for the expansion of catering personnel on passenger liners by exploring the development of passenger shipping. Those two factors were strongly interrelated with international competition, which accelerated the increase of services provided for the travelling public. The structure of this thesis is introduced in Section 1.4, and sources and methodology described in Section 1.5.

¹Valerie Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers with Special Reference to the Port of Southampton 1871-1921*, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis. University of London (1989), p.80.

Steamship crews were arranged into three main departments: deck, engine and catering. Catering personnel were those who were involved with the servicing of passengers during the trip or with the preparation of food. They would assist the passengers during the trip, serve food and drinks and accommodate them in the steerage or in the cabins. They were also responsible for the moral behaviour (especially in the beginning of the period) and safety of the passengers. The deck department took care of the exterior condition of the ship and navigation whilst its speed and engines were the responsibility of the engineers' department.

In the maritime culture the catering personnel were not appreciated, or indeed regarded, as seafarers. The deck hands and -officers, instead, were seen as the *proper* seafarers who during the sailing ship era had performed the 'heroic' tasks, such as climbing the rigging. Only sailors, whose work, however changed, had clear origins in the sailing ship era, were *seamen* in the proper sense of the word implying their highest position on board in terms of masculinity. Such definitions were subject to political manipulation. As will be seen, ship owners and labour unions alternately represented catering personnel either as atypical, or as standard seafarers depending on the issue at stake.

This study is constructed around the nature of the catering personnel's work. It argues that they were primarily seafarers and therefore constituted an essential, if neglected, part of the British maritime workforce. Catering personnel are best understood as seafarers, rather than as service workers in a floating hotel with no meaningful maritime element in their work. Of course, there were factors separating them from other maritime labour, but the unifying factors were dominant.

Seafarers' working conditions differed fundamentally between sailing ships, cargo steamers and passenger liners. At sea, there were bigger differences in the working conditions between different trade routes and different kinds of shipping than between different sections of the crew. The crew of a particular ship was very much subjected to a similar working environment, discipline and rhythm of work. Moreover, an individual's working conditions were determined by his or her ranking in the hierarchy. Working hours, salaries, cabins and diet were arranged accordingly. Various 'efficiency' movements, such as Taylorism (also interpreted as scientific

management), Fordism and the Bedaux system started affecting British workplaces from the early twentieth century onwards.² These rationalisation efforts, as well as the hiring of professionals from the luxury hotels from ashore, increasingly interfered with the traditional maritime working structures especially on passenger liners. However, in terms of duties, it is important to differentiate between working *conditions* and working *structure*. Even if the catering personnel's working structure changed dramatically on passenger liners during the period, their working conditions were still very much organised through maritime customs and regulations. Therefore it is argued here that catering personnel, as well as other sections of labour on passenger liners, were maritime workers in the true sense of the word.

Another main theme in this study is that the catering personnel reflect the changing nature of seafaring work in general. Their work became more indoor-based and increasingly dependent of technological apparatus. Generally speaking, with the development of passenger shipping, increasing numbers of seafarers were involved with passenger service to some extent. However, as will be shown, some other groups of the maritime labour force did not regard the work of the catering personnel as possessing the qualities of the real maritime labour. The voice to be heard through the evidence, though, is either ignorant or sometimes even hostile towards this workforce. This study suggests, that because catering personnel were regarded as representing the feminine in the shipboard community, their work was regarded as menial and inferior to others in the shipboard hierarchy.

In a sense the changing composition of the maritime workforce reflects the occupational transition in western societies into 'non-productive' service sectors. At sea, passengers and the standards set for their service by shipping companies brought more land based norms and domesticity on board than was earlier the case. Shipping companies and legislative forces increasingly interfered with seafarers' conduct and

² See, for example, Graig R. Littler, *The Development of the Labour Processes in Capitalist Societies*, especially chapters one and two (London, 1982); Wayne Lewchuck, 'Fordism and British Motor Car Employers 1896-1932' in Howard F. Gospel and Graig R. Littler (eds.), *Managerial Strategies and Industrial Relations. A Historical and Comparative Study* (London, 1983).

manners at sea. Growing numbers of catering personnel and the presence of passengers represented this shift from the relatively relaxed attitude of seafarers towards land-based institutions to more regulated surroundings and domesticated manners. As Ulrich Welke has noted, with the arrival of steamships, the ship owners increasingly interfered with the actual labour processes onboard.³ This interference will be demonstrated in this thesis by examining the degree of discipline and changes in labour processes within catering departments.

The catering personnel's working conditions differ from earlier accounts written on maritime labour in many ways making their history worth studying. The recognition of catering personnel as being a major part of the maritime labour will change the depiction of the whole labour force. They constituted such an essential part of the whole British maritime labour force that their history, for the large part, becomes the history of seafarers in Britain.

1.2. Catering personnel and the maritime historians

The 'real' maritime labour is also defined by maritime historians. The work of catering personnel is largely neglected both in contemporary texts as well as academic historical works, which extends the exclusion of catering personnel from seafarers to maritime historians. Nevertheless, as Malcolm Cooper has claimed, changes in the nature of maritime labour associated with the introduction of steam technology require us to review earlier debates about maritime labour and their working conditions.⁴ Brassey in his contemporary analysis of British seafarers also notes how 'the growth of steam separated seamen into classes more distinctly than was formerly the case' and raised questions about their character and skill.⁵ Indeed, within the transition from sail to steam, seafaring work underwent a fundamental transformation. The rise of the ocean-going fleets and the development of passenger shipping increased the total employment of sea-going people, but the number of

³ Ulrich Welke, *Steam and Hierarchy*. Paper presented at the ICMH conference in Oslo in August 2000.

⁴ Malcolm Cooper, 'Maritime Labour and Crew List Analysis: Problems, Prospects and Methodologies' *Labour/Le Travail*, 23 (1989), p.179.

⁵ Thomas Brassey, *British seamen as described in recent parliamentary and official documents* (London, 1877), pp. 26-27.

those who worked in 'old' seafaring occupations, such as deckhands, decreased.⁶ Most of the men and women employed in the catering department represented, alongside the marine engineers, the new occupational forces recruited onboard. However, few historical studies have been written on British maritime labour in the steamship era, when these new groups of sea-going labour force entered the shipping trade. Instead, attention has focused mainly on maritime labour on sailing ships. Even more seldom has catering personnel or their increasing proportion of maritime labour force been acknowledged in historical accounts. The history of catering personnel remains virtually unwritten.

In most studies of maritime labour the catering personnel have simply been ignored or passed over in a few words. The few historical analyses which have recognised cooks and stewards have simply classified them as service workers, not seafarers. However, no proper explanation for this dismissal has been given. Why should a group working on ships with the rest of the maritime labour force not be classified as such labour? What is the fundamental factor in their work that excludes them from a definition of seafaring? The failure to recognise them as seafarers has led to a severe distortion of our understanding of British maritime labour, its composition and its working conditions.

A great number of business histories have been written on steamship companies, but few mention their sea-going labour force.⁷ The large volume of work on shipping companies tends to ignore labour in general, let alone catering crew. Nevertheless, a handful of studies have devoted some space to the manning issues of the shipping companies. George Blake in *The Ben Line 1925-1955* describes in some length the manning policies of the Ben Line and the transition from sail to steam and its consequences for the composition of the crews. George Musk in *Canadian Pacific*.

⁶ The ship's engineers' status and sailors' resistance to them has been discussed by H. Cambell McMurray, 'Technology and Social Change at Sea: The Status and Position on Board of the Ship's Engineer, circa 1830-60' in R. Ommer and G. Panting (eds.), *Working Men Who Got Wet: Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project* (St John's, 1980), pp. 37-50.

⁷ Francis Hyde, *Cunard and the North Atlantic 1840-1973. A History of Shipping and Financial Management* (London, 1975); Francis Hyde, *Blue Funnel. A History of Alfred Holt and Company of Liverpool from 1865-1914* (Liverpool, 1957); R. S. McLellan, *Anchor Line 1856-1956* (Glasgow, 1956); P. M. Heaton, *Booth Line* (Gwent, 1987); Andrew Porter, *Victorian Shipping, Business and Imperial Policy. Donald Currie, the Castle Line and Southern Africa* (Exeter, 1986).

The Story of the Famous Shipping Line has devoted a few pages to describe the working conditions of the kitchen department on one of the company's ships in the 1920s.⁸ Historical accounts of maritime labour exist, but they mainly concern the sailing ship labour force. Eric Sager's work is a notable exception, although he mainly deals with Canadian labour. The same applies to Valerie Burton who has included catering personnel in her analysis of Southampton passenger liner crews. However, both of them see the catering personnel's status in seafaring at least as 'ambiguous'.⁹ Yrjö Kaukiainen has studied maritime labour in the transitional period from sail to steam, although mainly dealing with Finnish shipping, where the transition to steam occurred remarkably later.¹⁰ For the study in hand his work was not very useful since restaurant personnel employed on passenger liners were left out of the analysis. The reason for this was the Finnish practice according to which restaurants were not usually owned by shipping companies themselves, but by private entrepreneurs who also hired their own personnel. Therefore the restaurant workers on passenger ships were left out of the ships' accounts as well as from crew listings kept by seamen's houses.¹¹ The maritime labour market in the age of sail was a favourite topic of discussion among maritime historians during the 1980s and 1990s.¹² However, they were not very helpful to this study either, since they again concentrate mainly on sailing ship crews.

The work of Laura Tabili and Jeffrey Bolster, however, offers some interesting explanations for the exclusion of the catering personnel by using gender and race as key tools in their analyses of maritime work. First of all, as Bolster argues, catering

⁸ George Blake, *The Ben Line 1925-1955* (Toronto and New York, 1956), pp. 12-13, 20-21, 30-32, 50; George Musk, *Canadian Pacific. The Story of the Famous Shipping Line* (London, 1981), pp. 38-40.

⁹ Citation from Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 142. In the same context, she also classifies catering personnel as 'first and foremost service workers', not as seafarers. The same conclusion is reached by Eric Sager in his analysis of the Canadian steamship crews. Eric Sager, *Ships and Memories. Merchant Seafarers in Canada's Age of Steam* (Vancouver, 1993), p. 63.

¹⁰ Yrjö Kaukiainen, *Sailing Into Twilight. Finnish Shipping in an Age of Transport Revolution, 1860-1914* (Helsinki, 1991); Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'Från Jungman Jansson till Kalle Aaltonen. Sjömen i Finlands handelsflotta 1860-1914 – en kvantitativ översikt.' *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 3, (1988), pp. 345-372.

¹¹ Kaukiainen, *Sailing Into Twilight*, p.105; Carola Sunqvist, 'Kvinnor ombord- Åbokvinnor i sjöfarten före första världskriget' *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 3, (1988), pp. 499-503.

¹² See, for example Charles P. Kindleberger, *Mariners and Markets* (London, 1992); Lewis R. Fischer (ed.), *The Market for Seamen in the Age of Sail. Research in Maritime History No.7* (St John's, 1994); L.R. Fischer and Helge W. Nordvik, 'From Namsos to Halden; Myths and Realities in the History of Norwegian Seamen's Wages, 1850-1914.' *Scandinavian Economic History Review*, Vol. XXXV.No.1 (1987), pp. 41-64.

work had low-valued feminine attributes, which were thought of as subordinate to others. Therefore the work of a cook and steward was often done by black men on American sailing ships. Indeed, he argued, it became the only option for black seafarers towards the mid-nineteenth century.¹³ Laura Tabili sees a similar connection between race, gender and class in the division of labour on British merchant ships. She pays attention to gender distinctions in the all-male workplace- 'to how levels of skill, by which workingmen have measured their manhood, for example, might have affected definitions of masculinity'.¹⁴ She argues, using catering personnel as an example, that with rapid technological change and accelerating international competition, 'the redefinition of work and skill accompanying the shift from sail to steam was thus at the same time gendered, racialized, and politicized'.¹⁵ Following these lines, women's work, including personal service jobs, was initially allocated to cabin boys, apprentices or the old and the disabled onboard, and later to black men. She argues that all tasks were gendered by status, and catering, stoking and engineering were condemned as less than proper seafaring by shipowners and deckhands alike.¹⁶ These latter developments, especially the gendering of tasks in the shipboard community, must be central to any attempt to conceptualise catering personnel in the maritime labour force.

1.3. The legislative framework concerning the employment of catering personnel and the development of passenger shipping

The mass employment of catering personnel at sea is strongly related to the development of passenger shipping. This section presents the background to catering personnel employment on liners and provides an insight into the state's response to the expanding passenger trade. It explores the official regulation and ideas on the role of catering personnel as well as the attitudes towards services to be provided to the third class passengers.

¹³ W. Jeffrey Bolster, 'Every Inch a Man' Gender in the Lives of African American Seamen, 1800-1860' in Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (eds.), *Iron Men, Wooden Women. Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*. (London & Baltimore, 1996), pp. 164-168.

¹⁴ Laura Tabili, 'A Maritime Race' Masculinity and the Racial Division of Labor in British Merchant Ships, 1900-1939' in Creighton and Norling (eds.), *Iron Men, Wooden Women*, p.172.

¹⁵ *ibid*, p.169.

¹⁶ *ibid*, pp. 178-179.

In the 1850s, the British state started intervening in shipping through new legislation concerning navigation, emigrants and maritime labour. The initial purpose of the new passenger acts was to regulate emigrant traffic but in effect they turned an entire new page in the history of passenger shipping. The 1849 Passenger Act was the first to include any regulation of sea cooks. It required every passenger ship carrying more than 100 adults to have at least one 'seafaring person' employed solely to cook for the passengers.¹⁷ It also required shipping companies to set aside a designated cooking area, which was to be properly covered and arranged, with suitable cooking apparatus and the necessary fuel. The Act therefore represented an initial attempt to provide basic cooking facilities for ordinary passengers as well as to offer them permanent service workers who were paid by the shipping company.

Until the 1850s, steerage passengers travelled with their own food and the cooks would normally only provide the fire and stove and keep order in the kitchen. If the former wanted their meals cooked, they had to pay bribes to the cook, who would be paid in cash, alcohol or tobacco. The Parliamentary Committee, which was set up to investigate the emigrants' travelling conditions in 1851, was concerned about the issue and quality of provisions on the ships. By that time provisions were served raw on sailing ships (if issued at all), although they were usually served cooked on steamships. Most emigrants travelled with their own food and cooked it themselves. The Committee's suggestion of issuing cooked provisions was based on practical reasons: it would solve the problems with both provisions and fire. Before, there were difficulties with providing fire for everybody to cook their food separately. There was also the inconvenience of storing provisions since the rations were issued weekly and emigrants had to store them individually, which occupied space. The scale set by the 1852 Passenger Act was very basic and was regarded as additional, the passengers having their own food and utensils with them. According to the Act, some articles were also to be served in a cooked state, which meant that the passenger cook really had to prepare food for the passengers. However, the dietary scale was so basic that no complicated cooking was required.¹⁸

¹⁷ *An Act for Regulating the Carriage of Passengers in Merchant Vessels, 1849*. 12 & 13 Victoria XXXIII.

¹⁸ The weekly dietary scale to be issued to the passengers was: 2 ½ lbs. of Bread or Biscuit, 1 lb. wheaten flour; 5 lbs. oatmeal; 2 lbs. rice; ½ lbs. sugar; 2 oz of tea or 4 oz of Cocoa or of roasted coffee and 2 oz salt. *The Passengers Act 1852*, 15 & 16 Victoria XXXII.

The common opinion was that emigrants were incapable of moral behaviour and cleanliness without supervision.¹⁹ Also, because of seasickness, they were often physically incapable of following acceptable standards of hygiene being unable, for example, to use the privies on the deck. Furthermore, the officers, who had previously been responsible for the welfare of the third-class passengers, were too busy to perform their duties, since they were pre-occupied with working the ship.

In the 1850s there were few British steam liners carrying passengers to America. By then, messing and stewards were already common on the coastal paddle-steamers that operated on shorter routes around the British Isles and along major rivers. The *early steamers were forerunners in providing 'modern' catering services and catering personnel for their passengers.*²⁰

Up until the 1850s, the catering personnel were almost exclusively engaged with servicing the first-class passengers, who were accommodated in cabins and served four meals a day. However, the first-class passengers were a small minority and the law did not regulate their conditions. In contrast, 'constables' were sometimes appointed among the emigrant passengers to superintend the serving of provisions, cleaning the decks and keeping a general order in the steerage.²¹ By the middle of the nineteenth century, the regular employment of a third-class steward was deemed to be more desirable by the authorities, since it was easier for the captain to enforce discipline if the stewards were permanent workers under his authority.²² The 1852 Act imposed that 'a seafaring person has to be carried onboard, who shall be rated in the ship's articles as Passengers' Steward. He shall be employed in messing and serving out the provisions to the passengers and assisting in maintaining the cleanliness, order, and good discipline among the passengers and who shall not assist

¹⁹ *Report from the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act*. BPP 1851, XIX, 'Recommendation of the Committee that some person should become upon the ship's books in every ship carrying above a certain number of passengers, to act as passengers' steward', qq. 4243-4255. The evidence of Lieutenant Charles Friend, Inspecting Officer at Cork, which states that 'No doubt the filthy state in which the emigrant ships have been found has resulted far more from the dirty habits of the emigrants themselves than from any indifference on the part of the ship's officers...'

²⁰ *Report from the Select Committee*. BPP 1851, XIX, qq. 4286. The evidence of Admiral Bowles.

²¹ *Report from the Select Committee*. BPP 1851, XIX, qq. 5790. The evidence of E.A. Smith, Emigration Officer at Londonderry.

²² *Report from the Select Committee*. BPP 1851, XIX, qq. 4907-4909. The evidence of Mr Rankin.

in any way in navigating or working the ship.²³ Hence, the main motivation of the ship owners and authorities to employ a steward was not to provide better service but to enforce discipline and a fair distribution of provisions onboard.

The 1849 and 1852 Passenger Acts were the great watershed in the development of passenger shipping, since they regulated - for the first time- the carrying of third-class passengers. The Passenger Acts improved the service provided for the ordinary passengers in stipulating that a doctor and interpreter had to be carried and that a hospital was to be set apart in the steerage. All these regulations increased the number of crew who were solely engaged with servicing the passengers, since previously most of the passengers were not entitled to any kind of facilities during the voyage. Therefore the Acts had important consequences for the work opportunities and career prospects of the catering crew.

1.4. The structure of the thesis

The patterns of exclusion and integration of the catering personnel are the principal themes of this thesis. The chapters are arranged thematically, exploring the practices of exclusion from different angles.

First of all, catering personnel will be analysed in Chapter 2 as a major new element in the maritime labour market. If not entirely new, catering personnel only became numerically significant with the development of passenger shipping from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The hierarchical segregation of maritime labour between different routes and different kinds of shipping, as well as the passenger liners' role within the segregation process are the main themes of this chapter. It offers an analysis of catering personnel within the maritime labour market, as well as comparisons between the passenger liner workforce and other maritime trades.

²³ *The 1852 Passenger Act*, XXXV; The important role of a steward in dealing out the provisions was emphasised by the witnesses of the Select Committee. *Report from the Select Committee*. BPP 1851, XIX, q.4255. The evidences of Mr Bernard, who was involved in selecting emigrants for the Australian colonies and q. 6572, the evidence of Charles Friend.

In Chapter 3 the organisation of the labour process and the expansion of the catering personnel will be examined in detail since no comprehensive surveys of its organisation have yet been written. It will be argued that shore-based working practices extended their influence into maritime working patterns, especially on passenger liners. Having said that, the organisation of duties peculiar to the maritime workplace also remained. The developments in management structure followed those of big industrial workplaces; the control of workers increased with the number of managers, who, for their part, tried their best to reduce the number of labourers. From the early twentieth century onwards, a new, shore-based organisational structure with new labour saving techniques and increasingly intrusive managerial control was erected on top of the old, naval-based work organisation still prevalent on passenger liners and merchant marine in general. However, the organisational patterns and duties of catering personnel also differed from those of other elements of the maritime labour force in many ways, which is one of the ongoing focal points of this and the following chapters.

Chapter 4 analyses the training and recruitment of catering personnel and explores how the necessary level of skill was reached to match the new requirements of the passenger trade. It describes how the recruitment of the new workforce, needed in a relatively short period of time, was organised. On one hand, they were not regarded as needing any formal qualifications, education or skills. On the other hand, the large liners, as competition grew, required levels of cooking and service, which did not exist among maritime labour. This chapter also takes a closer look at the career patterns of cooks and stewards, which were much more complicated than those of the rest of the seafarers. Seafaring was a temporary occupation for many. However, in passenger liners, catering personnel could spend their whole career at sea within the catering sector. Catering, as it was understood in the sailing ship era, was not a transient job any more but a career of its own.

Chapter 5 will return to the exclusion theme and analyses the working conditions of the catering crew. It argues that they were seafarers excluded on the one hand from many benefits secured by other groups of seafarers, and on the other from advances achieved by the shore-based labour force. Service-related jobs have traditionally included long and unregulated hours, originating from unpaid women's homework

and domestic service performed by servants. However, the working hours of the catering crew were long even when compared to service-related jobs ashore. Their long working hours did not attract much sympathy from fellow seafarers, ship owners or trade unions because generous tips -allegedly- compensated for the long hours.

Patterns of exclusion are explored further in Chapter 6. It seeks an explanation for the relatively bad working conditions of the catering personnel compared to the rest of the maritime labour force by analysing the relationship between the dominant maritime trade union, the National Union of Seamen (NUS), and the catering personnel. Catering personnel and their notoriously bad working hours were never prioritised by the NUS. Catering personnel were also involved in a power struggle between two dominant maritime trade unions, in which personal ambitions and dislikes complicated their position. The attitude of the NUS towards catering personnel was especially harmful since it managed to achieve a monopoly position on the National Maritime Board, which regulated British seafarers' working conditions during and after the First World War.

Gender aspects of exclusion are analysed in Chapter 7. Already in the sailing ship era, catering tasks were regarded as inferior amongst seafarers and ship owners alike. Women's maritime employment is of particular interest for this chapter: most women employed at sea were to be found in catering. Women worked on passenger liners mainly as stewardesses serving female passengers. Furthermore the development of passenger shipping also created other opportunities for women: they worked as shop assistants, nursery nurses and hairdressers onboard, as well as laundry workers and cleaners ashore.

However, most of the catering personnel were men, even if cooking and cleaning were regarded as menial and feminine jobs. By tradition, therefore, the cooking and cleaning tasks were allocated to the very young, relatively old or to handicapped seafarers. In some cultures those jobs were allocated to black men and, increasingly, to women. This chapter analyses the allocation of jobs and its gender implications in a male community. As will be demonstrated, along with capitalisation in seafaring the jobs lowest in hierarchy and pay were done by black men. In countries such as

Finland for example, where there were no black men available for the lowest paid jobs on the ships, the tasks were done by women.

1.5. Sources and methodology

This study is based on a range of qualitative and quantitative material. My core data has been obtained from the Crew Lists and Agreements for British Merchant Ships of 1861-1938. In order to get an overall idea of long-term developments, Cunard ships were sampled matching the British census returns (1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931), year 1938 being an exception. To keep the sample to a manageable size, all the catering personnel from the first voyage of the ship in each year were recorded, along with summary data on crew sizes and voyage details of all the ship's voyages during that particular year. The database was first organised yearly and secondly under three different sections: the crew database, the voyage database and the ship database. 'The note on the dataset' at the end of the thesis describes the methodology and size of the dataset in more detail. Other source material will be discussed in relevant sections.

The 1861 Crew Lists and Agreements are archived in Britain, 90 per cent in the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and 10 per cent in the Public Record Office (PRO) in Kew, Richmond.²⁴ Most of the Agreements used in the sample, about 80 per cent (between 1863-1938) are stored in the Maritime History Archive of the Memorial University of Newfoundland.²⁵ The rest of the Crew Agreements were deposited either in towns where the Cunard ships operated from, namely in Liverpool Record Office (LRO) and Southampton Record Office (SRO), or in the PRO. Crew

²⁴ The PRO holds ten per cent of all Crew Lists 1861-1938 and a sample of Crew Agreements in three series: BT 99 (Series II), BT 100 (Series III, Celebrated Ships) and BT 144 (Series IV, Fishing vessels) and one of Official Ship's Logs (BT 165).

²⁵ David Alexander and Keith Matthews, *Index to the Crew Lists and Agreements of the British Empire, 1863-1913* (St John's, 1974); *A Guide to the Agreements and Crew Lists: Series II (B.T. 99) 1913-1938* (St John's, 1987).

Agreements for some of the voyages were never found and it is likely that they have not survived.

The Crew Agreements contain information such as the seafarer's name, age, place of birth, nationality, job title, wages and (from the end of the nineteenth century) also their addresses. They also list the previous ship of a seafarer, which facilitates, at least in theory, the tracing of the whole career of a particular seafarer.²⁶ Apart from providing a complete list of the crew members from each voyage, the Agreements provide data on the technical details of the ship, as well as its voyages (day of departure, day of arrival and route). They, and the accompanying logbooks also carry information on victualling scales, disciplinary actions and deaths at sea.

Regardless of the richness of this source, Crew Agreements have been systematically studied only by a few historians.²⁷ Therefore, some of the problems faced by the author were somewhat unexpected. The method of sampling as explained above was affected by several problems: firstly, the career patterns of an individual seafarer cannot be followed by this method. Secondly, given that the first trip of the year, which was always sampled in full was usually made in winter, it was difficult to capture in full additional seasonal labour employed during the high season.

Nevertheless, the Crew Agreements have several great advantages as a source. The relationship between technological change and working conditions can be explored by comparing the technical details and superstructure of ships (gross tonnage, rigging

²⁶ See *Note on Dataset 1861-1938* for detailed description of the information in Crew Agreements.

²⁷ See Cooper, 'Maritime Labour and Crew List Analysis'; Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*; Valerie Burton, 'More Than a List of Crew...' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* Vol. 8, No 4, (1987), pp. 312-316; Keith Matthews, 'Crew lists, agreements and official logs of the British empire 1863-1913' *Business History* Vol. XVI, No. 1 (1974), pp. 78-80; Valerie Burton, 'Household and Labour Market Interactions in the Late 19th-Century British Shipping Industry; Breadwinning and Seafaring Families' in W. Guianne and P. Johnson (eds.), *The Microeconomic Analysis of the Household and the Labour market Proceedings of the 12th International Economic History Conference* (Sevilla, 1998), pp. 99-109; David Alexander, 'Literacy among Canadian and foreign seamen, 1863-1899' in R. Ommer and G. Panting (eds.), *Working men Who Got Wet: Proceedings of the Fourth Conference of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project* (St John's, 1980), pp. 1-33. See also other articles of the last mentioned volume, which have been written by the members of the Atlantic Canada Shipping Project using the Crew Agreements in the possession of the Memorial University in St John's, Newfoundland, as a main source. An unpublished student group project by Pat Hann, John Hatcher, William Ronald Knowling and Clyde Johnson, *The Social Analysis of the Crews of Large Transatlantic Passenger Liners* (St John's, 1988) is a good example of this. The CD-Rom *Ships and Seafarers of Atlantic Canada* also contains a 1 per cent sample of British seafarers.

in sail and machinery in steam, speed, cargo capacity, and so on) with developments in the size and composition of the maritime labour force. The long-term increase in catering and service personnel and the decrease in the number of deckhands is directly comparable with the technical revolution in shipping from sail to steam and into the increasing reliance on faster and then, bigger ships. Technological change also affects maritime work *itself* as specific tasks tended to be broken into smaller units and become de-skilled. Crew Agreements are also an ideal source for examining the age, hierarchical structure and status of individual ranks in terms of age and wages.

Other sources offer alternative perspectives on these issues. The occupational tables of the National Censuses were utilised to obtain an overall picture of maritime labour in the period under examination, even if the information is severely defective. Only those who were at home or in port on board a ship were enumerated, which meant that the occupational tables cannot be used as a basis for calculating the absolute number of seafarers. However, they offer some information on the ages of different groups of seafarers and where they came from. This information is used in the thesis to draw comparisons between maritime labour in the passenger liner trades and seafarers in general and to analyse differences in their age structure. With census tables, the researcher faces similar problems than with Crew Agreements: because of the relatively long time span, the principles of recording change and make the comparison of data difficult.

The other sources used for this study further reflect the exclusion of catering personnel from the biases of archival preservation. The absence of catering personnel from primary sources can be said to reflect the theme of this thesis. Because catering functions and catering crew were considered as unimportant, relevant records have not been preserved. The lack of material in the shipping companies' archives reflects the attitude that exhaustive details of catering and victualling were not important to seafaring. The absence of records relating directly to catering crew is evident especially in the Cunard archives. Information regarding catering personnel is scattered and only to be found in relation to other matters. The situation is slightly better with other shipping companies: registers regarding the stewards and cooks have been preserved. The P&O's and the British India Shipping Company's records

are a good example of this and detailed records of catering personnel have been preserved. However, they relate mainly to service and discipline. For the purposes of this study, these registers have been sampled briefly in order to provide a comparison with the Cunard data.

The Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick, holds the Archives of the National Union of Seamen. By investigating their records, I was hoping to find data which reflected trade union attitudes and reactions to technological change in shipping, the de-skilling of jobs and the emergence of new occupational groups, especially catering personnel on passenger liners. However, the seafarers' trade union archives lack material relating directly to catering personnel and women. However, there is a small collection of the NUSSCBB (National Union of Ship's Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers) records, although the material preserved in the NUS archive in Warwick reflects the relationship between these trade unions, rather than the conditions of their members. However, the minutes of the Shipping Federation are an invaluable source on the training of catering personnel and the National Maritime Board's minutes are also very helpful on issues relating directly to the working conditions of the catering personnel as well as their involvement in major disputes with shipping companies and labour relations in general.

Data relating to ship plans, as well as wages and the age structure of the maritime labour force, are excellent sources for analysing the hierarchy onboard ship. As Eric Sager points out, the hierarchy was built into the very structure of the ship itself. On British ships, the divisions of the living quarters for the crew were very rigid, with specific class, ethnic and national associations.²⁸ Due to the strict hierarchy, the eating and living conditions varied enormously according to rank. By locating each seafarer's cabin on a ship, its size and the number of people sharing it, the rank of the seafarer can be established. The above-mentioned transitions in shipping influenced several Merchant Shipping Acts, and also the legislation changed in response to these challenges. The Merchant Shipping Acts began to regulate the discipline, victualling scales and minimum space provided for each seafarer. British Parliamentary Papers and the intensified response of the trade unions provide an excellent source for

²⁸ Sager, *Ships and Memories*, pp. 91-92.

analysing these issues. Parliamentary Papers also proved to be invaluable for assessing the conditions of early emigrant ships, the early employment circumstances of catering personnel and the living conditions on board ship for the crew.

Diaries, other personal accounts of seafarers and employment guides show further how hard, even if exciting, the work of these people was. A lack of privacy, long working days, missing home and cursing the passengers were the most commonly portrayed features in these sources. However, they also provided evidence of pride in their work and the strong sense of comradeship between crew members. Working in such an environment, in a specific microcosm with a mixture of different personalities, capricious passengers and famous people, was, after all, quite unusual and addictive. Working on those ships left an everlasting mark on seafarers and gave rise to a large number of memoirs.

Taken overall, the aim of the thesis is to further our understanding of maritime labour and the existence of different working conditions by including catering personnel in the historiography. By analysing the role of both women and men in the maritime labour force, the gender issues of seafaring would no longer be marginalised and applied only to a small minority of seafarers but analysed in relation to the maritime workforce in general. This thesis aims to make amends to the marginalisation of jobs gendered as female in maritime history by highlighting the employment conditions of catering personnel, whose history has so far remained unwritten.

2. Catering Personnel and the 'New Maritime Labour'

2.1. Introduction

This chapter contributes to the discussion of the maritime labour market by highlighting the particular role of the catering personnel within it. First, a general overview of the maritime labour market will be given with special reference to the impact of technological change on the workforce. Second, this chapter highlights the importance of recognising the particularities of the catering personnel in comparison to the rest of maritime labour. In particular, it warns against extensive generalisations about the stability of the 'new maritime labour', especially of the expanding catering sections on passenger liners. These seafarers- together with the engineers' departments- would soon comprise a majority of the British maritime labour force, although the tasks the catering personnel performed were traditionally seen as inferior by seafarers and therefore assigned to those of lower rank. The remainder of the chapter considers the demographic origins of the catering personnel and demonstrates that the maritime labour market was hierarchically segregated in terms of nationality and age.

A number of different sources and approaches have been used to illuminate the subject from different angles. Census data, Board of Trade reports, the author's dataset of Cunard's catering personnel, and the ship's cooks' register have been used to provide a profile of maritime labour in general, and catering personnel on passenger liners in particular.

2.2. A profile of the 'new maritime labour'

Technological change, particularly in connection with the development of large passenger ships, made catering departments a major component of seagoing labour. The other key groups to emerge to the seafaring world were the engineers, firemen and stokers. The transition from sail to steam therefore created a new workforce, and the introduction of more powerful engines increased their numbers dramatically. Later, the transition from steam to oil burners in the 1920s decreased their numbers

again. The changes in transport technology also greatly affected the deckhands. In the sailing period changes in rigging decreased the crew size and later on, with the disappearance of sail altogether, an important (and heroic) part of their work, namely the climbing of the rigging, vanished. At a more general level, the changes in hull material from wood to iron made possible the building of massive superstructures which facilitated the carrying of large numbers of passengers and the amenities they enjoyed. This in turn meant that more catering personnel were increasingly employed.

The ocean-going maritime workforce was split into those employed on tramps, cargo liners and passenger liners. To some extent, this differentiation was also hierarchical: the black British, the black colonial citizens and the non-Europeans got the jobs and routes nobody else wanted. Sail and steam tramps paid lower wages and offered inferior working conditions compared to liners and therefore British seafarers turned down positions in those trades. Thomas Brassey states in his seminal work of 1877: 'Steamship crews are much better provided for than the seamen belonging to sailing vessels, which appear to be obliged to take what is refused by the steamers.' Seafarers on steamers were often called 'superior' compared to those employed on sailing vessels and tramps.²⁹

In the age of steam the differences in wages for different routes and different trades remained.³⁰ As a result, the maritime labour market segregated along national lines.

²⁹ Brassey, *British Seamen*, pp.5 and 9; Conrad Dixon, *Seamen and the Law: An Examination of the Impact of Legislation on the British Merchant Seaman's Lot 1588-1918*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University College London (1981), p. 193.

³⁰ See comparisons between different routes and trades in *Tables showing the progress of British Merchant Shipping*. BPP 1882. LXII. 'Seamen's Wages. Rates of wages (per month) of Able Seamen in various trades, in the ports of Bristol, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Newcastle and Shields in each of the years 1848, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1871 and 1881.' Table no. 19, p. 24. The table reveals the differences in pay in different ports. It also shows that in Liverpool, the North American route was the best paid across the years, especially on steamships. Another source from year 1897 shows that the similar differences in pay continued. The wages of Able Seamen in sail were slightly better from London than from Liverpool in 1893 and 1894. However, the passenger vessels departing from Liverpool in those years paid better wages than London. The table also shows the general trend of passenger vessels paying better wages than any other trades; *Changes in rates of wages*. BPP 1897. LXXXIII. 'Table showing the ordinary monthly rates of wages of Able Seamen who shipped at the under mentioned ports in the years 1893, 1894 and 1895.' Table XXIX, p.122.

As a rule, steamships paid more than sailing ships and therefore the number of foreigners, especially non-Europeans, was higher on the sailing ships. The seafarers' unions were successful at certain ports in controlling the labour supply (apart from the catering personnel, as will be discussed in Chapter 6) and therefore restricted the access of the non-unionised labour to employment. The seafarers' unions fiercely opposed the employment of foreigners since they were seen as a source of cheap labour and therefore kept British seafarers out of employment. The shipowners, for their part, aimed to justify the recruitment of foreigners claiming that they were more efficient, more sober and more obedient than the British.

Restrictions on the employment of foreigners were removed in the 1850 Navigation Act and therefore the number of foreigners started to increase rapidly. Shipping saw other rapid changes in its labour force especially from the 1850s onwards. Firstly, in the late-nineteenth century, shipping expanded rapidly. Secondly, rapid technological change brought engineers and big catering crews onboard and reduced the sailors' department, which used to form the majority of the workforce, to a minority.

This section offers a profile of the new maritime labour force brought about by changes in shipping technology. Lindop, Dixon and Sager have noted that technological transformation and the development of passenger liners were major factors in bringing 'sweeping changes' in working environment, and therefore in the composition of the maritime labour force.³¹ New groups of people, the catering crew and the engineering department, emerged on board steamers, people who had possibly undergone a shore-based apprenticeship or otherwise worked on land before going to sea. In a closely related development, the gender patterns of maritime labour started to change. Women increasingly stepped onto the ship's deck as paid members of the crew, which, for many, was scandalous. Paternalistic ideology required the separation of sexes on emigrant vessels and therefore created a need to institutionalise the employment of women at sea. These major changes and the broad statistical profile of these trends are described in more detail below.³²

³¹F. J. Lindop, *Seamen's Trade Unionism to 1929*. Unpublished M.Phil. Thesis, University of London (1972), p.23; Dixon, *Seamen and the Law*, p.150; Sager, *Ships and Memoirs*, p.68.

³² Women's employment at sea is described in more detail in Chapter 7.

By 1901, seafarers employed in the catering and engineering departments (including surgeons and pursers) outnumbered sailors in decennial censuses.³³ Other figures provided by the Registrar of Shipping and Seamen indicate a similar transformation although these suggest a slightly slower pace:

Table 2.1. The estimated number of British Seamen, other than Asiatics, employed in the various ratings on sea-going trading vessels, 1888-1901

Year	Deck Department	%	Engineering Department	%	Catering Department (inc. Pursers)	%
1888*	114,419	64	41,785	23	23,081	13
1891	117,480	61	48,830	26	25,340	13
1896	110,830	60	49,410	27	25,500	14
1901	97,840	54	55,370	30	29,810	16

Source: Report of the Committee. BPP 1903. LXII. Appendix M, No. 8.

*Appendix M, No. 1. *Ibid.*

Table 2.1 shows clearly how the numbers of sailors decreased rapidly compared to engineers and catering crew. While the numbers of sailors decreased by 16.7 per cent from the peak figure of 1891, the other groups of maritime labour increased by 24 per cent. The maritime labour force now consisted of people with entirely new skills. At the start of the twentieth century, the 'newcomers' formed half of the entire maritime workforce.

Occupational information recorded in censuses offers an insight into the change occurring in the maritime labour market. Even though there are serious problems in using the census data for counting seafarers, it illustrates the general trend of a growing percentage of catering personnel. The decennial censuses covered only those who were at home, in port or in home waters on the census night, and in addition, the enumeration criteria also varied over time. If the number of those staying at home can be said to represent a reasonably consistent proportion of the

³³ Figures calculated by statistics collected by V.C. Burton, 'Counting Seafarers, The Published Records of the Registry of Merchant Seamen 1849-1913' *Mariner's Mirror*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (1985), Table 6, p. 315. According to the table, in 1901 approximately 45 per cent of the seafarers employed

workforce, the share of catering personnel in the maritime workforce grew from 2 per cent to 24 per cent between 1861 and 1931 (Table 2.2). In some ports the catering department formed even larger part of the maritime workforce. In Liverpool, which was largely occupied with passenger traffic, the catering personnel formed 43 per cent of the workforce.³⁴

Table 2.2. Catering personnel enumerated in the census of England and Wales compared to the total number of seafarers, 1861-1931

Year	Female catering personnel	Male stewards and cooks	Females of the catering personnel, per cent	Other merchant seafarers*	Catering personnel of all seafarers, per cent
1861	146	1471	9	94,665	2
1871	216	3436	6	94,370	4
1881	386	6381	6	95,093	7
1891	389	n/a	n/a	107,445	n/a
1901***	995	26,205	4	154,700	16
1911	596	15,514	4	77,028	17
1921	933	23,865	4	99,056	20
1931	1,128	23,956	4	78,023	24

* Figures in 1891 and 1901 include stewards and cooks

** In absence of the census data for 1901, Valerie Burton's figure has been used, which was taken from the Annual Statements of Navigation and Shipping. Burton (1985), p.309. In the 1901 census, only the total number of seafarers has been recorded. The 1901 census material was only released after this chapter had been completed.

*** Figures taken from *Return of the Number of Seamen employed in 1901 on vessels registered under part I of the Merchant Shipping Act 1902*. BPP 1902.XCII. Table "Estimated Total Number of Seamen", p.279.

Source: Census of England and Wales 1861-1931, Occupation Tables.

Many thanks for Ms Jo Stanley for co-operating with these figures.

Another feature is the high proportion of male catering personnel throughout the period under consideration. The number of female catering personnel seems too large at the beginning of the period, but the classification system might provide an explanation. Probably all women working at sea in any capacity were classified in this category, including stewardesses who might have worked on home trade vessels

in the home and foreign trade were sailors, and 46.5 per cent were members of the engineers' or catering department. These figures exclude captains and Lascars.

³⁴ E. Caradog Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, Vol. II (Liverpool, 1934), p.90.

as well as on sailing ships, some of whom might have been captains' wives or other female relatives officially signed on as crewmembers. Otherwise the percentage of women among the catering personnel remained relatively unchanged. The stagnant patterns of women's employment meant that no new roles became available to them. Their employment within passenger shipping was accepted for one purpose only (as will be discussed further in Chapter 7): to provide care for the woman and child passengers.

The increase in catering personnel and the emergence of the engineering department changed the working culture of *seafarers in many ways*. *Due to the shortening of voyages, the regularisation of routes, the presence of passengers and the catering services offered to them (and especially the behaviour required from the crew), domesticity*³⁵ influenced a bigger part of seafarers' lives than was earlier the case. The presence of passengers required more polite manners on board, the wearing of uniforms and restrictions on smoking and drinking in public. Therefore the liners were not to every seafarer's liking and they were often called 'cattle boats'.³⁶ Furthermore, according to Eric Sager, seafarers had mixed feelings towards work in large passenger ships.³⁷ Those working in engineers' and catering departments were not usually trained at maritime institutions or apprenticed on sailing ships, and they were therefore a threat to the old seafaring values. Valerie Burton notes that the heroism originally attached to the job was, with advancing technologies, lost to the ordinary seafaring men. Their courage was to distinguish the men, as Burton notes, from the 'stay-at-homes'.³⁸ However, with technological change, a large proportion of the seafaring workforce now struggled with capricious passengers, rather than with storms and waves.

³⁵ Domesticity = home and family life, sometimes also connected with civilised living conditions. Domestic duties are the reproductive duties normally performed by women at home. Lat. *domesticus*= belonging to the house.

³⁶ Tony Lane, *Grey Dawn Breaking. British Merchant Seafarers in the Late Twentieth Century* (Manchester, 1986), p. 11.

³⁷ Sager, *Ships and Memoirs*, p.67.

³⁸ Valerie Burton, 'Whoring, Drinking Sailors', Reflections on Masculinity from the Labour History of Nineteenth-century British Shipping' in Margaret Walsh (ed.), *Working Out Gender. Perspectives from Labour History* (Ashgate, 1999), pp. 86-87.

The changing composition of the maritime labour force caused deep concern, as evidenced in contemporary discussions.³⁹ In the late nineteenth-century, there was a passionate public debate over the 'deterioration' in the quality of seamen, which was connected with the development of steam, the change of apprenticeship regulations in 1849 and the disappearance of old seafaring skills associated with the era of sailing. As David M. Williams points out, the deterioration appeared to be evident in the skill and seamanship of maritime labour and this view was reinforced by two arguments: the *proportion* of men described as 'seamen' was contracting and there was an apparent decline in the *skills* of individual seamen. He concludes that the reason why the shift in employment patterns caused such alarm was really because of the number of foreigners employed as Able Bodied seamen (ABs) and the inability of employers to come to terms with a new maritime labour force.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he argues that seamen were regarded as *the* essential element in the seafaring labour force, and it was claimed that only *they* represented real Royal Navy reserve potential.⁴¹ In other words, the catering and engineering personnel hampered the ability of the British Merchant Marine to defend the country when in crisis.

It is not difficult to detect the gender undertones of this debate. The Secretary to Trinity House at Hull told the 1860 Select Committee that

Steam vessels are rapidly taking the place of sailing vessels and the crew consists mainly of engineers and firemen and very few sailors...it is found in steam vessels boys are taught little more than to polish brass work, carry coals and do the work of a servant.⁴²

Seafarers regarded working on the steamships as less dangerous and less 'a man's work'. Work on the steamship was better paid and much sought-after, but with the disappearance of the traditional sailing ship skills, which had been important,

³⁹ A key source for the debate on the deterioration in the quality of seamen is Brassey, *British Seamen*.

⁴⁰ David M. Williams, 'The Quality, Skill and Supply of Maritime Labour, Causes of Concern in Britain, 1850-1914' in Lewis R. Fisher, *et al.* (eds.), *The North Sea. Twelve Essays on Social History of Maritime Labour* (Norway, 1992), p.43.

⁴¹ *ibid*, pp. 43, 45.

⁴² Dixon, *Seamen and the Law*, p.133.

working under sail now became more valued in terms of masculinity. Tapio Bergholm, who has studied dock labourers, has taken gender into account in studying their labour unions and working conditions. He suggested that masculinity was an important factor in their work culture and that the irregularity of employment and the illusory freedom to decide themselves when to work and when not to, was important to their manhood.⁴³ I would argue that the dockers' saying '*It is poor, if you have to work every day*' also reflects the seamen's attitudes towards work. The irregularity of sailing ship patterns forms a strong contrast with work on steamships, under which work time and leisure time became more strictly defined. Ashore, many workers resisted the increasingly formal definition of the working week by retaining the custom of Saint Monday (the absence from work on Mondays), which survived up to the 1870s. As Douglas Reid's study implies, it was predominantly a male habit, especially concentrated among the better-paid workers. The new regular shipping patterns were not to everybody's liking, since the traditional freedom of seafarers to choose their next ship, route and time spent ashore was severely threatened. In the seafarers' culture, a distinction was made between a 'company man' and a man who took full advantage of the possibility of changing ships whenever he wanted. Being called a 'company man' carried sarcastic undertones which implied that the person in question was not adventurous and, further, was on the side of the employers. Tony Lane refers to this mentality by stating that 'A right thinking seaman was a man who treasured his freedom and decided himself which ship he would sail in'.⁴⁴

At the beginning of the period in 1861, catering personnel comprised about 30 per cent of the labour force on the transatlantic liners. By the First World War, they already formed the biggest department on the largest passenger ships such as Cunard's liners (see Table 2.3). However, there was a large variation between different routes: on the Mediterranean and coastal routes their numbers remained

⁴³ Tapio Bergholm, *Ammattiliiton Nousu ja Tuho. Kuljetusalan ammattiyhdistystoiminta ja työmarkkinasuhteiden murros 1944-1949* (Helsinki, 1977), pp. 30-37.

⁴⁴ Lane, *Grey Dawn Breaking*, p.164.

Table 2.3. Average Crew Sizes on Cunard's liners on different routes 1861-1938

Coastal routes Mediterranean routes Transatlantic routes

Year	Coastal routes			Mediterranean routes			Transatlantic routes			Voyages analysed	Crewmembers analysed
	Deck & Engineers	Catering Dep.	TOTAL	Deck & Engineers	Catering Dep.	TOTAL	Deck & Engineers	Catering Dep.	TOTAL		
1861	62.3	6	69.3	45.6	9.1	53.5	83.7	33.5	114.8	74	6936
1871	47.1	9.7	51.9	40.2	7.2	47.5	77.0	40.2	120.4	84	7667
1881	24.3	4.5	29.0	38.4	8.2	46.6	65.5	40.9	106.3	86	7881
1891	20.0	4	24.0	32.5	6.1	38.5	101.5	59.5	161.8	79	9674
1901	*	*		28.4	5.0	33.4	137.7	98.7	260.9	34	5260
1911	*	*		29.9	5.0	35.0	244.7	212.8	457.6	62	17345
1921	87.5	8.5	96.0	39.8	7.1	51.1	176.7	209.5	371.5	57	17459
1931	26.3	5	31.3	28.3	5.2	33.3	124.8	197.2	320.7	49	11367
1938	24.5	4.5	29.0	24.4	5.1	32.5	134.6	217.5	353.0	51	10771
TOTAL										525	94360

* No such voyages in the sample

Source: Dataset 1861-1938

much smaller, as did the volume of passengers. Mediterranean routes usually carried only first-class passengers and mail until the 1930s when they concentrated entirely on carrying cargo. From the 1860s, the size of the catering personnel increased rapidly, especially on transatlantic routes. Stewards' departments grew considerably in the early-twentieth century: by 1891 every eighth seafarer serving on merchant vessels was in the catering sector: by 1911 every fifth crewmember was employed in this capacity.⁴⁵ Technological change, emigration and competition between the liners, as well as new emigrant legislation, revolutionised passenger shipping and influenced the growth in catering personnel.

2.3. Nationality and maritime labour

This section analyses whether the maritime labour market was segregated geographically and whether that segregation was hierarchical. The available data, derived mainly from national censuses and parliamentary papers, will be used to compare the nationality of seafarers between passenger liners and other trades. Furthermore, the racial and national bias in the recruitment policies of passenger liner companies will be examined using Cunard as an example and comparing the results with the overall national composition of maritime labour. Crew Agreements, which form the core source of data for this study, will be compared with the national data in order to explain the locality of recruitment of a particular passenger liner company and the possible variation in recruitment patterns between different trades.

The analysis will focus on a number of specific questions, including whether the passenger liner crew was recruited within the immediate hinterland of the port of departure. Furthermore, the birthplaces will be grouped by counties and comparisons will be made between the place of residence and place of birth of catering personnel.

Table 2.4. demonstrates that the number of foreign seamen employed on British ships increased rapidly after the repeal of the Navigation Acts.

⁴⁵ Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 315.

Table 2.4. The number of British and foreign persons employed in vessels belonging to United Kingdom, Isle of Man and Channel Islands, 1859-1900

Year	British Persons	Foreign Persons (includes Lascars)	Percentage of foreigners	Lascars (as a percentage of all seafarers)	Lascars (as a percentage of foreigners)
1859	179,780	14,029	8	0,5	7
1871	204,180	17,765	9	N/A	N/A
1881	187,409	24,805	13	N/A	N/A
1891	186,176	54,304	29	10	44
1900	174,532	72,916	42	15	49

Source: BPP 1903. *Report of the Committee...* BPP 1903. LXII. 'Number of British and Foreign Persons Employed'. Appendix A. No. 6. Evidence supplied by Mr. Howell, Assistant Secretary, Marine Department, Board of Trade.

Elsewhere, Valerie Burton has provided a table of nationalities of seafarers up to the year 1911. According to her figures which are based on quinquennial census returns of seamen, the number of foreigners was initially relatively low, but by 1906 they constituted 17 per cent of all merchant seafarers employed on British ships, although this had fallen slightly to 14 per cent by 1911. These figures are lower than in Table 2.4 since they exclude Lascars. Burton's data confirm the steady expansion in the number of Lascar seamen: they constituted 12 per cent of the workforce in 1891, 19 per cent in 1906 and 21 per cent by 1911.⁴⁶ The increase in the number of foreigners, as well as the relative decline in the importance of the deck department was seen as a threat, as will be seen in Chapter 4.

The printed census reports represent a further source of information on the nationality of merchant seafarers but their value is undermined by the fact that they occasionally include foreign ships which happened to be in English or Welsh ports on the census night. Because of the nature of the source, the figures should be

⁴⁶ Burton, 'Counting Seafarers', p.318.

Table 2.5. Occupations and country of birth of the most common foreign seafarers enumerated in the censuses of 1861-1931.

	TOTAL	French	Spanish	Portuguese	Italian	German	Austrian	Prussian	Dutch	Norwegian	Swedish	Russian	Chinese	Other Asian	USA	Subtotal
1861																
Stewards	68	6	1	2	3	2	3	7	10	1	4					39
Stewardesses	3					1			1	0	1					3
Other Seafarers	15561	1532	531	148	667	2254	811	1559	1084	2840	1351	454				13231
1871																
Stewards	194	20	8	6	7	56	4		19	26	19	6				171
Stewardesses	8			1		3			1	1	2					8
Other Seafarers	11630	1020	434	118	710	2434	322		609	3441	1216	384				10688
1881																
Stewards	525	50	29	8	36	130	12		27	94	60	12				458
Stewardesses	27	1				4			2	1	15					23
Other Seafarers	9998	1222	543	48	734	1725	342		369	1922	1473	506				8884
1891																
Stewards	n/a															
Stewardesses	48		1			4			2	1	31	6				45
Other Seafarers	15035	1067	684	127	641	2829	163		480	4457	2294	587				13329
1901																
Stewards	n/a															
Stewardesses	99	2				1			2	11	53	14			2	85
Other Seafarers	16992	1230	1313	151	534	1918	199		772	3916		1108	237		129	12106
1911																
Stewards	2161	119	168	15	49	274	35		130	283	134	62	94		334	1746
Stewardesses	148	7	1		1	13	1		2	15	36	44			2	122
Other Seafarers	13033	772	929	89	211	1710	150		615	2308	1956	1059	386		124	10640
1921																
Stewards	1090	81	92	41	55	34	5		107	72	37	23	111		122	828
Stewardesses	55	9		1		3			5	8	6	6			1	39
Other Seafarers	3926	355	436	331	102	132	4		357	427	516	493	332		59	3724
1931																
Stewards	1,383	48	70	3	50	34	6		48	76	50	10	91		651	1159
Stewardesses	n/a															
Other Seafarers	3875	112	281	38	116	146	7		196	429	389	59	381		51	2281

Sources: Censuses of England and Wales 1861-1931, Occupation Tables.

interpreted as relative rather than absolute: normally only those who were in port at census night were enumerated. Table 2.5 on page 29 lists the most common nationalities of foreign seafarers throughout the period under examination. The large number of Scandinavians and Russians (many of whom were 'Russian Finns') is notable, as well as the diminishing number of Germans after the First World War. After 1901, when non-Europeans were enumerated, one-fourth to one-third of them worked as stewards and cooks. Asian nationalities were also mainly employed in the stewards' departments.

The figures in Table 2.6, provided by Mr. Malan, the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen, show that the majority of foreign seamen worked as sailors at the turn of the century. More than ten per cent of the stewards' department were foreigners-excluding Lascars. According to his estimate, the number of foreign seafarers was increasing.

Table 2.6. The estimated number of British seafarers employed at certain ratings on foreign-going merchant vessels, 1891-1901

Year	Nationality of Seafarers	Sailors	Firemen & Trimmers	Stewards	Stewardesses
1891	British seafarers	50,070	24,210	21,000	870
	Foreign seafarers	16,600	4,430	2,870	30
	TOTAL	66,670	28,640	23,870	900
	% of foreign seafarers	24.9	15.5	12.0	3.3
1896	British seafarers	43,310	23,250	21,140	860
	Foreign seafarers	17,540	5,270	2,960	20
	TOTAL	60,850	28,520	24,100	880
	% of foreign seafarers	28.8	18.5	12.3	2.3
1901	British seafarers	36,660	23,530	24,110	1,110
	Foreign seafarers	16,960	8,610	3,610	50
	TOTAL	53,620	32,140	27,720	1,160
	% of foreign seafarers	31.6	26.8	13.0	4.3

Source: *Report of the Committee...* BPP 1903. LXII. Appendix M, No 8. Evidence supplied by Mr. Malan, Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen.

In fact, the number of foreigners in the stewards' department was surprisingly low compared to the other departments and remained very stable during the period. However, the table omits the important element of Asian workforce namely the Lascars. There were national differences with foreigners employed in different departments: Germans and Scandinavians dominated in the deck departments unlike

the low-paid non-Europeans who were employed in catering departments. It is interesting to note, however, that there was a low proportion of foreign stewardesses compared to stewards and other male groups in the maritime labour market (Table 2.6): they formed only three to four per cent of the catering personnel during the period under consideration.

The large number of foreign sailors suggests that a significant percentage of them were employed on sailing vessels, where there was only sailors' work available. The following table (2.7) provides another estimate of the percentage of foreign ratings at Liverpool and suggests that there were a good deal more foreigners employed on sailing vessels than in steam.

Table 2.7. The proportion of foreign ratings on Liverpool-based ships compared to the national average 1887-1901, in per cent

Year	Liverpool Sail	National Sail	Liverpool Steam	National Steam
1887	30.0	n/a	5.9	n/a
1891	31.6	22.4	6.7	11.3
1896	31.8	25.4	8.1	12.4
1901	35.1	29.0	7.9	14.4

Source: Report of the Committee... BPP 1903. LXII. Appendix B.No.1. Evidence supplied by Captain Henderson, retired Master Mariner and Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office, Liverpool. Vol III. Number of foreign seamen serving on Board trading vessels in 1901. BPP 1902.XCII, p.288.

The Annual Statements of Navigation and Shipping provide similar data from the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁷ Indeed, the proportion of foreign ratings employed on Liverpool-based steamships only rose from approximately six per cent in 1887 to just eight per cent by 1901. Furthermore, other evidence suggests that employment on sailing ships became a dead-end job with inferior working conditions and wages.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Annual Statement of Navigation 1873*. BPP 1874. LXIV, p. 299, 407; *Annual Statement of Navigation 1881*. BPP 1882. LXXVIII, p. 291; *Annual Statement of Navigation 1891*, BPP 1892. LXVII, p. 427.

⁴⁸ Tony Lane, *Liverpool. City of the Sea* (Liverpool, 1997), pp.87-88; Brassey, *British Seamen*, pp. 5-6, 37; Burton, 'Whoring, Drinking Sailors', p.95.

Contrary to the Liverpool experience, Tony Lane argues that the rapid increase in the number of foreign seamen in the late-nineteenth century was 'the result of the development of scheduled services which became progressively widespread as trades came to be dominated by the steamships.'⁴⁹ The passenger liner companies operating in the Far East employed Lascars and Chinese and other Asian nationalities in their catering departments. However, the use of Lascar seamen was only common east of the Suez Canal, and steam ships out of Liverpool often operated in the Atlantic, which might explain the low number of foreigners on Liverpool steamships. The P&O (Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company), one of the biggest passenger liner companies, was the first to run services from Suez to Bombay via Aden and recruited crew from the region. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Indian crews were increasingly employed on liners running between the UK and India, and by the turn of the century most ships trading to India (including non-British vessels) had Indian crew.⁵⁰ Often the whole catering personnel -apart from stewardesses- on these routes consisted of Lascars, because they were cheaper.⁵¹ It was also common for ships to carry mixed European and non-European catering personnel.⁵²

Other shipping companies recruited their crew among natives depending on which non-European port they operated from. For example, Elder Dempster, a Liverpool shipping company operating to West Africa, generally recruited its employees (who belonged to the Kru [or Kroo] tribe) from Sierra Leone. Those ships, as well as ships trafficking to India, had European officers.⁵³ However, the number of foreigners was significantly lower on steamships, as reflected in national statistics (Table 2.7).

⁴⁹ Tony Lane, 'The Political Imperatives of Bureaucracy and Empire: The Case of the Coloured Alien Seamen Order, 1925' in Dianne Frost (ed.), *A History of Ethnic Seafarers in the UK* (London, 1995), p. 108.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ The collected material on seafarers' wages on various liners reveals that most ships where whole catering personnel consisted of Indians, carried a British stewardess. UW. MRC. MSS.367/TSF/2/3/1. Shipping Federation Archives. Seafarers' wages on various liners in 1917.

⁵² See, for example, *ibid.* ('Seafarers' wages on various liners in 1917'); NMM. P&O/10/10. 'Instructions to Pursers and Clerks in Charge onboard the Steamships of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company' (1860), p .9.

How does the overall composition of the maritime labour force on merchant vessels compare to that of catering personnel on British passenger liners? The results, based on the data available, suggest that at the beginning of the period in 1861, 92 per cent of Cunard catering personnel were white and British, while 97 per cent were male. Towards the end of the period, the nationality composition was roughly the same, although the percentage of women had slightly increased. The following table (2.8) reveals the national breakdown of the catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners. It shows the relative absence of foreigners compared to the other shipping trades (see Tables 2.6. and 2.7). The notable exceptions are the years 1911 and 1921, when the proportion of foreigners was over 23 and 10 per cent respectively. After 1903, when Cunard became the official agency for Hungarian emigration and entered into the Mediterranean emigrant trade, it commonly recruited its catering personnel from the Continent. *Saxonia* and *Ultonia* were transferred south and sailed a fortnightly service between Fiume -Trieste - Venice - Palermo - New York. Later on, *Aurania*, *Carpathia*, *Pannonia* and *Slavonia* also served on the Mediterranean route.⁵⁴ Whole catering crews were recruited from Mediterranean ports of departure, apart from the most senior ranks who were normally British. The recruited crew was mainly Italian (37 per cent), Austrian (24 per cent) and Hungarian (11 per cent), as were most of the 40,000 emigrants carried from the Continent each year between 1903 and 1915.⁵⁵ The other common nationalities employed were French (4 per cent), American (3 per cent), Russian (3 per cent), German (2 per cent) and Swiss (2 per cent).⁵⁶

The absence of foreigners on Cunard's passenger liners was striking compared to the national average. It appears that they had a strong local bias in recruiting their workforce and that workforce was easily available. The number of foreigners employed clearly fell below the national average compared to those employed on other steam and sailing ships. As the data below (Table 2.8) suggest, the proportion of the English-born grew to 90 per cent of the Cunard's catering crew towards the end of the period. The Table 2.8 also reveals the decreasing number of Scottish

⁵³ Lane, 'The Political Imperatives of Bureaucracy and Empire', p. 108.

⁵⁴ F. Reid Corson, *The Atlantic Ferry in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1931), pp.66-67; Hyde, *Cunard and The North Atlantic*, pp. 110 -111.

⁵⁵ Hyde, *Cunard and The North Atlantic*, p.111.

⁵⁶ Dataset 1861-1938.

catering personnel employed by the company. Cunard's early recruitment policy reflected the Glasgow origins of the company's founding partners: the Scots were recruited mainly from counties around Glasgow. The foreigners employed were mainly of European origin, rather than Africans, Lascars and Chinese. The majority of foreigners and Lascars seem therefore to have been employed on other routes or on different trades.

Table 2.8. The nationality of catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners by birthplace 1861-1938

Year	English	%	Scottish	%	Irish	%	N.Irish	%	Welsh	%	Foreign	%	Colonial	%	At sea	%	Total
1861	274	59.1	139	30.0	20	4.3	10	2.2	15	3.2	6	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	464
1871	250	61.7	99	24.4	14	3.5	17	4.2	12	3.0	12	3.0	1	0.2	0	0.0	405
1881	318	66.7	77	16.1	21	4.4	21	4.4	20	4.2	16	3.4	4	0.8	0	0.0	477
1891	382	77.0	43	8.7	24	4.8	17	3.4	13	2.6	15	3.0	2	0.4	0	0.0	496
1901	468	83.7	30	5.4	23	4.1	12	2.1	8	1.4	14	2.5	4	0.7	0	0.0	559
1911	1868	68.6	64	2.3	82	3.0	22	0.8	50	1.8	628	23.1	9	0.3	1	0.0	2724
1921	2194	81.0	69	2.5	74	2.7	29	1.1	42	1.5	277	10.2	23	0.8	2	0.1	2710
1931	2608	89.5	55	1.9	62	2.1	19	0.7	64	2.2	73	2.5	30	1.0	2	0.1	2913
1938	2490	88.4	82	2.9	49	1.7	36	1.3	56	2.0	68	2.4	36	1.3	0	0.0	2817

Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

The large majority of the catering personnel, however, were English throughout the period. The proportion of English employees had risen to 90 per cent in the 1930s, which reflected an exceptionally high level of dominance in the maritime labour market. This section will take a closer look at the British crews, and analyse the geographical origins of catering personnel by county of birth. Their actual addresses were only registered in the Crew Agreements from 1894 onwards, although place of birth was previously recorded. The operation of Cunard express passenger liners from Southampton and London around 1920 has to be kept in mind when comparing the home addresses of catering personnel with the ship's port of departure.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ For example, *Ausonia* and *Albania* operated the route London-Southampton-Montreal already in 1911 and by 1920s *Saxonia* and *Verbania* operated from London. By 1930s, Liverpool had lost its position as a primary port of departure for Cunard passenger liners and remained a home port for only its Mediterranean liners and general cargo services.

Table 2.20 at the end of the chapter lists the ten most common counties of birth of the catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners. Lancashire remains the most common birthplace of the catering personnel over the period. From the 1880s onwards the Greater London area became one of the most common places of origin, while the number of Scottish employees decreased steadily. Cunard's removal of its services to Southampton shifted the recruitment focus to the southern counties. Cunard had recruitment offices in Liverpool, Southampton and London, which meant that the company actively sought catering personnel from these areas. Even if Southampton had become Cunard's main port of departure by the 1920s, the Greater Liverpool catchment area (which included parts of the counties of Lancashire and Cheshire) continued to provide the largest proportion of the company's catering personnel.⁵⁸ A conscious favouring of a local workforce was not a new phenomenon. Ship owners have traditionally preferred local men, and actively sought to recruit from their port of operation and seafarers from other regions were only employed if local men were not available.⁵⁹

The analysis of the catering crew's addresses from 1901 onwards points to similar conclusions and the significant shift in the place of residence to the southern counties, in particular to Hampshire, with the removal of the company's main port of departure to Southampton, becomes clearer. Simultaneously, the composition of the catering crew became more heterogeneous. In 1901 over 90 per cent of the catering personnel were resident in the Greater Liverpool area, but by the end of the period only 45 per cent lived there, and Hampshire and Greater London had become significant. Very few travelled from Scotland, Wales or Ireland, while the majority of those residing abroad in 1911 were Italians, Austrians and Hungarians recruited from Southern Europe during Cunard's contract with the Hungarian government. The relatively high percentage of foreigners in the early 1920s was due to *Pannonia's* trip from New York -Cuba-Trieste-Liverpool (which is included in the sample), when the

⁵⁸ For the purposes of this study, the Greater Liverpool area has been defined as including Liverpool, Bebington, Birkenhead, West Kirby, Hoylake, Wallasey, Bootle, Crosby, Litherland, Kirkby, Knowsley, Prescot, St. Helens, Widnes and Runcorn.

⁵⁹ David Jenkins, *Jenkins Brothers of Cardiff. A Ceredigion Family's Shipping Ventures* (Cardiff, 1985), p.56; Yrjö Kaukiainen, *Laiva Toivo, Oulu*. (Helsinki, 2000), pp.82-86.

majority of catering personnel, recruited in New York, were Italians. They were signed on and off in a foreign port- on this occasion in Trieste.⁶⁰

Table 2.9. The place of residence of catering personnel, 1901-1938, in per cent

Year	Gr. Liverpool	Gr. London	Hampshire	Scotland, Wales & Ireland	Abroad	Not known	Other
1901	91	1	3	1	1	1	2
1911	70	3	2	0	17	1	7
1921	57	6	17	2	8	2	8
1931	50	13	23	1	1	1	11
1938	36	9	42	1	1	2	9

Source: Dataset 1901-1938.

Apart from the very end of the period, the northern part of Britain remained the major area of residence for the catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners, most of whom resided in the Greater Liverpool area. The following table (2.10) shows the persistence of a northern recruitment base for catering personnel in terms of their place of residence.

Table 2.10. The origins of Cunard catering personnel on passenger liners by region (north-south) according to place of residence, 1901-1938

Year	North*	%	South**	%	Other	%	TOTAL
1901	527	91	29	5	20	3	576
1911	1997	72	140	5	625	23	2762
1921	1686	61	701	25	394	14	2781
1931	1603	54	1144	39	216	7	2963
1938	1169	41	1510	53	185	6	2864

* Cheshire, Lancashire, Scotland, Yorkshire, Cumberland, Northumberland, Westmoreland.

** Berkshire, Cornwall, Devonshire, Dorsetshire, Gloucestershire, Greater London, Hampshire, Kent, Oxfordshire, Somerset, Surrey, Sussex, Wiltshire.

Source: Dataset 1901-1938.

⁶⁰ Dataset 1901-1938.

The Greater Liverpool area can be examined in detail in order to analyse the locality of recruitment more effectively. For the purposes of this study, the area was divided into two main parts following the river Mersey. The main Liverpool area, including Bootle, Crosby, Kirkby, Prescott, St Helens, Widnes and Runcorn, belonged to the county of Lancashire. The area on the other side of the river consisted of Birkenhead, Bebington, West Kirby and Wallasey and belonged to the county of Cheshire. The docks for departing Cunard ships were all on the Lancashire side of the river in north Liverpool. The following table shows the breakdown of the addresses of the catering personnel in the area and shows that the majority of catering personnel lived on the same side as the docks. Bootle and Waterloo, representing the northern districts of Liverpool, were amongst the most common places of residence. Cunard also had one of its recruitment offices in Bootle, which was closest to the docks from which Cunard ships regularly departed.⁶¹

Table 2.11. County of residence of Cunard catering personnel residing in the Greater Liverpool area, 1901-1938*

Year	Lancashire	%	Cheshire	%
1901	488	95	26	5
1911	1750	90	187	10
1921	1393	88	197	12
1931	1268	86	209	14
1938	878	85	160	15

* Greater Liverpool: Area covering Liverpool, Bebington, Birkenhead, West Kirby, Hoylake, Wallasey, Bootle, Crosby, Litherland, Kirby, Knowsley, Prescott, St. Helens, Widnes and Runcorn.

Source: Dataset 1901-1938.

This study has not analysed in greater detail the registered addresses of catering personnel. Valerie Burton has covered this topic in her dissertation on passenger liner crews in Southampton which made, for the first time, an important connection

⁶¹ Seafarers' living patterns in the 1930s Liverpool are analysed in Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, p.98, which confirms that majority of stewards lived in Bootle, Wallasey, Fazakerley, West Derby, Everton, and Toxteth.

between the home and professional lives of seafarers.⁶² Although the importance of such an approach is fully recognised, the current study concentrates primarily on more general employment and recruitment patterns of the major passenger liner companies.

2.4. The stability of catering personnel employment

The technological transition from sail to steam has been interpreted as a stabilising factor in the maritime labour market and steam liners were seen as providers of *constant employment compared to sailing ships*.⁶³ However, the maritime labour market remained casual for the majority of seafarers during this period, since the tradition of signing the work contract (Crew Agreement) for one trip only continued as a key principle of employment. By signing the agreement a seafarer accepted all the conditions of employment, and the legal opportunities to complain afterwards were minimal. The system gave employers much arbitrary power since the labour force did not have any formal guarantee of long-term employment. Personal likes and dislikes often determined whether a person was re-employed or not, and this affected the sexual culture onboard ships and made women workers especially vulnerable. There were also significant differences between different groups of seafarers. On passenger liners, signing off after each voyage had become a formality at least for the senior members of the crew by the end of the 1930s, but catering personnel only became anything like permanent labour force at the very end of the period. Even then, catering employment remained seasonal. The assistant ratings, in particular, remained vulnerable to the seasonal variations of the passenger trade. Even if employment on liners became more regular in terms of the ships' voyage patterns compared to other trades, it can only be characterised as continuous for a proportion of the catering personnel.

Seasonal fluctuations were high in the catering department, as is evident in a comparison of voyages completed at different times of the year. For this purpose,

⁶² Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*.

⁶³ Sager, *Ships and Memoirs*, p. 99; Brassey, *British Seamen*, p.166; Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 69.

Cunard ships were selected on the basis of a stable voyage pattern throughout the year. Only those ships, whose voyage patterns did not change at all during the year in question were analysed. All the voyages made by the selected ships were included. Ships operating to North Atlantic destinations had regularly the lowest numbers of catering personnel during the winter months, especially in December, January and February. For example, five out of the seven ships sampled in 1901 had the lowest manning levels in their catering departments in January, while February was the slackest month for the two remaining ships. Throughout the period catering manning levels were as the lowest point in January, but 77 per cent of the ships included in the sample registered their lowest number of catering staff between November and March.

Table 2.12. The lowest manning levels in the catering departments on Cunard passenger vessels 1861-1938, by calendar month

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1861	2	2	2		2					2		
1871	5	3					2					
1881	3	2	3				2	2				2
1891	5									2	2	3
1901	5	2										
1911	3											
1921	1		1	1		1			1	1	2	1
1931	1		3								1	
1938				1							2	1

Source: Dataset 1861-1938

By contrast, there was greater variation in the peak month for manning levels (Table 2.13, which is constructed in the same fashion as Table 2.12); as the employment of catering personnel was most evident in the periods between April to June and August to October. Emigrants preferred to arrive in the New Country early in summer, since it was easier to get established in their new homes during the warmer time of the year.⁶⁴ On Mediterranean routes, which were not affected by the emigrant traffic, the number of the catering personnel did not vary remarkably from one voyage to

another. Later in the period, when seasonal emigration decreased and travelling for pleasure became more common, seasonal fluctuations in the number of catering personnel also declined on the transatlantic routes.

Table 2.13. The highest manning levels in the catering departments on Cunard passenger vessels, 1861-1938, by calendar month

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1861		2			3	2		3				
1871				2	2	3		3	2	2		
1881					4				3	3		
1891				3		4		2	2	2		
1901									2			
1911				3		1	1	1	1	1		
1921					2	3						
1931			1			1		1				
1938						1	1		2			

Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

It has to be noted, though, that the data demonstrates a clear seasonal pattern on the Atlantic routes. According to an employment guide from the 1910s, on Australian and New Zealand routes the season was scheduled to run from November to March and on ships to South Africa the key period was between October and March.⁶⁵ Therefore, at least in theory, it was possible for catering personnel to change routes according to season, but there is no evidence that this was widely practised. An employment guide for young people published in 1916 advised those desiring to become stewards to train themselves for two occupations or more in order to be employed both in the winter and summer, since 'the work is seasonal, and therefore necessarily attracts a large number of people for the summer only. Such men often find it difficult in securing work in the wintertime.'⁶⁶ The employment was most seasonal on North Atlantic passenger liners, where the sailings were reduced by 60 per cent from October to April in the 1930s.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ The published guides often advised emigrants to arrive in spring. See, for example William Cobbett, *The Emigrant's Guide*, p. 99.

⁶⁵ MMM. DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p.10.

⁶⁶ MMM. MAR/PM. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*, p.107.

⁶⁷ Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, p.87.

The figures suggest that the employment of catering personnel remained seasonal throughout the period under consideration. How much, then, did the average size of the catering personnel vary according to the time of the year? The following table (2.14) shows that there were large seasonal variations in the size of the catering department, but that fluctuations varied on different routes and over time. The highest and lowest numbers of catering personnel employed on all of a ship's voyages during the year were recorded, and the figures have been calculated according to the actual number of workers onboard at the time of departure. The level of the variation reflects the difference between the lowest and the highest numbers of catering personnel employed. For example, on the busiest transatlantic trips in 1881, 35 per cent more catering personnel were employed compared to quieter voyages. On Mediterranean routes, the level of variation was lower, since, as has been noted, those ships were not involved with shipping emigrants.⁶⁸

Table 2.14. Seasonal variations in the employment of catering personnel on certain routes of Cunard ships, 1861-1938, in per cent

<i>Year</i>	<i>Mediterranean routes</i>	<i>Transatlantic routes</i>	<i>Total variation</i>
1861	17	9	11
1871	20	22	21
1881	6	35	32
1891	43	53	50
1901	*	31	31
1911	0	19	13
1921	20	23	22
1931	*	32	32
1938	*	54	54

* No voyages in the sample.
Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

Fluctuations in passenger levels affected the employment of catering personnel more than the deck and engineering departments. The daily work of a fireman, engineer and a deckhand was much the same regardless of the number of the passengers. Seasonal fluctuations also affected other groups of the maritime labour force, but to a lesser extent: sometimes it was cheaper for ship owners to lay up ships than to keep them going during the quiet times. This tactic could not be commonly used in

⁶⁸ Cunard ships transported emigrants to America from Mediterranean ports from 1903 onwards, but those trips have been classified as transatlantic routes.

passenger shipping, however, since the principle of regular service and Government mail contracts forced the liners to be in traffic even if they were running in debt. But, since the catering personnel were not involved with steering the ship or running the engines, manning levels were easy to regulate according to the number of passengers expected for each voyage. When crew accommodation was being built for *Queen Elizabeth*, accommodation was arranged for 116 extra stewards, 'who may be required for the busy period'.⁶⁹ This allowed for a variation of 13 per cent in the number of catering personnel, a figure which falls below the average variation on Transatlantic routes presented in Table 2.14. This was most likely due to inadequate accommodation organised for stewards, an important aspect of working conditions that will be explored in Chapter 5.

Apart from seasonal fluctuations, the stability of employment of the catering personnel was problematic in several other ways. In order to maximise effective usage of the catering personnel, they were sometimes transferred to another vessel at the end of the outward voyage. Towards the end of the period, this occasionally happened in American ports if the number of passengers on a return journey was smaller than on the outward one. In the later years of the period (from 1910 onwards) two to three per cent of the catering personnel transferred to another of the company's vessels in the middle of the voyage.

The statistical evidence presented above (Tables 2.12, 2.13 and 2.14) suggests that the general stability of employment on passenger liners did not apply to the catering personnel. Technological change made seagoing patterns more stable in other ways, however: the ports of departure, the destination and the port of arrival were usually known prior to the trip, and even the dates of departure became fixed from the 1870s onwards. Crew could normally expect to be at specific port on certain dates, which before the era of the steamships was impossible to know or even to estimate.

In addition, even if the labour market remained officially casual in terms of the short contracts of employment, it is important to analyse whether the maritime labour on

passenger liners was *in practice* permanently employed on the same ship. Anecdotal evidence and the seafarers' discharge books suggest that some employees remained in the same company's service for decades, even remaining on the same ship. In those cases, employment could surely be said to be permanent. Robert James Blythyn sailed for 36 consecutive years on Cunard ships, of which 27 years he worked on *Aquitania*. His relative Robert William Blythyn from Liverpool spent at least nine years on Cunard ships. John Sawyer joined Cunard as a bell boy in 1935 and ended up working for the same company for 48 years.⁷⁰

Even if seafarers on passenger liners did not have long-term work contracts, the company usually guaranteed employment for the next trip if the work was available and the employee was regarded as suitable for the company. Table 2.15 examines the relative continuity of employment in individual ships by comparing previous and current employment. Since the Crew Agreements routinely list the previous ship where the person had been employed, they allow us to observe the stability of employment by assessing how often catering personnel on British passenger liners were forced to change ships or company.

Table 2.15. The proportion of catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners employed on the same ship for two consecutive voyages, 1861-1938, in per cent

<i>Year</i>	<i>Same</i>	<i>Different</i>	<i>First Ship</i>	<i>Not known</i>
1861	59	39	1	1
1871	79	21	0	0
1881	62	36	2	0
1891	88	11	1	0
1901	85	14	1	0
1911	63	30	6	1
1921	77	22	1	0
1931	82	17	1	0
1938	82	17	1	0

Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

⁶⁹ UL. CA. D 42/C 3/287. Crew Accommodation on *Queen Elizabeth*. Extract from the Minutes of meeting of Shipbuilders Committee held 29.7.1930.

⁷⁰ 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' *Liverpool Echo*, July 10, 2000. There are several discharge books deposited in Merseyside Maritime Museum's DX and SAS collections. The discharge books reveal the seafarer's job history by stating the names of the ships served, their routes and dates of signing on and discharge. See, for example, SAS/23A/2/7, The discharge book of John Davies, Steward; DX/1055, Blythyn/Knill collection; DX/1359, Discharge books of Albert Parr, bellboy and DX/1389, waiter and personal and career papers of Edward Maughan, steward and purser.

Because the information was derived from data collected on the first trip of each year, tables 2.14 and 2.15 reflect the situation on winter sailings and therefore underplays the inherent seasonality of employment (see Tables 2.12 and 2.13), as catering personnel were most frequently recruited for spring and autumn voyages. The significant increase in continuous employment between 1861 and 1871 reflects the shift towards more permanent sailing patterns for Cunard ships, while a similar trend from the 1920s onwards was a reflection of the decrease in seasonal emigration, which reduced the fluctuation in demand for catering personnel. The high level of continuity in the interwar period might also be an indication of the impact of economic depression on employment patterns, as seafarers, in general, sought to retain their jobs in an increasingly competitive labour market. By the 1930s around 80 per cent of the catering personnel did not change ships even within the company's fleet. The year 1911 was an exception due to Cunard carrying Austrian, Hungarian and Italian emigrants straight from the Mediterranean ports.

Table 2.16. The previous ship of catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938, by type, in per cent

Year	Same company's passenger ship	Same company's cargo ship	Different company's ship	First ship	Not known
1861	96	0	2	1	1
1861	99	0	1	0	0
1881	94	0	4	2	0
1891	95	0	4	1	0
1901	91	1	7	1	0
1911	82	0	12	5	1
1921	91	0	8	1	0
1931	95	0	4	1	0
1938	98	0	2	1	0

Source: Dataset, 1861-1938

Table 2.16 reveals that the number of first trippers (apart from the year 1911 for above-mentioned reasons) was low, which suggests that the majority of catering personnel were experienced seafarers. The low proportion of inexperienced seafarers was a result of the ability of Cunard's to select the most skilled men and women, due

to relatively high wages. Those going to sea for the first time had to find employment with less prestigious firms.

Employees were generally loyal to their chosen shipping company and normally stayed in the same company, even if the ships changed. It was not common to change employment between cargo and passenger liners, which indicates a high level of work segregation. It could also indicate that catering work on passenger liners was of a different character to employment on other types of ship and therefore not suitable for everybody.

Sea-going catering workforce was also segregated by terms of age. In the sailing ship era, seafaring was a young man's occupation. On sailing ships, approximately 70 per cent of the seafarers were under 30 years of age in the 1880s.⁷¹ In the 1890s and the 1900s the mean age of sailors was 20-25.⁷² The age structure, however, changed with technological transformation and was higher on steamers. In catering departments, at least 60 per cent of men were over 25 years of age throughout the period. Eric Sager has calculated that almost half the crews on steamships in general were aged 30 or over in the late-nineteenth century.⁷³ In the following table (Table 2.17) the age structure of male stewards on Cunard passenger liners is examined and compared to the available data for stewards on all British ships. It demonstrates that on Cunard ships, the men were not older than men on British ships in general, and in addition, there were remarkably less old men employed compared to the rest of the maritime workforce.

Table 2.17. reveals that the job of a steward was not just an entry into a seafarers' profession: some men remained stewards into a very mature age and a few even until retirement. Cunard had roughly the same proportion of young men under 25 years of age in catering jobs as the national average. The number of older men, however, was much higher on British vessels in general than on Cunard's passenger liners. This

⁷¹ Judith Fingard, *Jack in Port. Sailortowns of Eastern Canada*. (Toronto, 1982), p.66.

⁷² *Return of the Number of Seamen employed in 1901*. BPP 1902. XCII. 'Estimated Total Number of Seamen', p. 279.

⁷³ Eric Sager, *Seafaring Labour. The Merchant Marine of Atlantic Canada 1820-1914* (Montreal, 1989), p. 251.

might reflect the higher retirement age (and lower wage level) of cooks and stewards on other ships in comparison with North American passenger liners or the continuing custom of allocating catering jobs to older men. Over time, the age structure of the Cunard's male catering personnel reflected the national trend and changes in the level of unemployment. During the years of high unemployment the average age rose and the relative number of men under 25 years of age decreased, which reflected a fall in the demand for new catering personnel. When the passenger numbers decreased, operating costs were minimised by reducing the employment of catering personnel.

Table 2.17. The age structure of male catering personnel on Cunard vessels compared to the national average, 1861-1938.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Men under 25 on Cunard, per cent</i>	<i>Men under 25 on all ships, per cent</i>	<i>Men 55 or over on Cunard, per cent</i>	<i>Men 55 or over on all ships, per cent</i>	<i>The average age of Cunard's male catering personnel</i>
1861	42	33	0.2	4	27
1871	36	36	0.0	3	28
1881	28	38	1.0	12	31
1891	25	n/a	1.9	n/a	33
1901	35	n/a	1.8	n/a	30
1911	40	33	0.3	6	28
1921	25	24	0.5	6	32
1931	24	28	0.4	9	34
1938	18	n/a	0.5	n/a	37

Source: Dataset 1861-1938, National Census of England and Wales, 1901-1951, Occupation Tables.

2.5. The geographical origins of ship's cooks

Were catering personnel different by geographical origins to those who worked on other shipping trades? Did catering personnel recruited to passenger liners come from the same areas than other catering crew and how 'maritime' was their background? This section will compare the origins of those of the catering personnel on passenger liners to those employed as cooks on cargo ships. The ship's cooks,

who were certificated according to the 1906 Merchant Marine Act, generally found employment on cargo ships and formed a relatively large part of their catering crews. All the entries from the Register of Cook's Certificates in 1921, consisting of 620 individuals, have been used to chart their ages and demographic backgrounds. The Register, deposited at the National Maritime Museum for the years between 1915 and 1958, contains the following information: their name, age, birthplace, place examined and location of certificate issuing office.⁷⁴ In addition to the ship's cook, cargo ships carried only one or two stewards and sometimes a second cook.

The 1921 data show that the majority of British cooks came from Liverpool and other northern port cities. Liverpool was a big passenger liner port, unlike North and South Shields and Cardiff which were dominated by cargo shipping. However, alongside the carrying of passengers, Liverpool and Birkenhead also had lively cargo traffic. Therefore, there do not seem to be significant difference between the origins of catering personnel on passenger liners and cargo ships. Liverpool was a major provider of maritime labour: in July 1932, for example, over 21 per cent of all seafarers were found on Merseyside.⁷⁵

Table 2.18. The most common birthplaces of British ship's cooks examined in 1921

<i>Place of Birth</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>%</i>
Liverpool, Bootle & Birkenhead	84	15.6
London	37	6.9
Aberdeen	30	5.6
N. & S. Shields	24	4.2
Cardiff	20	3.7
Sunderland	17	3.1
Other British	326	47.7
BORN OVERSEAS	82	13.2
TOTAL	620	100

Source: NMM. X97/052. The ship's cooks certificates, 1915-1958.

⁷⁴ NMM. X97/052. The ship's cooks' certificates, 1915-1958.

⁷⁵ Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, p.85.

The register also reveals the city where the examination was taken. As Table 2.19 indicates, apart from London and Sunderland, the proportion of examinations taken in the cook's hometown was very high. The lower figure for Sunderland can probably be explained by its proximity to South Shields which had a well-established cookery school that recruited candidates from other areas in the North East. It is also interesting to note that although Southampton was increasingly threatening Liverpool's position as the country's premier passenger port, only six cooks from the 1921 sample had been born there and only one was actually examined in his port of birth.

Table 2.19. The percentage of British cooks taking their examination in the city of birth in 1921

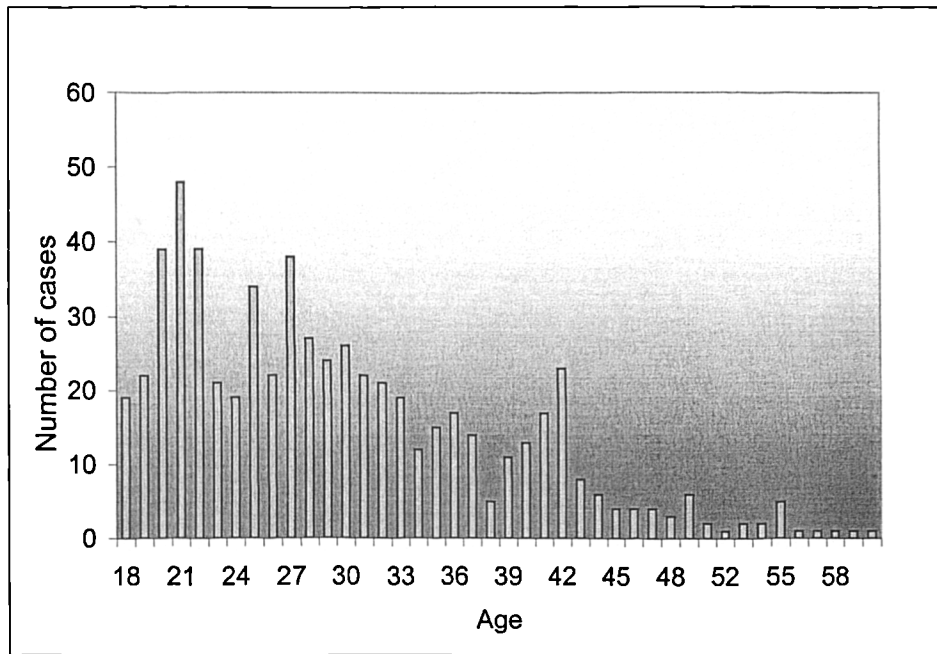
<i>Place of Birth</i>	<i>Total Cases</i>	<i>% examined in the same city</i>
Liverpool & etc.	84	92
London	37	68
Aberdeen	30	97
N. & S. Shields	24	90
Cardiff	20	100
Sunderland	17	53

Source: NMM. X97/052. The ship's cooks' certificates, 1915-1958.

The data suggest that cooks took their exams locally and that the demand for cooks was high in the large port cities. The low mobility of cooks could also be explained by the pattern of local recruitment and the tendency to employ personnel of a young age (Figure 2.1). The data indicate that the men between 20 and 24 years of age represented the largest group examined and the majority of candidates (68 per cent) were under 35 years of age. The large number of 20-24 year olds suggests that young men, after taking a trip or two as mess boys or assistant cooks, participated in lessons while they were in port between voyages. The fact that the examination was not taken by the very young suggests that the men had some seafaring experience behind them. They might also have taken the certificate 'just in case'- in order to secure employment if offered a job as the sole cook on a cargo ship (only one cook had to carry the certificate on a ship at any one time).

The increase in the number of men examined between 40 and 43 can probably be explained as a result of the post-war de-mobilisation of cooks. In fact, 28 per cent of the certificates given to men of that age were sent for issue to Royal Navy barracks or to the Royal Navy School in Portsmouth or Devonport.

Figure 2. 1. The age of ship's cooks examined in Britain in 1921



Source: NMM. X97/052. The ship's cooks' certificates, 1915-1958.

The average age of the men recruited was lower than on passenger liners. Furthermore, before taking their examination, the men were likely to have some seafaring experience behind them, which indicates that stewards/ mess boys went to sea at an age below 20. The figures for catering personnel born overseas on cargo ships and passenger liners show that a slightly higher percentage of ship's cooks were foreigners than was the case with the catering personnel on passenger liners. 13 per cent of the certificates were issued to men born overseas, of whom the majority came from Hong Kong and China (24 cooks). The next largest groups were Europeans (18) and Indians (9).⁷⁶

⁷⁶ NMM. X97/052. The Ship's Cooks' certificates, 1915-1958.

In conclusion, big passenger liners companies offered better wages and living conditions than steam tramps and sailing ships (the wages of catering personnel will be analysed in more detail in Chapter 5). Therefore they were able to select groups which were considered to be suitable: at least on North American routes companies used mainly white European catering crew. However, P&O often used Lascars in the catering department. The emphasis on whiteness could have reflected the employer's idea of a passenger liner as a superior institution, since black people were not employed by Cunard in any occupations that were visible to passengers. The maritime labour force was split hierarchically into different groups by age and nationality. Women had a very restricted role in the catering workforce; gender was therefore a crucial factor in dividing employees into different, *unequal groups in* employment, a topic which will be examined in more detail in Chapter 7. Apart from being gender-segregated, the maritime labour market was also segregated along national lines: the non-Europeans worked on sailing ships or tramps where the employment pattern was less regular and where wages and working conditions were difficult to regulate.

Table 2.20. Ten most common British counties of birth of the catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938

<i>Year</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Cases</i>	<i>Percentage of total</i>
1861	Lancashire	159	33.8
	Lanarkshire	43	9.1
	Midlothian	14	3.0
	Cheshire	13	2.8
	Greater London	13	2.8
	Perthshire	13	2.8
	Yorkshire	13	2.8
	Ayrshire	13	2.8
	Renfrewshire	11	2.3
	Gloucestershire	10	2.1
1871	Lancashire	149	35.6
	Lanarkshire	34	8.1
	Cheshire	20	4.8
	Antrim	11	2.6
	Ayrshire	11	2.6
	Yorkshire	10	2.4
	Dublin	9	2.1
	Gloucestershire	9	2.1
	Midlothian	8	1.9
	Renfrewshire	8	1.9
1881	Lancashire	206	42.9
	Cheshire	25	5.2
	Greater London	21	4.4
	Lanarkshire	20	4.2
	Antrim	15	3.1
	Ayrshire	11	2.3
	Dumfriesshire	10	2.1
	Renfrewshire	8	1.7
	Gloucestershire	7	1.5
	Hampshire	7	1.5
1891	Lancashire	259	51.6
	Cheshire	22	4.4
	Lanarkshire	15	3.0
	Greater London	14	2.8
	Yorkshire	13	2.6
	Antrim	12	2.4
	Dublin	11	2.2
	Dumfriesshire	8	1.6
	Warwickshire	8	1.6
	Shropshire	7	1.4
	Cork	6	1.2
	Cumberland	6	1.2
	1901	Lancashire	339
Greater London		32	5.6
Cheshire		18	3.1
Dublin		12	2.1
Lanarkshire		10	1.7
Yorkshire		10	1.7
Isle of Man		8	1.4

	Antrim	6	1.0
	Hampshire	6	1.0
	Shropshire	6	1.0
1911	Lancashire	1295	46.9
	Greater London	130	4.7
	Cheshire	119	4.3
	Yorkshire	53	1.9
	Dublin	26	0.9
	Hampshire	24	0.9
	Anglesey	18	0.7
	Kent	18	0.7
	Lanarkshire	17	0.6
	Warwickshire	17	0.6
	Essex	16	0.6
	Isle of Man	15	0.5
	Staffordshire	15	0.5
1921	Lancashire	1181	42.5
	Greater London	242	8.7
	Hampshire	239	8.6
	Cheshire	120	4.3
	Yorkshire	86	3.1
	Kent	42	1.5
	Dublin	37	1.3
	Lanarkshire	22	0.8
	British colonies	20	0.7
	Gloucestershire	19	0.7
1931	Lancashire	1291	43.6
	Greater London	356	12.0
	Hampshire	279	9.4
	Cheshire	181	6.1
	Yorkshire	58	2.0
	Kent	49	1.7
	Devonshire	33	1.1
	British colonies	30	1.0
	Sussex	29	1.0
	Essex	28	0.9
1938	Lancashire	1059	37.0
	Hampshire	529	18.5
	Greater London	272	9.5
	Cheshire	139	4.9
	Yorkshire	64	2.2
	Kent	50	1.7
	Lanarkshire	45	1.6
	British colonies	35	1.2
	Gloucestershire	31	1.1
	Sussex	31	1.1

Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

3. The Structure and Expansion of Catering Departments on British Passenger Liners

3.1. Introduction

In the mid-nineteenth century the catering departments on board ships were relatively small and homogenous. By the end of the century, however, the numbers of people employed, and the range of activities performed, had expanded considerably. The tasks were differentiated vertically into sections as well as horizontally according to the principles of seniority. In addition, unlike other departments, the catering staff was increasingly organised by different passenger classes, which made its structure, organisation and hierarchy a complicated matter. The allocation of catering personnel into separate classes emerged first in the stewards' departments and later in the kitchen departments. This chapter outlines this division and pays particular attention to their internal organisational patterns. According to Peter N. Davies, the advances in maritime technology facilitated the growing size of ships and 'this, in turn, meant that a different organisational structure was required both at sea and on shore'.⁷⁷ For catering personnel, models for these structural processes were adopted both from sea-based and, increasingly in the later period, from shore-based work organisations. New ideas about work organisation and management, which originated from America, reached Great Britain after the First World War, and attracted the attention of major ship owners. The expansion of the catering personnel and its increasingly complicated organisational structure were part of these developments.

One of the main concerns of this study is to analyse the expansion of the catering personnel during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. As Burton has noticed and statistical data in Chapter 2 confirm, the stewards' department constituted the fastest growing category of men and women employed at sea during the period.⁷⁸ This chapter examines reasons for that development in more detail and identifies the factors that contributed to the changes in the size of the catering department. The first

⁷⁷ Peter N. Davies, 'British Shipping and World Trade: Rise and Decline, 1820-1939' in Tsunehiko Yui and Keiichiro Nakagawa (eds.), *Business History of Shipping. Strategy and Structure*. (Tokyo, 1985), p. 49.

⁷⁸ Burton, *Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 141.

part of this chapter also underlines the significance of catering as a major maritime occupation and itemises the various tasks classified as catering over time.

A relatively detailed description of the organisational structure of the catering personnel is necessary here since it is extremely complicated and not presented elsewhere in the historiography. Fortunately, a considerable volume of primary evidence survives. A few contemporaries such as Captain E.G. Diggle, Frank Bullen and Richard Bond, have illustrated in some depth the organisation of the catering department. Together with the shipping companies' archives and crew agreements, their memories provide excellent source material for the purposes of this and Chapter 5.⁷⁹ First, the expansion of the catering personnel will be reviewed in Section 3.2. The three following sections will then concentrate on the main elements of the department and their organisational structure. Finally, the allocation of stewards to different passenger classes will be examined in Section 3.6.

3.2. The expansion and subdivision of the catering personnel

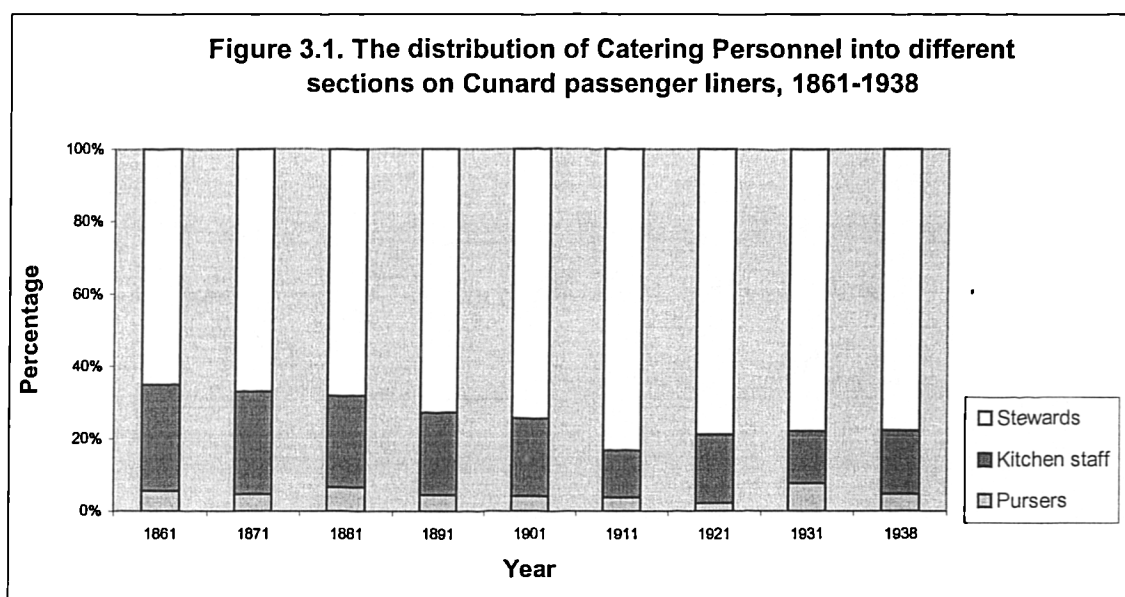
By the mid-nineteenth century, catering departments had already been separated from other departments on passenger liners and larger sea-going tramps; the partition of domestic work from other types of tasks on board ship had already been made. A Cunard captain's memorandum from 1848 states that 'the departments on board are classed under three heads: the sailing, engineers and stewards and servants.' It also advised captains: 'The Steward Department in details had better be left in great measure to the Head Steward's arrangement; but we expect you to take a lively interest in this department.'⁸⁰ On the other hand, until the 1850s the deck officers were normally responsible for the well-being of steerage passengers, including their cleanliness, arrangement into messes, the curing of seasickness, and discipline.

⁷⁹ Captain Diggle was the commander of *Aquitania* and wrote a book on his experiences (E.G. Diggle, *The Romance of a Modern Liner* (Bath, c.1930). Richard Bond was a former chief steward and then an instructor at the Nautical Training School for Stewards and Cooks in Liverpool. He wrote several guides and handbooks for ship's stewards and cooks which have been used as a source for this study, such as *The Ship's Steward's Handbook* (Glasgow, 1918), *Sea Cookery* (Liverpool, 1917), and *The Ship's Baker* (Glasgow, 1923). Frank Bullen, an ex-seafarer, wrote *The Men of the Merchant Service* (New York, 1900), which, most likely, was meant to act as a career guide for young boys interested in the seafaring career. These accounts are, however, descriptive popular histories and memoirs rather than historical analyses of the work organisation of maritime labour.

⁸⁰ UL, CA. D/38/2/4. Captain's Memoranda. Liverpool 25.3. 1848. Second paragraph.

However, the arrangement was unsatisfactory, since deck officers were occupied with navigational duties: it was therefore regarded as necessary to employ someone who had nothing to do with working the ship, as such, and who could deal with the problems of steerage passengers on a permanent basis.

As figure 3.1 below shows, most members of the catering personnel were stewards. Stewards worked in the dining room, cabins, smoke rooms, saloons and bars serving food, drinks or performing various services for the passengers. Stewards were not only employed to provide services to the passengers, but they also had to undertake domestic work for the other crew members.



Source: Dataset 1861-1938

They worked as officers' and engineers' stewards, captain's boys and glory hole stewards.⁸¹ Stewardesses and laundry workers have also been included in this group. They were engaged full time in various service-related tasks, usually in public places on the ship, and were largely responsible for the safety of the passengers.

As Figure 3.1 shows, at the beginning of the period thirty per cent of the catering personnel were located in the kitchen department. This group of catering staff

⁸¹ The area where the below-deck crew was accommodated was named a 'glory hole'.

worked mainly behind the scenes in the kitchens, bakeries or butchers' shops. As catering departments became increasingly developed, kitchens segregated in their own working units, each of which had its own hierarchy and occupational structure. The chief cook also gained more authority as a result of this development. However, their relative numbers decreased by ten per cent between 1861-1938. A more detailed analysis of the kitchen crew and the reasons for the decline in their numbers will be given later in this chapter.

The smallest section within the catering personnel was the 'pursers' department' or, as it was sometimes called, 'the passenger department'. At the beginning of the period, members of that group used to belong to the catering department but after they were segregated, they were increasingly regarded in a technical context as part of the deck department. Furthermore, they belonged to that section of the crew which was employed solely for the welfare of passengers and should therefore be regarded as service workers, as opposed to those whose seafaring work was practically unaffected by the presence of passengers. In considering the ratio of deck to catering personnel it is important to take into consideration the pursers' department, since it includes that not even the deck department was fully occupied with working the ship. An increasing number of personnel from the deck department were engaged in servicing the passengers and therefore crew ratios need to be studied using other sources in order to avoid a serious distortion between seafarers who carried out service work and the 'old' maritime occupations. Pursers and assistant pursers, surgeons, nurses and printers, as well as typists and bandsmen, belonged to the pursers' department.

At the beginning of the period, as indicated in Table 2.3, ships in Cunard's transatlantic routes carried, on average, 34 caterers per ship. The catering department was typically composed of a chief steward, a purser, a second steward, four bedroom stewards, one stewardess, five saloon and fore cabin stewards, two steerage stewards, two pantry stewards, two mess room stewards (one for officers and one for engineers), a barkeeper and a surgeon. Furthermore, there was always a boots steward to polish the passengers' shoes. In the kitchen, there was normally a first cook (who was later to be called a 'chef'), three cooks, a couple of cook's assistants, a ship's cook and his assistant, two bakers and a butcher. On smaller ships the catering

personnel, if any passengers were carried, consisted of three or four stewards and the same number of cooks and a stewardess.

By the 1890s, the average number of catering personnel had grown to 60 on the biggest passenger liners. On Cunard's coastal and Mediterranean routes, by contrast, the average size of the catering department had declined. The increase on the Atlantic was a result in the growth in ship size, but was also an indication of the better quality of service offered to passengers. Competition between liner companies caused the services offered for first-class passengers to become overwhelmingly luxurious, and steerage passengers were also offered more civilised conditions than before.

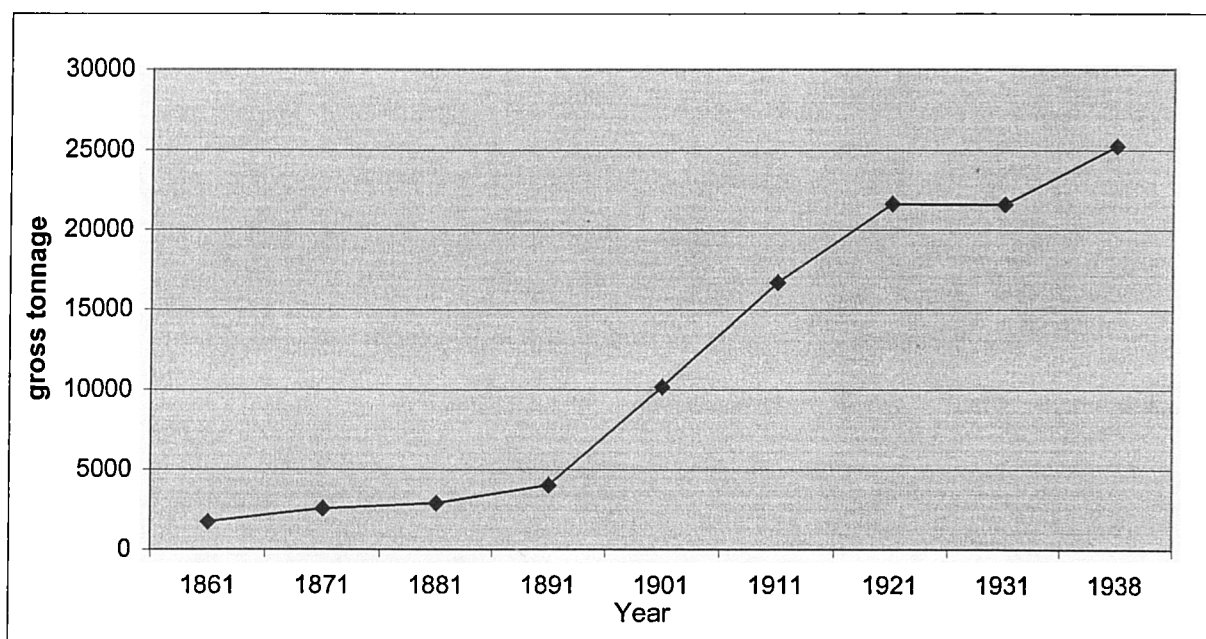
By that time the average transatlantic liner kitchen employed four or five passenger cooks, several assistant cooks, a ship's cook, two or three bakers and a couple of butchers. In the stewards' section, each class now had its own steward who was specifically responsible for that class (first class, second class and steerage). It was still a custom to carry only one stewardess per ship. The biggest Cunarders had started to employ a matron in the steerage section, a custom which was adopted considerably later than on P&O vessels where a matron was already common by the 1840s. An interpreter, as required by law, was always employed for the steerage passengers. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the average size of the catering personnel on big passenger liners had increased to nearly 100. In particular, the number of assistant steward ratings had grown rapidly due to the growing number of passengers, the increased size of the dining rooms and the selection of dishes on offer. It has to be remembered, though, that Cunard did not represent an average passenger liner since liners and secondly crews were smaller on other routes.⁸²

The 1910s were also years of rapid expansion in the size of the catering department. The size of catering personnel on transatlantic liners doubled during the period under consideration and their average size increased to 213 people per transatlantic liner. The biggest liners in 1911 carried as many as 400-500 catering personnel; ten times more than in the 1860s. Figures 3.2 and 3.3 below reveal a complex relationship

⁸² Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 56.

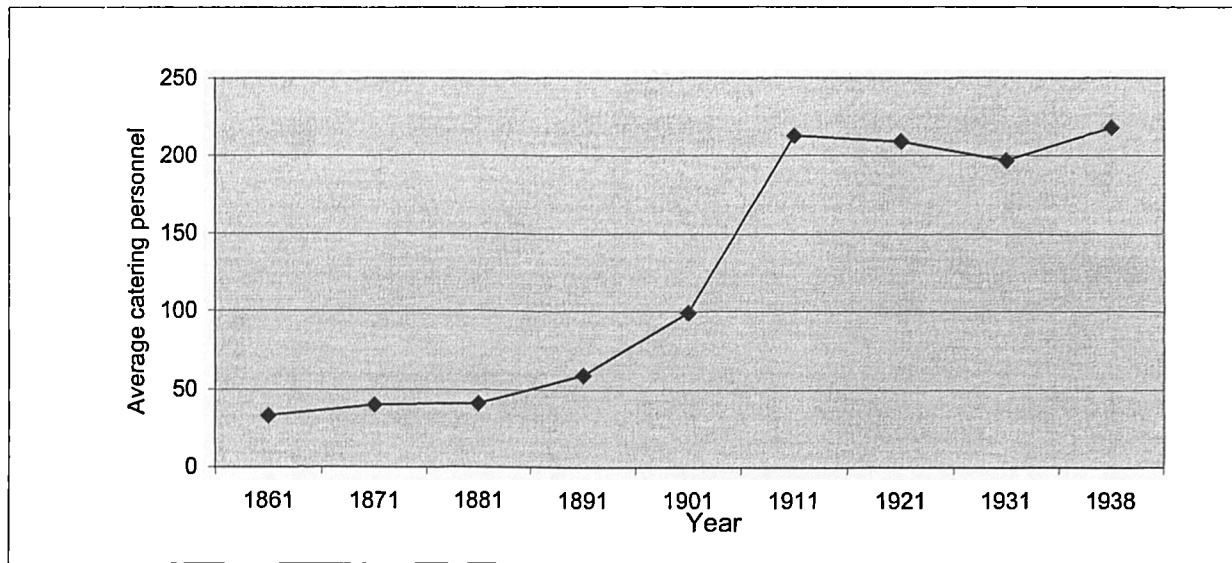
between the increased tonnage and the number of catering personnel during the period. It was initially assumed that the increased size of the ships in terms of their superstructure could explain the rapid growth in the number of the catering personnel. Up until 1901 there was a clear similarity in the overall trend, but between 1901 and 1911 there was a disproportionate growth in the average size of the catering department. By contrast, the period covered by the First World War and the 1920s witnessed a decline in the number of catering personnel, regardless of the continuing increase of gross tonnage. Thereafter, the average size of the catering personnel remained relatively stable or even decreased at times. The decline in the number of catering personnel reflected a decline in passenger capacity: after the 1900s passenger capacity did not rise in proportion to the increase in gross tonnage. For example, *Caronia* and *Carmania*, which were built in 1905, had 19,687 gt and

Figure 3.2. The average gross tonnage of the Cunard fleet, 1861-1938



Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

Figure 3.3. The average size of the catering department on Cunard, 1861-1938



Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

carried 1,750 passengers, whereas *Queen Mary*, which has its maiden voyage in 1934, was 81,235 gt and carried only 1,995 passengers.

The reason for the rapid growth of the gross tonnage did not lie in any increase in demand since passenger numbers and especially emigration was in decline. Passenger services to USA and Canada had suffered badly due the introduction of restrictive immigration legislation in 1921 and 1922 respectively. Third-class traffic carried by Cunard westwards was reduced from 49,305 passengers in 1921 to 34,763 in 1922.⁸³ After 1927, Cunard suffered a continuous fall in the number of first and second-class passengers carried both east and west.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the depression of the 1930s also led to a fall in passenger numbers, despite the fact that there had long been an oversupply of liner tonnage from the end of the First World War onwards. So, why did the size of passenger liners continue to grow?

The liners carried much more than only passengers- they were also flagships of national importance. The maritime nations regarded the operation of transatlantic

⁸³ Hyde, *Cunard and the North Atlantic*, p.170.

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p.178.

services under their own flag as a matter of national pride. The liners became symbols of the nation's (military) strength and technological advance. The size of a ship also became a major asset in advertising: the ship's size was usually exaggerated especially during the inter-war period and ships were portrayed as gigantic and almost fear-provoking figures. Their names were chosen to emphasise their hegemony: *Majestic*, *Titanic*, *Imperator*, *Ile de France* and *Queen Mary*. S.G. Sturmev notes that the inter-war years in shipping were marked by nationalism to the extent that ships that the market could not absorb were built with the aid of the Government loans. *Queen Mary*, for example, was built despite the general over-tonnage on the North-Atlantic services following the imposition of US quota restriction for emigrants. During this period, maritime countries customarily built bigger and more powerful liners with Government assistance. The United Kingdom was among the nations that aided shipping with postal subventions, various subsidies and by indirect financial backing through loans and legislation, which were of direct assistance to shipping.⁸⁵ Apart from the nationalism of the inter-war years, ships also continued to act as symbols of imperialism, as had been the case in the previous century. According to Freda Harcourt, European nations, such as France, Germany and Britain, subsidised certain steamship companies as 'flagships of imperialism'.⁸⁶

The catering personnel, as seen in Figure 3.3, were affected by the decline in passenger capacity. Even if gross tonnage increased, there was a clear limit to the growth in catering crews. Technological advances in the superstructure of ships cannot alone explain the expansion of the catering personnel. Indeed, changes in the size of liners during the interwar period were essentially a reflection of non-economic factors, such as the heightened importance of national prestige. The following section, therefore, will examine a range of other factors which affected the size of the catering personnel and their structure.

⁸⁵ Basil Mogridge, 'Labour Relations and Labour Costs' in S. G. Sturmev (ed.), *British Shipping and World Competition* (London, 1962), pp. 98-101, 107-108. Hyde, *Cunard and the North Atlantic*, p.171, mentions the 1924 Order in Council, which exempted from taxation the profits earned by the shipping lines of Britain and United States.

⁸⁶ Freda Harcourt, 'The P&O Company: Flagships of Imperialism' in Sarah Palmer & Glyndwr Williams (eds.), *Chartered and Uncharted Waters. Proceedings of a Conference on the Study of British Maritime History* (London, 1981), pp. 21-22.

From the early twentieth century onwards, the size of catering personnel was affected by the application of new shore-based productivity-increasing methods. After the First World War the principles of scientific management, including Taylorism,⁸⁷ started to affect British workplaces as employers sought to reduce the impact of international competition and increasing trade union influence.⁸⁸ Most scholars link the increased need for control, management and rationalisation to the general growth in the size of workplaces.⁸⁹ In both the British industrial and service sectors employers sought to reduce the number of workers, to re-organise the work process through increased mechanisation and rationalisation, and to break-down specific tasks into smaller units. Management was increasingly separated from execution, which reduced the power of workers within the labour process and increased the level of management.⁹⁰ Rationalisation was adopted by Cunard, which affected the catering personnel more than other departments. The following sections will demonstrate the effects of these new developments on the organisational structure of the catering personnel, as reflect in the increase in the number of managers and the breaking down of tasks into smaller units on board ship.

⁸⁷ F. W. Taylor, an American, developed the methods of scientific management and published them first in *Principles of Scientific Management* (New York, 1911). Central principles of scientific management included the divorce of conception from execution, increasing control of the foremen, bonus system and the general intensification of labour through 'scientific' study. He insisted, that in order to increase output, employers have to dispossess workers of their special knowledge and themselves gain mastery of specific production expertise. Scientific management was an effort to calculate exactly what levels of performance were physically possible in any given time. A good overview on Taylorism is given in John E. Kelly, *Scientific Management, Job Redesign and Work Performance* (London, 1982).

⁸⁸ Richard Edwards, *Contested Terrain. The Transformation of the Workplace in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1979), p. 18; Nicholas Griffin, 'Scientific management in the Direction of Britain's Military Labour Establishment During World War I' *Military Affairs*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (1978), p. 197; Wayne A. Lewchuck, 'The Role of the British Government in the Spread of Scientific Management and Fordism in the Interwar Years' *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (1984), p. 355; Patrick Joyce, 'Work' in F.M.L. Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.131-194.

⁸⁹ Edwards, *Contested Terrain*, p.18; Henry Bravermann, *Labour and Monopoly Capital* (London, 1974), p.64 and 86. Thomas Cochran also notes that the growth of industrial companies into large corporations with thousands of people working in numerous branches led into more complicated and bureaucratic management. Thomas Cochran, 'The Sloan Report: American Culture and Business Management' *American Quarterly* Vol. 29 No 5 (1977), p. 476.

⁹⁰ An interesting interpretation of these developments in division of labour can be found in Bravermann's *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, p. 73, 75. According to him, this new, the so-called detailed division of labour destroys occupations and renders the worker unable to carry through any complete work process. Braverman developed his ideas from Karl Marx and argued that during the phase of monopoly capitalism, deskilling will occur in all forms of work, which leads to the degradation of working class. This dynamics, according to him, is based on scientific management, also called 'Taylorism', and automatization.

3.3. The stewards' department

It is important to stress that the duties of the chief steward, second steward and the assistant stewards varied considerably between cargo and passenger liners, even if the job titles remained the same. The larger the vessel, the greater the responsibilities of the chief stewards and second stewards were, as was reflected in their seniority. Therefore, work (and work titles) should not be compared between cargo ships and passenger liners. The standard of service was aimed at a much higher level on passenger liners than on ships where only crew were carried. On passenger ships tasks were also much more differentiated than on cargo ships and therefore the hierarchy was more complicated. Furthermore, there were great discrepancies between different companies in terms of pay, organisation and working conditions. For example, when Cunard and White Star merged, the companies faced major difficulties in bringing the companies' catering departments into line in terms of work organisation and pay.⁹¹

The stewards department was led by the chief steward on board, who took orders from the catering superintendent or the superintendent ashore. He organised every department by personally selecting his closest subordinates, who reported straight to him. He was the highest manager of the department, even if he was not directly involved with disciplining the workforce. One of his most important duties was the provisioning of the ship. He had to calculate carefully the stocks needed as the shipping company looked aversely at any waste of food items. He also had to know accurately the quantity of provisions required for each trip because of the lack of space. Before refrigeration, the storage of food on ships was a big problem: animals had to be carried during long voyages and they were important for the milk supply as well as being providers of fresh meat. It meant that the catering department had to slaughter the animals themselves and dress and prepare them for the table. Since

⁹¹ UL, CA. GM 9/6/12. A memorandum from Catering Department to General Managers in 27 October 1934 offers a good example of the differences in organisation between Cunard and White Star: 'Cunard system has been to carry a chief storekeeper and assistant where necessary, working under the Chief Steward and having charge of all items of stores other than bar stock, also the barkeeper's staff to man all bars and have charge of the stocks in the cellars under the control of the Purser. The White Star system has been to rank all of the above as storekeepers and assistants under the control of the Chief Steward, to whom the cash is paid for sales, and then rendered to the Purser.'

animals were sometimes kept for long periods of time, they had to be fed and provision had to be made for their welfare.

The ship owners specified the maximum cost of victualling per head and the more efficiently the chief steward could utilise the provisions, the more popular he was in the company. Stocktaking took place every voyage and hence he had to be aware of any possible delays and the price levels of the next port. There was a clear difference in the chief steward's purchasing power on passenger and cargo vessels. On cargo ships the captain retained responsibility for purchasing provisions until much later which gave him considerable power, since he was able to make profits of victualling and make deals as he saw fit. On passenger liners the captain's purchasing power was gradually transferred to the chief stewards, pursers and superintendents ashore by the early twentieth century.⁹² Since the suppliers advertised their services in the chief stewards' magazine, it seems that they had reasonable independence in choosing supplies.⁹³ This shift in purchasing responsibility has to be seen in a wider context in terms of other factors which affected the role of the captain in modern ships. According to Ulrich Welke, whose work was based on an analysis of shipmasters' authority primarily on German vessels, the technological transition from sail to steam served to increase the captain's power.⁹⁴ By contrast, the transfer of purchasing power to chief stewards ultimately reduced the power of captain (and often the ability to make a direct profit from his position). The increasing importance of the chief steward was also matched by the emergence of another powerful figure within modern shipping, namely the chief engineer. According to Douglas Jerolimov, the marine engineers gained economic power as the overall size of ships increased and

⁹² *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 20754. The evidence of David Henry Churney, Steward. There is evidence, however, that at least in the late nineteenth century captain still signed for the provisions obtained at foreign ports. The British India Steam Navigation Company's service regulations in 1887 stated that 'Purchase of provisions at outports are to be made indent on Agents and the receipt for provisions so obtained is to be signed by the Commander who must satisfy himself that the articles he signs for have actually been received. Attention to this rule is absolutely necessary to prevent fraud on the part of the butlers.' NMM. BIS/31/1. Service Regulations, p.42.

⁹³ Their magazine, which had its editorial office in London and a branch in Liverpool, dedicated its first page to a listing of suppliers. Advertisements of everything from bakers, beers and bicycles to tailors and outfitters were a major part of the magazine. MMM. DX/1242. *The Chief Steward and Floating Hotel* Vol. XIV No. 77 (1913).

⁹⁴ Ulrich Welke, *Der Kapitän: Die Erfindung einer Herrschaftsform* (Münster, 1997).

engines became more powerful and expensive. Between 1850-1914 the chief engineer's salary increased to 90 per cent of a captain's salary.⁹⁵

The chief steward also had to compile a list of crewmembers by the mess in which they ate, a list of passengers and the numbers of their cabins. He planned the menus and controlled the stores in terms of their weight and quality. The difficulty in planning the menus, compared to hotels ashore, was that the climatic conditions could vary greatly during the voyage and menus had to be planned accordingly. Also, the accuracy of stocktaking was of primary importance: the provisions had to last until the next port and sometimes for the whole journey if the specific food item was not available at the next stop. The planning of menus was an extremely complicated business with different menus and bills of fare for each class and for the crew. The first class menus were particularly extensive, varied and frequent. There were also many different nationalities travelling on liners, many of whom followed their own dietary requirements, which were different from the British.

Sometimes, especially at the beginning of the period, the duties of a purser and chief steward were intertwined and their responsibilities in relation to each other varied from one company to another. On P&O ships the purser was responsible for the cleanliness of the cabins and the consumption of provisions. Sometimes he was to approve the stores sent to him by the company's agent. The provisioning system was described in the P&O's Company's Instructions:

The Stewards' daily requisition for stores is to be handled the Purser every evening by the Head Steward, and is to contain his demand for all the stores required from the store for the following day's consumption. On the purser signing it, it becomes a warrant of issue to the Storekeeper, whose duty is to refuse, under all circumstances, unless the most urgent, to give out any article not borne upon it.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Douglas Jerolimov: 'Toward a Technocracy: Marine Engineers and the 'Modern' Ship'. Unpublished paper given at ICOHTEC conference in Prague 22. August 2000, p.4. The high position of a chief engineer in everyday ship's life was visible in that in some ships he was the only officer to eat at the captain's table.

⁹⁶ NMM. P&O/10/10. Instructions to Pursers and Clerks in Charge on Board the Steamships of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (1860), p.35.

Extensive paperwork was required. Separate victualling abstracts had to be kept for passengers, officers and crew alike. Different sums were budgeted for victualling according to the individual status of passengers and crew, which made it necessary to plan separate menus for each group of passengers as well as for the crew. In addition, the Lascars were allowed less money for their victualling than European crews.⁹⁷

The second steward (or, on the large ships, the assistant chief steward) was the chief steward's right hand. His responsibility was to look after the working arrangements of the catering crew and therefore to act as a buffer between the chief steward and the staff.⁹⁸ He acted as a 'whipper' to the rank-and file and ensured that everybody was at work in time. He often took part in the daily inspection round by the captain and chief steward. He also supervised the servicing of all meals.⁹⁹

Next to the chief steward and second steward in hierarchy of the catering personnel were the senior stewards, such as the barkeeper, liner keeper and wine steward. The headwaiter was responsible for the rank-and file waiters and for the seating arrangements requested by passengers.¹⁰⁰ Apart from these stations, each department had its own chief steward, who was responsible for the operations in their own class.

The cleaning duties were not separated from the other duties in the catering department. The saloon stewards, waiters, bedroom stewards and bell boys each started their day by cleaning their particular sections before passengers woke up, even if bell boys tended to perform the most strenuous cleaning tasks. On the other hand, bath stewards, boot stewards and some crewmembers' stewards also waited on tables during dinner times and cleaned the pantries afterwards.

Captain Diggle describes the organisation of the catering department as 'one of subdivision and devolution', where the head of each section was made responsible for the working of his own section.¹⁰¹ Every member of the stewards' department

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p.36.

⁹⁸ Diggle, *The Romance of a Modern Liner*, p.378.

⁹⁹ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p.383, 385.

¹⁰⁰ T.C. Hughes, 'My First Trip Starts as a Cadet Purser' *Sea Breezes*. Vol. 70, No. 602 (1996), p.148.

¹⁰¹ Diggle, *The Romance of a Modern Liner*, p.198.

had their own place and duties within their group. There was a leading rating (e.g. headwaiter, leading stewardess, first pantry steward, head laundress) who was responsible for some parts of the section's organisation, for example for the keys of the passenger cabins and minor disciplinary actions.¹⁰² The senior bedroom stewards, pantry stewards and senior waiters each had responsibility over their particular sections. The particular duties were structured according to principles of hierarchy, seniority and custom. There were four main groups of stewards within the department: the bedroom stewards, the pantry stewards, waiters or saloon stewards and bath or bathroom stewards. When the sizes of ships grew, so did the number of cabins and size of dining rooms. Furthermore, there was an increasing selection of restaurants to choose from. When catering departments grew dramatically, it was regarded as increasingly important for everyone to have their specifically defined tasks and work areas. Every task onboard carried a strictly defined status according to the level of skill required. The most junior ratings in the stewards' department were those, whose job title ended with the designation 'boy'. They were usually children or young boys between 14 and 18 years old. They carried all the scrubbing and their work started early in the morning in order to make everything look spick and span when the passengers woke up. Other positions within the stewards' section which were regarded as most junior and therefore unskilled were the second and third class saloon stewards, officers', engineers', doctor's, purser's stewards, second boots stewards, second and third pantrymen and buglers.¹⁰³ On many passenger liners these positions, especially the officers' and captain's stewards, were often filled by non-Europeans, depending on where the ship operated. P&O recruited elements of their catering personnel from the Christian Goa region in India, whereas Blue Funnel favoured Chinese employees. In the Palm Line some members of the catering department were Nigerian.¹⁰⁴ Contrary to Tony Lane's belief, the catering personnel were sometimes ethnically mixed on passenger liners. For example on P&O's liners,

¹⁰² UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/3/6. *Do's and Don'ts for Stewards*, p.5.

¹⁰³ MMM. DX/1050 e. *How to obtain berths on the large liners*.

¹⁰⁴ Lane, *Grey Dawn Breaking*, p. 18.

the British and Indian catering crew worked side by side on tasks specifically defined for them.¹⁰⁵ The native stewards and cooks sometimes had their own job titles and working structure alongside the Europeans, which further complicated the organisation on these routes.

As already noted, the growth rate of the catering personnel declined after 1911. Cunard, for example, started to devote considerable efforts in order to secure a saving of labour costs. These savings were effected mainly in the catering department, since the diminishing passenger numbers justified cuts in this labour group. Between 1921 and 1932, considerable reductions were made in the stewards department, especially among the assistant ratings. In *Scythia*, for example, the stewards section was cut by 14 per cent and in *Berengaria*, by as much as 41 per cent. By comparison, the reduction in the deck crew was only nine per cent in *Scythia* and two per cent in *Berengaria*.¹⁰⁶ In some cases, the reductions in manning levels were more drastic than can at first sight be seen. As Francis Hyde reminds us of an important factor in the effect of rationalisation over wages: '...it must be remembered that more voyages were being undertaken and more routes were being served with each succeeding year. Unit costs on wages were therefore being reduced.'¹⁰⁷ Detailed evidence on the scale of manning level reduction can be found in the case of *Mauretania* between 1914 and 1932.

Table 3.1 reveals that the reduction in crew numbers was not made in the deck department: on the contrary there was an increase in the number of ratings and in the staff of the Pursers' department. In the engine room, the reduction in ratings was a result of the conversion from coal to oil in 1921. An interesting (and somewhat typical) phenomenon can be seen in this table: the increase in the number of officers at the same as significant cuts in the number of ratings were made. The number of

¹⁰⁵ 'The native servants are to be carried for the officers of the ship... The junior officers are to have an European servant told off to attend to their cabins and mess.' NMM. P&O/10/10. Instructions to Pursers and Clerks in charge on Board the Steamships of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (1860), p.9. Also elsewhere in the company's records different ethnic groups are referred to working together, which always did not go smoothly: according to a chief steward's report from year 1931 a steward of 34 years old was 'logged for striking of a Goanese'. NMM. P&O/77/26. Stewards' Register 1929-1932.

¹⁰⁶ UL, CA. GM21/2. Crews- pre-war and post-war comparisons.

¹⁰⁷ Hyde, *Cunard and North Atlantic*, p. 182.

ratings in the engine room fell by 64 per cent, the number of officers increased by 25 per cent. The same phenomenon can be seen on other ships. In fact, the number of

Table 3.1. Manning scale comparison in *Mauretania* between 1914 and 1932.

<i>Department</i>	1914	1932	% increase
DECK			
Officers	7	7	0
Ratings	56	58	3.5
Pursers' department	15	25	67.0
TOTAL	78	90	15.4
ENGINE			
Officers	32	40	25.0
Ratings	353	125	-65.0
TOTAL	385	165	-57.2
CATERING			
First class & females	195	146	-25.1
Second class/tourist stewards	66	32	-51.5
Third class stewards	55	20	-63.6
Kitchen department	62	64	3.2
TOTAL	378	262	-30.7
OVERALL TOTAL	841	517	-38.5

Source: UL. CA. GM21/2. Crews. Pre-war and post-war comparisons.

officers was never cut, although their salaries were invariably much higher than the ratings'. As overall, after the implementation of labour saving measures, the increased number of officers were left with fewer ratings to supervise. The increased number of officers could also reflect the increasing intervention of the shipping company in terms of supervision and discipline to the ship's affairs. From the 1880s onwards, as Arthur J. McIvor notes, employers aimed to cut production costs by extending the managerial control more directly over production processes.¹⁰⁸ This

¹⁰⁸ Arthur J. McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain, 1880-1950* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 53.

trend was also in line with the practical application of general management principles ashore: the management sector and therefore, hierarchy, tended to increase with the growing size of the workplace.¹⁰⁹ And this increasing management sector, in turn, made careful calculations as to how to reduce the workforce. Cunard is a good example of this: detailed calculations were made in the main office in Liverpool in order to make savings in labour costs by moving people from one working point to another, by improving efficiency and by raising productivity.¹¹⁰

The application of rationalisation measures and intensification of work by Cunard Line occurred at the time when British employers in general developed various strategies designed to manage and control labour.¹¹¹ During the interwar period British firms experimented with Taylorist ideas which led to increased task subdivision, job fragmentation and deskilling in many industries.¹¹²

During the rationalisation process in Cunard, the number of assistant ratings was reduced drastically. In *Mauretania*, for example, during the same period (1914-1932) the number of bell boys was reduced from 20 to five and the number of stewardesses from 17 to 14. In *Scythia*, the saloon waiters were reduced from 35 in 1921 to 27 by 1932.¹¹³ The fact that the reductions were made in the ratings who actually performed the work at the same time as the size of the ships increased meant that those who remained had much more work to do. At the same time, the turnaround time of passenger liners became much shorter, as engines were converted to oil and therefore the resting period for the crew, especially for the catering personnel, (who often worked in port anyway) was reduced considerably. As a consequence of these labour-saving methods the organisational structure of the catering department became heavy, while the reduced number of workers below deck were left with more work to do.

¹⁰⁹ Thomas Cochran, 'The Sloan Report: American Culture and Business Management' *American Quarterly* Vol. 29, No. 5 (1977), p. 476; Braverman, *Labour and Monopoly Capital*, p. 64; Edwards, *Contested Terrain*, pp. 28-34; Littler, *The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies* (1982), p.104 notes how growing size of organisations and the capital concentrations provided the base for the rationalisation movement.

¹¹⁰ UL.CA. GM21/2. Crews- pre-war and post-war comparisons; C3/287. Allocation of catering staff.

¹¹¹ See Hyde's analysis of Cunard's attempts to reduce the fuel and wage during the 1920s and the early 1930s. Hyde, *Cunard and North Atlantic*, pp.181-188.

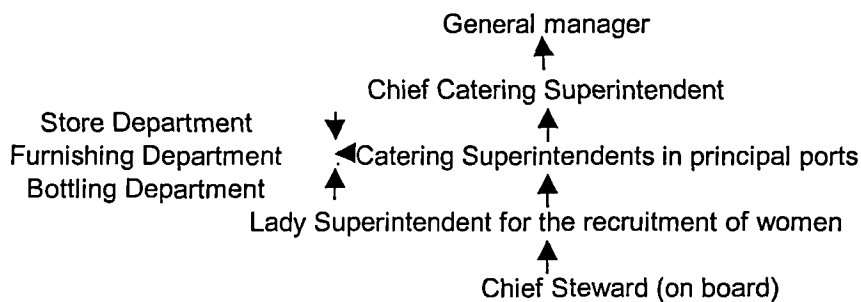
¹¹² McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain*, p. 58, 66.

¹¹³ UL.CA. GM21/2. Crews-pre-war and post-war comparisons.

Personnel faced immense differences in the nature of their work depending on whether they were classified as an officer, senior rating, assistant steward or a boy. Life onboard in all its aspects - where one lived, what food one ate, who one socialised with- was determined according to the status of one's work. In addition, there were other factors which will be dealt with in later sections of the thesis that reinforced the hierarchical organisation of a ship according to the principles of seniority, including pay policies (5.2) and discipline (5.4).

Finally, in this section, it should be noted that only a part of the catering department actually worked onboard. An important element of catering operations (stores, bottling services, the general maintenance of linen etc.) was done ashore. The shore catering personnel had their headquarters at the principal ports. Catering services, which Cunard operated in Liverpool and later in London and Southampton, were a vital part of the department. It was critical, that the shore-based bottling operations, laundries and stores were effectively linked with the organisation on board. Whenever the turnaround time was shortened, it was crucial that the stores and linen came on board punctually, that the food suppliers at each port were reliable, and that the required provisions were delivered in time. Other shore-based services offered to passenger liners included the ship's uniforms, household machinery, cutlery and flowers.

Figure 3.4. The shore-based organisation of the catering department at Cunard in the 1930s



Source: UL.CA.

Catering superintendents supervised the catering departments ashore, which were primarily concentrated in Liverpool and Southampton. Large bottling and catering stores were also located there, storing grocery, china, glassware, crockery, cutlery

and soaps required by Cunard liners.¹¹⁴ Catering departments also supervised the washing of linen. A number of laundries were situated in Liverpool and Southampton.¹¹⁵ The Liverpool laundries operated by Cunard had twelve women working in its premises in 1935.¹¹⁶ However, when the amount of laundry increased by the 1930s, these laundries alone could not manage all the washing and repair of the liners. Therefore, some of the washing was carried by shipboard laundries and by an outside company in New York.¹¹⁷ The economical and effective running of laundries (and other shore based catering operations) were relatively important for the merged Cunard White Star: in 1935, for example, laundry operations alone constituted 3.65 per cent of the company's total expenditure.¹¹⁸

According to the evidence presented in this section, I would suggest that the workload of the catering personnel became heavier over time. Cuts in the labour force, an increasingly hierarchical organisational structure and shorter turnaround times all meant the gradual intensification of labour for stewards.

3.4. The kitchen department

Before passenger shipping developed, the cook was often the one and the only member of the catering personnel, although he would sometimes have an assistant to help him with serving the food, washing the dishes and cleaning the officers' quarters. Traditionally, the cook's job carried a very low status, allegedly due to his incompetence in cooking.¹¹⁹ Another, more likely, factor contributing to the cook's low status in the ship's hierarchy was the association of his work with the domestic

¹¹⁴ UL, CA. AC14/32. Victualling etc.

¹¹⁵ UL, CA. GM9/6/9. Memorandums. 16 May, 1935; 21 November, 1934; 23 August, 1934.

¹¹⁶ UL, CA. GM9/6/9. Memorandum from the Furnishing Department to the General Manager. 14 November, 1934.

¹¹⁷ UL, CA. GM9/6/9. Memorandum from the Catering Department to the General Manager, November 21, 1934; Memorandum from the General Manager 13 May, 1935.

¹¹⁸ As a comparison, coal formed 7.45 per cent of the total spending. UL, CA. GM9/6/9. Memorandum 16 May, 1935.

¹¹⁹ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge, 1987), p.85; Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 205; *Return of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 15143, The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell, the superintendent of the North Shields Cookery School; q. 17996, The evidences of John William Squance, a ship owner and q. 16892-3, the evidence of Joseph Bellamy, a ship owner.

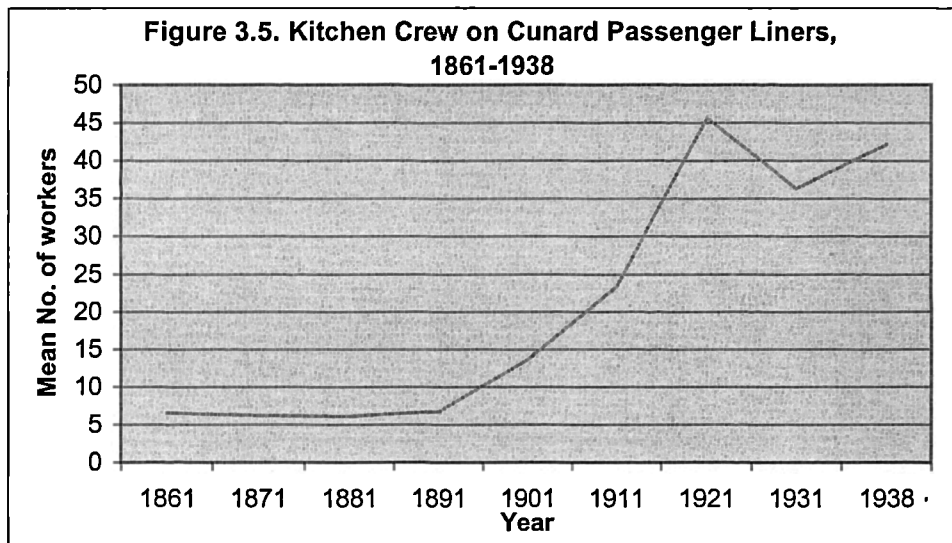
household work performed by women ashore.¹²⁰ On sailing ships the cook was usually the most junior member of the crew or a man beyond his prime age. In order to understand the status of the cook's work at sea it is vital to state the obvious: his work was not regarded as skilled. However, on passenger liners there was a marked increase in the level of proficiency required and cooks gradually became regarded as skilled labourers. As passenger shipping developed, a liner's reputation came to be based on the standards of service, and food was a very important part of the package. The development of passenger shipping from the mid-nineteenth century onwards also required a re-organisation of the galley to develop, an issue which will be examined in this section.

When the number of passengers was small, the cook was assisted by a steward or a stewardess, who served food to the passengers and kept the galley clean. As the numbers of passengers grew and the menus became increasingly complicated on certain routes, the kitchen crew also increased in size. The most important factor in the increase of the kitchen department on emigrant ships, however, was the change in emigration legislation in the mid- nineteenth century. From then on, the majority of passengers were entitled to meals that had to be served in a cooked state. Previously, the cook on emigrant ships was solely engaged with cooking for the first-class passengers and the crew; his main responsibility was to keep a fire alight for steerage passengers. By the beginning of the 1860s the transatlantic liners, on average, needed three cooks, two assistants, two butchers and a baker. In addition, a ship's cook and an assistant were employed to cook for the crew. On Mediterranean routes, where only first class passengers were carried, three cooks were normally the maximum. The exact division of tasks amongst them is not known, but the 'first cook' might have undertaken the more complicated tasks and probably held a leading position of some kind. By examining the average ages of these different ratings, it appears that the principle of seniority had already emerged. The eldest, and the most experienced, acted as a first cook, the next experienced as a second cook etc. For example, the mean age of the first, second third and assistant cooks on Cunard passenger liners in 1861 was 30, 27, 25 and 20 years respectively.¹²¹

¹²⁰ The association of certain shipboard tasks along gender lines will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 7.

¹²¹ Dataset 1861-1938.

When the size of the catering personnel started to increase rapidly in the 1890s, specialisation and hierarchy also developed further. At the beginning of the period, even if seniority had already affected the organisation of work, it was still relatively easy to achieve the required level of skill, as overall there was no rigid division between skilled and unskilled work. With the growth of the kitchen department, however, the work was split into smaller units and skilled and less skilled work was delegated to different individuals in separate parts of the kitchen.



Source: Dataset 1861-1938

The Chef (earlier in the period called the chief cook) led the kitchen department. As was the case with the chief steward, he too became increasingly occupied on big ships with administrative duties. Managerial duties were an important part of the chef's work. Apart from having to generally supervise the cooking he was responsible with the chief steward for the bookkeeping of the kitchen department and the daily menus. He kept a menu book and a daily stores book, in order to control the food items issued to the galley. Again, since the shipping companies were so afraid of waste, the chef was the person to control it in the galley. *The Ship Steward's Handbook* explains the chief cook's duties as follows:

The chief cook must be a caterer who can calculate correctly the quantities of the many different foodstuffs that will be required to

carry the ship from port to port, or to the round voyage; and he must keep a sharp lookout to see that raw materials are not wasted.¹²²

The chief cook's work differed from his counterparts' work ashore with regard to ordering and controlling the stores, since it was not possible to order more food during the voyage apart from possibly at intermediate ports at which the ships stopped. Due to a lack of space, it was simply not possible to have plenty of supply stores either.

In the 1930s the paperwork on the biggest liners became so intensive that a special clerk was needed for administrative duties. An ex-larder cook, Edgar Hilton, worked as a control clerk on *Queen Mary* and recalls: 'It was quite a challenging job, involving all of the administrative work in the six kitchens throughout the ship, from writing the menus under the supervision of the chef, ordering stores and checking the service to passengers at meal times.'¹²³

By the 1910s, specialisation had become more pronounced in kitchen departments. Sauce cooks, vegetable cooks, larder cooks, fish cooks, grill cooks and special cooks for Jewish and Italian passengers had already made their appearance. By 1920 the kitchen department had differentiated into separate classes, sometimes with each class operating its own kitchen. Second saloon cooks and third-class cooks emerged alongside second cooks and third cooks, and these titles meant completely different things in the shipboard hierarchy. By 1921 the earlier custom of classifying the cooks simply by numbers had been replaced by the appointment of specialist cooks. By then, the process of specialisation and differentiation had been taken further, with cooks on larger vessels having specific responsibilities for dealing with entrees, fish, Greek cuisine, roast and soups. Furthermore, since crew size had grown substantially on the biggest liners, each new group had its own cook, unlike before when the ship's cook and his assistant had cooked for the entire crew.¹²⁴

¹²² Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p.139.

¹²³ Edgar J. Hilton, 'One of Cunard's Cooks Recalls the Glory Days.' *The Ocean Liner Gazette* (Fall/Winter 1996/97), p.11.

¹²⁴ Dataset 1861-1938.

This process of organisational development reflected the general tendency to segment work into smaller tasks and to classify them as either skilled or unskilled. In separating the cooks' work into specialised areas, with one cook preparing the vegetables, one the sauce and another the meat, cooks ultimately lost control over the final outcome of their labour, namely the complete dish served to the customer.

The two other main groups of kitchen workers, namely butchers and bakers, were physically segregated in their workshops near the galley. The work of a baker was traditionally important on board ships, because bread constituted one of the few easily available fresh products on long voyages. At the beginning of the period, only one or two bakers were carried on passenger liners. When the kitchen department grew and more bakers were employed per ship, the bakers' shop was increasingly organised on the principles of seniority. If, for example, four bakers were employed, the available work was divided into different elements, the chief baker was responsible for confectionery and fancy pastry, pies, tarts and ices and superintended the baker's shop. The second and third bakers prepared the dough for the fourth, who performed the less skilled labour, such as moulding and baking the loaves and rolls at night time.¹²⁵ The butcher's shop was organised on the same principle: the first butcher was in charge of the shop and the refrigerators (when available) and prepared the meat for the cooks. The second butcher assisted the first one and acted as a carver, while the third butcher performed all-around work in the shop.¹²⁶

There were also several assistant ratings, including scullery boys, porters and assistant cooks, who were regarded as unskilled labourers. It was their duty to transfer the prepared food to the pantries and wash the dishes. The scullion was the most junior member of the kitchen department. Bond writes of a scullion's work: 'It is unskilled and humble work, but it is essential toward the comfort and well-being of all on board. The scullion is a cog in the wheel that would be sadly missed if it were removed.'¹²⁷ His duties consisted of washing up the dirty pots and pans and assisting cooks in peeling potatoes, washing and preparing vegetables, carrying water from the pumps, making morning coffee and preparing the lighting in the morning.

¹²⁵ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p. 68-72; *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p.7.

¹²⁶ MMM. DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on Large Liners*, p.7.

¹²⁷ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, pp. 23-25.

The food supplied to the first-class passengers became overwhelmingly plentiful towards the end of the nineteenth century, and compared favourably with the menus offered at luxury hotels. Every trend in cooking was followed and even the printed menus became an art form. The shipping companies aimed to imitate hotels in the manner in which the work was organised in the galleys. Already by 1904 the guide to employment on large liners noted, that 'cooks on the large liners are divided into classes similar to hotels' and that 'the duties are the same for each grade, as in hotel kitchens'.¹²⁸ When improvements in the catering arrangements of *Queen Mary* were planned in 1938, a meeting of naval architects' was held at the Savoy Hotel London, where improvements in the washing arrangements for plates, china and silver were discussed. The positioning of the washing machines was discussed in the context of the limited space available on the ship.¹²⁹ Significantly, these discussions aimed at improving *Queen Mary's* kitchens had been initiated either from experience in *Queen Mary* or as a result of discussions with the Savoy Hotel, London, and Waldorf-Astoria, New York.¹³⁰ The chefs on the transatlantic liners were frequently recruited from the continent and from large hotels. They often came from France or Switzerland, and did not necessarily have any seafaring experience, and therefore inevitably brought some land-based working practices with them. This caused friction amongst the ratings. For example, *The Marine Caterer*, a union magazine for catering personnel's reported in 1911 that: 'It is a regrettable fact that the alien has, in some companies, attained to a position for which he has had no seafaring qualifications.'¹³¹

As demonstrated earlier, the tendency for the size of the kitchen department to increase came to an end after 1911 and on some liners the numbers of cooks and other kitchen ratings fell. The decline in the number of kitchen personnel was largely caused by Cunard's labour-saving policy during the depression years. The serious labour shortage of the First World War might also have affected the attempts to

¹²⁸ MMM. DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p. 6.

¹²⁹ UL.CA.D42/C3/169. Memo of the meeting held at Savoy Hotel, London on 18th March 1937.

Naval Architect's Department. 'Galleys and Pantries- Kitchens'

¹³⁰ UL.CA. D42/C3/169. Memorandum from the Secretary, Cunard White Star Limited, 14th

September, 1938. 'Galleys and Pantries- Kitchens'.

¹³¹ *Marine Caterer* No. 1, Vol. I (1911), p.17.

reduce the maritime labour force.¹³² Hyde largely ignored how wage savings were made during the depression period, although fuel and wages are cited as the most important elements that affected the operational costs of Cunard ships: the labour saving policies followed by Cunard during 1920s are dealt with in only one sentence.¹³³ Alterations were made by Cunard's management in ships' working arrangements in an attempt to reduce costs by cutting the number of catering personnel. Since cooking was very labour intensive, these labour-saving strategies affected the kitchen department most seriously. The chronic lack of space, particularly in the kitchen department, was a further motivation for shipping companies to attempt to reduce labour, despite the increasing workload, as food quality was viewed as a major asset in the competition between passenger liners.

The fall in the number of cooks after 1911 was partly facilitated by technological change and the adoption of the latest labour-saving equipment in shipboard kitchens. Refrigeration was first introduced in Cunard liners in 1893 with the launching of *Campania* and *Lucania*.¹³⁴ As it became increasingly common, the butcher's work was done ashore and the meat was simply brought onboard ready to be refrigerated: there was no longer any need to keep and look after animals onboard. However, even by the early 1920s, refrigeration had not been introduced on all ships.¹³⁵ In the 1910s potatoes and other vegetables were still peeled by hand, although peeling machines had been introduced on the biggest liners and became common in the 1920s. The introduction of a drain-pipe made the carrying of water to and from the galleys unnecessary by around 1920. Oil fuels were introduced in the beginning at the 1920s, which put an end to the necessity of someone (usually the scullion) cleaning and making the fires every morning. Electric mincers and sausage-making machines were brought onboard by the 1910s, as well as a dough-mixing machine and baker's ovens (such as drum ovens, brick ovens and water-tube ovens, which were amongst the most modern in the 1920s). A magazine intended for senior members of the catering

¹³² Mogridge, 'Labour Relations and Labour Costs', pp. 299-300.

¹³³ Hyde, *Cunard and the North Atlantic*, p. 182.

¹³⁴ UL, CA. PR 3/21/1-2. General Information.

¹³⁵ Bond, *The Ship's Baker*, p.25.

personnel reported in 1913 how the Queen herself had been shown the kitchen technology on Cunard's *Mauretania*.

The apparatus most noticed were the automatic egg-boilers and the electric toasters, grills, roasters and mincing machines. Her majesty watched the dough-mixing machine at work, and some girdle cakes made in half a minute were served on the Royal tea-table in the saloon.¹³⁶

These expensive investments were not acquired for the benefit of the workers, but to run the departments with the minimum crew possible. After 1911 there was a decrease in the number of cooks, which clearly reflected the mechanisation of liner kitchens and its effect on the number of kitchen personnel. Electricity, refrigeration, mechanisation and the shortening of voyages led to a decrease of labour in the kitchen department, especially in the most labour-intensive jobs. Therefore the labour-saving strategies of shipping companies affected mainly the assistant ratings.

Table 3.2. Manning Scale comparisons on *Scythia* and *Berengaria*, 1921-1932.

	<i>Scythia</i>		<i>Berengaria</i>	
	1921	1932	1921	1932
DECK				
Officers	6	6	7	7
Ratings	45	40	74	65
Pursers & others	16	15	20	27
TOTAL	67	61	101	99
ENGINE				
Engine Officers	15	15	46	53
Engine Ratings	30	36	436	119
TOTAL	45	51	482	172
CATERING				
1st class & females	111	132	357	216
2nd class stewards	45		88	
Tourist class stewards		19		54
3rd class stewards	48	32	71	28
Kitchen Department	48	35	104	66
TOTAL	252	218	620	364

Source :UL, CA. GM 21/2.Crews- pre war and post-war comparisons.

¹³⁶ MMM. DX/1242. *The Chief Steward and Floating Hotel*, Vol. XIV, No. 77 (1913), p. 52.

The manning scale comparisons undertaken in Cunard's head office reveal, for example, that on *Scythia* the number of assistant cooks was reduced from eleven in 1921 to five in 1932 and only one assistant butcher was employed in 1932 instead of three in 1921.¹³⁷ A similar development can be seen on *Berengaria* (Table 3.2). Table 3.2 clearly, shows, amongst other things, that reductions in labour was substantial in the kitchen department. Apart the fall in engine ratings on *Berengaria*, which were due to her engines being converted to oil fuel (after the manning levels had been calculated in 1921), the manning reductions in the kitchen department was by far the highest, at 41 per cent.

In summary, a massive expansion in kitchen department occurred in the 1890s due to developments in passenger shipping. The provision and quality of the cooking were increasingly viewed as major assets for passenger liner companies. At the same time, the growth in passenger capacity and in the size of ships' crews meant that an army of cooks was required to fulfil their needs. However, during the interwar period, the need to effect savings, the application of more 'effective' ideas of work organisation, as well as the implementation of labour-saving appliances, helped to reduce the labour required on ships. As a result, shipping companies, such as Cunard, were able to make substantial reductions in manning levels which were most apparent in the kitchen department.

3.5. The pursers' department

Until the end of the nineteenth century, the Pursers' department, or the passenger department, was regarded as a part of the catering department and is therefore included in this study for the whole of the period. By the 1890s, it had been separated from the catering department and was classed as part of the deck department. Initially, it consisted only of a purser and a surgeon.

¹³⁷ The following titles ceased to exist after 1921: Assistant vegetable cook, extra 2nd cook, 3rd cook, extra 3rd cook, 3rd class cook, Assistant 3rd class cook, Assistant extra 3rd class cook, Assistant ship's cook, extra 3rd baker and extra 3rd butcher. UL, CA. GM 21/2. Crews- pre-war and post-war comparisons, *Scythia*.

The purser's presence dates back to sailing ship times. In the Navy he issued victuals, clothes, provided tobacco for the men and acted as a banker, although he usually acted as a private merchant. He worked by taking credit at the beginning of the journey, hoping to get his investment back at the end of the voyage. He was only allowed a limited wastage and therefore it was his business to get good stewards. He often complemented his wages by his own business activities- money-lending, broking and agency work- which were fully accepted as part of the purser's work.¹³⁸

His role was very much the same on merchant steam liners. Cunard's early instructions to its captains stated that the purser's role was to trade the articles needed, and sometimes the profit went to him and sometimes to the company, depending on the individual company's arrangements.¹³⁹ In the 1860s and 1870s a Cunard purser received a certain sum each year for wages, but later became a monthly paid employee of the company. On P&O ships the purser was responsible for the control of the ship's accounts, sleeping quarters and the disciplining of stewards and stewardesses. Even if the company's agent supplied the stores, the purser was to approve them and was responsible for their quantity and quality.¹⁴⁰

Certain characteristics of his duties remained much the same throughout the period under consideration even if additional duties emerged with the growth of passenger shipping. He remained a ship's main accountant, who in addition became responsible for the passengers' welfare on steam liners. The control of passenger accommodation remained one of his main responsibilities. Supervisory duties were also involved as he managed a large group of workers as part of the deck department. This involved personnel responsible for the health and entertainment of the passengers, but who had actually little to do with catering itself. Surgeons, nurses (after the First World War) and dispensers (from the 1930s onwards) ran the ships' hospitals and took care of the sick passengers and crew during the voyages. Printers (who dealt with menu cards and ship's newspapers), typists, telegraphists, baggage masters and writers were also part of this section of the deck department. Bands were introduced in 1905 on Cunard ships, and the company's magazine revealed that

¹³⁸ N.A.M. Roger, *The Wooden World. An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986), pp. 87-96.

¹³⁹ UL, CA. D/38/2/4. Captain's Memorandum. Liverpool 25.3. 1848.

¹⁴⁰ NMM. P&O/10/10. Instructions for Pursers (1860).

Caronia was the first ship to be supplied with an orchestra. It consisted of two violins, a cello, bass, piano, flute and cornet. Bands had two main purposes: they played at Sunday divine services and at concerts organised onboard mainly for seamen's charities.¹⁴¹

The surgeon was an important member of the crew on emigrant ships, since various diseases were a serious menace to passengers who had been packed in a small space with poor air circulation and little chance to practice proper personal hygiene. Furthermore, the carrying of a surgeon was a legal requirement on ships bound to North America if one hundred or more passengers were carried. A 'medical practitioner' had to be carried on trips exceeding 80 days in sail or 45 days in steam.¹⁴² Interpreters were also employed by that date on some ships since the Passengers Act of 1849 required an interpreter to be employed if more than 100 persons were carried.¹⁴³ Regardless of the law, interpreters were not formally employed on Cunard transatlantic liners before the 1880s. Before then, it is probable that they were recruited among the steerage passengers, who wanted to work for their passage, and therefore do not appear in the crew agreements. By 1891 an interpreter, barber, purser and surgeon were carried on transatlantic liners, but on Mediterranean and coastal routes there were usually no barbers or surgeons which suggests that their employment was strongly connected with emigrant shipping.

In the Pursers' department the book-keeping duties were multifarious: the crew's wage sheets and discharge books had to be kept up to date as well as various information on the crew required by authorities where ships visited. The staff purser, if employed, organised most matters relating to the crew, and the senior assistant purser acted as a chief clerk. The senior assistant purser dealt with second-class passengers, while the chief purser took care of the first-class ones. The relative rank of the purser was directly related to the class of passenger he dealt with. For example, the junior officers dealt with crew matters and third-class passengers. On the big modern liners, the amount of paperwork was enormous. The *Cunard Magazine* describes the purser's role on board in the 1920s sarcastically:

¹⁴¹ UL, CA. *Cunard Magazine* Vol. 1X, No 2-3 (1922), p. 55.

¹⁴² The Passengers Act 1852. Paragraph XXXVIII.

¹⁴³ *An Act for Regulating the Carriage of Passengers in Merchant Vessels, 1849.* 12 & 13 Victoria.

He lives surrounded by log books, discharge books, articles, insurance cards, passports, tickets, time tables, passenger returns, cargo and passenger manifests, alien lists, library and bar returns, bulletins, marconi grams, cable returns, landing cards, baggage declarations, passengers' valuables, surplus stores, wages sheets, gold, silver, copper, notes, greenbacks, nickels, dimes and dollars.¹⁴⁴

By 1901 Pursers' department already formed 10 per cent of the deck department. By that time, there was evidence of an increasingly hierarchical structure and various senior, junior and assistant ratings were employed. The relative size of the Pursers' department increased noticeably on big passenger liners and by 1911 it already comprised around 25 per cent of the deck department. The growth in this section was particularly rapid on steam liners. In 1891 1.3 per cent of all seafarers were members of the Pursers' department; by 1911 the comparative figure was 2.3 per cent.¹⁴⁵

The purser's position was therefore somewhat peculiar on passenger liners. During the period he was regarded as a member of the deck department and yet he handled the ship's accounts, disciplined parts of the catering department and was responsible for the passenger accommodation onboard. His and the chief stewards' duties were sometimes interrelated, depending on the shipping company. On big transatlantic liners the purser's role was to act as 'Mr Sociable' to the passengers, while keeping an eye on such routine work as the clerking. His role is a perfect example of the persistency of seafaring traditions with no equivalent ashore.

3.6. The allocation of stewards into different classes

The division of passenger space into classes was characteristic of public transport during the period. From the beginning, these sections were physically separated from each other and sometimes trespassing via another class was prohibited- especially via a higher class! Before steam liners entered the emigrant trade, they accommodated only first-class passengers, which meant private cabins and prepared meals served in a saloon. The emigrants were transported in the steerage, which by the 1910s, when dormitory-style accommodation was gradually separated into private cabins, was to

¹⁴⁴ UL, CA. 'The Pursers' *Cunard Magazine* Vol. V, No.2 (1920), p.11.

be designated third class. Second class then became an intermediate category for passengers who did not want to travel in the steerage, but could not afford the same services as first-class passengers. With the drying up of the emigrant trade, more space per passenger was provided in the third class as they gradually moved from the dormitory type of accommodation into cabins. They were also offered space on deck, smoke rooms, dining rooms and children's nurseries. The old steerage-type third-class accommodation was improved and refurbished according to modern standards. By 1930, a 'tourist third cabin' was introduced by almost every Atlantic company.¹⁴⁶ Each class had its own dining room, hospital, deck space, toilet facilities, smoke rooms and later nurseries, with baths and bars allocated to them on different decks and often in different parts of the ship. The lower decks were cheaper than the upper ones and the aft (and later, midship) more comfortable than the forepart of the ship. Depending on the class in which one travelled, there were big differences in passenger fares and, therefore, in services. The principle of dividing passenger space into classes continued throughout the period, even if it had started to break down in the 1930s. By then, on some ships, the public places were common to everyone and only the standard of cabin varied according to the class. Even today, however, different classes of cabins are allocated to distinct parts of the ship. However, the provision of an entirely different set of services for three and even four groups of passengers on some ships was obviously an expensive arrangement.

The difference in the quality of services provided could be measured by the quantity, variety and frequency of dishes, the amount of space allocated per person and the level of personal attention dedicated to each passenger. The bill of fare, which stated the provisions provided during the voyage, was different for each passenger class.¹⁴⁷ Even salt and pepper were rationed according to the class one travelled in: according to Cunard's instructions for stewards it was stated that: 'salt, pepper and mustard must be on the table for every two passengers in the first and cabin class and every three in the tourist and third classes'.¹⁴⁸ The size of the dinner table was also bigger the lower the class one travelled in. Not only the variety of dishes, but the way they

¹⁴⁵ Burton, 'Counting Seafarers', p.315.

¹⁴⁶ Corson, *The Atlantic Ferry*, p.61.

¹⁴⁷ For example, on Cunard's Express Steamers in 1925, the daily rate of victualling per head for first-class passengers was four times higher than that of travellers in the third class. UL, CA. AC/14/32. Memorandum to the Managers, 1st of September, 1925.

were served depended on the allocation of class. In the first class, waiter served the food to the table, while a cook or a steward delivered it through a hole in the wall to the third class.

In the first class there were no limits to a customer's demands and normally every single desire of a first class passenger was granted. The company's instructions advised stewards that: 'on no account should passengers' requests be refused before submitting same to the Head Waiter, who will in turn refer the point of issue to the restaurant manager or other official.'¹⁴⁹ In the third class, on the contrary, requests were often refused since the passenger had not paid large sums for his/her passage and besides, was a member of the 'lower classes'. Whilst every wish was granted to first-class passengers, a steerage passenger was subjected to a multitude of prohibitions and instructions. For example, steerage passengers had to be in bed by 10 p.m. according to the company's instructions of 1885.¹⁵⁰ The general opinion was that steerage passengers should be thankful for every facility that was provided for them. However, there was a gradual improvement in attitudes to third-class passengers, as an article by James Mortimer, who travelled from London to Chicago on *Majestic*, reveals:

Really exceptional accommodation [was] provided for all the passengers, including even those in the steerage where a large number of the poorer class of travellers are, in every way, better treated than is usually the lot of the poor European emigrant.¹⁵¹

The reason for the gradual improvement of third-class passenger accommodation was the loss of emigrant traffic on North Atlantic routes. Therefore, they started to develop a new,

tourist type of travel, where passengers, though paying a normal third class fare can be supplied with some of the amenities usually associated

¹⁴⁸ UL, CA. PR/14/20. Instructions to Stewards, p. 15.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.4.

¹⁵⁰ UL, CA. PR/14/11. *Rules to be Observed in the Company's service* (1885), p. 23.

¹⁵¹ UL, CA. PR 3/6/11a. An article of James Mortimer: 'From London to Chicago'. The date of publication is not known, but *Majestic* was built in 1934.

with travel of a more expensive character. Such accommodation has appealed to a large section of the public in America.¹⁵²

The company's instructions given by Cunard to its staff had to remind the 'steerage stewards to treat passengers with consideration, civility and kindness'.¹⁵³

Evidence of the segregation of stewards into different classes can already be seen in the 1860s, with separate stewards working in a saloon and in the steerage. Separate stewards for each class were needed simply because the sections were completely isolated from each other. It followed that there was a big difference in duties (and later, earnings) depending on the class to which stewarding staff were allocated. Again, there was an increasing tendency towards the development of hierarchical structure. The status of a steward was reflected by his passengers. In the first class, passengers treated stewards almost as their personal servants. A steward's workload therefore varied immensely depending on how demanding his passengers were on each particular trip. On the other hand, working in the steerage was much more straightforward since not much personal service was expected.

One way to measure the standards of service is the steward -passenger ratio, which reflects the standard of services provided for different passenger groups and the nature of a steward's work in different classes. In the 1860s, the estimated ratio for the first class was around one steward to ten passengers. The passenger capacity in the steerage was a maximum of 900 in the 1860s on Cunard's transatlantic liners and two steerage stewards at the most were carried, making the ratio as striking as 1:450. These calculations, however, must be treated with caution. The estimates are based on passenger capacity, not on the actual number of passengers carried on a particular

¹⁵² Sir Thomas Royden, the chairman of the Cunard Steams Ship Co. 1922-1930, quoted in Hyde, *Cunard and the North Atlantic*, p.179.

¹⁵³ UL, CA. PR 14/20. Instructions to Stewards, p. 23.

voyage.¹⁵⁴ A more accurate ratio can be calculated by comparing the voyage accounts with the crew agreement figures of stewards employed.

Table 3.3. The allocation of stewards into different classes on selected trips made by Cunard 1891-1938

Ship	Date	1st class/Cabin			2nd cabin/ Tourist			Steerage/ 3rd class		
		Pass.	Stewards	RATIO	Pass.	Stewards	RATIO	Pass.	Stewards	RATIO
<i>Catalonia</i>	29.1.1891	6	16	03:01	11	1	01:11	42	2	01:21
<i>Lusitania</i>	7.1.1911	272	171	01:02	253	63	01:04	349	34	01:10
<i>Mauretania</i>	21.1.1911	334	179	01:02	191	32	01:06	457	33	01:14
<i>Carpathia</i>	2.3.1911	262	47	01:06	213	31	01:07	1,327	65	01:20
<i>Aquitania</i>	2.4.1921	473	284	01:02	633	121	01:05	1,029	94	01:11
<i>Saxonia*</i>	4.1.1921				430	89	01:05	1,160	55	01:21
<i>Carinthia</i>	23.5.1931	21	140	07:01	51	30	01:02	21	20	01:01
<i>Samaria</i>	31.1.1938	18	84	05:01	56	19	01:03	93	19	01:05

NOTE: Only these voyage accounts preserved by Cunard archives match with the author's dataset.

* 1st class and 2nd class calculated together

Source: UL, CA. AC12/1-10. Abstracts of accounts of voyages;

MUN. Crew Agreements of Catalonia, 29.1.189 ; PRO BT100/193-200. Lusitania, 7.11. 1911;

PRO. BT100/226-231. Mauretania 21.1.1911; PRO BT100/155. Carpathia 1.3. 1921; MUN.

Aquitania 2.4. 1921 19; MUN. Saxonia 4.1. 1921; MUN. Carinthia 23.5. 1931; MUN. Samaria 29.1.1938.

Table 3.3 clearly indicates that the level of service improved considerably towards the end of the period and by the 1930s the steward-passenger ratio could be considered as generous in all classes. However, there was still a clear imbalance between categories and remarkable differences between voyages. It appears that on quiet trips the quality of service was better for an individual passenger. It has to be noted here, however, that the ratios do not necessarily represent the situation at other times of the year, since the ships could have been extremely quiet in the wintertime. Therefore, the above table also reveals significant variation, which suggests, that the number of stewards did not always match with the passenger numbers. However, the calculations made at Cunard's office show how carefully the number of crew needed for each trip was assessed. In 1930 for *Berengaria's* trip on the 5th of September, the ratio of waiters to passengers was calculated by the management as follows:

¹⁵⁴ The number of stewards is derived from the Dataset 1861-1938. The information on passenger capacity (=maximum number of passengers) is derived from Duncan Haws, *Merchant Fleets. Cunard* (Hereford, 1987) Bonsor, N.R.P., *North Atlantic Seaway*, 5 Volumes (Channel Islands, 1975-1980) and from Cunard Archives in the University of Liverpool.

Table 3.4. The allocation of waiters to different classes on *Berengaria* in 1930.

<i>Class</i>	<i>Passengers</i>	<i>Waiters</i>	<i>Seats in dining room</i>	<i>Ratio of waiters/passengers</i>	<i>Ratio of waiters/seats</i>
1st class	750	153	816	1 to 5	1 to 5
2nd cabin	610	50	350	1 to 12	1 to 7
Tourist	370	23	286	1 to 16	1 to 12
3rd class	525	18	178	1 to 29	1 to 10

Source: UL.CA. C3/28. Allocation of Catering Staff.

The number of bedroom stewards was also considered carefully. In the first class the ratio was 1:19, in the second cabin it was 1:25; in the tourist 1:30 and in third class 1:35. Stewardesses were allocated on the basis of a ratio of 1:31 females in the saloon class, 1:75 in the second cabin, 1:85 in tourist class and none in the third class. Third-class stewardesses were only employed if a very large number of female passengers were carried.¹⁵⁵

In fact, the principle of separating passengers into different classes on liners and in the transport services eventually reflected the rigid class division of British society. As late as 1930 the following memorandum was delivered to Cunard's pursers:

Our attention has been drawn to the criticisms made by passengers regarding the mixing of classes on board certain of our ships, with particular reference to cabin public rooms and deckspace being used by tourist third cabin passengers. Suitable notices should be displayed on board indicating the class of passengers allowed in the various parts of the ship...In addition to this, all reasonable efforts must be made to prevent passengers who are travelling in the lower classes from making use of the higher class public rooms and deck space.¹⁵⁶

For first-class passengers there was a clear need to retain class divisions on liners as a direct reflection of their social status. The upper-class, as John Benson notes, ensured that 'they maintained their physical and social distance from the remainder of

¹⁵⁵ UL. CA. C3/287. Allocation of Catering Staff. Memorandum from Catering Department to the Chairman, Shipbuilding Committee.

¹⁵⁶ UL. CA. GM 2/1-2. Instructions to Pursers. Segregation of classes. Memorandum to Pursers, 4.4. 1930.

the population', also when they travelled.¹⁵⁷ Even if traditional divisions within British society were gradually altering during the interwar period, shipping companies were still required to maintain a rigorous separation of facilities on their liners, primarily because of the continued importance of first-class passengers.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, it might have been necessary to ensure a generous number of stewards for first-class passengers, given their traditional dependency on servants and their inability to manage without them. The number of servants remained an indicator of social status and represented a dividing line between the working classes and those higher on the social scale. The practise of keeping servants reached its peak in the 1870s, but it had become more expensive by the beginning of the twentieth century. Still, some households found it difficult and tiresome to survive without numerous live-in servants.¹⁵⁹ First-class passengers might not have been used to - or even capable of- emptying the waterpots or making their own fire and lighting; for this reason some travelled with their own servants.¹⁶⁰ In an early emigrant guide, however, passengers were advised not to take their servants with them, since

they are no use on board the ship; they can cost a great deal; you will have to wait for them and they not on you; they will be more seasick than your wife and children will be; they will be a plague to you throughout the whole voyage; and long before you see the land, they will kick up their heels, and see you at defiance.¹⁶¹

Furthermore, since servants were often accommodated in a different class to that of their employers, they would not be as handy as the stewards allocated to them by the shipping company. On the other hand, travelling with servants was still so common

¹⁵⁷ John Benson, *The Rise of Consumer Society in Britain, 1880-1980* (London, New York, 1994), p. 98.

¹⁵⁸ Neville Kirk, *Change, Continuity and Class. Labour in British Society, 1850-1920* (Manchester, 1998), pp.148-150; Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend. A Social History of Great Britain, 1918-1939* (London, 1985), pp. 64-66; Changes of class divisions in railways is discussed by Paul Thompson, *The Edwardians. The Remaking of British Society* (London, 1975), p. 309.

¹⁵⁹ Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin, 1975), pp. 17-20.

¹⁶⁰ There is considerable evidence of servants travelling with their employers. Terry Coleman, *The Liners: A History of the North Atlantic Crossing* (Harmondsworth, 1977), p. 189, notes that Cunard traditionally offered special rates for servants, who usually travelled in a different class than their employers. See, for example, MMM. DX/1093. The diary of Janet Smith, a passenger (lady's maid) aboard *Umbria* from Liverpool to New York, and a return voyage on *Campania 4*. September- 17 October 1896.

¹⁶¹ Cobbett, *The Emigrant's Guide*, p. 100.

in the 1920s and 1930s that a special servants' dining room was allocated to them on the biggest liners such as *Aquitania* and *Berengaria* and a steward employed to attend on them.¹⁶² The capacity of this hall was 65. In the 1930s when *Queen Elizabeth* was being built, it was debated whether an additional steward was needed since 'in many instances personal servants are as difficult to please as their patrons'.¹⁶³

Especially at the beginning of the period, the primitive conditions of the steerage passengers and the separation of sexes during the voyages were justified by similar practices in the workhouses.¹⁶⁴ After 1921 the accommodation in the third class improved considerably due to the restrictions placed on emigration to the USA and Canada. Therefore new groups of passengers, mostly Americans, had to be attracted by the shipping companies in a climate of fierce competition. The first class passengers wanted the emigrants out of sight during the voyages and did not wish to socialise with them under any circumstances. The ship's officers and the captain normally only socialised with the first class passengers, which shows which social class they regarded themselves as belonging to. By contrast, the rest of the crew was regarded as equal with the third-class passengers. As well as the vigorous segregation of different classes, crew members were instructed not to have any personal contact with the (first-class) passengers. Robert Louis Stevenson, who normally travelled by first class, went from Glasgow to New York in 1879 as a steerage passenger. He remarked on the sudden change in attitude of the first-class passengers with whom he had travelled previously: 'they gave me a hard, dead look, with the flesh about the eye kept unrelaxed.' He also complained about the lack of attention he received from the first-class women passengers during the voyage:

In my normal circumstances, it appeared, every young lady must have paid me some passing tribute of a glance; and though I had often been unconscious of it when given, I was well aware of its absence when it was withheld. My height seemed to decrease with every woman who

¹⁶² Dataset 1861-1938.

¹⁶³ UL, CA. C3/287. Crew accommodation on *Queen Elizabeth* 3039. Extract from minutes of meeting of shipbuilders committee held 29.7.1930.

¹⁶⁴ *Reports with Regarding to Accommodation and Treatment of Emigrants on Atlantic Steamships*. BPP 1881.LXXXII. Evidence of Mr. Ramsden, Guion Line. 'Emigrant Accommodation on Board Atlantic Steamers. Inquiry held before Mr. Thomas Gray, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trade', q. 54.

passed me, for she passed me like a dog. This is one of my grounds for supposing that what are called the upper classes may sometimes produce a disagreeable impression in what are called the lower.¹⁶⁵

If the third-class travellers' manners and costumes looked vulgar to the upper class passengers, the etiquette required in the first class might have been considered as pompous and boring by the third-class passengers. A big difference clearly existed in the manners and life-styles of the different social classes in British society which also affected their pattern of travelling.¹⁶⁶

It can be also concluded that a high degree of segregation was also characteristic for the work organisation of the catering department during the period. The traditional maritime hierarchies combined with new ideas on work organisation derived from the land-based industries made the structure of the catering personnel a complicated matter. On the one hand, there was an increasing segregation of duties between skilled and unskilled staff. On the other hand, there was also a trend towards vertical segregation of tasks, which led to certain loss of control over the labour process and its outcome. What is important to note, however, is that the transport industries in general, and shipping companies in particular, maintained a clear segregation of passengers by social class. This, in turn, had important consequences for the organisation of work on board ship, and was a critical factor in the physical and institutional segregation of tasks along hierarchical lines within the catering department. At the same time, there was an increasing separation of managerial and operational tasks, together with the significant reduction in the size of the labour force as a result of rationalization and cost-saving in the interwar period. The end result was a substantial increase in the workload of cooks and stewards. By contrast, the relative increase in the number of managerial staff onboard ship, whose rank reflected naval custom, reinforced the separation between officers and ratings. Their working conditions, including the hours worked by the catering personnel, will be analysed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁶⁵ Ludovic Kennedy (ed.), *A Book of Sea Journeys* (Suffolk, 1981), pp. 75-76.

¹⁶⁶ See, for example, Jose Harris, *Private Lives, Public Spirit. A Social History of Britain, 1870-1914* (Oxford, 1993), p. 8; R. Hogart, " 'Them' and 'Us' ", Chapter 3 of *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth, 1958), pp.53-4 and 60-1 in Kirk, *Change, Continuity and Class*, pp. 303-305.

4. From the Captain's Tiger to the Chief Steward.

Training, Recruitment and Career Patterns of the Catering Personnel

4.1. Introduction

The British maritime labour market reacted slowly to changes in the composition of the labour force. In particular, the training of catering personnel lagged behind modern shipping requirements. Initially, general concern over high desertion rates and the deterioration in the quality of British seafarers directed attention to the quality of cooking on British ships in the late-nineteenth century. However, with the development of passenger shipping, the training of catering personnel gradually improved in line with the demands of the travelling public and technological advances in shipping. On passenger liners the 'career steward'- someone who would spend his entire career in service-related tasks at sea - came into being.

This chapter explores the question of how the training and recruitment of this rapidly-expanding element of the maritime workforce was organised. A number of historical studies have examined about the training and recruitment patterns of specific components of the maritime labour force, but the catering personnel have largely been excluded from these accounts.¹⁶⁷ The next section (4.2.) will explore the connection between the training and status of the catering personnel. Attitudes towards the formal training of catering personnel were articulated in discussions regarding the training of ship's cooks, which are well documented in the Parliamentary Papers of 1903. Section 4.3 will look at the establishment of training institutions for sea-going catering personnel, in particular the Nautical Training

¹⁶⁷ V.C.Burton, 'Apprenticeship Regulation and Maritime Labour in the Nineteenth-Century British Merchant Marine' *International Journal of Maritime History* No 1 (1989), pp. 29-49; Valerie C. Burton, 'A Man Cannot Make a Sailor Without Education'. Merchant Navy Apprentices in the Nineteenth Century' *A Merseyside Maritime History-Transactions and Research 50th Anniversary edition* (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 17-25; Keith Matthews, 'Recruitment and Stability of Employment in the British Merchant Marine: The Case of C.T. Bowring and Company' in Rosemary Ommer and Gerald Panting (eds.), *Working Men Who Got Wet* (Newfoundland, 1980), pp. 79-103; Daniel Vickers and Vince Walsh, 'Young Men and the Sea: the sociology of seafaring in eighteenth-century Salem, Massachusetts' *Social History*, Vol. 24, No. 1(1999), pp. 17-37; David M Williams., 'Advance Notes' and the Recruitment of Maritime Labour in Britain in the Nineteenth Century' in Lewis R. Fischer (ed.), *Research in Maritime History* No. 7 (1994), pp. 81-100.

School for Stewards and Cooks in Liverpool which provided instruction for catering personnel especially on passenger liners. The different recruitment channels and training schemes operated by the passenger liner companies will be discussed in Section 4.4. Sometimes they recruited catering personnel from nautical institutions, but more frequently they ran their own apprenticeship and training schemes. The last section (4.5) will consider the question of career advancement, which was problematic for a group of people whose skill was not assessed formally. It argues that not only promotion to a higher rank, but also transfer to a higher passenger class or to a position with access to larger numbers of passengers, were regarded as important upward steps on a career ladder.

4.2. The quality of cooking, the 1906 Merchant Shipping Act and the status of catering personnel at sea

This section will analyse the status and training of catering personnel by focusing on the 1906 Merchant Shipping Act and its consequences for the professional skills of catering personnel at sea. The Act made it compulsory for every British ship of 1,000 gross tons and upwards to carry a certified cook. It was the first and only Act during the period which regulated the competency of catering personnel, so it is essential to discuss the circumstances leading to the institution of certification. It should be stressed that there were no national standards for the quality of cooking for passengers, since the 1906 Act was primarily concerned with the seafarers' diet and its implications for discipline. Nevertheless, the discussion in Parliament provides useful information on the quality of cooking on passenger liners and technical aspects of cookery at sea.

Before 1908 a cook at sea did not require any special training.¹⁶⁸ For the first time, it was now officially recognised that cooking and catering at sea required specialised skills, even if those skills were obtained through only a few weeks of training plus one month's service at sea in any capacity. The Act stated:

After the thirtieth day of June nineteen hundred and eight, every British foreign-going ship of a thousand tons and upwards gross

¹⁶⁸ The Act was passed in 1906 but only became effective on 13 June 1908.

tonnage, going to sea from any place in the British Islands or on the continent of Europe between the River Elbe and Brest inclusive, shall be provided with and carry a duly certificated cook who is able to prove one month's service at sea in some capacity.

A cook shall not be deemed to be duly certificated within the meaning of this section unless he is the holder of a certificate of competency in cooking granted by the Board of Trade or by some school of cookery or other institution approved for the purpose by the Board, or is the holder of certificates of discharge showing at least two years' service as cook previously to the said thirtieth day of June nineteen hundred and eight.¹⁶⁹

Complaints about the quality of provisions onboard ships had always been relatively common, but bad cooking became a public issue in the late nineteenth century.¹⁷⁰ By that time, the contrast between the living conditions onboard steam liners, sailing ships and tramps had become notorious. There was still no official scale of provisions, raw materials were of bad quality, and the diet monotonous. Technological change had made it possible, in theory, to provide better living standards onboard ships. For the first time, it was realised that it was possible, and even desirable, to eat well onboard a ship.

Food has always been important to seafarers. The quality of food was a matter of life and death at sea since it was not possible to obtain alternative nutrition during long voyages apart from occasional fishing and hunting. Seafarers' yarns are full of legends and horror stories of the food served onboard, especially on sailing ships. The cook was often described as a tragicomic or unpleasant character and the cook's 'extraordinary lack of skill' was the curse of almost everyone on the ship.¹⁷¹

Still, on sailing ships the cook was normally the oldest or the least skilled seaman. Simon P. Ville states that sometimes an apprentice would do the cooking and receive a few pence more per week in return. He also suggests that little skill was required of a cook since the meals were simple.¹⁷² But perhaps the meals were simple because the cook had no skills to create variation and to ensure the proper preservation of

¹⁶⁹ *Merchant Shipping Act 1906*, Section 27. 6 Edward VII 48.

¹⁷⁰ Conrad Dixon, 'Pound and Pint, Diet in the Merchant Service, 1750-1980' in Sarah Palmer and Glyndur Williams (eds.), *Chartered and Uncharted Waters* (1981), p. 169.

¹⁷¹ Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*, p. 123.

¹⁷² Simon P. Ville, *English Shipowning During the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, 1987), p.109.

stores? Thomas Brassey recalled the training of the cooks in his famous book *British Seamen* in 1877:

It would be only fair for the crews if some certificate of competency were required before a man was allowed to ship as cook. The culinary processes on many merchant ships are of the rudest description, and the inexperience of the cooks is the more serious in a sanitary point of view, because the dietary is of necessity unnatural. If the food is ill prepared it must have a most prejudicial effect on the health of crews.¹⁷³

Furthermore Alan Villiers, who used to work on sailing ships, emphasises that good and sufficient food was very important at sea and if treated well, the crew was content even if the pay was poor.¹⁷⁴ Seafarers, especially on a sailing ship, really needed a balanced diet in order to maintain their physique when working from dawn till dusk.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, seafarers' desertions and the alleged deterioration in the quality of maritime labour raised questions about their conditions onboard. In 1903, a Select Committee was set up to investigate the conditions onboard ships and the employment of Lascars. The 1906 Merchant Shipping Act and the certification of cooks can be interpreted as part of the action designed to reduce the number of foreigners on sailing ships and tramps by improving the living conditions of British seamen. Therefore, the issue of food and cooking became the main topic of discussion in the Select Committee. There was an enquiry into whether harsh conditions on ships, compared with improved living standards ashore, made British seafarers reluctant to obtain employment on tramps. David M. Williams highlights the depth of the concern:

That British vessels should be manned by 'a heterogeneous mixture of foreigners' with some vessels alleged to resemble 'Noah's Ark' in their crew composition and that British boys should be reluctant to go to sea, seemed outrageous and unacceptable.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Brassey, *British Seamen*, p. 287.

¹⁷⁴ Alan Villiers, *The Way of a Ship* (London, 1953), p. 182.

¹⁷⁵ Williams, 'The Quality, Skill and Supply of Maritime Labour', p. 52.

The Committee was of the opinion that 'improved food and cooking is the most hopeful course to induce young men to take and remain at sea'. They also stated that an 'increase in the number of British seamen in the Mercantile Marine may be looked for rather in the improvement of their conditions than in the increase of facilities for training boys for the sea'.¹⁷⁶ It is noticeable that the improvements in diet and cooking did not apply to foreigners and Lascars. The Committee was of the opinion that foreigners were used to a harsh life and bad food and they were more amenable to discipline.

Historians have usually overlooked the possibility that bad food contributed to desertions, a phenomenon which has usually been interpreted as the seafarers' method of using their bargaining power in relation to wages. However, contemporaries highlighted the poor conditions and inferior diet on British ships, as well as wages.¹⁷⁷

In general, witnesses questioned by the Committee agreed that the food fell below any acceptable standards. There were, however, different opinions on the necessity of making a cook's certificate compulsory, and disagreement over why the standard of food was so bad. The Superintendent of the North Shields Cookery School was of the opinion that 'food, in many cases good of its kind, is rendered almost worthless when cooked, and very unappetising, owing to the incompetency of the cook'.¹⁷⁸ She also appealed to the ship owners, arguing that the training of cooks would prove economical in the end, since it would reduce the waste of meat. By contrast, the union leader J. Havelock Wilson's view was that 'no cook can make a satisfactory meal out of the materials specified in the ordinary scale, even if a large number- not majority- of men are incompetent'.¹⁷⁹ The ship owners did not agree with the trade union representatives' argument about bad provisions and blamed the poor quality of food on the incompetence and lack of intelligence of the cooks.¹⁸⁰ However, there is

¹⁷⁶ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, Vol. 1.

¹⁷⁷ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII. The evidences of William Raeburn, Ship owner, q. 20,197, William Hooper, Importer, q.22,487, James Coyle, Fireman q. 11,115; J. Havelock Wilson qq. 5583-4 and 11,190-5, Joseph Henry Longford, His Majesty's Consul, Nagasaki, q. 2,447-2,448; Vjilliers, *The Way of a Ship*, p.183.

¹⁷⁸ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 15,143. The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell.

¹⁷⁹ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 5, 571-7. The evidence of J. Havelock Wilson.

¹⁸⁰ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, The evidences of John William Squance, a ship owner, q. 17,996 and Joseph Bellamy, a ship owner, q.16,892-3.

strong evidence that the system of provisioning provided lots of opportunities for fraud since there were too many middlemen to profit by it. Also, the captain, who had to deal with the provisions, may have made mistakes: he was usually not an expert in dealing with rations, unaware of the current prices and often very busy while in port. The system of ship owners paying the money intended for provisions directly to the captain provided an opportunity for misconduct. By properly training cooks and stewards, it was thought, the captain's purchasing power could be transferred to the cooks, as it was on the large passenger liners.¹⁸¹

The ship owners' representatives, although they regarded the training of cooks as desirable, were against compulsory certification because they were reluctant to pay higher salaries for cooks.¹⁸² Therefore, the issue of certification became political: the trade unions, by trying to increase their bargaining power, aimed at certification and tried to ensure that the required period of service would be as long as possible. One of the purposes of the trade unions (first Wilson's Union, The National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, and from 1911 the National Union of Stewards, Butchers and Bakers) in their aims to certificate the catering personnel was to limit the employment opportunities of foreigners.¹⁸³ The ship owners, on their part, opposed certification since recognition that a job required particular skills would lead to pressure to increase wages.¹⁸⁴ Officially their opinion was that even if the quality of cooking left much to be desired, the ships' cooks had improved in recent years.¹⁸⁵ On the other hand, they were the first to affirm that poor cooking was to blame for the bad food, not the quantity nor quality of the victuals supplied by the ship owners.

The ship owners probably wished to emphasise existing efforts to train cooks undertaken at their own expense. The Shipping Federation, the main organisation for

¹⁸¹ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 20,754. The evidence of David Henry Churney, Steward.

¹⁸² *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, qq. 17,388-9, 17,547-8. The evidence of John Hughes, ship owner.

¹⁸³ The article called 'The Union's scheme for the establishment of high-class Schools of Cookery in the various seaport towns' states, that 'the object of the school was to oust the foreigner' and '[T]he object of the school is to get the English cook to bring himself up to as high standard as a foreigner is supposed to hold in the eyes of ship owner'. *Marine Caterer* Vol. III, No. 9 (1913), p. 672.

¹⁸⁴ Captain A. G. Course, *The Merchant Navy. A Social History* (London, 1963) p. 257; *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 15,196. The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell.

¹⁸⁵ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q.14,161. The evidence of Duncan Stewart, master mariner.

ship owners, was actively involved in the training of seafarers. The Federation supported several nautical cookery schools and had its own school in Gravesend where deckhands and cooks, and initially also stokers, were trained. Indeed, the ship owners used their political influence to delay the implementation of the 1906 Act until 1908. They also managed to water down the certification. The final Act, as quoted earlier, stipulated that anyone with a few weeks' training and a month's service at sea in any capacity could be regarded as a skilled cook, although the original Bill introduced by J. Havelock Wilson had demanded a year's service. The National Sailors' and Firemen's Union was the most dedicated campaigner for the certification of cooks. The Union had already tried to make the ship owners voluntarily carry trained and certificated cooks in 1886. J. Havelock Wilson in particular was a committed advocate of compulsory qualifications and played an active role in the preparation of the 1906 Act, both as a Member of Parliament and as a witness.

The general opinion of the Committee and many of the witnesses was that an improvement in the quality of food and cooking on tramps would lead to better (British) seamen being drawn into the Merchant Marine. In other words, the particular aim of the 1906 Act was to exclude foreigners from the workforce by raising the living standards of British seafarers. By contrast, the ship owners were firmly against national legislation even if they were already actively involved in training the cooks.

Despite the introduction of compulsory certification and examination, the quality of cooking took a long time to improve on cargo ships. According to the *Seaman* magazine in 1925

Even when the Board of Trade began to take an interest in the quality and quantity of the rations, the artist in the galley was too often chosen by a process of unnatural selection. The man who was not good for anything else was the man to cook.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ *Seaman*, August 28 (1925), p. 2.

4.3. The establishment of the sea cookery schools

A common way to become a ship's cook on sailing ships and tramps before the 1906 Act was to sign on as an assistant cook, and even after one journey to get promoted to ship's cook. David Churney, a steward, explained the training as follows:

If anything occurs onboard, for instance, if a cook gets drunk, or gets ill, the mess room boys are very often put in the galley to do the cooking for the passage home, and, of course, the people onboard the ship make no trouble about it, because they know he is not a qualified man; they do not expect much; he is only a mess-room boy and he will be discharged at the end of the voyage with a cook's discharge, and the next voyage he gets employment as a full blown cook, and people have to suffer for it.¹⁸⁷

The evidence also suggests that if a man really learned how to cook, he would not stay on a sailing ship or a tramp for very long and would transfer to a passenger liner or go ashore.¹⁸⁸ Relatively low wages, long days and the lack of career advancement were important factors which deterred skilled cooks from tramps.

As a consequence of the 1906 Act, the demand for cookery schools increased and several new ones were established in the major port cities, some of which also trained cooks for passenger liners by providing more advanced lessons in maritime catering. Before the Act, there were a number of sea cookery schools in Great Britain: in London (opened in 1893), Liverpool (1890-1891¹⁸⁹), North Shields (1890), Hull (1904) and Belfast (1904).¹⁹⁰ The first sea cookery school in Britain operated in Glasgow, but it had to close because of a lack of pupils and funding.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 20,756. The evidence of David Henry Churney, steward.

¹⁸⁸ Bullen, p.204; *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII. q. 20,805. The evidence of David Henry Churney, steward.

¹⁸⁹ Around 1890 the Liverpool City Council started to provide seamen's cookery classes. Alexander Quinlan & N.E. Mann, *Cookery for Seamen* (Liverpool, 1894), p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ UW. MRC. MSS.367/TSF/1/4/1. The Shipping Federation Archives. General Purposes Committee minutes 20.11.1903 and 19.2.1904.

¹⁹¹ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 15,166. The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell.

Most of the cookery schools which were established before the 1906 Act were funded by ship owners.

By the 1920s, a number of additional cookery schools operated in other major ports, for example in Sunderland, Dublin (the Dublin Command School of Cooking) and Edinburgh (the Edinburgh School of Cookery & Domestic Economy).¹⁹² In 1930, The Royal Air Force School of Cookery and Messing in Hatton was approved by the Board of Trade as a recognised school of cookery.¹⁹³ After the Second World War, National Sea Training Schools in Kent and Gloucestershire were established. They offered eight-week courses for those interested in obtaining a berth in a catering department and 12 weeks pre-sea training for those intending to work on deck. The schools were controlled by a Committee, which consisted of representatives from the Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Education, ship owners and seamen.¹⁹⁴

In Liverpool there were several opportunities to acquire basic lessons in sea cookery. Certain elementary schools prepared boys for a career in catering by offering them lessons in the general principles of working in a kitchen during their last two years of formal education.¹⁹⁵ Classes in sea cookery had been started in Liverpool in the 1890s and at the beginning of the twentieth century the *Seamen's Cookery School* was opened with one instructor in the Board of Trade building in Canning Place.¹⁹⁶ After the First World War its name was changed to the *Nautical Training School for Stewards and Cooks*. In the inter-war period the school moved its premises to Myrtle Street and in 1946 it was moved again to Oldham Street.¹⁹⁷ In 1960 it became the *Nautical Training College* which still awarded certificates of competency for ship's cooks.¹⁹⁸ The Liverpool sea cookery school operated under the control of the Education Committee of Liverpool City Council. The Liverpool Ship owners'

¹⁹² NMM. X97/052. *Cooks Certificates 1915-1958*. Vol. I, p.1.

¹⁹³ NMM. X97/052. *Cooks Certificates 1915-1958*. Vol. II, p.1.

¹⁹⁴ Course, *The Merchant Navy*, p. 295.

¹⁹⁵ The school leaving age was fixed at 14 by the Education Act, 1918. In 1931, only 10 per cent of Liverpool children under 19 remained in full-time education after the minimum school-leaving age. Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, III, p. 64.

¹⁹⁶ MMM. 710. MAR. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*, p.168.

¹⁹⁷ MMM. DX/313. *Classes for Stewards and Cooks Nautical Catering College Prospectus* (c.1960's); NMM. SAH/ 58/3. *Classes for Stewards and Cooks*. Nautical Training School for Ship's Stewards and Cooks prospectus (Liverpool, 1936).

¹⁹⁸ MMM. DX/313. *Classes for Stewards and Cooks*.

Association, the local Marine Board, the Mercantile Marine Service Association and the Merchant Service Guild supervised its work.

The cookery school offered various courses for ship's cooks. The ordinary course, which led to the award of a Certificate of Competency under the 1906 Merchant Shipping Act, lasted for three weeks in the 1930s and included a final examination. The cost of attending was 21 shillings and Mr Richard Bond, who had also written several handbooks for cooks and stewards, provided the instruction.¹⁹⁹ By the 1960s the course lasted six weeks.²⁰⁰

Detailed curricular information is only available for the 1930s. At that time the basic course consisted of lessons in the care of utensils, cleanliness and economy in the use of materials. It also offered instruction in the general principles of cookery involved in the preparation of the most common dishes (such as pea soup, fish and sea pie), and the use of tinned meats, baked beans and the treatment of preserved vegetables. The making of pastry and puddings, bread and cakes was also an important part of the curriculum. The Liverpool School offered separate courses for butchers and confectioners, and operated its own bakery.²⁰¹ In the 1930s the school also provided more advanced lessons in sea cookery. A three-month course for assistant cooks, which could be undertaken whilst in employment, was offered alongside a year's training course for apprentice cooks and stewards. Ship's cooks were also able to specialise in baking or confectionery by attending the various courses and examinations organised by the school.²⁰² Extra courses on Cabin Cookery, Saloon Cookery and Higher Grade Cookery were offered, which introduced the candidates to more advanced modes of cooking and were obviously intended for cooks already working on passenger liners who wished to obtain a Certificate of Proficiency in Higher-Grade Cooking.²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ MMM. DX/313. *Classes for Stewards and Cooks*. Richard Bond was the author of several much acclaimed (and well-advertised) books intended for ships' catering personnel. *The Ship's Steward's Handbook* (Glasgow, 1918), *The Ship's Baker and Confectioner* and *Sea Cookery* (Glasgow, 1917) were commonly used books of reference published by James Munro & Company Limited in Glasgow.

²⁰⁰ MMM. DX/313. *Classes for Stewards and Cooks*.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² NMM. SAH/58/3. Liverpool Education Committee. Nautical Training School for Ships' Stewards and Cooks. November, 1940.

²⁰³ *ibid.*

One of the biggest nautical cookery schools was situated in London and was run by the Sailors' Home in Well Street. The Shipping Federation supported it financially.²⁰⁴ The London School of Nautical Cookery was opened in 1893 to train cooks 'to make use of the minimum scale of victualling laid down by the Board of Trade'.²⁰⁵ Before the 1906 Act attendance was low. In 1907 there were already 20-30 pupils attending each month but the Cookery Instructor still complained how difficult it was to meet the demand for cooks. By 1910, there was a regular attendance of between 12 and 20 each month. Each pupil was given, on average, 52 hours of instruction in order to obtain training mainly as ship's cooks, second cooks and mess room stewards. In 1926, the school also started offering courses in bakery. Despite a good attendance rate, however, only a few certificates were issued each year, and only small proportion of the pupils actually obtained their qualifying certificates. This might have been a result of prior work commitments, or it may reflect a lack of motivation. Despite high attendance figures, the School complained in 1910 about the lack of money and tried to compensate for this by selling food on its premises.²⁰⁶ In 1915, in order to obtain a larger grant from the London City Council, troops were offered courses in camp cookery.²⁰⁷ It is also important to note that the other cookery schools also struggled under low attendance rates. Due to poor recruitment of seafaring cooks, the North Shields Sea Cookery School also offered classes for girls.²⁰⁸ The main reason for the lack of motivation was that certificated men were not necessarily offered higher wages.²⁰⁹

Elsewhere in the catering department, few regulations applied. No official training was required for the post of a steward. Instead, personal appearance and smartness were the prospective stewards' most appreciated qualifications. A guide to employment on passenger liners stressed the importance of presentation on several occasions: 'everything depends on personal appearance and smartness', and stewards

²⁰⁴ NMM. X97/052. Cooks Certificates, 1915-1958, Vol. I, p.1; UW. MRC.MSS.367/TSF/1/4/1.

Records of Shipping Federation. General Purposes Committee minutes. 7. 2.1893.

²⁰⁵ NMM. SAH 63/2. Notebook of the London Nautical Cookery School; SAH 63/1. Minutes of the London Nautical Cookery School, 7. 10. 1909.

²⁰⁶ NMM. SAH 36/2. Minutes of the London Nautical Cookery School, 13.1.1910, 4.6.1910 and 27.1.1926.

²⁰⁷ NMM. SAH 36/2. Minutes of the London Nautical Cookery School, 14.1.1915, 15.4. 1915 and 8.7. 1915.

²⁰⁸ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 15, 209. The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell.

²⁰⁹ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q. 15, 144. The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell.

were admonished to 'be determined and persistent, and should your appearance and manners be satisfactory, you will eventually be successful'.²¹⁰ The instructions for stewards also underlined the importance of smart appearance: 'It is easier to fit a square peg into a round hole than to mould into a good steward a person of slow intellect, disobliging and tactless disposition, heavy movements, bad manners or a raucous voice'. The same leaflet also stated that:

as a general rule advancement comes more rapidly to those who have in addition to the indispensable qualities enumerated above ('deftness, quickness, civility and a certain measure of refinement of speech and manner, cleanliness in both person and work and a natural aptitude to desire and please'), a cheerful pleasant manner, everlasting patience and sufficient self-control to restrain any outward expression of annoyance under the most trying circumstances.²¹¹

The London Nautical Cookery School, however, trained mess room stewards, most likely for cargo ships, although the first time any evidence of certification appears in the school's records was in 1913. In fact, the training of stewards never became popular: between 1909-1938 only 54 mess room stewards were certificated by the school.²¹² However, by the 1930s the Liverpool Nautical Training School for Ships' Stewards and Cooks (note the inclusion of stewards in the school's title) had started providing various courses for ships' stewards, mainly for passenger liners. Even if no formal qualifications were required, the Education Committee of the Liverpool City Council awarded certificates to stewards who passed the courses. In the 1930s the school had a twelve-month training course for apprentice cooks and stewards as part of curriculum. It was intended for boys between 15 and 18 years of age who planned on going to sea as cooks or stewards. The course provided general tuition in sea cookery, stewarding and waiting, and language classes in French and Spanish were given in the evenings.²¹³ A six-week preparatory course for boys under 18 years of age was offered, which was intended to train boys as officers' stewards on ships. Amongst other things they were taught how to make up an officer's bunk, to care for

²¹⁰ MMM. DX/1050e. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p.3.

²¹¹ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/3/16. *Do's and Don'ts for Stewards*.

²¹² NMM. SAH 63/2. London Nautical Cookery School, Minutes 10.8.1909-6.1.1938.

²¹³ NMM. MS/75/008. *Classes for Ships' Stewards and Cooks held at the Nautical Training School for Ships' Stewards and Cooks* (Liverpool, 1936).

his uniform, to fit up mosquito nets and to fold curtains.²¹⁴ The school also offered short courses for assistant stewards and second stewards.

Some men worked and attended their lessons in cookery schools in turn. It was common practice for a student to interrupt his course in order to go to sea, and then to turn up again to continue his studies. The evidence suggests that the pupils did not usually come from prosperous families, as they could not afford a very long and expensive education. In Liverpool, a year's course in the mid-1930s cost three guineas payable in three instalments.²¹⁵ In some schools the private ship owners helped with the expenses.²¹⁶ It is believed that formal training was undertaken only if it was mandatory, because few trainee cooks could afford to stay out of employment for any length of time.

Even if no official training was required for most catering positions on passenger liners, the requirements of luxury liners reinforced the need for more effective provision. Firstly, the fierce competition between shipping companies and the specialised requirements of luxury liners meant that the catering crew had to be trained in the latest cookery methods. Secondly, training was important in inculcating appropriate manners among catering personnel, given that the reputation of passenger liner companies depended on the quality of service provided. Thirdly, the increasing importance of the catering department on passenger liners and the higher skill levels required of staff reinforced contemporary efforts to train catering personnel. Finally, the role of individual motivation should not be ignored, as candidates were increasingly willing to undertake training in order to secure good positions on liners with better career prospects.

4.4. Recruitment and training by the liner companies

Although the role of formal education became increasingly important towards the end of the period under consideration, passenger liners often recruited catering personnel straight from school. An informal 'apprenticeship' (serving as a boy) which

²¹⁴ NMM, MS/75/008. *Classes for Ships' Stewards and Cooks*.

²¹⁵ *ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, q.15152. The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell.

was usually started between the age of 14 to 16, was a popular way to steward's or cook's profession.

In this study the service of boy ratings in the catering departments has been interpreted as an informal apprenticeship, which was different to the formal training provided in other departments.²¹⁷ The type of apprenticeship served by boys in the catering department onboard ship was essentially the same as in hotels and restaurants ashore, but did not lead to any formal qualifications. Boys entered hotels as page boys, lift boys, cloakroom attendants or apprentice cooks. After two or three years, they could proceed to be waiters in the same fashion as at sea. The hotels and restaurants were regarded as offering good prospects for advancement 'to smart, ambitious and well-educated boys'.²¹⁸ The extent to which apprenticeship was either formal or effective varied considerably between individual shipping companies, although in some cases preliminary training was provided. The system was undoubtedly exploitative of juvenile labour, but it nevertheless contained an apprenticeship element.

The elements for training catering personnel differed from those of other departments because of the absence of a premium type of apprenticeship. Under the terms of these arrangements, the apprentice paid a sum of money on entry into a profession. However, no evidence exists of stewards' boys paying any money to the shipping companies. The only expense was the uniform, for which the company sometimes lent the money. Heavy physical work was done by the boys and the growing number suggests that they were used increasingly to replace more expensive labour in the catering departments. The boys' wages, which were progressively increased, fell far below the adult rate and there was a clear hierarchical division between work carried out by men and boys. The latter were assigned the least desired jobs, such as the

²¹⁷ Boys who wanted to become deck officers were required to a service of three-four years as an apprentice, preferably in a sailing ship at least up to the early twentieth century. A boy was entitled to rank as Able Seaman (A.B) after three years at sea, at the end of his fourth year he was qualified to take the Board of Trade Examination for Second Mate's Certificate. Usually a premium was asked. Those who could not afford the apprenticeship could enter as a deck boy and serve a few voyages as such and then serve as Ordinary Seaman (O.S) for three years and then maturing to an A.B. MMM. 710. MAR/PM. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*. More information about apprenticeship at sea in the eighteenth century can be found in Burton, 'A Man cannot Make a Sailor Without Education'.

²¹⁸ .MMM. 710. MAR/PM. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*, pp. 88-89.

work of a 'lavatory boy'.²¹⁹ As they were normally paid about half the salary of an adult male, the shipping companies aimed to use boy ratings in jobs that were previously classified as adults' work, such as that of a ship's cook.

During the apprenticeship boys were trained onboard by the chief steward, the second steward, a chef or a chief baker, depending on which section of the ship they were allocated to. After the training period, the boy started as a galley boy, if he was to be trained as a cook, or as a steward's boy if he was to be trained as a waiter or a steward. These boys would act as the captain's personal servants (known as 'captain's tigers'), 'commis waiters', who assisted the waiters during meal times, messengers (in the period before telephones) or as bellboys who answered the bells from passengers' cabins. They could also take their first position as apprentice cooks, who could work their way up within a company or sometimes, after gaining some sea experience, switch to a new employer.²²⁰ To take an example, George Knill went to sea at the age of 16 as a scullery boy. After one year, he found a post as the first assistant cook for two trips, was then promoted to fourth cook on a passenger liner and then to second cook on a cargo liner. After twelve years at sea he finally sailed as a ship's cook.²²¹

Simply running away to sea might have been a short-term solution for many youngsters, who wanted to escape school or a career family had selected. However, it was not a common method of choosing a career on a passenger liner. On the contrary, both family and school were strongly involved in a young man's career choice. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the role of head teachers as career advisers was remarkable, and they directly influenced the recruitment processes. The Liverpool Education Committee advised young boys interested in the ship cook's profession:

Certain elementary schools prepare the boys during their last two years at school. By this means they learn the general principles which should guide them in working in the kitchen- the necessity of order, accuracy, and cleanliness. At the age of 14 the representative of a shipping firm

²¹⁹ MUN. Logbook of *Carmania*, 30. 7. 1921. 'List of young persons under sixteen years of age employed as members of the crew of *Carmania* on a voyage from Liverpool to New York.' Three boys under sixteen years of age were employed on that particular trip and all as lavatory boys.

²²⁰ Women were not apprenticed to the catering departments. Their recruitment patterns are dealt with in chapter 7.

²²¹ MMM. DX/1055e. Blythyn / Knill Collection. Discharge book of George Knill.

inspects the boys, and the most suitable are signed on as cooks' boys. A system, amounting in effect to apprenticeship, is in vogue, whereby a boy remaining on the same ship has received an all-round training by the time he reaches the age of 20...Boys desiring to undertake this training should consult their headmasters as soon as possible.²²²

Edgar Hilton, an ex-Cunard cook, was recruited straight from school at the age of 17. The headmaster of the school had received a letter from Cunard offering vacancies for boys with a good knowledge of French to be trained as chefs.²²³

In general, family background was a very important factor in determining youth employment.²²⁴ The parents' occupation and cultural background largely determined a young man's career choice in two ways. On the one hand, the occupation of the father or other male relatives often served to define certain jobs as more masculine or desirable than other occupations. On the other hand, the relative level of the parents' income determined the type of a position the son was placed since some apprenticeships required a high premium. Parents often made applications on behalf of their children and went for interviews with them.²²⁵ Influential connections and family background were two very important factors that affected the recruitment of crew on British liners. Employment on big liners seems to have been a family tradition: there were families where most of the members were employed by the same company and even served on the same ship. According to Brinnin, there was even a 'father-to-son heritage of stewardship that marked whole families in Liverpool and Southampton'.²²⁶ For example, Robert William Blythyn (father), Robert James Blythyn and William Blythyn (sons) and George Knull (husband of Mary Blythyn, Robert William's daughter) were all employed as stewards and cooks by Cunard.²²⁷ In Liverpool, which was a port so largely occupied with the North Atlantic traffic, catering personnel formed 43 per cent of the total seafarers in the early 1930s. In addition, there was an exceptionally strong tendency for the seafarers' sons to follow their fathers' occupations. According to the *Social Survey of Merseyside*, 25 per cent

²²² MMM. 710. MAR/PM. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*, p.168.

²²³ Hilton, 'One of the Cunard's Cooks Recalls the Glory Days', 10-12.

²²⁴ Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London, 1996), p.12 and 33; Michael J. Childs, *Labour's Apprentices. Working-Class Lads in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, 1992), p. 90.

²²⁵ UL CA. C2/259. Applications for Employment 1922-1926. Letters from Applicants.

²²⁶ John Malcolm Brinnin, *The Sway of a Grand Saloon; A Social History of the North Atlantic* (New York, 1972,) p. 396.

of seafarers' sons went to sea, which was much more than the career inheritance in other major occupations in the area.²²⁸

Passenger liner companies sometimes operated their own training scheme for stewards, which also acted as way of recruitment system. The Blue Funnel Line operated its stewards' training scheme by recruiting boys two or three months before their sixteenth birthday. They had to apply in writing and be related to serving members of the company's staff. They were always carefully interviewed with their parents and underwent a medical examination. The boys started first by serving in the company's canteens for three months and then gradually moved to working on a ship, first in port and then on coasting vessels. They were given classes in cleanliness, personal appearance, the preparation of silver, cutlery and glass for the laying of tables, as well as learning French phrases. They also had to be confident in serving drinks and have knowledge of wines.²²⁹ Blue Funnel also required a recommendation from the Juvenile Employment Committee, which operated under the Liverpool Education Committee.²³⁰

Longing for the sea and dreams of distant places played an important part in the career choice of those who decided to go to sea. Mr John Jenkins's story is fairly typical in considering the background and the reasons why they became seafarers. It also brings together previous points about family connections, age and recruitment patterns. John Jenkins, who went to sea as a bellboy, wrote about his decision in the following terms:

Living only five minutes from the sea, I spent much of my time as a boy at the beach. Great ships were a daily sight, warships from the naval base and the liners passing to and fro from Southampton: *Berengaria*, *Aquitania*, *Europa*, *Bremen* and the Union Castle ships to South Africa, enough to make a boy dream of far-away places. That dream came true for me in 1934, the year I left school at the age of fourteen. There was a slump in employment, especially if you had no specific qualifications. For a few weeks, I worked for a local printing works until one day my grandparents, who had a friend with

²²⁷MMM. DX/1055. Blythyn/Knill Collection.

²²⁸Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, pp. 90 and 100.

²²⁹MMM. 6.C.2213. Ocean Archives. Blue Funnel Line. Statistical Details and Staff Details 1914-1966.

²³⁰*Ibid.*

connections at Cunard, asked me if I wanted to go to sea... At last a letter arrived asking me to go to Southampton for an interview where it was explained to me and my mother what the job would entail. Incidentally, my mother was a widow and my brother and I never remembered our father: at one time, he had been a soldier in India and also a steward on the old *Majestic*.²³¹

The intake of boy ratings increased during the 1930s, when they represented seven per cent of Cunard's catering crews:

Table 4.1. Characteristics of boy ratings in the catering department of Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Percentage of catering crew</i>	<i>Mean age at first trip</i>	<i>Mean age of all boy ratings</i>
1861	3	*	17
1871	1	*	18
1881	1	14	15
1991	2	15	18
1901	1	17	18
1911	2	17	17
1921	3	15	16
1931	7	16	17
1938	7	17	17

* no first trip boys on the sample

Source : Dataset 1861-1938.

Several explanations for the increase could be given. Although some were young and eager to pursue a career at sea, many boys did not have much of a choice. They often came from families who could not afford an expensive education and starting as a boy rating was the only route into seafaring and a way of starting to earn money as soon as possible. Cunard did not use cheaper non-European labour, unlike the P&O, and perhaps found employing juveniles a more acceptable way to save on labour costs. Furthermore, cultural taboos still created a barrier to employing women (who, with children, had been a traditional source of cheap and easily exploitable labour) in

²³¹ John Jenkins, 'Young Bellboy goes to sea on the *Mauretania*.' *The Ocean Liner Gazette*, Fall/Winter (1996/97), p. 8.

these roles at sea. Steward's boys worked where-ever they were needed on the ship. John McGreavey, of Warrington, described his first trip as a bellboy in 1933 as follows:

Initially, life was very rough indeed. There was no training and you only got through by the goodness of the other crew. It was pretty brutal and there was a lot of bullying. I loaded bar stocks, removed dirty linen, scrubbed out toilets and cleaned cabins and stairs.²³²

Despite early hardships, the boys had the prospect of quick promotion. Normally, as Table 4.1 suggests, they would not spend a long time as a boy rating. If a boy liked the sea life, he had several choices. In a few cases, it was possible to proceed as far up as chief steward with this method. For example, John Sawyer joined Cunard as a bellboy and became a chief steward and finally an assistant vice-president of Cunard in New York.²³³ In general, serving as a boy on a passenger liner was regarded as a progressive job leading to a job of a steward in contrary to blind-alley jobs, such as errand boys and milk assistants, where career progression was very limited.²³⁴

The tendency to use substitute (cheap) boy labour for adult labour was not welcomed by the trade unions.²³⁵ Amongst others, the National Union of Seamen repeatedly complained about the use of boy ratings in adult jobs, especially on cargo ships.²³⁶ The 1919 agreement on a national wage scale restricted the use of boy ratings to under 18 year olds. If over 18, they had to be rated as assistant stewards. However, boys under 18 had to complete 12 months service at sea before they were entitled to be rated as an assistant steward.²³⁷ Furthermore, the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act of 1920 obliged every master of a ship to keep a list of

²³² *Liverpool Echo*, 'A Life on the Ocean Wave', 10.7. 2000, p. 4.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, III, p. 206.

²³⁵ Childs, *Labour Apprentices*, pp. 59 and 70. Liepmann argues that the apprenticeship, individual or contractual (indentured), was a matter between three parties: an employee, a worker and a trade union, which aimed to regulate the entry into skilled occupations and control the supply and demand and the living wage. Kate Liepmann, *Apprenticeship. An Enquiry into its Adequacy under Modern Conditions* (London, 1960), p. 14.

²³⁶ Protests were expressed at the several meetings of the National Maritime Board against the continuing practise of engaging boys in place of assistant ratings. UW. MRC.MSS. 367/NMB/1/2/3. NMB meetings on the 2 February, 17 March, 16 June and 1 September 1922; Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, p. 98.

²³⁷ *The National Maritime Board 1919. Standard Rates of pay, hours of labour, and other determinations* (London, 1919).

young persons over 14 and under 16 years of age who were members of his crew. The Act also prohibited the employment of children under 14 years of age on any ship, except on a vessel in where only members of the same family were employed. Lists of crew members attached in the crew agreements after 1920 reveal that boys of 16 years of age or younger were expressly employed in catering departments. The Merchant Shipping Act of 1925 further restricted the employment of young persons on a ship apart from the catering department. The employment of a person under the age of 18 as fireman or trimmer was prohibited. If no person over 18 was available, two young persons had to be employed to do the same work.

The most common method of adult recruitment was to visit the ships when they arrived in port. In many cases, the recruitment of adult catering crew was dependent on individual initiative, with potential employees visiting individual ships when they arrived in port. The best method was alleged to be

to go aboard the vessel the day after she has arrived home and ask anyone you see working in the department you want to sail in who is required in that department for the next voyage, and then, with the information gained, apply next morning for employment to the Shore or Chief Steward.²³⁸

It was also common practice among shipping companies to recruit the sea-going crew from their shore-based employees. Dominion Line, American Line, Bibby Line, P&O, Union Castle Line and the Booth Steamship Company were among those shipping lines which required previous company service.²³⁹ Cunard also stipulated that some of their sea-going personnel, like pursers and typists, had to be employed first at one of their offices ashore.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ MMM. DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p.4; The same advice was given by Richard Bond, Chief Instructor to the Nautical Training School for Stewards and Cooks in Liverpool in his *Ship Steward's Handbook*. (Glasgow, 1918), p.1.

²³⁹ MMM. DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p. 10; Rachel Mulhearn, 'In Service at Sea' in *Room Service; Aspects of life Aboard the Ocean Liner. Papers presented at a Research Day School in Liverpool in 1996*, p.42.

²⁴⁰ UL. CA. C2/259. 'Applications for Employment 1922-1926' Letter from T. Royden to Lady Clyde, 2.7.1926.

4.5. Career patterns of the catering personnel

The expansion of catering departments, within the context of the overall development of passenger shipping, made career advancement possible for both cooks and stewards. In general, there were substantial differences in the career patterns of catering personnel depending on whether they were employed on sailing ships and steam tramps, or on passenger liners. Traditionally, a ship's cook on a sailing ship could only secure advancement by moving to the deck when a newcomer would take over his cooking duties and the possibility of promotion remained restricted. On passenger liners the situation was slightly different. A cook would have probably started as a mess boy, occasionally helping in the kitchen. Later a second cook, an assistant, appeared who might have earlier been a steward or a mess boy and later become a ship's cook. When passenger services improved, catering on passenger liners became more competitive between shipping companies. Men who gained employment on big liners expected to advance along a career ladder according to certain principles. By the 1920s, the large luxury liners carried a cavalcade of stewarding staff and cooks, whose promotion was determined by the principle of seniority or by the arbitrary decision of the chief steward. Employees expected to either move into positions where more tips could be made or to a more senior position such as headwaiter, second steward, a specialised cook, chef or even chief steward. However, as will be emphasised further in Chapter 7, this new possibility for career advancement only applied to men. Even if the expansion and the improvement in catering services gave women an opportunity for employment at sea, their career prospects in seafaring remained very limited.

In fact, less than ten per cent of the catering department in the major liner companies started as boys and a surprisingly high proportion of the catering personnel started their careers at sea as adults. Those who did so, came from diverse backgrounds. Prior experience in catering was not regarded as a requirement. For example, in 1921 the applicants for general steward positions with the British India Steam Navigation Company had, on average, 3.1 years seafaring experience but 31 per cent of them had no seafaring experience whatsoever. Many of the applicants had previously worked as railway cleaners, barbers, box office managers, commercial travellers and

office workers.²⁴¹ By contrast, more specialised jobs in the catering department, including cooks, required wider prior knowledge and experience of the field. The applications by cooks and chefs to the British Steam Navigation Company reveal that they had on average 19 years seafaring experience. Only 11 per cent of that sample had *less* than ten years experience at sea. They had normally worked previously as cooks either for the Merchant Marine or the Royal Navy. All the applicants for a baker's post had similar previous experience of the field in either a maritime or shore-based context.²⁴² A further insight into the career pattern of chief stewards can be obtained from the service records of the Blue Funnel shipping company for the period 1907 to 1936 (Table 4.2). Just over 50 per cent of the company's chief stewards had started their careers as assistant stewards, whereas only nine per cent had initially been employed as boy ratings. Joining at an early age and serving an apprenticeship seldom provided a basis for achieving promotion to a supervisory position in the same company.

Table 4.2. The chief stewards of the Blue Funnel Ocean Steamship Company, 1907-1936, by initial employment status

<i>Initial employment status</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Assistant , third, fourth or fifth Steward	51.5
Second Steward	24.2
Boy ratings	9.1
Deck Steward	3.0
Saloon Steward	3.0

Source : MMM. 6.C.1842. Blue Funnel Steam Ship Company. Service Records 1914-1957.

Table 4.3 offers similar evidence on the stewards' initial employment status on Cunard passenger liners. It demonstrates that the most stewards started as assistant stewards, waiters, assistant cooks and, from the 1930s onwards, as boy ratings. It has to be remembered, though, that crew agreements are not the best source to study career advancement in detail. Between 1881 and 1901 nearly all the assistant steward ratings (bedroom and mess room stewards and waiters regardless of classes) were signed on as 'waiters'. Therefore, it is possible (and very likely) that most of these

²⁴¹ NMM. BIS/30/38. Stewards Department. Applicants for general stewards for year 1921 (40 cases).

²⁴² NMM. BIS/30/38. Stewards Department. Applicants for chefs, cooks and bakers for year 1921 (43 cases).

newcomers worked in the second or third class or as officers' stewards, where high standards of service were not required and less money from tips was made. The high number of inexperienced waiters and stewardesses in the period of 1891-1911 is a consequence of Cunard recruiting Italian and Hungarian catering personnel for its new Mediterranean emigrant route.

Table 4.3. The most common initial posts of catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938 (in per cent)

<i>Period</i>	<i>Newcomers as percentage of catering personnel</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage of newcomers</i>
1861-1881	1.53	Waiter	6	28.6
		Assistant Cook	5	23.8
		Steward rating	4	19.0
		Surgeon	2	9.5
1891-1911	4.82	Waiter	107	57.8
		Scullion	18	9.7
		Assistant baker	14	7.6
		Stewardess or Matron	13	7.0
1921-1938	0.86	Boy rating	25	33.8
		Bandsmen	9	12.2
		Laundry worker	8	10.8
		Passage worker	5	6.8

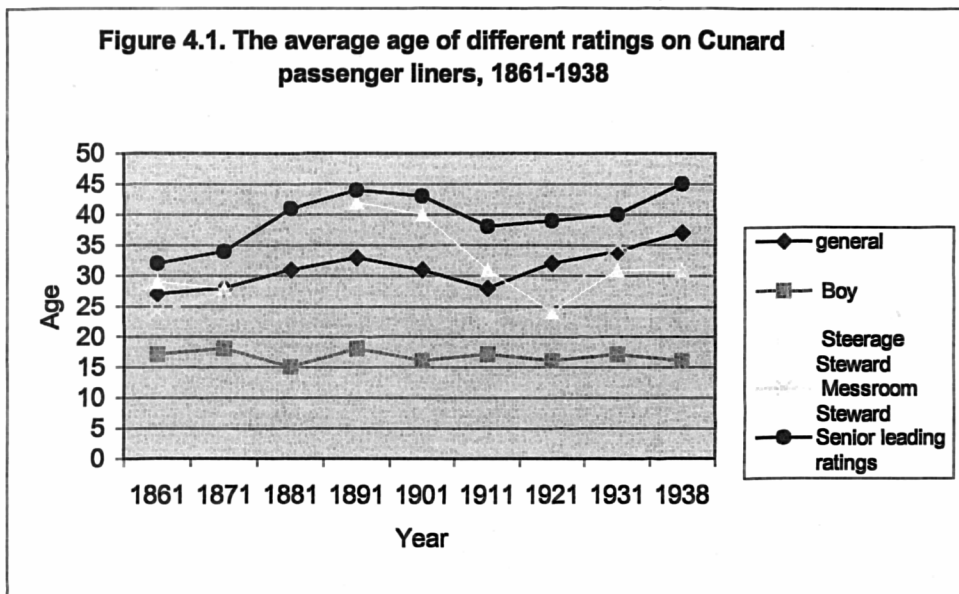
Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

The statistical data presented in tables 4.2 and 4.3 show that there were hardly any mess room stewards among the newcomers or even among those who came from other companies' ships. However, several contemporary sources claim the opposite: they suggest that the post of mess room steward was the most common starting position for a career as a steward after which one routinely moved into passenger service.²⁴³ *A Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*, published by the Liverpool Education Committee, was meant to give information and general advice about different occupations for young people. It described the stewards' career prospects as follows: 'Usually passenger servants are promoted from being stewards to the crew through various stages, and in the end become waiters in the 1st class.' It also stated that 'bell boys, cabin boys and mess room boys are also employed and for them there

²⁴³ See for example, Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p.1.

is an opportunity to become assistant stewards'.²⁴⁴ Furthermore, courses were arranged for mess room stewards at the London Nautical Cookery School, but it was anticipated that graduates would find employment mostly on cargo ships.

As the data show, mess room stewards on the large passenger liners were not newcomers. None of the first trippers or those who joined Cunard from another company started as such. Why was the impression given that a mess room steward was the appropriate starting position? It might have been the case on cargo ships and earlier on sailing ships that a boy started as a mess room steward and then proceeded further. On passenger liners, however, the mess room stewards were not very young, even if their age did fall below the average of all workers in the catering department.



Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

Note: Because of the custom of naming all the steward ratings as waiters, there is no information on the ages of steerage stewards (1881-1891) and mess room stewards (1881-1891) in this sample.

Assistant cook seems to have been the most common job title for men in the kitchen on their first trip. Scullery boy or scullion, described by Richard Bond as the most common starting job in the kitchen department, does not occur with any frequency in the statistical data based on the crew agreements.²⁴⁵ In fact, scullions appear on

²⁴⁴ MMM. 710. MAR/PM. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*, p.107.

²⁴⁵ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p.23.

Cunard ships in only two years of the sample (1911 and 1921) and only two of them signed on at the time of their first voyage. They were not very young either- their average age was 26 (1911) and 29 (1921) respectively- which does not suggest that a position as a scullion was an ideal starting position for a young and ambitious seafarer. On Cunard ships, however, the assistant cooks, in the absence of scullions, must have done a great deal of the latter's work. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the demand for assistant cooks fell with mechanisation and this is also supported by the figures presented in Table 4.3: the percentage of all newcomers that were assistant cooks decreased drastically during the period.

On Cunard, only a tiny majority of the catering personnel were first trippers and the company therefore did not fully represent contemporary employment practices. The maritime labour market was segregated hierarchically, as was initiated in Chapter 2. Individual trades and routes had different working conditions. Living conditions were usually better on passenger liners than on tramps, and shipping companies, from time to time, were able to select their employees without great difficulty. Even if there were occasional shortages of stewards at certain ports, Cunard, for example, always found it relatively easy to find employees. Work on transatlantic liners was generally better paid and by reputation more regular: liners therefore did not normally employ inexperienced catering personnel.

Lucrative career advancement only became a reality for a limited number of employees. Even if the principle of seniority was followed, not everybody was able to proceed up the career ladder since many more assistant ratings than senior ratings were employed. A sample of the dataset is used here to give a brief insight into the career patterns of the catering crew. The sample was created consisting of 343 individuals who were identified as having had multiple entries in the crew agreements over different years. The minimum gap in signing on was ten years, except in the case of the period between 1930 and 1938. The data confirm that nearly 50 per cent of the catering personnel did not register any career advancement and six per cent even experienced de-rating. Only 20 per cent enjoyed promotion within a rating (for example, from second saloon steward to saloon steward). The next most common type of promotion was from a lower into a higher class (15 per cent), which usually meant that more money could be made in the form of tips. By contrast,

advancement into supervisory positions (chief stewards, chief cooks or equivalent), or promotion from an assistant to boy rating to a steward or a cook was far less common. These figures, however, should be treated with caution, since studying career advancement is problematic due to the problematic job descriptions used in the crew agreements. Therefore the percentage of those whose jobs remained nominally the same is without doubt larger than it was in reality. It is likely that a person, even if he still worked as a waiter, had advanced into a somewhat better position within his section during the years. Also, some staff had already reached a supervisory position and simply stayed in it. Finally, it has to be remembered that the data only reveals the career patterns of those who stayed for a long time on the same company's ships.

Certain other patterns can be seen in the data. Mess room stewards were indeed promoted to passenger service positions, but it was more common for a steerage steward to be promoted to a higher class. Furthermore, the same individuals were sometimes found on different ships during the year of the sample. Their job titles show that it was fairly usual for catering crew to obtain positions slightly lower on the occupational scale than on the previous trip, depending on what was available and how desperate they were to get a new berth. Staff also accepted different positions within the employment hierarchy in the horizontal scale, for example, signing on as a bedroom steward for one trip and on the next voyage working as a saloon steward. Due to the peculiar nature of seafaring employment patterns, an employment position, by definition, only lasted for one voyage: a new position had to be negotiated for the next trip when employment was again dependent on the availability of suitable posts and the qualifications of other applicants. The extreme casualness of maritime employment and the constant need to negotiate a career pattern were characteristics that were simply not replicated in shore-based employment.

Miscellaneous discharge books at the Merseyside Maritime Museum, which reveal seafarer's careers either in full or in part, have been used to analyse more closely the

career patterns of some members of the catering department.²⁴⁶ An example of someone who started his career as a boy rating and advanced to the position of chief steward was Albert Parr, who was born in 1892 and lived in Liverpool. He joined *Lusitania* as a telephone boy in 1907 and worked as such at least until 1910. He lost his discharge book which was renewed in 1911, by which time he had been promoted to first class waiter. In 1919 he was promoted to chief steward, changing from Cunard to a smaller company, for which he worked until 1926 when he died at sea.²⁴⁷ Robert James Blythyn's career at sea shows that career advancement did not always go according to the books. He started his career as a steward's boy in *Aquitania* at the age of 17 in 1919. He was promoted to a third-class waiter after a year and a half and after a further three months, to a second-class waiter. By the end of 1920 he held the position of a first-class waiter, but was re-rated into the second class after changing ships within the company. Indeed, re-rating was often connected with a change of ship. In 1922, after changing ship again, he had to accept the position of a third-class class waiter and finally settled into the position of an engineer's steward for two years. Afterwards, he was promoted again to first-class waiter and worked as such until 1927, when he was re-rated again as a chief engineers' steward, a position he hold until 1929. Later, he worked as a first class waiter on *Queen Mary* and stayed at sea until at least 1954, when he was employed as a night steward.²⁴⁸ Lift attendants, night stewards and mess room stewards were often positions in which older men in their 50s and 60s were employed.

Normally, a person who went to sea as a member of the catering department would have decided very soon whether he (a woman did not have such a choice) worked in the kitchen or in the stewards' department. It was not common to work alternatively as a cook and a steward. However, at the beginning of the period, especially on small steamers, it occasionally happened. John Flemin, born in 1827, worked on several deep-sea routes and for various shipping companies, both as a steward and a cook

²⁴⁶ Discharge books reveal a seafarer's career by listing all the ships served, dates when signed on and off, position and the ship's route. The continuous discharge books for ship's crews were introduced in 1900.

²⁴⁷ MMM. DX/1359. Discharge books of Albert Parr.

²⁴⁸ MMM. DX/1055. Blythyn / Knill Collection. Discharge books and career papers of Robert James Blythyn.

during the period 1855 to 1882. 'Changing sides' was far more unusual on Cunard and other large liners, even if people did sometimes do various jobs within their particular sections. It was common to work sometimes as a second cook and first cook, depending on the trip. In this sense, catering work on passenger liners became much more segmented (and different) than it had previously been and the traditional work pattern was only retained on small tramps where no passengers were carried.

Promotion prospects also depended on the size of the ship, in other words, on the size of the catering department. As large-scale industries developed in the late nineteenth century, large passenger liners followed general tendency of creating several new job titles in order to ensure the functioning of the workforce, whose tasks had become increasingly segregated and divided into smaller units. Apart from the size of the ship, the 'new institutional apparatus'- the development of modern forms of planning, production and control (or 'personnel management')- gave rise to a whole range of new managerial and supervisory occupations.²⁴⁹ The size of the ship started to affect career patterns, especially towards the end of the period. The larger the vessel, the longer the career ladder became. For example, there were four different grades of pursers on Cunard (A, B, C and D). The senior assistant pursers were graded as E and F and junior assistant pursers as G, H, I and J. The larger the ship, the more ratings there were, and differences in wages became more pronounced, with greater responsibility and authority entrusted to chief pursers. Pursers had to be 22 years of age, show some previous experience, and pass a company examination. A memorandum from the mid-1920s regarding pursers' pay and conditions emphasised that promotion should be given by merit rather than on seniority, which indicates that seniority was still the most important criterion for promotion.²⁵⁰ A similar grading system applied to leading stewards. Job titles were divided into grades and when a man was promoted from the 'rank and file', he started on grade G and was promoted to a position of Extra Tourist Chief Steward or Extra Chief Third Class Steward. The General Manager stated that:

²⁴⁹ Veronica Beechey, 'The sexual division of labour and the labour process: a critical assessment of Braverman' in Stephen Wood (ed.), *The Degradation of Work? Skill, deskilling and labour process*. (London, 1982), p.65.

²⁵⁰ UL. CA. D42/C2/259. 'Cunard Pay and Conditions of Pursers and Assistant Pursers 1922-1926'.

Promotion to a higher rank or another grade will depend on his own ability to prove himself capable of advancement. It is not necessary that any rating should stay in any grade for a lengthy period, on the other hand circumstances may not permit of rapid advancement but whilst remaining in any specific grade he will receive £1 per month, except in Grades F and G.²⁵¹

It appears that as well as merit, the time spent on each rung of the ladder was an important criterion for promotion. Other grades also had to spend a recommended period of time before being considered for promotion to the next grade.

Appointment to most posts in the deck and engineers departments required formal certification, but this was not the case in relation to catering personnel. What personal qualities therefore did one need to obtain promotion within the catering department? Contemporary instructions for stewards provide some insight into this question. They state that:

as a general rule advancement comes more rapidly to those who have in addition to the indispensable qualities enumerated above ('deftness, quickness, civility and a certain measure of refinement of speech and manner, cleanliness in both person and work and a natural aptitude to desire and please'), a cheerful pleasant manner, everlasting patience and sufficient self-control to restrain any outward expression of annoyance under the most trying circumstances.²⁵²

Those who managed to stay on good terms with their work mates, superiors and passengers, had the best chance of promotion. The most important criterion for promotion, however, was the ability to please the passengers. The superiors kept a careful account of their conduct and sometimes a single complaint from a passenger was enough to stop promotion or even to cause dismissal.²⁵³

In the absence of formal training, other methods were used to measure abilities and skills. Richard Bond wrote of the steward's profession as follows:

The duties of a steward, like all other professions, are only learned after years of labour, and the ability to climb the ladder of success to

²⁵¹ UL. CA. GM9/6/12. Letter from General Manager's office to C.E. Cottrell, April 27, 1937.

²⁵² UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/3/16. *Do's and Don'ts for Stewards*.

²⁵³ NMM. P & O /77/ 12-30. P&O's steward's records on catering staff.

the top is decided by the skill and reliability of the steward, and the developed sense of tact, patience, and adaptability under many trying conditions.²⁵⁴

The importance of promotion cannot be overestimated. The shipboard hierarchy was based on job titles, and this was reflected in every aspect of life on board and, to a lesser extent, in the private life of every worker. Sometimes promotion determined when it was an appropriate time for a man to marry. In 1910, a Cunard steward asked for shore leave from the company's chairman in order to get married. The reply from A. A. Booth refused the request and stated: 'The request is foolish... wait to get married until you have established yourself on a more secure footing by proving your ability and keenness'.²⁵⁵ The rewards of promotion were not only financial: advancement to a supervisory position was an indicator of social distinction and bestowed advantages over 'ordinary' stewards. The size of cabin accommodation, the extent of privacy and the quality of food on board all increased in relation to status. Personal appearance and manners were also closely scrutinised by superior staff and determined an employee's career prospects. As a result, the personal likes and dislikes of both passengers and superiors alike played an important part in determining career advancement.

The career advancement of catering personnel manifested itself in different ways in comparison to other groups within the maritime labour force. Not only was promotion to a supervisory position regarded as a career advancement, but a transfer to another class was equally important, since a steward's status (and his financial situation) was directly related to that of his passengers'. Age and the principle of seniority were important factors in determining an individual's prospects for promotion. The most senior positions were allocated to individuals of a certain age group (see Figure 4.1). The figure suggests the age, as well as the years served within a company, were equally important factors in promotion. The Blue Funnel, for example, kept careful accounts of their stewards, especially on how many years they had served the company. The company's service records reveal their age, the year they joined the company and the year in which they were promoted.

²⁵⁴ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p. 1.

²⁵⁵ UL, CA. C1/212. Letter from Mr Le Sueur to A.A. Booth, Chairman on 22 July 1910, and reply 26 July.

Table 4.4. Career advancement of chief stewards in Blue Funnel, 1907-1936, by average age

<i>Joined the Company</i>	<i>Age when joined</i>	<i>Years served before promoted</i>	<i>Age promoted</i>
1907-1909	22	7	29
1910-1913	21	8	29
1914-1920	26	14	40
1921-1924	24	15	39
1925-1929	25	14	39
1930-1934	18	14	32
1931-1936	19	18	37

Source: MMM. 6.C.1842.Blue Funnel Line.Service Records 1914-1957. Table is comprised of the first one hundred entries in the records.

Table 4.4 suggests that a successful career often meant hard work and long service with one company. Climbing up the career ladder was not quick- it took an average of 15 years to get to the top. The average age of joining the company was reasonably high, which further suggests that a person was able to enter into a seafaring profession at a more mature age. Some of these chief stewards might also have started going to sea at a much earlier age, but worked for another shipping company previously. The average age on promotion rose after 1914 as a result of the increase in the size of the catering department and development of new ratings. The hierarchy within the catering personnel became more complicated and there were therefore additional steps to climb. The careful recording of the time workers had served on the company and the allocation of the leading positions to more senior members of the crew suggest that even if the importance of seniority decreased, it remained an important factor in promotion decisions. The data also suggest that seafaring in the steam era was not solely a young man's profession, as had been case in the time of the sailing ships.

5. Working Conditions: Catering Personnel as Seafarers

5.1. Introduction

The reason for the continuing neglect of catering personnel in maritime labour history lies in the belief that they were first and foremost service workers and hence not seafarers in the proper sense of the word. Catering personnel have either been completely ignored in previous historical studies, or regarded purely as hotel or restaurant workers with little in common with 'real' maritime labour.²⁵⁶ In this sense, maritime historians have adopted the hierarchical attitude prevalent in seafaring according to which different types of work are regarded as 'menial', 'manly' or as constituting 'proper seafaring'.²⁵⁷ However, the reality of their working conditions was much more complicated. There were some characteristics unique to catering personnel, which separated them from both the rest of the maritime labour force and also from shore-based service workers. However, this study takes the perspective that catering personnel were primarily seafarers. Even if the labour processes of the catering department were similar to service work ashore, the working *conditions* of the catering personnel were very similar to the rest of maritime labour.

The first section (5.2.) explores the principles of pay in the catering department- the pay itself and the method by which it was earned. It examines variations of pay according to the route, the size of the ship and the class in which one served. A large part of the analysis is dedicated to tips and an attempt has been made to calculate the stewards' real income after the unwaged part is added to the formal wages. The pay policies of the large passenger liner companies will be examined by devoting special attention to the differing principles of pay applied to the catering personnel in comparison to the other departments. Section 5.3 will extend the analysis of pay and conditions by examining the peculiar working hours of the catering personnel, which were, in practise, practically unlimited. Catering personnel became a crucial group in

²⁵⁶ Valerie Burton admits that the expansion of the catering personnel between 1870- 1920 was important but classifies them as 'first and foremost service workers'. Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 142. Eric Sager, another notable exception who has included catering personnel in his book on Canadian merchant seafarers, takes a similar viewpoint. He argues that the work of the catering personnel was similar to the work done on land and called their work 'basic service work requiring brief on-the-job training.' Sager, *Ships and Memories*, p. 63.

²⁵⁷ Lane, *Grey Dawn Breaking*, p. 152.

the battle over the adoption of the eight-hour day at sea, since they were the most overworked group on passenger liners. Section 5.4 will explore the nature of discipline at sea and how it was defined. Log books, stewards' registers from various shipping companies and black books have been used as source material for this section in order to analyse the most common offences of the catering personnel. Their living conditions at sea will be examined in Section 5.5 with special reference to accommodation and food and the final section (5.6) further stresses the seafaring aspects of the catering personnel's working conditions, with a closer look at cooks' and bakers' tasks at sea.

5.2. The waged and the unwaged income of the catering personnel

The principles of pay for catering personnel differed from other maritime labour in several ways. A major part of caterers' income came straight from the passengers' pockets in the form of tips. The pay of the catering personnel also differed from service labour ashore, even if the custom of tipping originated from land-based service industries. As with other maritime workers, their wages were subject to the pay policies adopted by the shipping industry as determined or influenced by individual shipping companies, various governmental regulatory bodies and trade unions. As the catering departments grew, the question of catering personnel's wages became increasingly important for the liner companies. The question of caterers' overtime was also a crucial debate during the period because they worked much longer hours for their monthly wages than other seafarers.

In the sailing ships and early steam packets cooks often earned slightly more than ordinary seamen. They could earn even more than able seamen (A.B.'s) if the tasks of a cook and a steward were combined. Their salary, however, remained lower than the A.B.s' unless they attended to passengers. When passengers were carried there

was a tendency for galley crew's wages to increase. Also, a cook who prepared meals for the passengers often received a better wage than a ship's cook who would only provide food for the crew.²⁵⁸

On Cunard's North Atlantic routes in 1871, stewards earned £3 a month compared to firemen's wages of £4.10s and £4 for the able-bodied seamen. The discrepancy remained in the 1930s: in 1931 stewards' wages were £8.5s, compared to £9.10s for firemen and £9 for able-bodied seamen. In making such comparisons it has to be remembered that firemen, for example, worked an eight-hour day by the end of the nineteenth century, whilst the hours of the catering personnel were unrestricted.

The wages varied in different ports and on different routes. Wage differentials between sailing ships and steamships widened from 20 to 30 per cent in the 1880s to 30 to 40 per cent by the 1890s.²⁵⁹ Foreign labour usually had to accept worse working conditions on sailing ships, as well as bad salaries. However, passenger liner companies operating east of the Suez Canal were able to use Lascar and Chinese labour, who would work under 'Asiatic Agreements' and hence were subject to lower pay and worse working conditions than European crew. Among Cunard's routes, the North Atlantic run was the best paid, while the Mediterranean and Le Havre routes paid less. Stewards, for example, were paid £3 per month on the North Atlantic in 1861, while the Mediterranean and Le Havre routes offered only £2.10s. The same difference in pay existed for second cooks: £5 on the North Atlantic, but only £4 on the other routes. Valerie Burton has presented further evidence on the variation in stewards' pay on individual routes and confirmed that the differences were indeed substantial, but had levelled out by the end of the 1910s.²⁶⁰ The large steamship companies had a reputation for paying their catering personnel well, so well, according to Bullen, that, 'You will find them occupying comfortable positions

²⁵⁸ Jonathan Press, *The Economic and Social Conditions of the Merchant Seamen of England 1815-1854*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Bristol (1978), p. 130.

²⁵⁹ Lindop, *Seamen's Trade Unionism to 1929*, p. 38.

²⁶⁰ She noted that by the end of the nineteenth century, the wages varied more with service than with locality. She showed also that the stewards' pay was the same in South American, West Indies and South African services but higher on North American routes. Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 82-84.

ashore while still in the prime of life, having earned sufficient within a few years to enable them to abandon the strenuous toil demanded of them at sea'.²⁶¹

Towards the end of the period, the size of a ship became a critical factor in determining wage levels, especially for the senior ratings. In the Cunard-White Star Company in the 1930s, senior posts were divided according to a grading plan, with the largest vessels offering the best rates of pay.²⁶²

Unlike the rest of the passenger liner crew, catering ratings had a weekly salary at the beginning of the period. The senior members of the kitchen crew were paid monthly and the purser received an annual salary. By the 1880s the leading ratings had been transferred to a monthly salary whereas ordinary ratings continued to be paid on a weekly basis until the 1890s. There were also differences between routes: in the 1890s, the Mediterranean and coastal routes still paid weekly salaries, but by the beginning of the twentieth century all wages were paid on a monthly basis.²⁶³ The money was usually paid in cash at the end of the voyage or on the day before sailing.²⁶⁴ The Seamen's Allotment Act of 1911, however, allowed seafarers to send home a part of their wages in instalments.

The stewards' pay remained much the same between the 1860s and the 1890s. The stewards' salary on Atlantic liners was £3.2s and on other routes £2.10s. By the early twentieth century, their wages had risen to £3.5s on some liners, but on others had fallen to £2.5s. Wages on the Mediterranean routes did not rise from the 1860s level until the 1920s. On average, the seamen's wages between 1896-1910 increased by 7-8 per cent, whilst workers' pay in Britain in general increased by about 10 per cent. The late-nineteenth century and early-twentieth was a period of stagnation for seafarers' wages in general.²⁶⁵ Seafarers' wages (catering personnel included) started to rise during the First World War. By 1919, when national standard rates of pay

²⁶¹ Bullen, *The Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 194. Other references to the North Atlantic ships' wages being relatively high, see Chapter 2 and for the earlier period, see Jonathan Press, *The Economic and Social Conditions of the Merchant Seamen of England 1815-1854*, p.124.

²⁶² UL. CA. GM 9/6/12. Sea Staff, Rates of Pay Memorandum, 1 April 1937.

²⁶³ Dataset 1861-1938.

²⁶⁴ Dataset 1861-1938; Hilton, 'One of Cunard's Cooks Recalls the Glory Days', p. 10.

²⁶⁵ Arthur Marsh and Victoria Ryan, *The Seamen* (Oxford, 1989), p.50.

were established by the National Maritime Board (NMB)²⁶⁶, the war risk bonus of £3 had been added to the catering personnel's wages.²⁶⁷ The standard wage for catering staff then was £13.5s plus a right to overtime in port. However, in 1921 when unemployment started to rise and trade collapsed, the average wage rates fell by 23 per cent.²⁶⁸ The economic situation affected the shipping industry badly and the employers started to enforce drastic reductions in wages.

Notwithstanding the fierce opposition by catering personnel and a strike by the caterers' union, wage reductions were implemented in 1921 throughout the shipping industry.²⁶⁹ The stewards' standard level of pay of £13.15s per month was gradually reduced by £5.10s between 1921 and 1925. At the same time, the working conditions of the catering personnel deteriorated, since they also lost the port overtime agreement, which they had only been obtained in 1919. The *Marine Caterer* emphasised its importance as the 'greatest that has been achieved on behalf of our members'.²⁷⁰ Further reductions in seafarers' pay were negotiated through the National Maritime Board in 1932, although the previous rates were finally restored in 1937.²⁷¹ After the wage reductions of the 1920s, the stewards' pay on the North Atlantic remained at around £8.5s throughout the 1930s, but had risen to £8.17.6 by 1938. By comparison, for assistant stewards and stewardesses the NMB scale was £7.11.6 in 1935 and £7.16s in 1936.²⁷²

Cunard paid ordinary stewards according to the NMB minimum rates and occasionally at a higher rate. At the beginning of the 1930s, the period of high unemployment and depression, the company's opinion was that the ordinary

²⁶⁶ National Maritime Board was established during the First World War to regulate the seafarers' wages. The NMB was a negotiating body involving the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union (later National Union of Seamen) and the Shipping Federation. Until 1921 also National Union of Ship' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers had their own representatives.

²⁶⁷ *The National Maritime Board 1919. Standard rates of pay, hours of labour, and other determinations.* National rates of pay did not apply to Lascars. They were paid lower rates than British crews. They were cheap labour also because they did not require the same living space and food than those on European articles.

²⁶⁸ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p.111.

²⁶⁹ The stewards' strike and the rise of trade unionism among the catering staff will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.

²⁷⁰ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1919), p. 1.

²⁷¹ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p. 141.

²⁷² UW. MRC. MSS.367/NMB/1/2/16. Catering Department. Monthly Rates of Pay. National Maritime Board Scale, March 25, 1935; MSS.367/NMB/2/17; Catering Department. Monthly Rates of Pay. National Maritime Board Scale, February 25, 1936.

stewards should not be paid more than the minimum, but that the senior ratings were worth more pay. The company wanted to maintain the difference between ordinary stewards and 'those who by virtue of having a more responsible post are paid slightly higher than the standard rate as approved by the National Maritime Board'.²⁷³ Senior ratings- barkeepers, linen keepers, storekeepers and headwaiters- were paid about 30 per cent more than the ordinary ratings.

Some members of the catering department, such as barbers and clothes-pressers, worked entirely on commission. They received a nominal wage from the company and paid rent for their shop. They were, however, entitled to all the profits they made. Particularly in the 1920s and 1930s, a reasonable portion of the wages of the catering personnel could consist of various monetary bonuses, which were ostensibly designed to raise the work motivation. During the war, all seafarers were entitled to a war bonus, especially if the ships were operating in a dangerous area and during the post-war period shipping companies made increasing use of this mechanism for raising labour productivity. There is no evidence of earlier attempts by shipping companies to 'motivate' employees through the bonus system before the First World War, even if in other industries various bonus systems were introduced already in the last decade of the nineteenth century.²⁷⁴ The new wage systems, such as payments by results and bonus systems, were introduced as incentives to work harder and increase productivity.²⁷⁵ According to Lewchuck, the incentive pay was seen as an essential element of British management system by the late 1920s.²⁷⁶ Cunard inaugurated a bonus system in 1924 for those in charge of a company's stores on board in order to prevent waste. The bigger the ship, the more the bonus system was in use. It was granted to storekeepers, pantry stewards, fruit-men, salad men, chefs, ship's cooks, butchers and bakers. The sums varied, but the storekeeper (£6.15s) and chef (£3.12.6) received the largest bonuses. Chefs were granted a bonus in 1928 for their 'added interest' in the cooking for third class passengers and the tourist class when the kitchens were separated. Butchers, in turn, were paid a bonus of £2 if a milk emulsifier was carried. Men who were in charge of the electroplates, cutlery and

²⁷³ CA, UL. Memorandum from Catering Department to General Manager, December 28, 1937.

²⁷⁴ Wayne Lewchuck, 'Fordism and British Motor Car Employers 1896-1932' in Howard E. Gospel and Craig L. Littler (eds.), *Managerial Strategies and Industrial Relations* (London, 1983), p.84.

²⁷⁵ Arthur J. McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain 1880-1950* (Basingstoke, 2001), p.66.

²⁷⁶ Lewchuck, 'Fordism and British Motor Car Employers 1896-1932', p. 86.

china received a bonus of 10s to £1.17.6 depending on the ship and rank. Deck stewards were entitled to bonuses according to how many chairs they hired out to passengers. First class chairs must have been more expensive than second class ones, since the second-class bonus was only half of the first.²⁷⁷ The payment of 'fat money' to certain kitchen ratings was in use at least from the 1920s as a means of reducing any unnecessary waste of fat, while White Star and Cunard operated several other bonuses for translators, chief stewards, chefs, surgeons, laundry crew etc.²⁷⁸ For example, Cunard granted pursers a bonus of £25 per month 'in lieu of profit in exchange' [of currency].²⁷⁹ However, the bonuses for captains, officers, engineers, pursers and chief stewards were abolished in 1935 in exchange for a pay rise by the newly merged Cunard White Star Line.²⁸⁰

In accordance with old practice, a seafarer's pay was stopped whilst in port. However, with the development of passenger shipping this custom was gradually abolished, as especially catering personnel were needed whilst in port. The ordinary ratings would normally sign off straight after arrival, whilst the others would work in port on a nine to five basis and be signed off during the last day before departure. There was plenty of maintenance work to do, as well as attending to the passengers. Senior members of the crew were not paid off after each voyage and therefore became permanent employees of the company. On Cunard White Star Line, full pay for ten days when not working by the ship and half pay thereafter was guaranteed for official ratings from 1933 and for specialised cooks from 1936 onwards, although the senior ranks had already enjoyed this benefit previously on White Star Line. The assistant ratings were guaranteed half sea-pay when they were not working on the ship.²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ UL,CA, GM2/1-2.'Revised scales of bonuses.' Memorandum to Pursers, April 29, 1930.

²⁷⁸ UL,CA, GM9/6/15. Rates of pay adjustments as from January 1, 1938.

²⁷⁹ UL,CA, D42/C2/259. Memorandum, April 17, 1926.

²⁸⁰ UL,CA, GM9/6/12. Memorandum from the General Manager. January 4, 1935.

²⁸¹ UL,CA, GM9/6/12. Catering Department. Grading plan operative on and from April 1, 1937 with revised rates of pay; Letter from General Manager's Office to C.E. Cottrell, April 27, 1937.

Some statistical comparisons with salaries ashore can be made by comparing the catering personnel's income with information on the shore-based catering trade collected by the Ministry of Labour in 1929. According to the survey, stewards' wages compared favourably with that of their counterparts in large hotels (of more than ten bedrooms). Whereas the ordinary saloon steward's monthly income was calculated at £13.9s with tips included, 77.5 per cent of the adult males employed in hotels earned under £12 a month in total. In 1930 the ordinary steward's waged income was £8.5s, but only about 20 per cent of the ashore-based catering staff earned the equivalent wage.²⁸² The evidence suggests that catering personnel's earnings, at least from early twentieth century onwards, compared favourably with wages on land in general, but the hours were often longer. In the 1910s, the chief baker would expect to earn £8 per month ashore, but the similar rating onboard would earn £12 per month.²⁸³ Furthermore, shipping companies provided upkeep when onboard, which was estimated to be worth 4-5 shillings per week in the 1920s.²⁸⁴ It has to be remembered though that many domestic servants, as well as hotel and restaurant workers, also lived at their workplace and their salary was adjusted accordingly.²⁸⁵

Tips formed a very important part of the stewards' income. However, access to this income source varied greatly according to the passenger class. First class and cabin class stewards, for example, had much better prospects of receiving substantial tips than their counterparts assigned to the third class. According to John Jenkins, a bell boy on *Mauretania* in the 1930s 'although our pay was not very good, the generosity of the passengers enabled us to enjoy our time ashore and save a little for home'.²⁸⁶ John Dempsey, who started at sea as a bell boy and later advanced to a bath attendant, recalled how the bugler took the bell boys' tips and put them under the purser's care.²⁸⁷ And a brochure on employment at sea advised that '[p]romotion does not go by wages, but from a post where few gratuities are received to one where

²⁸² Ministry of Labour, *Report on an Enquiry into Remuneration, Hours of Employment, etc., in the Catering Trade* (London, 1930), p. xiii & xix.

²⁸³ MMM. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*. pp. 8-9, 27-28, 63,64.

²⁸⁴ UL.CA. D42/AC14/32. Memorandum from the catering department to the general manager. October 4 1934; Memorandum to the managers. September 1 1925.

²⁸⁵ MMM. 710.MAR/PM. *Handbook for Employments in Liverpool*, pp. 88-89.

²⁸⁶ John Jenkins, 'Young Bellboy Goes to Sea on the *Mauretania*', p.8.

²⁸⁷ John Dempsey, *I've Seen Them All Naked* (Poole, 1992), p.3

more money can be made'.²⁸⁸ Further, within each class, the posts were classified hierarchically not according to wage levels, but based on access to tips. Although it is difficult to estimate exactly what part of stewards' income was comprised of tips, contemporary sources and memoirs imply that tips were extremely important.²⁸⁹ Again, some comparisons can be made using the Ministry of Labour's enquiry into the catering trade ashore. According to their estimate, 44.2 per cent of adult males received tips: 5.6 per cent of them earned under £2, 12 per cent £2-£8, 9 per cent £8-£12 per month and 17.6 per cent more than £12 per month in tips.²⁹⁰ A deck steward on a transatlantic passenger liner could earn £14 per month in tips, his income from this source was well above the average for shore-based staff. However, ordinary stewards working as waiters earned something between £4.16s and £9.4s per month in tips, which was not remarkably higher compared to their shore-based counterparts. Stewardesses on passenger liners were also better placed in this respect than women who worked ashore in a similar context. In the late-1920s stewardesses were reputed to earn £20 per month in tips. By contrast, only 30 per cent of women who worked in hotels had access to tips: only 0.5 per cent could expect to receive tips of more than £12 and 16.8 per cent of the sample received less than £2 per month from this source.²⁹¹

Tips, especially on North Atlantic passenger liners, were regarded as generous. According to a contemporary source:

The official pay of any steward, from the chief downwards, gives a very poor idea of his total income, including tips and commissions. At the home port of a giant liner you are quite likely to see a chief steward met at the quay by his chauffeur and limousine, while the captain walks off towards an omnibus. For the chief steward's income is often twice the captain's...²⁹²

²⁸⁸ MMM.DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p.5.

²⁸⁹ See, for example, Clive Brooks, *Life on the Liners* (Southampton, 1990), pp. 35-37. 'The Stewardess Nurse', an article on the *Queen Magazine*, also states that 'a large proportion of the salary of the stewardess comes out of the pockets of the women passengers in the form of tips'. Reprinted in Rupert Prior, *Ocean Liners. The Golden Years*. (London, 1993), p.88.

²⁹⁰ *Report on an Enquiry into Renumeration...* p.xv.

²⁹¹ *Report on an Enquiry into Renumeration...* p.xv-xvi.

²⁹² Roydon Freeman, *Sea Travel. The Serious Side and the Humorous Side* (London, 1930), p.10.

Since tips were frequently an important component of total income, specific arrangements were made for some elements of the stewarding staff, who would not normally have had contact with passengers. For example, they were allocated a certain number of tables at meal times in order to supplement their income. There is also strong evidence that catering crew tipped each other for special services, which gave certain groups who worked behind the 'iron curtain', and therefore did not have direct contact with passengers, access to tips. A contemporary source advised passengers to give generous tips to waiters, 'because he has to share it with the kitchen staff.'²⁹³ The same source noted that a 'ship's pool' existed in the 1930s, which enabled each group of workers to have a share of the available tips: 'there is an elaborate system of sharing out, in which those who serve behind the scenes receive a small charge'. The author claimed that on a large North Atlantic liner the pool would be a maximum of £400 a day, an estimate which should be taken with a pinch of salt, since there is an undertone of bitterness over the tips that stewards earned: 'a man of his limited ability, mental and physical, technically unskilled...' should not have earned such large sums of money.²⁹⁴

Terry Coleman also mentions the phenomenon of stewards tipping each other, and Valerie Burton in her study of passenger liner crews confirmed the existence of this custom on the basis of oral testimonies.²⁹⁵ Mr John Jenkins, who went to sea as a bell boy, helped the deck steward with afternoon teas: 'as well as few dollars of my help, I enjoyed my own tea and biscuits in his pantry, much appreciated by a hungry 14-year-old.'²⁹⁶ *Marine Caterer*, the union magazine mentioned the custom of waiters tipping pantry men and indicated that 'certain stewards pay for better service on behalf of their passengers.'²⁹⁷ Finally, John Crawley, who worked on Canadian Pacific ships in the 1920s, claimed the habit of the senior stewards paying 'bloods' or 'hoodles' to cooks was 'a way of supplementing poor pay and it maintained an entente cordiale between restaurant and kitchen'.²⁹⁸

²⁹³ Freeman, *Sea Travel*, p.6.

²⁹⁴ *ibid*, p.12.

²⁹⁵ Coleman, *The Liners*, p.172; Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p. 144.

²⁹⁶ John Jenkins, p. 9.

²⁹⁷ *Marine Caterer*, No. 8 (1912), p.411.

²⁹⁸ George Musk, *Canadian Pacific. The Story of the Famous Shipping Line* (London, 1981), p.40.

There were various ways of tipping on liners. A small tip with each purchase of a drink was acceptable, but as a rule, tips were paid at the end of the voyage. On world cruises, tips were given at the end of each week.²⁹⁹ The more luxurious the cabin, the more tips you were expected to pay. In the 1930s tips for a five-day period were recommended as follows: cabin and table stewards 2s each; deck, bath and boots stewards 4s each; library steward 2s; and the bartender 4s. For a three-week voyage £1 was said to be the correct amount for cabin or table stewards. The smoke room steward was said to be the best tipped man on board. However, Freeman's guide warned that stewards would expect 50 per cent more than the recommended amount, and higher sums were sometimes paid by the more generous passengers. The chief stewards were sometimes tipped, but not as a rule.³⁰⁰

The practice of tipping at sea divided contemporary opinion, but the custom was certainly well known to the general public. Freeman, for example, was of the opinion that tipping had become a form of blackmailing, which was evident when the pool of tips was divided between the waiter and those who worked in the pantry or in the kitchen. If a steward was suspected by his work mates of not sacrificing a sufficient proportion of his tips, they made sure that he received poor attention and was kept waiting as long as possible, so that his passengers complained and consequently, gave fewer tips. According to this view, stewards blackmailed the passengers and the kitchen staff, in turn, blackmailed the steward.³⁰¹ Maida Nixson, a stewardess, described the method of getting as many tips as possible from the passengers in the following fashion:

They [stewardesses], like stewards, were not at sea for their health, or to admire this world so wide; they were there to get money, as much of it as could be skewered out of passengers at the end of the trip. People were 'all right' or 'no good' according to the tips they might give...Some passengers, decent ones, rewarded one in the privacy of their cabins. The ones who didn't must be waylaid, dogged and if necessary, reminded.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ MMM. DX/1560/4/1. The Annual Franconia's World Cruise 1923-1924, Voyage accounts relating to Anne Smith, Stewardess with Cunard Line 1921-1930.

³⁰⁰ Freeman, *Sea Travel*, p.56.

³⁰¹ *ibid*, p.12.

³⁰² Maida Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess* (London, 1954), pp. 23 and 34.

Maida Nixon herself found tipping ethically questionable. Indeed, she found it difficult to justify why staff should expect double payment for their work, although they 'should be recompensated of their human dignity'.³⁰³ Service work, according to Nixon, was very hard work and somewhat degrading which the passengers should pay for.

Jealousy often affected the attitudes towards tips and stewards were envied by other crew members and by landlubbers alike. Other evidence suggests a certain envy on the part of deck officers towards the income of catering personnel. The magazine *Chief Steward and the Floating Hotel* commented on a letter by a second deck officer in the *Nautical Magazine* in which he had complained about the good earnings of stewards and cooks as compared with deck officers and captains. The chief stewards' magazine replied as follows:

Again, he says that the chief steward of a liner is far better off in every way than the captain of a good sized cargo steamer, and can afford to reside next door to the commander of his ship if he chooses to do so. I suppose the officer's idea is that the chief steward is nobody, and should live in the slums...He further criticises a chief steward who retired from a large Liverpool liner only a year ago, and now spends most of his time 'collecting the rents from his property'. Of course, that is a crime.³⁰⁴

Because of their lower pay, tips formed an important part of stewards' income, yet working for tips was regarded as unmanly and degrading. According to Bullen 'there is among sailors a marked repugnance to the tip because 'the subordinates are always expected to keep a smile'.³⁰⁵ Also *the British Seafarer*, a union magazine, was highly critical of the practise of tipping:

The tipping system, happily approaching its doom, attacks those whose circumstances compel them to seek a living under it, saps their manliness and independence, and creates antagonisms and jealousies, favouritism and sneakishness, snobbishness and servility, all of which have prevented men recognising wherein lay their real interests.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Nixon, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, pp. 35-36.

³⁰⁴ MMM. DX/1242. *Chief Steward and the Floating Hotel* Vol. XIX, No. 77 (1913), pp. 72-73.

³⁰⁵ Bullen, *Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 179.

³⁰⁶ *The British Seafarer*, Vol. II, No. 3 (1914), p.3.

The practice of passengers tipping stewards was also used against them on several occasions. Even the seamen's union leader, J. Havelock Wilson, justified a reduction in stewards' wages in the 1920s. He had little sympathy for their situation and was of the opinion that stewards deserved the reduction in wages because they were no worse off than sailors and firemen due to their tips. He argued that the stewards set aside as much as £30 to £40 pounds in tips on an Atlantic voyage.³⁰⁷

By contrast, stewards themselves insisted that lucrative tips were a great illusion. According to *The British Seafarer*:

The experienced man knows how much of these stories contain and the beginner soon learns that the 'travelling public' are very liberal in their demands but the reverse of generous in the matter of 'tips', which are conspicuous in their absence...³⁰⁸

The ship owners' attitudes towards tipping changed during the period. In the mid-nineteenth century, stewards were forbidden to accept gratuities from passengers. However, the ship owners soon changed their minds when they realised that tips paid by passengers could justify low wages. On *Franconia's* annual world cruise in 1923-1924, passengers were explicitly advised to give tips and gratuities to the crew. The system of tipping was justified by the ship owners as follows: 'The fact, that the amount of personal service demanded by different persons varies greatly still further emphasises the desirability of the personal tip'.³⁰⁹ The ship owners concluded that paying low wages could improve service since the steward would work for longer hours and try harder to please the passengers in the hope of receiving good tips. Why would they bother being nice to customers other than for monetary rewards? The shipping companies, by paying low wages, guaranteed luxurious service to passengers, but this service was ultimately paid directly by the passengers themselves -not by the shipping company. When the employers discussed the eight-hour day, it was implicitly stated that long hours of labour without overtime were justified by access to tips: 'it is believed, that the stewards themselves would not agree to any alterations to conditions which involved double shifts, as this would

³⁰⁷ UW. MRC. MSS.175A/Box 49. Publication concerning reduction on stewards' wages.

³⁰⁸ *The British Seafarer*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1914), p. 3.

³⁰⁹ MMM. DX/1560/4/1. 'The Annual Franconia's World Cruise 1923-1924'.

halve the revenue derived from gratuities'.³¹⁰ When accused of overworking their catering staff, the ship owners emphasised the nature of the work of the catering department ('which closely resembles that which obtains in domestic service and in hotels on shore') and stated that the 'comparatively long hours of attendance are compensated by gratuities from passengers'.³¹¹ In 1925 Mr J. McMahan complained by letter to the Chairman of Cunard about having to do two jobs as a gym-instructor and as a chief boots steward. His hours were from 4am until 10pm without being entitled to any extra pay. The chairman refused the extra pay on the grounds that he would have received additional 'recompense from passengers with whom he came into contact'.³¹² A recognition that tips formed an essential part of the salary was also evident in the tradition of the Ben Line, which provided stewardesses with compensation for the loss of gratuities when there was a lack of women passengers on board.³¹³

Unfortunately, no calculations have been made by historians of a steward's real income. Valerie Burton estimated that 'the unwaged portion of stewards' earnings may well have been equal to, if not greater than their wages'.³¹⁴ The following section will therefore draw on a range of contemporary sources and the archives of individual shipping companies in order to analyse the different components of a steward's real wage. A bell boy whose first trip was a six-day cruise to Spain in 1935, remembers making more money on tips than on wages (his wages were £2 a month).³¹⁵ A recruitment guide from the beginning of the twentieth century told the prospective applicants that saloon waiters received 10 shillings per seat for the New York route, and more on longer voyages.³¹⁶ According to the same source, the first or second class waiter had six to eight seats on average, which meant that a first-class waiter could make 60- 80 shillings per transatlantic voyage. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a return journey would last less than a month and by 1910 the

³¹⁰ UL.CA. B 12. Conference of Hours of Labour at Sea. Memorandum which expressed the views of the employer members for the National Maritime Board's meeting held on April 20, 1920.

³¹¹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/12. Letter from G.A. Vallance, the General Secretary of the National Maritime Board, to the Board of Trade, 10 April, 1931.

³¹² UL.CA. D42/C2/259. Letter to Sir Royden from J. McMahan, December 29, 1928 and the reply January 2, 1929.

³¹³ Blake, *The Ben Line 1925-1955*, p.62.

³¹⁴ Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p.84.

³¹⁵ 'A Life on the Ocean Wave' *Liverpool Echo*, Monday, July 10 (2000), p.4.

³¹⁶ MMM.DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on Large Liners*, p.5.

journey time had been reduced to about 17 days, which meant that a steward was able to make one return trip and one and a half trips respectively. In 1901, for example, a first-class steward could earn £3.5s per month in wages and £6-£8 as tips before the deduction of any payments to the galley crew.

Because second class passengers were only expected to pay about half of the first-class figures, the stewards allocated to that class inevitably earned less. However, as the passenger-steward ratio was higher than in the first class, they would have direct contact with more passengers than the first-class waiters in the dining room. Third-class stewards received hardly any tips at all, and their job, as a result, was far less remunerative than on the other classes. However, relatively easy earnings were promised to prospective stewards on passenger liners. A contemporary source revealed: 'A boy who is gifted with that ingratiating manner which draws money out of their pockets will probably make a larger income as a steward than he would in most of the professions for which long training, knowledge and brain are required.' The author argued that tipping on a liner was not comparable to that ashore, since the catering personnel at sea were paid a reasonable salary unlike those on land, who would be 'either paid nothing or even pay for the privilege of being allowed to wait, just for the sake of tips'.³¹⁷ Indeed, according to a survey by the Ministry of Labour, a small proportion of workers in the catering trade depended entirely on tips.³¹⁸ However, depending on individual trades, about 60 per cent of catering workers had no access to tips. The percentage of those who received tips was highest in hotels and lowest in public houses. Women and men had an equal access to tips, but the *amount* of tips was much higher amongst men.³¹⁹

It has to be understood, though, that passenger numbers and the value of tips varied significantly, and that catering personnel were never promised a guaranteed amount. The unwaged part of their income was insecure and only a very small percentage of stewards were in a position to earn large sums of money from tips. However, on

³¹⁷ Freeman, *Sea Travel*, pp.11-12.

³¹⁸ Ministry of Labour, *Report on an Enquiry into Remuneration*,...p. xii. Unfortunately the survey does not provide us with percentages of workers without cash wages.

³¹⁹ *ibid*

Lusitania's winter trip to New York in 1911, there were 272 first class passengers and stewards to passengers ratio was 1:2. By using data on the ratio of waiters to passengers (Table 3.5) and Freeman's recommendations regarding tips, a rough estimate of earnings potential can be made. If second class cabin stewards received in tips between £1.4s (minimum) and £2.8s (maximum) per voyage, they would have earned on average £5.4s per month in tips, assuming that they were able to make three separate trips during that period. It has to be remembered, however, that the galley crew (pantry men, porters, cooks) was also given a share of the tips, although the amount is not known. At the beginning of the 1930s ordinary saloon stewards would have earned roughly £13.9s per month in total, which suggests that the claim that ordinary stewards earned £30 to £40 per trip was exaggerated. By contrast, deck stewards, library stewards, and especially bartenders seem to have been tipped extremely well. According to Freeman, each deck steward, smoke-room steward and bartender would be tipped 4 shillings per trip by each passenger, in addition of being tipped after each drink or chair booked. These groups of stewards were able to look after a great number of passengers and were able to make very much more money than waiters. Therefore, as an employment guide puts it: 'these berths are regarded as sinecures.'³²⁰ For example, if each first class passenger on *Berengaria* for its trip of the 5th of September 1930 gave a tip of 4 shillings to the bartender or deck steward, and there would probably have been three deck stewards and three bartenders, they would each have received £38 in tips. This may appear to be a large amount of money, but, on the other hand, there were not so many passengers on each trip and *Berengaria* was one of the largest passenger liners afloat. The *Social Survey of Merseyside*, published in 1934, gives another estimate of tips received by stewards and stewardesses, which is based on a survey made of steward's families in Liverpool. It was noted that some stewards, especially on cargo vessels, received no tips at all, while the best tips were received by those on short North Atlantic crossings. On longer voyages, the average tip was estimated to be less than 10 shillings a week, whilst on transatlantic crossings the average was £1 a week in the summer and much less in the winter. It is interesting that the estimate given by stewards' families is much lower than in the employment guide. Perhaps, as Jones argues, 'the cream of transatlantic traffic' did not travel on vessels sailing from

³²⁰ MMM. DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p.5.

Liverpool in the 1930s, or perhaps the families were not informed of the real value of the tips. It must also be remembered that the stewards in close contact with passengers were only a minority, which decreases the average level of tips. Furthermore, the third-class stewards, who received the lowest amount of tips, were included in the survey.³²¹

An alternative estimate of the value of tips can be derived from data in table 3.4. On *Carinthia's* trip in May 1931, there were 21 first class and 51 second class passengers. If each passenger tipped according to Freeman's recommendations, each deck steward would have earned £7.6s in tips per trip and £14.12s on a round voyage, which took three weeks. Given a regular salary of £8.6s, he would have earned a minimum of £22.18s a month, although some of this would have been shared with other crew members. However, there is strong evidence to suggest that officers and senior ratings also tipped the stewards which enabled those workers who provided services to the senior ratings some extra income.³²² It appears that stewards' tips varied considerably between different routes and according to the positions they held onboard. Certain positions were worth having and specific jobs were more remunerative than others, so that it is impossible to sustain any broad generalisation concerning the lucrative nature of stewards' tips. However, some stewards after several years' service with a company could reach positions where they earned a considerable amount of money from tips, thereby justifying the retention of a low wage policy for catering personnel by individual shipping companies. Indeed, the National Maritime Board, which fixed the wages during and after the First World War, settled the wages of stewards at a lower figure than those of firemen and able seamen because of tips.³²³

³²¹ Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, p. 95.

³²² UL.CA. GM9/6/13. A surgeon calculated the following in his letter: 'With travelling expenses and tips on board the £291 comes down to more like £275...' Dr Digby to the Superintendent, February 21, 1936.

³²³ In 1932, the standard NMB's monthly rates were £8.2s for able seamen, £8.12s for firemen and £7.7s for stewards and stewardesses. Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, p.94.

In terms of earnings, the catering personnel differed from other maritime labour. The principles of pay for catering personnel were different from those applied to other departments, especially on passenger liners. The unwaged income element in the form of tips formed an essential part of their salary, while their waged income was regulated by maritime labour organisations (National Maritime Board since the First World War) on the basis of agreements between ship owners and the dominant maritime trade union, the National Union of Seamen. Furthermore, there was far greater variation in their wages in terms of specific routes, according to the size of the ship and their place in the customer service chain. Even if tips were understood as part of the salary, access to them varied considerably according to passenger class and the number of passengers a steward would be able to look after.

5.3 The question of catering personnel's overtime

The issue of the catering personnel's hours of work is closely connected with their wages. Different rules regarding overtime applied to catering personnel on passenger liners than to the rest of the maritime labour force. Their working hours were also longer than their counterparts' on cargo ships. Their hours were, in practice, unlimited - although they did not receive any monetary compensation. The catering personnel were in service during the whole day when passengers were awake and even long before. They were expected to clean the public spaces and have coffee and breakfast ready before the passengers woke up. In addition, they were always on duty when the ship arrived or left port whatever the hours. The hours of labour on the days of departure and arrival were especially long and usually the hardest days for the catering personnel.

Hours remained long throughout the period under consideration and the work itself became harder. Compared with the hours on land, the working day at sea was very long by contemporary standards.³²⁴ The turnaround and crossing time of the ships became shorter due to technological change and therefore the turnover of passengers became more rapid. It can safely be said that the quicker the turnover of passengers, the more work there was for the catering personnel. Each time passengers came on

³²⁴ Jones, *The Social Survey of Merseyside*, II, p.96.

board, there was plenty of work to get them settled and help them to find their way around the ship. Violet Jessop, a stewardess, wrote of every sailing day being a bugbear for her since she found 'the business of getting acquainted with new passengers difficult'.³²⁵ The shortening of voyages made the work harder for catering personnel compared to the other departments, which interacted with passengers to a much lesser extent. The catering personnel did service work and their working routine depended very much on the passengers' requests.

Stewards and stewardesses were often called servants, especially at the beginning of the period and furthermore, were often seen as such.³²⁶ Anecdotal evidence suggests that passengers treated the bedroom stewards as their personal servants.³²⁷ *Marine Caterer*, their union magazine, also complained about the situation by stating that the passengers regarded the stewards and cooks as their 'own peculiar human chattels'.³²⁸ However, later in the period when the number of stewards was carefully adjusted to the number of passengers on each voyage, the passengers had to pay extra if they wanted a steward or stewardess for their own personal use for the whole voyage.³²⁹ The common characteristic shared with domestic labour ashore was the unlimited working hours. Their day started at 5 a.m. and continued until the last dinner or tea was served, the last passenger had gone to sleep, or the bar had closed. Unlike the deck or engine room crew, catering personnel did not work in shifts. The same cook or waiter would go through the whole day taking his breaks only when time permitted.

The stewards' day varied according to the section to which he was allocated, but he would normally commence his duties by 6 a.m. The saloon stewards, as well as mess room stewards, usually rose at 5.30 a.m. Some cleaning duties would be required before breakfast was served. In general, the saloon would have to be cleaned at 5 a.m. and all the cleaning work had to be completed by 7.30. Then the steward or boy would have time to change into a uniform. The bartenders and smoke room stewards

³²⁵ Violet Jessop, *Titanic Survivor: The Memoirs of Violet Jessop Stewardess*. Ed. By John Maxtone-Graham (Gloucestershire, 1988), p.85.

³²⁶ U.L.C.A. D 138/2/4. Rules and regulations. *Official Guide and Album of the Cunard Steamship Company*. Revised Edition (1877), pp. 42-43.

³²⁷ Coleman, p. 172; Jessop, p. 81.

³²⁸ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1, Vol. I (1911), p.1.

³²⁹ U.L.C.A. CM2/1-2. Memorandum to Pursers. Rates for Special Stewardesses. February 19, 1931.

worked continuously until the bar was open, and smoke room stewards, in addition, would help in the dining room during the meal times.³³⁰ On some routes the bars were kept open until midnight but on others the captain was authorised to keep the bar open as long as he wished.³³¹ It can safely be said that the working day of the catering personnel was a minimum of 12-13 hours even if some afternoons were free. In practice, free time was only allowed if the work was completed in due course.

The kitchen crew usually started between 4 a.m. and 5 a.m. They prepared everything in order to serve morning coffee and breakfast to the passengers and the crew. They customarily worked until the day's work was done- until the last meal of the day was served and the kitchen cleaned up. The chief cook was an exception and woke up at 6 a.m. Again, if work permitted, they might be allowed time off in the afternoon.³³²

The early starting hours were customary for the catering personnel from the beginning of the period. The rules and regulations for passengers advised them that the staterooms, the saloon and ladies' cabins were to be cleaned every morning, beginning at 5 a.m.³³³ Breakfast was to be served around 8 a.m., with the last dinner to be served at 7 o'clock and supper, if required, by 10 o'clock. In addition there was the cleaning of the public space which had to be done between meal times and the preparation of food before each meal. The above daily routine gives an idea of the length of the catering personnel's working day since no double shifts, as in other departments, were carried. Violet Jessop, a stewardess, complained about the working hours: 'the employers were to blame, since they only paid a starvation wage for intolerably long hours, saddling the travelling public to look after their employees with tips'.³³⁴

³³⁰ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, pp. 265-272.

³³¹ U.L.C.A. D42/GM24/2/2. Memorandum to captains on first class and cabin room bars.

³³² Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, pp. 24, 76, 133.

³³³ U.L.C.A. D 138/2/4. Rules and regulations. *Official Guide and Album of the Cunard Steamship Company*. Revised Edition (1877), pp. 42-43.

³³⁴ Jessop, *Titanic Survivor*, p.65.

Table 5.1. The number of crew and hours of work at sea on different trades in 1920

	North Atlantic <i>Carmania</i>	South America and Mediterranean <i>Tyria</i>	Long Voyage Ships Port Darwin
Number of Crew			
Deck	43	13	27
Engine	185	13	30
Catering	292	6	11
Hours worked at sea on average			
<i>Deck</i>			
AB:s	12	12	12
Carpenters	8	8	8
Quarter Masters	12	12	12
<i>Engine</i>			
Firemen	8	8	8
Trimmers	8	8	8
Greasers	8	8	8
<i>Catering</i>			
Saloon Waiters	12	14	12
Bedroom Stewards	13.5	14	12
Galley Crew	13.5	14	10

Source: UL.CA. B 12. Memorandum from Labour Department to General Manager's office.

As Table 5.1. indicates, there were considerable differences in the hours of work between the trades, especially within catering departments. The data also reveal considerable variation between different departments, the hours of catering crew being by far the longest. This shows that in the absence of regulations the demands of passengers dictated the situation. Hours were relatively fixed across different trades for the deck and engineering departments, but the hours worked by the catering department varied between routes. In the absence of strict company regulations, the hours worked by the catering personnel were dictated essentially by the demands of the passengers. Furthermore, there were enormous differences in the hours worked by different ranks within catering department, as was indicated in a memorandum from the catering department to the General Manager of Cunard, which revealed drastic differences in the daily hours worked at sea between ratings. Night watches and printers worked the shortest hours, whilst barkeepers, deck

stewards and smoke room stewards worked between 15 and 16 hours a day. According to the following estimate (Table 5.2), the average working day of the catering personnel at sea was between 12 and 14 hours.

When the working hours of the catering personnel are considered, it has to be remembered that they were often divided in to various parts during the day. There is evidence to suggest that stewards would have had a more extended break in the middle of the day on alternative days to compensate for long working hours. Working hours, therefore, might have been from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. and from 5 a.m. to 11 p.m. on alternate days. Afternoons were usually granted off on the late working days. In addition, some ships would require the saloon and stateroom stewards to take a watch from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. which would occur every three or four days. The stewardesses would work from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m., with afternoons off as a rule.³³⁵

Table 5.2. The approximate daily hours worked by the catering department on Cunard's North Atlantic routes in 1921.

<i>Jobtitle</i>	<i>Hours worked</i>
Nightwatch	7.5
Printer	8.0
Head Waiter	11.5
Bugler	12.0
Butchers	12.0
Waiter & Boy	12.0
Bedroom Steward	13.5
Cooks	13.5
Storekeeper	13.5
Bakers	14.0
Barkeeper	15.0
Deck Steward	15.5
Smokeroom Steward	15.5
Lounge Steward	16.0

Source: UL. CA. B 12. Memorandum from Catering Department to General Manager January 11 1921.

It meant that they would have had to go to work several times a day, followed by a brief amount of free time and by short period of sleep. As Table 5.2. indicates, there

³³⁵ MMM.DX/1050c. *How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners*, p.6.

might have been a difference of five to six hours in the daily hours of work for catering personnel, even if the basic salary for the adult assistant ratings was the same. It is interesting to note, however, that there was a close relationship between the length of the working day and the amount of tips received by the catering personnel, since those who had the longest days usually had the largest tips. Was the shipping companies' policy to overwork those groups whose tips were the most profitable- so that access to tips acted as compensation for unpaid overtime? The workforce might have been ready to do more work when the possibility of large tips loomed around the corner. Whatever the case, it is hardly a coincidence. If their income is considered in the light of the hours worked, it does not seem to have been particularly lucrative. Indeed, in line with the strategy adopted by the shipping companies, the long hours and low wages were indeed justified by the tips paid by the passengers. They not only worked 15-hour days but also did so without any days off during the week. Catering staff only had time off when 'off articles', which meant that their holiday entitlement was completely unpaid. Time taken off depended on a person's financial circumstances and the general employment situation in the labour market, which in practice could have been anything from a few days to a few months.

The overtime clause in ports, which the catering personnel had achieved in 1919, was lost in 1921. According to the 1919 agreement the catering department's working hours in port, between Monday and Friday, were from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. with one hour for breakfast and one hour for dinner. On Saturdays the working hours were from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. Overtime per hour was paid according to rank as follows: boys 9d; assistant ratings 1s. 9d; and higher ratings 2s. 9d.³³⁶ According to the 1921 agreement the ordinary hours actually worked were 8 hours within 16 hours, which in practice meant the loss of overtime in port for the mess room stewards and kitchen

³³⁶ *The National Maritime Board 1919. Standard rates of pay, hours of labour, and other determinations* (London, 1919).

personnel. Whilst Sunday was previously regarded as free, it was now regarded as an ordinary day, which naturally meant a lowering of pay. However, no overtime was paid whilst passengers were onboard.³³⁷

Working hours in the land-based industries shortened gradually from the beginning of twentieth century onwards.³³⁸ In 1919, the 48 Hours Bill was passed in Parliament, which would have meant an eight-hour day and a six-day week for the majority of land-based labour.³³⁹ Seafarers, along with agricultural workers and domestic servants, were excluded from the act.³⁴⁰ Seafarers protested fiercely against their exclusion. Various meetings as well as demonstrations were held, including a large one in Liverpool on 13 December 1919.³⁴¹ Ship owners objected to the eight-hour bill by stating that the conditions of life at sea differed fundamentally from those on land. They objected to the Bill because the numbers of people working at sea would have to be increased. They also saw overtime being prejudicial to discipline. Their most important argument was as follows:

A Steward does not work in watches in the same way as a seaman, and his hours of work are to a certain extent undetermined. A special difficulty would be felt in framing any regulation for hours of work so far as the steward's branch of the Merchant Service is concerned, since the range of their occupations and the necessary conditions of their lives vary very largely according to the class of vessel upon which they are employed. No one, perhaps, works harder than the passenger steward on board a passenger liner, but, on the other hand, the rewards for this class of work are well known to be substantial.³⁴²

The Genoa Conference of the International Labour Organisation Regarding Seamen was held in 1919-1920.³⁴³ Its aim was to reduce the seafarers' working day to eight

³³⁷ UW. MRC. MSS.367/NMB/2/3. Catering Department. Overtime in Port on Foreign-Going Vessels. 26 October, 1922.

³³⁸ McIvor, *A History of Work in Britain 1880-1950*, p. 67.

³³⁹ It was rejected in 1925.

³⁴⁰ Seafaring and agriculture were excluded partially because of their seasonality. According to Sidney Pollard, 'traditionally workers closest to nature, like agricultural labourers or sailors, had been obliged to adjust to vast changes in pace and rhythm, periods of exhausting toil alternating with long spells of comparative idleness'. Traditionally, their work was more 'task oriented' than 'time-oriented'. Sidney Pollard, *Labour History and the Labour Movement in Britain* (Brookfield, 1999), p. 49.

³⁴¹ *Marine Caterer*, Vol. X, No. 1 (1919), p.1; Vol. X, No 7 (1920), p.1; Vol. X, No. 8 (1920), p.1; Vol. XI, No 7 (1921), p.1.

³⁴² *Marine Caterer* Vol. X, No. 9 (1920), p.1.

³⁴³ The ILO Constitution was written between January and April, 1919, by the Labour Commission set up by the Paris Peace Conference. The Commission was composed of representatives from nine

hours by international agreement. In fact, a draft convention, which had emerged at the ILO conference in Washington in 1919 had already adopted the principle of the 48-hour week. However, most of the seafaring countries, including Britain, did not ratify it.³⁴⁴ The International Seafarers' Federation was of the opinion that it should be applicable to all members of the League of Nations.³⁴⁵ The European ship owners were united in their opposition to ratification and came up with their own proposal, which excluded any possibility of a compromise in the direction of an eight-hour day for stewards. They suggested a 48-hour week for the engineers' department without overtime, a 56 hour week for the deck department (without compensation for time worked over 48 hours), and a 70 hour week for stewards with compensation for time worked over 48 hours. However, the full conference took a vote on the seafarers' proposal for an eight-hour day. The ship owners' representative Alfred Boot wrote from Genoa that the convention, which would form the basis for discussion at the conference, was 'entirely unsatisfactory' and should not be ratified in Britain under any circumstances. The proposal gained 48 votes, with only 25 against, including the British Government. However, a two-thirds majority was required and the proposal was not adopted.³⁴⁶

Members of the catering department were overworked by contemporary standards and therefore various labour organisations attempted to intervene in the regulation of working hours. A few sources from Cunard's archives give an idea on how overworked the catering personnel really were. When the eight-hour day for six days a week was proposed for seafarers, the pay department noted that the stewards' department would require double the number of hands.³⁴⁷ The long working hours become evident in Cunard's calculations, which stated that if the steward's weekly

countries, Belgium, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Japan, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States. It resulted in a tripartite organisation, the only one of its kind bringing together representatives of governments, employers and workers in its executive bodies. The ILO Constitution became Part XIII of the Treaty of Versailles. Antony Aclock, *History of the International Labour Organisation* (London, 1971), pp.18-34.

³⁴⁴ Denmark and France were amongst the countries, which adopted the eight-hour day for seafarers.

³⁴⁵ UL.CA. B 12. Memorandum 'The Seamen and Conciliation'.

³⁴⁶ UL.CA. B 12. Letter to General Manager's office from Alfred Boot from Genoa, June 22 1920.

³⁴⁷ UL.CA. B 12. Letter from the Cunard Seamen's Pay Department to the Cunard's General Manager November 9 1919; Letter from Michael Brett, Secretary of Shipping Federation to A. Jones, Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool, May 5 1920.

working hours were to be reduced to 70, they would still have needed, on average, 20 per cent more labour on each ship.³⁴⁸

If the eight-hour day was to be made a reality, Cunard would have had to increase its labour to the extent shown in table 5.3:

Table 5.3. Extra crew required and the cost involved if the eight-hour day would have become a legal requirement on selected Cunard ships in 1920, by department.

<i>Vessel</i>	<i>Deck</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Engine</i>	<i>Cost</i>	<i>Catering</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Aquitania	46	£506	33	£412	172	£2365
Mauretania	42	£455	67	£837	150	£2062
Caronia	28	£322	27	£337	89	£1225
Saxonia	26	£299	13	£175	68	£1135

Source : UL.CA.B 12. Letter from Mr Cutchbert Laws, Shipping Federation, to Mr Cauty, White Star Line, Liverpool 1.6. 1921.

The *Marine Caterer* had claimed in 1912 that stewards worked as much as 18 hours per day and the union magazine also agreed that the competition between the liners had increased the duties of stewards.³⁴⁹ Their working hours were indeed much longer than of those in the catering trade ashore, whereas only 3.3 per cent of barmen ashore in 1925 worked more than 70 hours per week, stewards, on average, had a working week of 105 hours.³⁵⁰

At sea, firemen had already achieved an eight-hour working day by 1919, but the ship owners fiercely opposed the implementation of an eight-hour day on their ships, particularly for catering personnel. The captains were advised that 'the principle of paying overtime at sea should be strenuously opposed under all circumstances' and that 'in any circumstances it is felt that we should definitely refuse to make any compromise in the direction of an eight hour day for stewards'. Concerning the catering department the ship owners stated:

It is considered impracticable to work a ship satisfactorily on an eight-hour day and whilst it might be possible to pay overtime it must be

³⁴⁸ UL.CA. B 12. 'Hours of Labour and Manning.' A memorandum from the Catering Department to the General Manager. 14 September 1920.

³⁴⁹ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1912), p. 270.

³⁵⁰ Ministry of Labour, *Report on an Enquiry into Renumeration...*, p. 42.

borne in mind that the rates for stewards, especially the higher grades, have been fixed upon a scale commensurate with their present duties. In these circumstances it is felt that we should definitely not make any compromise in the direction of an 8-hour day for stewards.³⁵¹

Furthermore, the Shipping Federation claimed, that

Their [stewards'] object will be to get a reduction of hours, together with overtime for any amount by which the reduced number of hours exceeded 48 weekly. This problem will probably be the most difficult to solve, and the opinion of the meeting was that the stewards should be dealt with first...³⁵²

The statement of the ship owners reveals the central importance of catering personnel in their formal objections to the eight-hour bill. It is also instructive in a wider context: catering was regarded as a seafaring occupation when it was convenient for the ship owners, but in other situation it was classified as service work similar to that performed in hotels and restaurants ashore.³⁵³

A final argument of ship owners against paid overtime for catering personnel, as mentioned earlier, related to the claim that tips provided effective compensation for long working hours and low wages. Within this context, the catering personnel's hours became a question of crucial importance for the British shipping industry in its attempts to stop the adoption of an eight-hour day at sea. Catering personnel worked the longest hours of all seafarers and they were also the largest group of workers, particularly on passenger shipping. The threat of having to reduce the catering personnel's working hours made the British shipping industry seriously concerned for its competitive ability. In the final analysis, the British Government allowed the shipping industry to escape the ramification of the eight-hour bill in order to secure the international competitiveness of British ship owners.

³⁵¹ UL.CA. B 12. Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool. National Maritime Board. Memorandum 17. 4. 1920 for a meeting to be held on Tuesday 20. 4. 1920.

³⁵² UL.CA.B 12. A letter from Michael Brett, the secretary of the Shipping Federation, to A. Jones, the Employers' Association of the Port of Liverpool, May 5, 1920.

³⁵³ See, for example, UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/12. Letter from G.A. Vallance, the General Secretary of the National Maritime Board to the Board of Trade, 10 April, 1931.

There were other attempts to reduce maritime working hours primarily by trade union action, but without much success. In the 1921 stewards' strike working hours were an important issue.³⁵⁴ The main reasons for the strike were pay reductions, loss of overtime and the abandonment of the eight-hour day. Joe Cotter, the leader of the NUSSCBB (National Union of Ship's Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers), demanded an eight-hour day for the catering department, but lost his case and most of his membership in the strike. When seafarers managed to negotiate a concession from the ship owners on the eight-hour day for day workers at sea, the catering department was excluded from the agreement. However, a statement on the duties of messmen was included, which stipulated a period between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m., or 'as required' which- in practice- restricted their working hours to twelve.³⁵⁵

The struggle for an eight-hour day was also a matter of wages: due to the restricted space on board, the ship owners argued, it would have been impossible to have employed the extra men needed. Therefore, if the agreement had been ratified, catering personnel would have been entitled to overtime for all the hours they worked in excess of eight.³⁵⁶ Why, indeed, would the ship owners have ratified the overtime clause, since seafarers previously had done overtime without remuneration? The ship owners' argument that the restricted space on board ships was the reason for the long working hours of catering personnel was widely used. In Cunard's instructions for passengers it was stated that:

As the labour of the servants must be very great, and the space required for a larger number absolutely preventing an increase, the passengers are requested to spare them as much as possible between the meal hours, and particularly preceding dinner.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ The 1921 strike will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter 6.

³⁵⁵ UL.CA. B 12. Memorandum on Day Workers at Sea. For insertion in monthly articles of agreement after September 1st 1921.

³⁵⁶ This was also the ship owners' opinion. The ship owners' association was of the opinion that 'It appears that even in France, where the seamen have an eight-hour day by law, the exceptions are so wide that it really becomes a question of money payment. The same is the case in Denmark, where they have it by agreement.' UL.CA. B 12. Letter from Mr Cutchbert Laws, Shipping Federation to Mr Cauty, White Star Line, 1.6. 1920.

³⁵⁷ 'Rules and Regulations' *Official Guide and Album of the Cunard Steamship Company* (London, 1877), p. 43.

By 1920 the same argument was employed explicitly by the Shipping Federation in its campaign against the introduction of the eight-hour day for maritime labour:

There is no doubt that in passenger ships the stewards are probably harder worked under the present system than any other department, and it is quite impossible to reduce the working hours to eight per diem, without almost doubling the numbers of men employed, which the question of accommodation would make prohibitive.³⁵⁸

However, overtime remained a contentious issue and a number of possible solutions were proposed by the trade unions. In 1924 it was suggested that if an additional man was engaged for every sixth man, workers could be given one day off each week. Alternatively, it was proposed that crew should be granted an equivalent period of time off in their home port, which would also have guaranteed continuity of employment.³⁵⁹ In the volatile trading conditions of the immediate post-war period, it is not surprising that these proposals were also rejected by the ship owners.

However, the demands to reduce the catering personnel's hours of labour at sea continued, since they were remarkably longer than those of the rest of the maritime labour force. Finally, an agreement on overtime at sea was reached in 1936. It was partly a result of better trading conditions with the revival from the interwar depression. According to Marsh and Ryan, another reason for the ship owners' willingness to make concessions in the hours question was the British government's willingness to make some improvements to seafarers' conditions, despite its opposition to the international regulation of seafarers' conditions (in other words, its opposition to the eight hour day).³⁶⁰ The agreement, 'Hours in the Catering Department on Foreign-Going Passenger vessels', was adopted by the catering department panel of the National Maritime Board on 16 September 1936 and guaranteed catering personnel on British passenger liners paid overtime after twelve hours of work. At the same time, an eight-hour day and overtime were guaranteed to deck ratings, while catering department on cargo liners were granted a ten-hour

³⁵⁸ UL.CA. B 12. A letter from Michael Brett, secretary of the Shipping Federation, to A. Jones, Employers' Association of Liverpool, 5.5. 1920.

³⁵⁹ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/4/13. *The Marine Worker* (The Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union Magazine), No 67 (1924), p.12.

³⁶⁰ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, pp.141-142.

working day and overtime thereafter. According to the agreement, overtime was to be paid if the period off duty was less than seven consecutive hours or less than twelve hours in a period of 24 hours. The overtime rate was 5d. per hour for boys and 9d. per hour for other ratings.³⁶¹ However, the working hours on the days of departure and arrival remained unrestricted until 1943.³⁶²

It is clear, therefore, that a central reason for the continuing opposition of ship owners to improved working conditions for maritime labour was their reliance on the long working hours of catering staff. As a result, they actively opposed the introduction of the eight-hour day to seafarers. At the same time, the persistence of long working hours for catering personnel was connected with the practice of tipping which, in turn, provided an employer rationale for low wages. Moreover, the available evidence suggests that members of the catering department who enjoyed the largest tips also worked the longest hours, which indicates that tips were also being used as a form of compensation for the lack of overtime. The persistence of unlimited working hours prior to the agreement of 1936 clearly separated maritime catering personnel from their shore-based counterparts employed in hotels and restaurants. However, this was not the only key difference between these two groups of employees, as the maritime labour force was also subject to a particularly harsh form of discipline.

5.4. Stewards and discipline at sea

Catering personnel, as well as the rest of the maritime labour force, were subject to discipline that was fundamentally different and harsher than that of the land-based labour force. Merchant seafarers were employed under legal restraints unknown to other groups of workers, and did not benefit to the same extent as other employees

³⁶¹ UW. MRC. MSS.367/NMB/1/2/17. Final Agreement. Regulation of Hours. Catering Department: Foreign-Going Passenger Vessels.

³⁶² The new agreement of 1943 guaranteed overtime also for the previously excluded higher ratings. According to the new agreement, hours at port and at sea were to be 10 hours a day with 8 hours consecutive rest instead of 12 hours with 7 hours consecutive rest. The hours in port became similar to the hours at sea, even if no passengers were onboard. For the first time, the agreement regulated the arrival and sailing days by stating that the hours should be arranged in order to arrange 8 consecutive hours' rest. UL.CA. D42/GM24/2/2. Hours of work in catering department- foreign going vessels. Memorandum to Captains from General Manager's office. October 21, 1943.

from gradual improvements in workplace discipline.³⁶³ Unlike other elements in the labour force, seafarers were subject to regulations according to which they could be imprisoned if the authority at the workplace was not followed. No manual worker or factory hand was liable to such penalties. At the end of the nineteenth century disobedience of orders was still punishable with up to four weeks imprisonment and seafarers were fined one month's pay for leaving the ship without permission.

In the seafaring world, it was generally accepted that discipline was achieved by punishment rather than by prevention, reform or other positive responses. Jack Sadler distinguishes between four elements of punishment at sea: deterrence, expiation, retribution and reform. I would argue here that deterrence, expiation and retribution were the prime methods by which the catering personnel were disciplined on British passenger liners.³⁶⁴ First, the element of deterrence was employed by various Mercantile Marine Acts and Crew Agreements, which threatened the workforce with a range of penalties if the prevailing order or safety regulations were offended. Stewards and cooks were personally liable for any losses caused to the ships' property, with the cost of any damages deducted from their salary at the end of the voyage. Second, expiation was practised by way of compensating for the loss or damage of china, cutlery or linen with money. Deductions from seafarers' wages for 'wilful or negligent destruction of any part of the ship's cargo' had their origin in the twelfth-century Laws of Oleron.³⁶⁵ Finally, retribution was made in the form of monetary fines, dismissal from the company's service or even imprisonment. These disciplinary actions were often carried out at sea. This practice came to an end only with the 1979 Merchant Shipping Act, which stated that the seafarers' serious offences can not be dealt with onboard but must be brought in front of a committee ashore.

³⁶³ Dixon, 'Signing-On', p. 317.

³⁶⁴ Jack Sadler, *Discipline at Sea and Industrial Relations in the Shipping Industry* (London, 1983),

p.1.

³⁶⁵ Dixon, 'Signing-On', p.317.

Discipline on passenger liners was understood as obedience. Everyone should understand their place in the hierarchy and obey the orders of their superiors. According to Sager, the steamship was an industrial workplace that used military language and attitudes. The class hierarchy of the workplace was the key characteristic of relations on British merchant ships, and this, in turn, was related to discipline within a system of reward and punishment.³⁶⁶ The basic disciplinary principle on board ship was that the crew had to obey the officers, while the relative position of these two groups within the ship's hierarchy reflected different relations with capital, responsibility and power. Normally the institutions where the ships' officers were trained were so expensive that only wealthy parents could afford them. Even if the merchant marine was a world of its own in many respects, it had undoubtedly adopted the class-based hierarchy from society ashore.

Land-based institutions, including the government, did their best to influence seafaring, given its special importance to the state's economic and military interests. Due to its dual nature, merchant seafaring had been a place of interaction between military models and merchant practices, particularly as the merchant navy supplied the manpower needed by the Navy.³⁶⁷ By the mid-nineteenth century the traditional structures of authority at sea had been confirmed and reinforced by merchant shipping legislation and maritime workers had become subjected to detailed legislative provisions.³⁶⁸ Thereafter, seamen were one of the most legislated body of workers.³⁶⁹ The state's interest, however, did not improve the merchant seafarer's lot; rather the opposite, since any protective regulation imposed on British shipping concerning its workforce would damage its competitive position.

The growing interest of the state in seafaring was expressed by the establishment of the Marine Department on the Board of Trade. It was established after the 1836 report of shipwrecks, (which blamed relaxed discipline for the increase of accidents at sea), and heralded a tighter code of discipline at sea.³⁷⁰ From the mid-nineteenth century, the state imposed several Merchant Shipping Acts, which regulated

³⁶⁶ Sager, *Ships and Memories*, pp.71 and 92.

³⁶⁷ Sager, *Seafaring Labour*, p.88.

³⁶⁸ *ibid*, p.93.

³⁶⁹ Dixon, *Seamen and the Law*, p.3.

³⁷⁰ *ibid*, pp. 67-70.

maritime workforce and also bound catering personnel. Only a brief summary of the most important acts regulating discipline on merchant ships is given here in order to illustrate the different juridical position of merchant seafarers compared to the land-based workforce. For the first time, the 1835 Seamen's Registry Act introduced fines for temporary absence from the ship. Furthermore, a standard scale of permitted fines was introduced by the Board of Trade in the 1850 Merchant Shipping Act.³⁷¹ Refusal or failure to join a ship after signing on the agreement was punishable by imprisonment,³⁷² as was refusal of duty. The 1851 Amendment also stated that the costs of imprisonment or the court case may be deducted from the seafarer's wages.³⁷³ The master or owner of the ship was allowed to arrest the deserters without the local authorities' permission and bring them back on board using force, if necessary. The master could also temporarily place the offender in irons or keep him in confinement until the ship returned home. Officially corporal punishment was prohibited on merchant ships, although informal physical punishments were common.³⁷⁴

The Crew Agreement, stating the working conditions for the forthcoming journey, had to be signed by every employee before each voyage. The crew agreements normally stated the working hours, the scale of provisions and any regulations for preserving discipline issued by the Board of Trade. The new contract document, which was made more specific by the 1835 Merchant Shipping Act, included the penalties seamen were liable to upon signing on the contract. They included twelve weeks' imprisonment for desertion, continued disobedience or neglect of duty. A fine was payable for making a false statement about the last ship one had sailed on.³⁷⁵ A seafarer could be imprisoned for wilfully damaging the ship, assaulting the officers or disobeying or neglecting his duty.³⁷⁶ The crew agreement, apart from being the seafarer's working contract, was also a legal document. Other stipulations, which were special to a particular journey might have been inserted in the agreements.³⁷⁷ Some disciplinary clauses included in crew agreements were 'sanctioned but not

³⁷¹ *The Mercantile Marine Act, 1850*; paragraphs 78-79.

³⁷² *The Mercantile Marine Act, 1850*; paragraph 70.

³⁷³ *The Mercantile Marine Amendment Act, 1851*;XXII.

³⁷⁴ Press, *The Economic and Social Conditions*, p.56.

³⁷⁵ Dixon, 'Signing-On', p. 313.

³⁷⁶ *The Mercantile Marine Act, 1850*; paragraph 77.

³⁷⁷ *The Merchant Shipping Act, 1894*; paragraph 114.

universally required by law', for example some monetary fines for various offences. The fines were fixed for striking or assaulting a person belonging to a ship, having alcohol onboard, drunkenness, keeping arms onboard, insolent language to the officers, disobedience of commands and absence without leave. These offences were fined five shillings each apart from repeated drunkenness, which cost the drunkard ten shillings. Those monetary fines were legally enforcing if the offence was entered in the official logbook. When signing off, the fine was reduced from the seafarer's salary.³⁷⁸ An example of service personnel being subjected to relatively severe naval punishments is illustrated by a case from 1942, when a P&O night watchman had been absent from duty for 45 minutes whilst in port. When he was found to be intoxicated and incapable of work, the ship's purser decided to prosecute him under Emergency War Acts for absence without leave. The night watchman was sentenced to 14 days' hard labour.³⁷⁹

Apart from legislation, the degree of discipline depended on the policies of the owner and the character of the master.³⁸⁰ The North Atlantic passenger trade was reputed to be the toughest in terms of discipline. Their safety-consciousness and efforts towards regularity and fast passages led them drive their crew harder than was the regular custom in any other trades. John Malcolm Brinnin describes the discipline in his social history of the North Atlantic: 'Ship's crews, in the eyes of many captains and their employers were species of the subhuman. They were driven like slaves, taught to obey commands and whips like circus animals, their working lives were briefer than those of men in any other following.'³⁸¹

The presence of passengers gave a new dimension for discipline on the liners. Several shipping companies' regulations concentrated on prohibiting unnecessary interaction between passengers and workers. For example, crewmembers were prohibited from spending their free time in the passengers' quarters and especially in

³⁷⁸ See, for example, MMM. SAS 23A/12/4. The wage accounts of second steward A.G. Warburton 1894-1905. They show that the losses he had caused to the shipping company were reduced from his wages. The custom seems to have been commonly used in the passenger liners, since he worked on ships operating to China and Australia.

³⁷⁹ NMM. P&O 77/30, p. 62. Letter from Purser of *Stratheden* September 11 1942 to Superintendent S. Rawson.

³⁸⁰ Press, *The Economic and Social Conditions*, p.55

³⁸¹ Brinnin, *The Sway of the Grand Saloon*, p.9.

the passengers' cabins. Stewards were also told not to seek conversation with passengers and only to speak when spoken to. They were prohibited from wearing their own clothes at any time on board. As the passenger liner companies became increasingly aware of their corporate reputation, they began to pay particular attention to their workers appearance. This applied especially to the catering personnel who spent their working time among the passengers. Therefore, appearance became a disciplinary matter. The prevailing stewards' registers frequently refer to the stewards' appearance, especially tidiness. Sobriety became an appreciated quality of a steward. Smoking was not prohibited as such but it was so in the passengers' quarters. A company's circular also advised how the unpleasant looking yellow fingers caused by smoking had to be whitened with lemon juice.³⁸²

In the beginning of the period, discipline, which originated from the captain's or ship owners' authority, bore a resemblance to paternalism. The opinion prevailed that employers had to have the power to punish the naturally lazy men and that the workers had to be constantly employed to prevent unrest. The workers' personal cleanliness and morality became a matter of discipline. Despite regarding uncleanness, irregularity and untidiness as offences to discipline, they were also seen as the natural characteristics of the working classes. In reality, the possible lack of cleanliness was due to inadequate sanitary facilities. The crew's own sanitary conditions were appalling and they were prohibited by fine from using passenger toilets and baths.³⁸³ It was not normally possible to wash the uniforms during the journey, which must have made it difficult to look neat and tidy in all circumstances. P&O's instructions to pursers state that: 'On board the ship you will always have the watchful eye over the stewards and stewardesses, taking care that they are clean in their persons and that their sleeping berths are also clean and orderly... You will have to see that the stewardesses are attentive to their duties and you are never to

³⁸² UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/3/16. *Do's and Don'ts for Stewards*.

³⁸³ See, for example, MUN. Crew Agreements. A Crew Agreement of *Samaria*, January 29, 1938.

'Any member of the Crew found using or frequenting passengers' lavatories or compartments without permission of the Master will be fined 5/- for the first offence and 10/- for any subsequent offence'.

overlook the slightest appearance of levity in their part.³⁸⁴ The captain also supervised the cleanliness of the ship by personally inspecting the crew's and passengers' quarters daily.

Under the 1850 Shipping Act, Local Marine Boards, which established shipping offices in every seaport, kept a register of every seaman and their characters.³⁸⁵ Their conduct was also recorded in the discharge certificates³⁸⁶ and most shipping companies kept their private registers and black books on seafarers.³⁸⁷ The amount of workforce supervision was gradually increased from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. Whilst at sea, the captain had the ultimate authority and did his part to oversee the work of the catering department. The chief steward, the second steward, the purser and later the restaurant manager supervised the catering department. In addition, each class had its own chief in large liners enforcing discipline within his own section. Passengers also practised everyday supervision towards the catering personnel by keeping an eye on their conduct and reporting to the chief steward or alternatively to the shipping company.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, modern, more complex and multifarious levels of control were created to supervise work processes in a number of major industries.³⁸⁸ When before the ship owner or captain would have given direct orders to the crew in terms of discipline, this direct control was now replaced by more indirect management as the size of workplaces started to grow. Cunard, for example, started to employ increasing numbers of officers after 1914, as was analysed in Section 3.3. Supervision became increasingly effective and the catering personnel's character and conduct was monitored and recorded.

³⁸⁴ NMM. P&O/10/10. Instructions to Pursers and Clerks in Charge on Board the Steamships of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (1860), p. 9.

³⁸⁵ *The Mercantile Marine Act 1850*, paragraph XXXVI.

³⁸⁶ From 1900 onwards.

³⁸⁷ Records on catering personnel's conduct include the P&O's Stewards' Registers 1891-1940 (NMM. P&O /77/ 12-30), White Star Line's Black List Book on Catering Personnel (MMM. A 23. Cunard Collection, Black List Book No. 9), Catering Personnel, 1929-1935. British India Steam Navigation Company's ledgers on stewards (NMM. BIS 30/34-35), Orient Steam Navigation Company's Stewards' report on character 1884-1927 (MMM.OSN/24/1-3) and Blue Funnel's register on chief and second stewards (MMM. 6.C.1842. Service Records 1914-1957, MMM. 6.C.2213. Blue Funnel Line, Ocean Steam Ship Company; Statistical details and Staff details 1914-1966).

Logging, that is withholding of pay, was widely used as a punishment on passenger liners. The available evidence suggests that the monetary fine and dismissal from the company's service were the most commonly used disciplinary actions for the catering personnel. P&O's stewards' registers, which recorded catering personnel's conduct voyage by voyage, reveal that the most common offences were drunkenness and absence without leave (which was often connected to drinking).³⁸⁹ The most common offences of the White Star Line's catering personnel are shown in Table 5.4. The sample comprises of 342 first entries recorded in the black book.

The White Star Line's black book shows desertions to be the most common offence on their ships, which may have been due to their main destination being North America, the most popular desertion destination amongst seafarers. It is unfortunate, though, that the source does not reveal the nature of most of the offences, since detailed reports regarding them have not been found. 'Change desirable', the second most common entry in the black list book, was not supplied with detail either, but it usually meant a minor offence that was not serious enough for dismissal from the company's service. Amongst other things, being such a vague definition, it might have well been used to express the personal dislikes of the chief steward.

An offence directly connected with performance at work was only the fifth most common - laziness and lateness for work. Intemperance and refusal had more to do with discipline than work and 'absence without leave' was also something that mainly occurred in ports, when stewards or cooks went ashore without permission or did not return from town in time. At sea, absence from work was practically impossible, at least on a long-term basis, because one would sooner or later be found.

³⁸⁸ These new, shore-based productivity-increasing methods and their effect on disciplining the workforce has already been analysed in Section 3.2.

³⁸⁹ NMM. P&O. 77/12, Steward's Registers 1891-1894; 77/15, 1891-1894; 77/19, 1911; 77/23, 1920-1924; 77/26, 1929-1932; 77/30, 1937-1939.

Table 5.4. The most common offences of the catering personnel listed in the White Star Line's Black List Book, 1929-1935.

<i>Offence</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Deserted	27.8
Change Desirable	27.8
Laziness, lateness	8.5
Intemperance, refusing, absent without leave	7.3
Drunkenness	5.6
Sexual encounters with passengers	1.2
Untydiness	1.2
Agitator	0.9
Medical reason	0.9
Failed to join	0.6
Unknown	18.4

Source : MMM. A 23.Cunard collection. White Star Line's Black List Book No. 9. Catering Personnel. 1929-1935.

The Crew Agreements are a useful source for studying the desertion rates of the catering personnel since they systematically list all the causes for termination of the voyages. However, a detailed analysis based on the author's dataset shows that desertions of the catering personnel in the Cunard Steamship Company seem to have been a lot less common than in the White Star Line. As the Table 5.5 below shows, in the beginning of the period the Cunard's desertion rate for catering personnel was exceptionally low. Under 0.5 per cent of the catering personnel deserted during the years of the sample. The percentage increased rapidly in 1911 but fell back afterwards.

Table 5.5. The desertion rates of the catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938

<i>Year</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1861	0.0
1871	0.2
1881	0.4
1891	0.4
1901	0.2
1911	3.7
1921	1.2
1931	0.0
1938	0.1

Source : Dataset 1861-1938.

However, 1911 was an exceptional year for Cunard since at that time it used a large number of seasonal workers (the largest amount of first trippers) on its ships from the Mediterranean to North America. They might not have been committed to pursue a career at sea but instead were more interested in a free trip to America. It is also very likely that Cunard did not have any long-term plans for this workforce and actually did not mind them deserting. In fact, as the following table shows, most of the deserters from Cunard's ships were foreign nationals.

Table 5.6. Nationalities of the deserters from Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Colonial	1.39
English	18.75
Foreign	76.39
Irish	1.39
Scottish	0.69
Welsh	1.39

Source : Dataset 1861-1938

According to Cunard's logbooks, drinking was frequently a factor in offences committed by the members of catering department. It seems that stewards particularly got drunk in ports and therefore did not manage to return to the ship before its sailing. Drunkenness seems to have been very common but punished only if it interfered with work. Other drink-related offences were sexual relations, or attempts at them, with women. On passenger liners, unlike most cargo ships, men had a chance for a contact with women at sea. However, according to the paternalistic attitude of the authorities it was carefully controlled and punished. A projectionist on several liners claims that Cunard used to run their ships like nunneries.³⁹⁰ Socialising with women passengers was a privilege of the officers, and even they were prohibited from 'too close' encounters. However, the anecdotal evidence suggests that relations with women passengers were relatively common, even if they were punished severely. Maida Nixson, who worked on passenger liners

³⁹⁰ Brooks, *Life on the Liners*, p.103.

as a stewardess, states that some stewards were better described as 'gigolos'.³⁹¹ A Cunard's chief stewards' letter to the catering department regarding his dismissal from the Company's service illustrates the case in which accusations of drinking and 'broaching cargo' (as sexual relations with passengers of the opposite sex were called) were combined. The chief steward wrote that he had too much to drink while in port and on returning to the ship his condition was noticed by the purser who, according to his own words 'was at all times antagonistic to the stewards' department'. The purser reported his state to the captain. The captain believed the chief stewards' explanation that he normally did not drink so much and so thought that the matter was ended. However, a few days later the purser and the doctor entered his cabin in the middle of the night and stated that a lady passenger had reported that she had witnessed a woman entering his cabin. The two officers searched his cabin but no visitor was found. However, when both matters were reported to the management, he was dismissed from his duty.³⁹² On *Pannonia*, a waiter was found in a berth in the third class women's quarters. He was drunk and when found he assaulted the ships' officials. He was placed in irons and put on bread and water.³⁹³ Male stewards were often found guilty of sexual harassment. Stewards were caught making 'an indecent behaviour to a girl passenger', spying in a female passenger's cabin, sending notes to women passengers asking for meetings in empty cabins and attempting to enter a lady passenger's cabin while under the influence of alcohol.³⁹⁴ A very common offence, specific to stewards, was sleeping in the empty passengers' cabins. It is easy to see why the members of the catering department, who had relatively easy access to the empty cabins, took advantage of this since otherwise privacy on the ship was restricted. Sometimes stewards even took naps in the occupied passengers' cabins. Once a steward fell asleep in a passenger's cabin whilst smoking, causing a bath towel and part of the deck to catch fire.³⁹⁵

³⁹¹ Nixon, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p.31.

³⁹² UL.CA. C1/166. Letter from Phillip Biddecombe to F.W. Fahrenheit June 24, 1912.

³⁹³ MUN. Crew Agreements. The Logbook of *Pannonia*'s trip commencing January 18. 1921, the offence entered on May 15 1931.

³⁹⁴ NMM. P&O 77/30. Stewards' Register 1929-1932, p.479, 533 and 683. P&O 77/26. Last offence recorded in Stewards' Register 1937-1939, 19th entry.

³⁹⁵ There were plenty of such cases in P&O's stewards' registers. NMM. 77/12. Stewards' Registers 1891-1894; 77/15.1891-1894; 77/19. 1911; 77/23. 1920-1924; 77/26. 1929-1932; 77/30.1937-1939.

At sea, groups of men largely unknown to each other were thrown together in cramped conditions. Fights with colleagues and passengers were relatively common, especially when under the influence of alcohol. Gambling, stealing and desertion were other common offences committed by catering personnel on P&O's ships. 'Insolent behaviour' against superiors was a common offence, which was often related to drinking or the refusal of duty. Smuggling was fairly common amongst the crew. For example, gramophones, grapes, tobacco and even opium was smuggled.³⁹⁶ Gambling with the tip money and playing cards, even if often forbidden, seems to have been a favourite pastime of crews in general and catering personnel in particular.³⁹⁷

Another well-known and common problem on steamships was the robbing and exploitation of emigrants by the crews.³⁹⁸ Stewards and cooks, especially in the third class, found a way of complementing their income by selling extra food and better cabins to the passengers at the ship owners' expense. Usually payment was received in the form of money, tobacco or alcohol.³⁹⁹ *Pannonia*'s logbook from 1921 reported stewards for stealing ice and ham and selling them to third class passengers.⁴⁰⁰ Indeed, Burton notes that the stewards themselves regarded 'workplace appropriation' as their right in the absence of a fair wage from the employer.⁴⁰¹ An article in the *Marine Caterer* gives similar evidence on the stewards' dishonest attitude towards passengers by claiming it was due to the low wages paid by the shipping companies.⁴⁰² A statement in *Pannonia*'s logbook in 18 January 1921 describes a violent incident between a third class passenger and third class stewards. The passenger acted as an interpreter in the case of an alleged theft by a third class steward. He then noticed that several other (Italian) stewards were hostile to him. He described in his statement: 'an Italian Steward, named Felanger caught me by right

³⁹⁶ UL.CA. GM2/1-2. Captain's Memorandum, March 25, 1848; D138/2/4. Memorandum to Pursers, February 18, 1930, Memorandum on articles purchased by crew, April 20 1930.

³⁹⁷ UL.CA D138/2/4. Captain's Memorandum, March 25, 1848; D138/2/2. General Order from Charles MacIver.

³⁹⁸ Brassey, *British Seamen*, p.9.

³⁹⁹ UL.CA. PR3/4/6A. Diary written by Arthur Richard Jones on *Tripoli* from Boston to Liverpool, July 4, 1871.

⁴⁰⁰ MUN. Crew Agreements. Logbook of *Pannonia* on a trip commencing January 18, 1921. Both offences entered on June 20 1921.

⁴⁰¹ Burton, *The Work and Life of Seafarers*, p.147.

⁴⁰² 'I wonder whether the passenger who book their berths by this line know the wages of the men they have to trust with their valuables. It is doubtful!' *Marine Caterer*, No 10 (1913), p. 665.

hand, tried to drag me along and spat my face. Castaldi [the steward accused of theft] was with him and both get hold of me, struck me in the face and neck and also kicked me about the legs causing my face and neck to bleed badly.⁴⁰³ However, the stewards and cooks did not only steal from passengers but also from other crewmembers.⁴⁰⁴

Not only did the shipping companies discipline their crews but trade unions also participated in disciplining their members. In exchange for the control of their workforce, the shipping companies could guarantee a union preference in employment situations. For example, before the general strike in 1925 the National Sailors' and Firemens' Union guaranteed that its members would loyally carry out their contracts, whilst Cunard promised its members a distinct preference for the next few months.⁴⁰⁵ Union leader J. Havelock Wilson proposed in the National Maritime Board's meeting in January 1925 that a system should be established to penalise men who signed articles but failed to join, deserted abroad or misconducted themselves whilst employed at sea.⁴⁰⁶

Towards the end of the period, being an 'agitator' or a 'Bolshevik' seems to have become a relatively common offence, which might be an indication of the politicisation of catering departments. During that time, the National Union of Seamen made final efforts to make trade union membership compulsory also for catering departments. However, catering personnel were never very eager supporters of Wilson's union and hence there must have been plenty of agitation for and against compulsory membership at that time. The relationship between catering personnel and National Union of Seamen, which explains some aspects in their working conditions, is explored in more detail in Chapter 6.

⁴⁰³ MUN. Crew Agreements. Statement by Kosta Kovacevic, third class passenger. Official logbook of *Pannonia*, 18 January 1925.

⁴⁰⁴ MUN. Logbook of *Scythia* 22.8. -16.9. 1931; MUN. Crew Agreements. Logbook of *Imperator*, December 11, 1920.

⁴⁰⁵ UL.CA. C2/158. Correspondence. Letter to Mr Royden from the NSFU. October 26, 1925.

⁴⁰⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/6. National Maritime Board. National Maritime Board's meetings 16 January 1925.

5.5. From wet to cramped accommodation

The crew accommodation carried hardly any preferences to living patterns ashore. Traditionally, seafarers had lived under very basic conditions in the forecabin (the crew accommodation in the fore part of the ship). Before the mid-nineteenth century there were no provisions in law regulating the crew accommodation. The 1850 Merchant Shipping Act stipulated that the forecabin should have more than at least nine superficial feet for each seafarer. The 1854 Act stipulated further that the minimum size was nine superficial feet and fifty-four cubic feet for each seafarer if they used hammocks and seventy-four cubic feet if they used bunks. Furthermore, the forecabin was to be six feet high from deck to deck. The 1906 Act improved seafarers' conditions (although it excluded Lascars): it increased the living space and a minimum scale of provisions was laid down. Because of dampness and lack of ventilation many seafarers, including stewards, suffered from several illnesses. The ships were not normally air-conditioned and therefore in tropical climates the accommodation was very hot. The Shipping Federation had a benefit fund which received claims from seafarers (or their relatives) arising from accidents and diseases which led to disability or death. At the turn of the century, the most common accidents that catering crew were prone to were drowning and the fracturing of bones. Pneumonia, asthma and heart diseases were the most common illnesses amongst catering personnel, caused by the poor working conditions.⁴⁰⁷

The crew accommodation however, was better on passenger liners than on tramps. Some amenities, such as electricity, which were actually installed for passengers, also benefited the crew. Bed and bedding were supplied for passenger liner crews by the beginning of the 1920s, unlike in many other trades, where the issue of providing beds and bedding for crews was still discussed in 1938.⁴⁰⁸ When the *Times* published various letters by their labour correspondent about bad crew accommodation, the Shipping Federation admitted that 'most of us are not really proud of the accommodation that we do provide for our men'. Passenger liners,

⁴⁰⁷UW. MRC. MSS.367/TSF/1/5/1. Benefit Fund Committee minutes 1893- 1902.

⁴⁰⁸ MRC. UW. MSS.367/TSF/1/2/16; Proceedings at the Meeting of the Executive Council of the Shipping Federation. May 20 1938; Dataset 1861-1938. The Crew Agreements still required the crew to supply their own bed and bedding in 1911, but by 1921 the clause has disappeared from most agreements.

unlike most of the other trades, provided stewards who cleaned up the crew's quarters. In other trades seafarers were expected to clean their accommodation on their own time, which meant that ship owners did not take responsibility for cleanliness in crew's quarters. The ship owners defended themselves against *The Times's* accusations by stating that seafaring labour was dirty by nature and therefore they did not deserve better accommodation. The members expressed opinions of maritime labour as 'not having been sufficiently educated in modern ideas of hygiene' and that 'if you put pigs into a drawing room it will soon become pigsty'.⁴⁰⁹

There is nothing special about service workers living away from home, as many domestic servants, restaurant and hotels workers 'lived in'. The biggest difference usually compared to the workers ashore was that the seafarers always lived apart from their families and that the conditions they lived in were very basic. Since they lived on the ship, their private lives were under a close scrutiny. The crew accommodation in 'glory holes' was often referred as lacking the privacy and being cramped and ill-ventilated. The sanitary conditions were inadequate. However, on passenger liners their living conditions greatly improved throughout the period.

Catering personnel, engineers' department and deckhands lived in separate quarters. Interestingly however, on the very first Cunard ship, *Britannia* (1840), 'seamen' and 'servants', as they were then called, both lived in the forecastle but in separate cabins.⁴¹⁰ Officers lived separately from the crew on upper decks in more private accommodation and ate in separate mess rooms. On smaller liners, the firemen and deckhands might have occupied the same deck but lived on different sides of the ship in the forecastle style accommodation, where the bunks and eating table were in the same room.⁴¹¹ Catering personnel were usually situated aft in the lower decks.⁴¹² The custom of accommodating catering crew together separately from other departments continued in the twentieth century passenger liners. In *Olympic* and *Titanic* firemen, trimmers, greasers and seamen were berthed separately in forecastles and catering personnel amidships in one of the decks. Due to the separate location of the berths

⁴⁰⁹ UW. MRC. MSS.367/TSF/1/2/16. Proceedings at the Meeting of the Executive Council of the Shipping Federation. May 20 1938.

⁴¹⁰ MMM. E2.24. Cunard Collection. The ship plan of *Britannia*.

⁴¹¹ MMM. E2.39/2. Cunard collection. The ship plan of *Olympus*.

the crew was subject to different living conditions. The forecandle was said to be the most rolling place on the ship but the aft, where the stewards used to live, was the noisiest because of the location of the screws. In their quarters they did not only suffer from the rolling of the ship but also of constant noise.⁴¹³

Catering personnel, as well as other crew, lived in relatively cramped conditions on passenger liners. As catering departments grew with the development of passenger shipping, accommodating them became a problem for the ship owners: the space on liners was scarce and all the possible space was needed for the passenger accommodation in order to maximise the profit. The rationale of employing Lascars was not only for low wages since they required less space than Europeans.⁴¹⁴ The ship plans of *Titanic* and *Olympic* reveal that twenty-four stewards lived in a space no larger than a double first class cabin and thirty-eight in the space equivalent to two first class cabins.⁴¹⁵ In *Queen Mary*, built in 1936, most of the stewards' accommodation remained in the aft section, while the deck department still lived in the forecandle. Stewards' and cooks' accommodation had somewhat improved in twenty years: the stewards lived in cabins of two to four and the junior ranks had six in the cabin. The senior stewards had even more spacious accommodation in the upper decks.⁴¹⁶ Due to the seasonality of stewards' profession and the rapid expansion of the catering departments, they were often berthed in temporary accommodation in the steerage. *Marine Caterer* complained in 1911 the sanitary accommodation in those places being appalling.⁴¹⁷ According to the magazine, the stewards' accommodation remained much worse than the firemen's and sailors'. It gave an example of P&O passenger liners with 180 stewards having four wash basins and 250 stewards sharing four water closets.⁴¹⁸ Stewardess Violet Jessop claims

⁴¹² UL.CA. *Official Guide and Album of the Cunard Steamship Company* (1877). The ship plan of *Aurania*.

⁴¹³ John Jenkins, 'Young Bellboy Goes to Sea on the *Mauretania*,' p. 8; Brooks, *I've Seen Them All Naked*, p. 102.

⁴¹⁴ NMM. P&O/37/3. Reports from Mr Shields While On Tour, No. 1. To The General Managers, P&O.S.N. Co., from Mr Shields, 'Hong Kong, 15 April 1901.

⁴¹⁵ The Ship plans of *Olympic* and *Titanic*. *The Shipbuilder* (June 1911).

⁴¹⁶ The ship plan of *Queen Mary*. *The Cunard White Star Liner Queen Mary. Souvenir Number of the Shipbuilder and Marine Engineer- Builder*. 1936.

⁴¹⁷ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1911), p.8.

⁴¹⁸ *Marine Caterer*, No. 10 (1921), p. 4.

that stewards' accommodation was of secondary importance to the ship owners and gives evidence of *Olympic* being the first ship to have proper bathrooms installed for stewards. Later on however, she notes sarcastically that they were soon taken over by the second steward as storerooms.⁴¹⁹ In 1913 *Marine Caterer* complained about the accommodation on White Star liners. It claimed that the whole (male) catering personnel had the same sleeping quarters although the hours were very varied. The glory holes were said to be overcrowded, noisy and lacking even 'semi-privacy', with people coming and going at all hours. On those ships the cabins also became very smelly partly because of butchers' and cooks' clothes.⁴²⁰ The same magazine complained about the dampness of the accommodation.

As late as in 1955, when the catering staff arranged strikes against their working conditions, the bad quality of accommodation was one of the immediate reasons for the stoppages. The catering crew complained about tiny cabins, where six to ten men were required to sleep without proper ventilation. In addition, their cabins were often situated directly over the propeller shaft, which caused constant vibration. The special difficulty faced by the catering personnel was that they were expected to appear smart and alert in front of the passengers.⁴²¹

Food wise, catering personnel had a right to the passengers' leftovers. Otherwise the crew had their own cooks to prepare their food. Not all the ships had a special mess room for catering personnel in the 1930s, even if separate mess rooms for trimmers, firemen and deckhands were provided. Catering personnel often ate in the dining rooms after passengers were finished, or wherever and whenever circumstances allowed. Regulations concerning food in merchant ships were established by the mid- nineteenth century. The 1835 Seamen's Registry Act stipulated that no seafarer was to sail without written agreement with his employers, and from 1844 onwards the standard crew agreement included a table of provisions to be provided during the journey. As mentioned earlier, the 1906 Merchant Shipping Act set up a statutory scale, inspection of provisions and the compulsory certification of the ship's cook, who would cook for the crew. However, by the Second World War the scale was

⁴¹⁹ Jessop, *Titanic Survivor*, p.103.

⁴²⁰ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1913), p. 502.

⁴²¹ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, pp.165-166.

regarded as outdated, partly because it was formulated in a period when sailing ships were still in existence and refrigeration was still non-existent on many ships.⁴²² However, the Board of Trade Statutory Scale of 1957 was the first to introduce fresh meat to seafarers' weekly diet.⁴²³

The evidence suggests, therefore, that catering personnel spent their working lives in very basic and especially, cramped conditions. The quality of accommodation on passenger liners depended largely on the individual's ethnic origins as well as one's place in the hierarchy. Since catering crew were regarded as low-class seafarers, they lived in relatively bad quality accommodation. It is notable, that separation in accommodation was enforced also vertically, different sections of crew living in different parts of the ship. The vertical segregation of accommodation was common on all steamships, and was enforced also on passenger liners.

5.6. Performing domestic duties at sea

The previous sections of this chapter have emphasised the importance of understanding the catering personnel as a particular, previously neglected group of seafarers. This section identifies further characteristics in their working conditions that were unique to seafaring, by highlighting the differences between working conditions in hotels and restaurants on land and those on passenger liners. The working conditions of cooks and bakers will be used as a key example in order to give an idea of a ship as a workplace. They will also further stress the different conditions of the shore and sea-based caterers.

The duties of the sea cook varied according to whether he worked on a sailing ship, tramp steamer or passenger liner. The common characteristic for all of them was that they performed their duties on a workplace, which was often out on the high seas. The sea cook, therefore, had to adapt to working conditions unknown to most cooks ashore. The most important factors for the cook's employment on passenger liners

⁴²² L.H. Powell, *The Shipping Federation. A History of the First Sixty Years, 1890-1950* (London, 1950), p.59; Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p. 145; Conrad Dixon, 'Pound and Pint', p.170.

⁴²³ Dixon, 'Pound and Pint', p. 170.

were the 1852 Passenger Act⁴²⁴ and the development of passenger shipping. As noticed in the proceedings of the evidence supplied for the 1903 Parliamentary Committee, cooking was already of much better quality on passenger liners than it was on sailing ships or tramps.⁴²⁵ It was partly because the cooks had completed a long apprenticeship, the voyages were shorter and regular (which made planning the provisions easier) but above all because they were cooking for the passengers, who increasingly started choosing their ships on the basis of service. When emigrant traffic was brought to a standstill, those who travelled for pleasure with much money in their pockets demanded a high standard of service. During the first decade of the twentieth century the big passenger liners started to imitate international luxury hotel kitchens by their system of organisation. The grand hotels had organised their kitchens under the leadership of chefs and sous- chefs. Next in the hierarchy worked the sous-chefs for sauces, side dishes, fish and hors d'oeuvres. The similar system was in use in Cunard's passenger liners by 1911. By that time, the 'first cooks' had become 'chefs' and more continental chefs were employed.

The idea of large passenger liners being luxurious floating hotels was commonplace from the end of the nineteenth century onwards. However, the comparison was mainly used by ship owners and captains for public relations purposes. Even if the transition from sail to steam minimised the hardship of crossing the oceans by shortening voyages and making living conditions more civilised, it did not eliminate one ancient aspect of seafaring: danger. Since sea travel was traditionally regarded as dangerous and uncomfortable, ship owners wanted their passengers to forget that they were in a vehicle of transport and possibly in a position of danger. The ships were marketed as hotels in order to make people to forget the seasickness and the extreme rolling of the ship. Passenger advertising concentrated on highlighting the comforts of sea travel. Blue Funnel, for example, advertised their ship as 'combining the friendly comfort of home, the service and cuisine of the best of hotels, the acute

⁴²⁴ The 1852 Passenger Act required every passenger ship carrying more than 100 adults have one or two 'seafaring men' employed solely to cook for the passengers. 15 & 16 Victoria.

⁴²⁵ *Report of the Committee*. BPP 1903. LXII, qq. 10,444-51. The evidences of T. Alty, fireman; qq. 13,430-40, 13,527-30. J.E. Foley, General Secretary, Bristol Channel Licensed Boarding Masters' Protective Society; qq. 750-6. H. Henderson, Master Mariner and Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office of Liverpool; qq. 1627-8. D. Mackenzie, Superintendent of the Mercantile Marine Office, Glasgow; qq. 2707-10. J.H. Longford, Konsul in Nagasaki; qq. 5548-51. J.H. Wilson, General President of the Sailor's and Firemen's Union.

safety afloat and the utmost regularity'.⁴²⁶ In reality, heavy rolling could still, in spite of the fancy decorations and the increased size of ships, cause a very unhomely atmosphere and make the passengers' journey a long nightmare.

The available evidence suggests that catering personnel did not see themselves as hotel workers. On the contrary, the *Marine Caterer*, their union magazine, claimed that it was a boast only of the shipowner that the modern liner was a floating hotel.⁴²⁷ In their opinion fierce competition between the liner companies had set service standards too high. They argued that the 'personal service' demanded by the ship owners meant sheer servility and entertainment for the passengers.⁴²⁸ Furthermore, they disapproved of office staff superintending men who had served a lifetime at sea. This shows that seafaring experience was highly regarded and that they saw themselves as seafarers.⁴²⁹ Tony Lane's interviews of seafaring cooks from the late twentieth century reveal that most came from seafaring families or port communities (such as Liverpool) and that going to sea was a family tradition.⁴³⁰ As the catering personnel's magazine suggests, the stewards also saw themselves as a distinct type of personal servant:

This magazine is addressed to a class of men separate from their fellows. Separate by a reason of their surroundings and separate from other caterers by reason of the character of their work... From the marine caterer only is demanded provision for creature comfort and that personal attention with amounts almost to 'entertainment'. The ocean traveller is in so peculiar a position as to be dependent entirely upon those that serve in our department for the satisfaction of all his/her needs, and in some cases, the gratification of all his/her fancies. These circumstances plus competitive efforts of the ship owners in the entertainment of their travelling clients has led into evolution of the distinct class of personal servants.⁴³¹

Initially, extreme weather conditions were an important reason for employing stewards and stewardesses on emigrant ships in the 1850s. The passengers were often violently sea sick, which normally prevented them from eating or sleeping.

⁴²⁶ MMM. O/A. Blue Funnel 7.B.2/1361. Passenger advertising 1938.

⁴²⁷ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1911), p.17.

⁴²⁸ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1911), p. 7 and 17.

⁴²⁹ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1911), p.17.

⁴³⁰ Lane, *Grey Dawn Breaking*, p. 29-31.

⁴³¹ *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1911), p.7.

Obviously, the shipping lines were very conscious of the bad weather conditions. However, Clive Brooks notes that it was only after the Second World War, when air travel became a serious rival, that Cunard White Star really began concentrating on the reduction of rolling. The installation of new stabilisers on *Queen Mary* was followed by a marketing campaign claiming 'to smooth your way across the Atlantic'.⁴³² The reason for installing stabilisers on *Queen Mary* was its reputation as a bad roller. Cunard's management expressed their concern about *Queen Mary's* reputation: 'A new worry about *Queen Mary* is the loose talk that is going around about her rolling abilities and we pray for a few fine trips to lay the ghost of what might prove a very damaging reputation.'⁴³³ *Franconia* and *Laconia* (built in 1911) were among the first ships to be equipped with modern stabilisers called Frahm anti-rolling tanks.⁴³⁴ Similar stabilisers were installed on *Aquitania* a few years later. Despite the installation of these stabilisers on ocean going passenger liners, it seems that they did not help much and stories of rolling continued and were common still in the 1950s and 1960s.

Most of the basic tasks of waiters, cooks and bedroom stewards were characterised by the fact that they worked at sea. Compared to service jobs on land, the personal attention expected was greater and of a different nature. Sometimes the sea's presence made the work at sea very difficult. In fact, in heavy weather conditions, the work of a bedroom steward or a stewardess resembled work at a hospital more than a hotel, especially on the early emigrant ships. A large part of their work at sea was to take care of the seasick passengers by carrying meals to their bed and comforting them in their sickness. The storms could continue for days and in those situations one of the crew's most important tasks was to reassure the terrified passengers that there was no real danger. To a certain extent, the passengers depended on them at sea and therefore they were also responsible for their safety.

In bad weather the cook's job could be a very dangerous business. The extreme rolling of most of the transatlantic liners made cooking more complicated than at hotel kitchens. The making of fire and even simple duties like boiling water in those

⁴³² Brooks, *Life on the Liners*, p. 22.

⁴³³ UL.CA. C3/169. Letter from Tom Sparks to Sir Percy Bates, November 17. 1936.

⁴³⁴ Haws, *Merchant Fleets*, p.61.

conditions was extremely complicated. Also, all the pots and pans and other equipment needed in cooking had to be stored so that they did not move with the movement of the ship. Every pot, pan, glass, cutlery and food item had to be fixed into something and saucepans could not be filled more than three-quarters full because of the rolling.⁴³⁵ Because of the ships' tendency to roll heavily in bad weather, the kitchen needed special equipment. Every shipboard galley was fitted with a number of iron bars, which were tightly placed around each cooking utensil.

Another problem occurring from the rough weather was the serving of the food. Brooks notes that 'such gymnastics were one of the recurring nightmares that dining room staff had to learn to live with'.⁴³⁶ In order to make eating and serving the food possible in those conditions, the so called 'twiddlies' were installed in the sides of the tables in order to stop the items on the table from rolling off. Tablecloths would have to be dampened and chairs to be fastened to the floor. In rough weather, serving and eating certain dishes, like soup, was impossible. Carrying drinks was not easy either:

It's a very strange sensation when the ship goes right up in the air and then judders its way back down. You see, when it goes up you feel like you've got nothing in your hand and there's no weight at all on the tray, then- 'whoomp'- the ship comes down again and suddenly the tray seems about three times as heavy as the gravity presses down on you.⁴³⁷

Catering personnel often became seasick themselves, at least in the beginning of their career. Sometimes the sensitivity to seasickness could even stop a person from pursuing a career at sea.⁴³⁸ Edgar Hilton's cabin mate for example, was ill all the time in the beginning of his career.⁴³⁹ Most of the memoirs and diaries of the crewmembers and passengers mention seasickness and the violent movements of the ship.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ MMM. DX/1875. A.G. Payne, 'Cooking at Sea' *Cassels Magazine*, p. 654.

⁴³⁶ Brooks, *Life on the Liners*, p. 20-21.

⁴³⁷ *ibid*, 21-22. An interview of Charlie Turnell, a waiter on Cunard.

⁴³⁸ P&O's stewards' register lists a few such cases. For example, Mrs Violet Mary Keyl, a stewardess, was sent home on her own expense in the middle of the voyage because of extreme seasickness in 1938. NMM. P&O 77/30. Stewards' Register 1937-1939.

⁴³⁹ Hilton, *One of Cunard's Cooks*, p.10.

⁴⁴⁰ MMM. DX/1093. The Diary of Janet Sharpe aboard *Umbria* in 1896. She complains about the rough sea and about being seasick. She writes on Monday 7 1896 that 'the ship is rolling a good deal so much so that they had to put the riddles on the table this morning that is the thing to keep the plates

Numerous accidents happened to the catering personnel while performing their duties in harsh weather. A Cunard cook tells of the rolling of *Queen Mary* in the end of the 1930s:

A young stewardess was carrying a trayful of food up to a passenger in her cabin; the tray was heavily laden with silver-plate. As she turned into an athwartship alleyway, the ship began to roll and the girl began to run involuntarily, meeting the far bulkhead violently, causing her serious injury.⁴⁴¹

In 1911 the chef of the White Star Line died because he was thrown against the galley table which damaged his lungs.⁴⁴² An evidence form the 1950s from *Aquitania* suggest that the rolling hardly got better with time:

In the galley the duty cooks were old hands, and managed to stay on their feet, but they weren't agile enough to escape the un-anchored pots and pans that flew around and flattened themselves against the bulkheads and their bruised bodies that day.⁴⁴³

Apart from suffering physical harm due to the hard weather conditions, the catering personnel were also in danger of drowning which was not the case with workers ashore.⁴⁴⁴ They could lose their lives in shipwrecks or be washed away by a wave while walking on the deck. The magazine *The Chief Steward and Floating Hotel* reported a death of a steward onboard *Royal Edward* who had slipped on deck, struck his head against the mast and fractured his skull.⁴⁴⁵

steady.' Also another manuscript by Mr. R. E. Walker written onboard *Servia* in 1884 complains about the constant rolling of the vessel. MMM DX/1099; John Jenkins, p.8; MMM. DX/1481. The Diary of William Hodkinson, a passenger on 'Phoenix ' from New Zealand to England in 1866; MMM. DX/1486. The diary of a passenger from Liverpool to Canada on *Montclare* in 1926. She estimated that there were only a hundred people out of eight hundred who were not ill; MMM. DX/1560. Letters of Anne Smith, a stewardess 1923-1927; MMM. DX/1731. The diary of Robert Pendlebury, an emigrant to Australia on *Medic* in 1910.

⁴⁴¹ Hilton, 'One of Cunard's Cooks', p.10.

⁴⁴² *Marine Caterer*, No. 1 (1911), p. 240.

⁴⁴³ Brooks, *Life of the Liners*, p.19.

⁴⁴⁴ The *Marine Caterer* reported a cook being fallen overboard as a result of accident. *Marine Caterer*, No. 4 (1914), p. 90.

⁴⁴⁵ MMM. DX/1242. *The Chief Steward and Floating Hotel*. No. 77 (1913), p.52.

The Shipping Federation, the biggest ship owners association, had a Benefit Fund from which seafarers and their families could claim compensation if an accident or death occurred onboard. The source reveals that most of the accidents of the catering personnel occurred because of the rolling of a ship. For example, in 1894 the Benefit Fund Committee paid claims to a steward, who, due to the ship rolling heavily, was thrown against a galley stove and burnt his left arm. A cook on a steam liner scalded his foot when a copper of boiling fat fell on it during heavy weather. Another cook slipped when carrying a sack of potatoes on deck and fractured one of the bones in his leg. Dislocated shoulders, pneumonia, fractured bones and suicides were the most common cases to be handled by the Benefit Fund between 1893 and 1902. In several instances cooks or stewards were suspected of being under the influence of drink; in which case no compensation was paid.⁴⁴⁶

Cooks' and bakers' work at sea differed from their land-based counterparts in many ways. Apart from harsh weather conditions and isolation making the cook's work different from their shore counterparts was the fact that he often had to participate in various other tasks than cooking. Careful planning and means of preserving food were important on longer trips. The cook had to take care of the preservation of food, purchasing it in port, taking care of the animals carried and killing them. It was difficult to keep animals in good condition during long voyages because of limited space, lack of exercise and food, and stormy weather. In the book *Cookery for Seamen* there was a chapter 'How to kill and dress a pig, and how to cut it'.⁴⁴⁷ Also *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, published in 1918, dedicated three chapters for caring for the live stock as well as for killing and dressing of poultry, sheep and cattle.⁴⁴⁸ On passenger liners before refrigeration, the cows were often carried in order to provide fresh milk for the passengers during the voyage.⁴⁴⁹ Unless a separate baker was employed, baking was an important part of the cook's work, since flour was one of the most easily preserved articles on long voyages. The cook's popularity also depended on his ability to disguise the poor quality of his provisions or to provide the impression of variety with limited materials.⁴⁵⁰ Amongst other things, he had to

⁴⁴⁶ MRC. UW. MSS.367/TSF/1/5/1. The Shipping Federation. Benefit Fund claims.

⁴⁴⁷ Quinlan & Mann, *Cookery for Seamen* (Liverpool, 1894), pp.8-9.

⁴⁴⁸ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, pp.36-48.

⁴⁴⁹ Diggle, *The Romance of Moder Liner*, p.187.

⁴⁵⁰ Sager, *Seafaring Labour*, p.112.

know how to preserve eggs for five months and how to boil old potatoes.⁴⁵¹ For those qualities, David Bullen called him a Magician.⁴⁵²

With technological change, a larger mixture of ingredients and kitchen equipment was provided for the sea cooks, which made the work more demanding. Modern ways of preserving food, especially refrigeration, allowed one to spend more time with the cooking itself instead of having to slaughter the animals and waste ingredients. Technological changes allowed a more ambitious attitude towards cooking to develop, especially on passenger liners.

The mechanisation of equipment and the extreme specialisation of personnel arrived both to hotel and ship kitchens together with more rational management. As well as hotels, the large liners were forerunners in kitchen mechanisation.⁴⁵³ Although the overall work became harder in terms of pace and competition between individual shipping companies, technological change such as refrigeration, better ovens, electricity and shortening of voyages made cooking itself easier. The most arduous and labour intensive tasks like peeling potatoes and preparing dough were now done by machines, which facilitated the reduce of staffing. Refrigeration and electricity first appeared on ocean going passenger liners at 1870s but only became common at 1880s.⁴⁵⁴ *Servia* was the first Cunarder to be fitted with electric light.⁴⁵⁵ Oil fuel was introduced to the biggest passenger liners in the beginning of the 1920s. Before that time, the ranges and ovens used coal for cooking.⁴⁵⁶ While the use of electricity for cooking was restricted to the urban rich and businesses until the 1920s⁴⁵⁷, electric kettles, toasters, eggboilers as well as mincers and sausage-making machines were introduced to the largest liner kitchens before the First World War.⁴⁵⁸

⁴⁵¹ Quinlan & Mann, *Cookery for Seamen*, pp.16 and 30.

⁴⁵² Bullen, *Men of the Merchant Service*, p.192.

⁴⁵³ J.M. Dent & Sons, *Grand Hotel. The Golden Age of Palace Hotels. An Architectural and Social History* (1984), p.168.

⁴⁵⁴ Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *Travelling by Sea in the Nineteenth Century. Interior Design in Victorian Passenger Ships* (1972), pp.55 and 58.

⁴⁵⁵ Charles E. Lee, *The Blue Riband. The Romance of the Atlantic Ferry* (c. 1930), p. 146.

⁴⁵⁶ Bond, *The Ship's Baker*, p. 12.

⁴⁵⁷ Anthea M. Jarvis: *The Development of Cooking Technology, and How Women Used and Perceived it: 1820-1920*. MSc Dissertation, University of Liverpool (1997), p. 4.

Unlike meals prepared at households and hotels where extensive premises were used and cheap kitchen labour was available, the same work was done in a limited space at sea.⁴⁵⁹ The restricted space was as important to the cooks' working conditions as the rolling of the ship. Frank Bullen writes on the cooks in steam that they 'in a space no larger than a reasonably-sized cupboard, succeeded in turning out a dinner of several courses for five hundred people, no matter what the weather may be' and therefore every inch of space was needed in the kitchen. Bullen also notes that another quality separating them from cooks ashore was the fact that, unlike ashore, an every single item of the dinner had to be prepared by the cook himself, and not bought all ready to the table.⁴⁶⁰ A. G. Payne, specialist in cookery, compares the kitchens ashore and onboard the liner *Kaisar I Hind* in 1884:

[T]he comfortable and spacious kitchen shrinks into an iron-bound apartment probably one quarter the size. The kitchen range becomes the galley fire. The view from the window, commanding a delightful prospect of the area railing, is changed into one of rolling billows crested with foam. What was formerly the kitchen floor is now an inclined plane, sometimes sloping thirty degrees in one direction and sometimes in another.⁴⁶¹

The cooks, because of the heaviness of menus⁴⁶², complicated catering arrangements, class-specific set of choices and the frequent meal times worked under tremendous pressure. The *Marine Caterer* emphasised the contrast between hotel and ship kitchens by claiming that the work on board ships was constantly carried out under high pressure. It wrote, that 'the amount of work done during a prescribed period would amaze anyone accustomed to work in a kitchen ashore ... his work is done under such stress and difficulties'.⁴⁶³ The food on passenger liners had become a pastime activity by the end of the nineteenth century. The *Marine Caterer*

⁴⁵⁸ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, pp. 65, 191, 192.

⁴⁵⁹ Joan E. Walley, *The Kitchen* (1960), p. 17.

⁴⁶⁰ Bullen, *Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 192-194

⁴⁶¹ MMM. DX/1875. Payne, 'Cooking at Sea', p. 654.

⁴⁶² The menus contained frequently seven dishes, which according to the *Marine Caterer*, was much more than any restaurant ashore would have submitted for the similar occasion. *Marine Caterer*, No. 2 (1911), p. 33.

⁴⁶³ *Marine Caterer* No. 2 (1911), p. 32.

complained about the frequency and high variety of dishes offered to passengers arguing that passengers had little else to do on board than eat and drink.⁴⁶⁴

The baker's work was of special importance onboard. Richard Bond states on the nature of the baker's work:

Unlike his confrere on shore, he must be a man whose knowledge and ability will enable him to surmount many obstacles and unexpected difficulties in the manufacture of food products, that would make a baker on shore turn grey with worry, years earlier than his age would justify.⁴⁶⁵

He had to calculate exactly how much flour would be needed for the number of people on board for the time the vessel will be at sea. He had to know how to handle and store the flour supplied, since it easily went mouldy and sour if stored incorrectly for long periods of time. The baker must have also been capable of preparing all the bread, pastry and cakes consumed on board in varying temperatures since his work was greatly affected by varying climatic conditions. The difficulty faced by the ship's baker in bread-making was the varying temperatures depending on the location of the ship, since the dough must always be made so that the temperature was as near as possible 90 degrees Fahrenheit.⁴⁶⁶ He also had to know how to prepare yeast, a task of special difficulty and importance. The production of yeast in varying conditions at sea, which were affected by bad weather, badly-fitted workshops and shortage of essential materials, was a task demanding high expertise. Therefore, the baker's work depended greatly on whether the ship was equipped with an ice house or refrigerator, since the yeast could be stored in a refrigerator and even in the ice house for about a week by the 1920s. On a ship where no ice was available the baker would have to prepare the yeast for the whole journey.⁴⁶⁷ In addition of knowing how to bake, he had to hold knowledge on the materials themselves.⁴⁶⁸ On some ships there were no special bakers' ovens even if fresh bread was especially important since it was often the only fresh food item available.⁴⁶⁹ Therefore, the ship's baker had to know a variety of recipes that could be made without the use of

⁴⁶⁴ *Marine Caterer*, No. 4 (1911), p. 1.

⁴⁶⁵ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p.68.

⁴⁶⁶ Bond, *The Ship's Baker*, p.52.

⁴⁶⁷ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p.73.

⁴⁶⁸ *ibid*, pp.68-72.

⁴⁶⁹ Bond, *The Ship's Baker*, p.84.

the ovens. Apart from ovens, other equipment, such as hot plates and refrigerators, was often unavailable to the ship's baker.⁴⁷⁰ Furthermore, the baker's shop was ill-ventilated because of its location, which was usually in an alleyway in close conjunction of the galley. Because of the lack of air-conditioning and the heat of the ovens, they might become very hot places to work in.⁴⁷¹ On smaller ships, the baker was required to assist the cook and therefore required knowledge of general cooking. However, on large Atlantic liners a number of specialist bakers were usually carried.

This chapter has demonstrated the various aspects which made the catering personnel's work on passenger liners different from their shore-based counterparts. Apart from the legislative aspects, the intensity and rhythm of work, and the lack of family life, the presence of the sea had further consequences to the work itself. The severe weather conditions made their daily routines of work different from the shore based caterers. Furthermore, the difference in technical equipment and the actual space restrictions were the other major aspects which distinguished the catering personnel's working conditions from those of shore-based catering occupations.

Compared to other sections of maritime labour, the two most striking aspects of catering personnel's working conditions were the unfixed pay and the unrestricted working hours throughout the period under consideration. Therefore their total income is difficult to define. The level of pay was largely performance-related as a significant part of their wages was paid by the passengers themselves. However, since the high level of tips correlated with extremely long working hours, the unwaged income acted as paid overtime. The justification of low pay for catering personnel because of their access to tips was inequitable but the persistence of an unwaged income element also meant that trade unions remained unsympathetic towards the catering personnel's low wages.

The next chapter looks at the working conditions of catering personnel from another angle. The organisations that regulated their working conditions will be explored and

⁴⁷⁰ Bond, *The Ship's Baker*, pp.323 and 325.

⁴⁷¹ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p.70 and 101.

the question of how the trade unions' activities and international competition affected catering personnel's working conditions will be answered.

6. Catering Personnel and the Organisation of Seafaring Labour Before the Second World War

6.1. Introduction

This chapter highlights aspects of the catering personnel's trade union organisation and labour market policy regarding catering personnel employed in shipping industry. The establishment of the caterers' union, and its relations with the National Maritime Board (NMB) and the National Union of Seamen (NUS) will be explored.⁴⁷² Unionism is a useful alternative angle from which to examine catering personnel's working conditions and their place in the broader maritime labour force. Catering personnel's position in maritime trade unionism will clarify certain peculiarities in their working conditions, such as their long working hours, which have been examined in previous chapters. Special attention will be paid to the impact of the unions' strategies on working hours and wages of the catering personnel. It will be argued that catering personnel were not necessarily protected by these actions, rather the opposite. This chapter will therefore demonstrate the impact of the maritime trade unions and government intervention on catering personnel's working conditions and their response to these actions. The fact that their working conditions were inferior to those of other groups in the maritime labour force was not only due to their passivity towards trade unions. In fact, it will be argued, the activities of the dominant trade union, the National Union of Sailors and Firemen (later National Union of Seamen), actually contributed to a worsening of the catering personnel's working conditions.

Previous literature on seafarers' industrial relations and trade union activities has largely ignored catering personnel, who are at best treated very briefly in these accounts. The history of the National Union of Seamen by Marsh and Ryan only deals very briefly with catering personnel: no attempt is made to assess the extent to which NUS policy led to a deterioration in their working conditions on passenger liners or to explain its failure to recruit catering staff on a voluntary basis.⁴⁷³ Lindop, in his

⁴⁷² The National Union of Seamen before 1926 was known as the 'National Union of Sailors and Firemen' (NSFU).

⁴⁷³ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*.

account of seamen's trade unionism, concentrates almost solely on the development of the NUS and the role of Joseph Wilson, and gives the impression that they represented the whole maritime labour force.⁴⁷⁴ In reality, most of the catering personnel on passenger liners remained outside the union up until the Second World War. Moreover, there were major differences in trade union activity among catering personnel on different trades, but this has not been made particularly clear in previous accounts. By contrast, Wailey recognised the important role of the NMB in isolating seafarers from other groups of workers and accepted that seafarers cannot be categorised as a monolithic group because of the range of different trades and employment functions. Before 1942 the NUS did not represent all the different sections of seamen.⁴⁷⁵

Studies of employers' organisations are also unaware of the complexities of the maritime labour market. Powell does not even mention the cooks' and stewards' union in his account of the Shipping Federation, the largest ship owners' association in Britain, although Bean does emphasise that not all ship owners belonged to the Shipping Federation. Liverpool, as a port, did not give much support to the Shipping Federation: it had its own employer's organisations, consisting primarily of large liner companies, which had a direct impact on local industrial relations.⁴⁷⁶

This chapter has therefore made extensive use of primary sources in reconstructing the place of the catering personnel in maritime unionism. Sources include the National Maritime Board's minutes, the Shipping Federation's archives and the National Union of Seamen's records. This study has greatly benefited from the NMB's minutes, which provided excellent information on the catering personnel's working conditions. All the surviving material concerning the National Union of Ship's Stewards, Butchers and Bakers (NUSSCBB) and the records of the Amalgamated Marine Workers Union, which the NUSSCBB and British Seafarers' Union founded in 1921, has been analysed at the University of Warwick's Modern Records Centre. In addition, magazines and newspapers, such as the *Times* and the

⁴⁷⁴ Lindop, *Seamen's Trade Unionism*, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁵ Wailey, *A Storm from Liverpool*, pp. 5, 13, 19-20.

⁴⁷⁶ R. Bean, 'Employers' Associations in the Port of Liverpool, 1890-1914' *International Review of Social History* 21 (1976), pp. 358-382.

Seaman and Marine Caterer, the cooks' and stewards' union's publication, have been surveyed.

The primary sources contain, as will be noted, several references to difficulties in organising the catering personnel. It will be shown that the NUS had a particular difficulty in attracting catering personnel on passenger liners. On cargo ships, a few members of the catering crew joined Wilson's union, but the larger crews on passenger liners developed a stronger identity of their own. This chapter also challenges some commonly-held views that the trade unions always had a positive impact on the working conditions of its workers. It will be shown that the functioning of the NMB, with J. Havelock Wilson's assistance, effectively stopped any attempts to reduce the catering personnel's working hours. Furthermore, attitude of the NUS towards the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers reflected a lack of any reference to working class solidarity once they had gained the ship owners' official recognition with the founding of the National Maritime Board.

The following section (6.2) gives a general overview of the maritime trade unions and especially of the catering personnel's organisation before the First World War. Section 6.3 deals with the beginning of the collective bargaining system and the creation of the National Maritime Board, including a catering panel. The next section (6.4) deals with the NMB and the post-war wage reductions it carried out, as well as the stewards' strike which followed in 1921. During the dispute, the NUSSCBB lost its representation on National Maritime Board to the NSFU and the alliance between ship owners and the NSFU was an important factor in determining the working conditions of the catering personnel as a whole (Section 6.5). The subsequent sections (6.6,6.7) deal with the NUSSCBB's amalgamation with the British Seafarers' Union (BSU), which then became the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU), and its defeat in 1925. The chapter finishes with an analysis of the introduction of compulsory union membership for catering personnel, which was also applied by the NUS to staff on British passenger liners following the outbreak of the Second World War.

6.2. The development of maritime trade unions up to the First World War

The Sailors and Firemen's Union, which had come into existence in 1887 under the title of 'The National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland', became the largest national seafarers' union in Great Britain. Its formation was part of the 'New Unionism' of 1888-90. It represented a mass expansion in trade union organisation during which many workers, who were previously poorly organised, became increasingly aware of the benefits of collective bargaining.⁴⁷⁷ Within the movement stable unionism also became established in industries with no significant base in craft production such as mining, textile and railways.⁴⁷⁸ Other characteristic features of 'new unionism' were low entrance fees and aggressive strike tactics, wildly fluctuating membership and the unions' willingness to recruit workers without distinction of type of employment. The trade union movement was also somewhat radicalised with the arrival of socialist ideas.⁴⁷⁹ Accordingly, Mary Davis highlights that the term 'new unionism' does not only mean that many new unions were formed, but also that new, more class-conscious and militant approaches to trade unionism were adopted.⁴⁸⁰ The National Amalgamated Sailors and Firemen's Union of Great Britain and Ireland claimed a membership of 65,000 in 1890, but suffered a substantial loss in its funds and membership during the 1890s. Support for the dock workers and seafarers in the 1890 strike actions, the depression in trade, and being sued for libel because of a pamphlet which attacked the ship owners were factors

⁴⁷⁷ Chris Wrigley, 'Labour and Trade Unions in Great Britain, 1880-1939' *Refresh* 13 (1991), p. 2; E.J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire, from 1750 to the Present Day* (Harmondsworth, 1990), p. 165. Some historians, however, date the start of 'new trade unionism' well before 1890, especially in the industrialised areas in the North. W. Hamish Fraser, *A History of British Trade Unionism, 1700-1998* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 71-72; Peter Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation. The Economic History of Britain, 1700-1914*, 2nd Edition (London, 1983), p. 341.

⁴⁷⁸ Richard Hyman, 'The Historical Evolution of British Industrial Relations' in Paul Edwards (ed.), *Industrial Relations Theory and Practice in Britain* (Oxford, 1995), p. 37.

⁴⁷⁹ Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Harmondsworth, 1987), pp. 90, 93, 98; Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation*, p.339.

⁴⁸⁰ Mary Davis, *Comrade or Brother? A History of the British Labour Movement, 1789-1951* (London, 1993), pp. 94-95.

which led to voluntarily liquidation and subsequent re-emergence in 1894 as the National Sailors and Firemen's Union.⁴⁸¹

J. Havelock Wilson, an ex-ship's cook, became the president of the Union. He was to become one of the most controversial figures in British trade unionism and a long-term leader of NSFU. Socialist ideas, however, did not impress Wilson. He was the vice-president of the British Workers League, which was closely connected with the so-called non-political trade unionism.⁴⁸² According to Wilson's testimony, there was a deliberate attempt at the end of the nineteenth century to recruit stewards and cooks from both cargo ships and passenger liners. A total of £6,000 was spent on this campaign, but without much success.⁴⁸³ Indeed, in an attempt to recruit catering personnel and fishermen NSFU briefly changed its name to the National Union of Sailors, Firemen, Fishermen, Cooks and Stewards in 1889. In the same year, two specialised catering branches were opened in London and Southampton, but their existence was short lived and they ceased to function within a few years. By 1910, however, the NSFU claimed that it had over 4,000 cooks and stewards as union members.⁴⁸⁴

Although the NSFU expanded rapidly, it did not succeed (and was not particularly interested) in recruiting catering personnel who worked on passenger liners.⁴⁸⁵ Moreover, Wilson admitted that those caterers who did join came from tramp steamers.⁴⁸⁶ Catering personnel had a reputation for being difficult, and even impossible, to organise.⁴⁸⁷ It seems very likely that the 4,000 cooks and stewards Wilson claimed to have in his union were actually employed on sailing ships and tramps and not on passenger liners.⁴⁸⁸ Cooks and stewards on cargo tramps, perhaps

⁴⁸¹ Arthur Marsh and Victoria Ryan, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions* (Aldershot, 1987), p. 177. They cite J. Havelock Wilson's 'unsound financial arrangements' and the opposition of the ship owners' as other reasons for the decline in membership.

⁴⁸² A.R. and C. P. Criffin, 'The Non-Political Trade Union Movement' in Asa Briggs and John Saville, (eds.), *Essays in Labour History 1918-1939* (London, 1977), p. 133.

⁴⁸³ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/5. *Minutes of Proceedings* of a Conference with Representative Cooks and Stewards. October 19, 1921, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ Lindop, *Seamen's Trade Unionism*, p. 60.

⁴⁸⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/5. *Minutes of Proceedings...*, p. 5.

⁴⁸⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/7 'An Analysis of the Shipping Industry' A Study prepared by the Labour Research Department. No year of print, but after 1923; MSS 175/6/AMW/2/5. *Minutes of Proceedings...*, p.5.

⁴⁸⁸ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/5. *Minutes of Proceedings...* p. 5.

due to their small numbers, were more favourable to Wilson's union, especially if the other crewmembers belonged to the union. The National Sailors' and Firemen's Union, as the name suggests, was primarily concerned with recruiting sailors and firemen rather than other groups of maritime labour such as fishermen, stewards, stewardesses and cooks. For example, the minute books of the NSFU from the late-nineteenth century reveal a consistent demand for equal wages and hours of work for sailors and firemen, without any explicit reference to the position of catering personnel.⁴⁸⁹ To this extent, Wilson's recruitment tactics failed to reflect structural changes in the maritime workforce, with the relative decline in the number of sailors and a disproportionate increase in the overall size of the catering personnel.

It is not surprising, therefore, that catering personnel on passenger liners developed their own separate approach to unionism. In 1909 the National Union of Ship's Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers (NUSSCBB) was formed by Joe Cotter in Liverpool. He was an ex-steward on *Mauretania* who decided to organise the catering department after Cunard had started to employ foreign cooks and stewards.⁴⁹⁰ The head office was situated in North John Street in Liverpool and the Liverpool branch office in Canning Place near Albert Dock. Shortly after its foundation it also opened branch offices in Southampton and Glasgow.⁴⁹¹ The union's magazine was called *Marine Caterer*, which was edited initially in 1909 by Frank Pearce and thereafter by Arthur W. Short.⁴⁹² By 1919 the union had branches in Glasgow, Southampton, Cardiff, Bristol, Avonmouth, London, South Shields, Hull, Leith and Antwerp. The Liverpool, Southampton and London branches, all in large passenger liner ports, were the biggest.⁴⁹³

The NUSSCBB's governing body was the General Purposes Committee, which consisted of the General President, the General Secretary and delegates from the various ships. It was responsible for the general management of the union and

⁴⁸⁹ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/1/1. 'Mr Wickham concluded that there should be equal wages and hours of labour for sailors and firemen.' Minute Book of NSFU, 19 January, 1889.

⁴⁹⁰ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/5. Minutes of Proceedings..., p. 5.

⁴⁹¹ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/1/3. Correspondence of the National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*

⁴⁹³ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/1/1. General Statement of the Receipts and Expenditure, Funds and Effects of the NUSSCBB.

reported regularly to the National Executive Council, which met less frequently.⁴⁹⁴ The purpose of the union was 'to use every legitimate means to improve the conditions of all members of the victualling department, afloat and ashore'. Amongst others, its aims were to obtain reasonable hours of work, better accommodation and adequate sanitary conditions for all seafarers.⁴⁹⁵ The NUSSCBB claimed to have a membership of 15,316 in 1913 and 10,000 in 1920.⁴⁹⁶ Marsh and Ryan provide similar figures on union affiliation, with a membership of 2,030 when it was established in 1909, 3,624 in 1910 and 15,000 by 1911.⁴⁹⁷

Before the establishment of the NUSSCBB, a few smaller unions representing catering personnel had existed briefly. There is evidence in 1912 of national union (the Cooks and Stewards Society of British Cargo Steamers), which was still in existence in 1916.⁴⁹⁸ The specific origins of these organisations and the extent to which they were interrelated remain unclear, but they definitely had no connection with the NUSSCBB, although the latter did have a formal rival in 'The International Sailors', Firemen's, Cooks', Stewards' and General Workers' Union'.⁴⁹⁹ The union entitled 'British Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers' had been established in Cardiff with a membership of 2,000 in 1907. Another local union, the 'Union of Marine Cooks, Bakers and Butchers Benefit Society of Liverpool and District' existed in Liverpool in between 1891-1895.⁵⁰⁰

The relationship between NUSSCBB and NSFU were good before the First World War and they even co-operated in 1911, when the NSFU took part in the successful seafarers' and dockers' strike. NUSSCBB supported the work stoppage and as a result its membership rose to 15,000 and it claimed to have most of the liner cooks and stewards on its books. As a result of the strike, a hundred ship owners agreed on the

⁴⁹⁴ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/1. Rules of The National Union of Ship's Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers, 1920.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/7. 'An analysis of the Shipping Industry', p.5.

⁴⁹⁷ Marsh and Ryan, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions*, p. 189.

⁴⁹⁸ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/1/2. NSFU Minute books 1911-1915. Meetings on 14.4.1912 and 20.4.1913.

⁴⁹⁹ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p. 311.

⁵⁰⁰ Marsh and Ryan, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions*, p. 193.

standardisation of wage rates in London and in Liverpool and all seafarers, including catering personnel and shore gangs, received a 10s increase per week.⁵⁰¹

According to Wrigley, 1911-1913 was a period of unrest in British industry owing to the lack of collective bargaining and the upturn in the trade cycle.⁵⁰² The reason for the success of the 1911 strike by seafarers was not only because the timing was right (freight rates were raising and tonnage increasing), their victory was also due to the fact that there were few strike-breakers available. Even if the importance of worker solidarity is recognised in trade union histories in connection with the 1911 strike, the contribution of the catering personnel has been ignored.⁵⁰³ The fact that the NUSSCBB joined the strike was important for Wilson, since they formed almost one third of the membership of NSFU at that time.⁵⁰⁴ As a result of the effective organisation of labour, the ship owners finally recognised the maritime trade unions, in particular the NSFU. As Bean concluded, recognition in Liverpool was granted before the general transport strike later that year 'because the employers adopted a realistic and more forward looking strategy to put labour relations in the port on a stable footing, once and for all.'⁵⁰⁵ The owners of the North Atlantic liners also realised that stable labour relations were essential in order to meet international competition from the German lines.⁵⁰⁶ The success of the 1911 strike was important as it led to the acceptance of Wilson's union by both the ship owners and the state as the main representative organ of seafarers. However, the catering personnel, who by then formed a majority of the workforce on passenger liners remained outside the NSFU. Indeed, in Southampton the NSFU was faced with a rival organisation, the British Seafarers' Union, which had strong support amongst personnel employed on transatlantic liners operating from the port. The new union had been formed by former members of the NSFU's Southampton and Glasgow branches, namely by Mr Alderman Lewis and Emanuel Shinwell.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰¹ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p. 57. The Liverpool liners' special role in the 1911 strike has been covered in more detail by Bean, 'Employers' Associations in the Port of Liverpool', pp.374- 376.

⁵⁰² Wrigley, 'Labour and Trade unions in Great Britain', p.2.

⁵⁰³ Fraser, pp. 116-117; Bean, 'Employers' Associations in the Port of Liverpool'.

⁵⁰⁴ In 1910, NSFU had 12,000 members whilst the NUSSCBB claimed a membership of 3,624. Marsh and Ryan, *The Historical Directory of Trade Unions*, pp.306-308.

⁵⁰⁵ Bean, 'Employers' Associations in the Port of Liverpool', p. 382.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰⁷ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, pp. 43-44.

The NUSSCBB was not seen as a threat by the NSFU before 1921. Nor is there any evidence of Wilson's union seriously trying to recruit catering personnel from the passenger liners before 1919.⁵⁰⁸ Rather, the joint conference organised between NSFU and NUSSCBB on 24 November 1914 suggests a degree of co-operation. The conference was organised 'for the purpose of taking into consideration the prevailing state of unrest of the seafaring men on the matter of wages'.⁵⁰⁹ However, the outcome of the conference is not known. Marsh and Ryan also characterise relationship between Cotter and Wilson as essentially co-operative during this period and according to Lindop the NUSSCBB initially adopted a position of neutrality in the inter-union rivalry between the NSFU and BSU.⁵¹⁰

However, very soon after the establishment of the British Seafarers' Union, it started to expand at the expense of the NUSSCBB by actively recruiting stewards and cooks. The BSU's magazine, *The British Seafarer*, carried articles in the 1910s which were specifically addressed at catering personnel and actively encouraged them to organise.⁵¹¹ Their strongest support was in the liners anyway and in that sense, the catering personnel were a natural target for recruitment. As a result of the BSU's recruitment policy, Cotter's union quickly lost the members it had gained in Southampton after the 1911 strike and therefore developed a hostile attitude towards the BSU and started to co-operate with the NSFU.⁵¹² The BSU claimed that they had started to recruit the stewards and cooks on their own request since the members had been disappointed at the NUSSCBB's ineffectiveness. In fact, the NUSSCBB had asked its members to remain neutral and not to act with the BSU, a policy which was used against them. According to *The British Seafarer*, such a policy had made stewards powerless and asking for membership.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁸ UW. MRC. MSS175/6/AMW/2/5. Minutes of proceedings..., p.6.; MSS 175/1/1/4. NSFU minutes book 1915-1920. NSFU decided to start amalgamation with the Hull Seamen's and Marine Firemen's Union as well as start 'an educational campaign' among the members of NUSSCBB and start preparing for the catering personnel joining the Union.

⁵⁰⁹ UW. MRC. MSS175/1/1/2. NSFU Minute Book 1911-1915. Joint conference of NSFU and NUSSCBB, 24 November 1914.

⁵¹⁰ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p.43; Lindop, *Seafarers' Trade Unionism*, p.160.

⁵¹¹ See, for example UW.MRC. MSS 175/5/3. *The British Seafarer*: 'Stewards, Awake!' January (1914), p.6; 'Stewards, Organise!' February (1914), p.7; 'Stewards and Organisation', March (1914), p. 3.

⁵¹² Lindop, *Seafarers' Trade Unionism*, p. 160.

⁵¹³ 'Stewards, Awake!' *The British Seafarer*, January (1914), p.6.

There was a lack of unity among seafaring unions before the war, but the relationship only became antagonistic with the establishment of the BSU. However, the hostilities were concentrated between the BSU and the NSFU and to some extent between BSU and NUSSCBB. By contrast, the relationship between Wilson's union and the NUSSCBB remained friendly.⁵¹⁴

6.3. The National Maritime Board and NSFU's alliance with the employers

The Shipping Federation, the national ship owners' association, was established in 1890 to fight back against the strong NSFU. According to Powell, it was founded as 'a permanent battle-axe' against 'oppression and abuse'.⁵¹⁵ Since the establishment of the Shipping Federation, the activities of these two organisations were concentrated on a bitter fight with each other. The Shipping Federation refused to recognise the NSFU as a negotiating partner and the NSFU refused the ship owners the freedom to determine wage levels and select their own labour. An important outcome of the 1911 strike for the NSFU was that it was recognised as a contracting party in national wage negotiations.⁵¹⁶

The long-term goal of the seafarers' international movement was to achieve a negotiation board for standard national wages.⁵¹⁷ The NSFU, in turn, aimed to achieve sole rights to negotiate with the ship owners and hence gain control of the maritime labour supply. By January 1913, less than two years after the strike, the NSFU had started 'an active propaganda, under the instruction of the General President to promote the principle of recognition of the union and to establish a permanent board consisting of representations from ship owners and the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union.'⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁴ The inter-union competition and rivalry was not peculiar to maritime trade unions. Regional and sectional rivalry decreased trade unions' bargaining power also in other sectors, such as in railways and docks. Philip Bagwell, "Transport" in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *A History of British Industrial Relations 1875-1914* (Brighton, 1982), pp. 230, 245; Marsh and Ryan (1987), pp. 160-161, 264.

⁵¹⁵ Powell, p.1.

⁵¹⁶ Lindop, p.3.

⁵¹⁷ JW. MRC.MSS 175/3/13/2. The Story of Havelock Wilson by Frank Taylor.; C. Ernest Fayle, *The War and the Shipping Industry* (1927), p.264.

⁵¹⁸ JW. MRC. MSS 175 1/1/2. NSFU Minute book 1911-1915. 4 January, 1913.

The NSFU's main target was realised in 1917. Some form of joint negotiating agency became necessary as a result of war-time requirements, and the Ministry of Reconstruction took the initiative in establishing a joint industrial council for shipping. The Shipping Federation, the Ministry of Shipping and the NSFU were all represented on this wartime National Maritime Board (NMB). It was established to safeguard industrial peace during wartime since the mercantile marine was of vital national interest. The government was now forced to recognise the unions in a labour market where five million men were enlisted in the Armed Forces out of a total male labour force of fifteen million, although in shipping foreign labour was more easily available than in other trades.⁵¹⁹

The National Maritime Board had single-handed control over labour policy in shipping during and after the First World War. The NMB was one of the organisations, whose establishment was facilitated by government intervention during the First World War as a third party in the relations between employers and employees.⁵²⁰ The National Maritime Board set the first national standard rates for the British Merchant Marine on 6 October 1917. The national standard rates were both maxima and minima and were non-negotiable. In October 1918, seafarers also received a war-risk bonus of £3 a month, which was to be added to the wages of all ratings at the end of the war. The National Maritime Board's rates of pay were constructed for two groups: according to whether a seafarer served on a passenger liner, or on cargo liner or general trading vessel. On cargo liners the wage rates were classified according to the number of hands, but on passenger vessels the wages were fixed.⁵²¹ The Wages Act of 1918 was then extended to November 1919, and wages had to be maintained at these levels until 30 September 1920.⁵²²

When the first national agreement on wages was reached between the Shipping Federation and the NSFU in 1917, the latter had two reasons to celebrate: it was a special victory for Wilson, since the creation of national bargaining and conciliation

⁵¹⁹ Wrigley, 'Labour and Trade Unions in Great Britain', p.2.

⁵²⁰ The intervention of the state in requiring employers to recognise unions for collective bargaining during the First World War is analysed by Wrigley 'Labour and Trade Unions in Great Britain', p.2 and Bean, 'Employers' Associations in the Port of Liverpool', p. 359.

⁵²¹ *National Maritime Board 1919*, p. 30.

⁵²² *National Maritime Board 1920. The standard rates of pay, superseding and embodying the 1919 agreement.* The Shipping Federation (1920), p. 2.

machinery was a crucial element in his ambition to improve seafarers' wages.⁵²³ Furthermore the NSFU had now gained sole recognition in representing all British sailors and firemen.⁵²⁴ With the establishment of the National Maritime Board, as Marsh and Ryan put it, 'Wilson had achieved everything which he had ever expected or desired in the building of relationships with the employers'.⁵²⁵ In effect, this wartime development in maritime industrial relations meant that the NSFU and the Shipping Federation had joint control of the supply of maritime labour- with catering personnel as an exception.

However, after the war there continued to be a need for a similar organisation in order to deal with labour disputes. Unrest and unofficial strikes occurred amongst seafarers- especially in Liverpool- demanding a national standard rate of wages. The National Maritime Board, which was similar to its wartime equivalent, was re-constituted in November 1919. The fundamental difference to its predecessor was that the Government was not involved. The Board consisted of 26 district boards and was organised in five sub-panels of six members, of which the catering panel was one. On each panel, there was an equal representation of owners and employers. The NUSSCBB was allowed to appoint its own representatives. The employees' representation on the catering department panel was granted solely to the NUSSCBB, whilst the sailors' and firemen's panel was represented mainly by the NSFU. The British Seafarers' Union was given representation only at a local level, namely on the passenger liner panels of the Southampton and Glasgow District Boards.⁵²⁶

The most important principle of the National Maritime Board was the no-strike obligation, which Wilson emphasised on several occasions. As head of the largest trade union on the employees' side, he made it clear that he would not support any strike by other trade unions – whether attached or unattached to the Board. Furthermore, the aim of the Board from both sides was to engage all members of the crew only through their unions. Therefore, the Board gave individual unions, namely for those represented on the Board, the monopoly in engaging crew.⁵²⁷

⁵²³ Lindop, *Seamen's Trade Unionism*, p.75.

⁵²⁴ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/1/3. NSFU Minute Book, 1915-1920. 24.3.1917.

⁵²⁵ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p. 61.

⁵²⁶ *ibid*, p.83.

⁵²⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. NMB minutes 19 December, 1919.

The NMB also insisted on representing British seafarers and ship owners at all national and international conferences, which aimed to regulate seafarers' working hours.⁵²⁸ By gaining monopoly in representing seafarers and being firmly against the eight-hour day in shipping the NMB managed to suppress the negative response to any propositions for an eight-hour day for British seafarers, the issue which was of most importance to catering departments. Therefore the existence of the NMB was a great obstacle in securing better working conditions for the catering personnel on British passenger liners, especially since they did not even have proper representation in that organisation after 1921. They effectively stopped any interference from other labour market organisations by claiming that they had the sole right to represent British seafarers. For example, in February 1930 the Board of Trade carried out an enquiry for the National Maritime Board on 'Whether overwork exists in the British Mercantile Marine and if so, what remedies may be devised for dealing with it'. The Sailors' and Firemen's and Catering Department Panels of the NMB forwarded the conclusions of the enquiry to the Board of Trade. The letter emphasised that '[a]lthough the work on board ship is not regulated by Act of Parliament or by Government regulation it is regulated by the National Maritime Board, which has operated since 1919 as a voluntary body set up by the employers and employed in the shipping industry'.⁵²⁹

Wilson's Union, during the process of establishing the NMB, distanced itself from the national and international labour movement and gave up even the faintest allusions of ties to socialist ideas.⁵³⁰ Wilson's trade union became co-operative by nature: it tried to stop all strike activity (actually denied them as a form of industrial bargaining) and sought to control the labour supply together with the ship owners. Wailey argues that in effect the NSFU became a strike breaking organisation and: 'For the forces of the

⁵²⁸ See, for example, UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/12. Letter from G. A. Vallance, the General Secretary of NMB to the Assistant Secretary of the Mercantile Marine Department, Board of Trade, 10 April, 1931.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵³⁰ Wailey, *A Storm from Liverpool*, p.19.

State there could be no better advocate of what it was attempting to achieve within the leadership of the NSFU and its president J. Havelock Wilson.⁵³¹

6.4. Wage reductions and the 1921 stewards' strike

Very soon after its establishment the post-war National Maritime Board started making reductions in seafarers' wages. Seafarers had experienced a rapid increase in wages due to the war and the ship owners now wanted to reduce them to the pre-war level. The initial economic boom had declined rapidly after the end of the war and the seafarers' unemployment rate had increased quickly. Moreover, in 1921 alone, shipping freight rates dropped 74 per cent.⁵³²

At the meeting of the full board in March 1921, the ship owners announced their desire for drastic wage reductions. They demanded an immediate reduction in pay of £4.10s per month in the deck and engineering department and £5.10s in the catering department.⁵³³ Cotter especially found it difficult to approve of any reductions, since the NUSSCBB's main policy had been to gain an increase in wages and establish the eight-hour day. Earlier in 1921 the *Times* had reported trouble in several ports caused by 'the arbitrary demands' of stewards for an eight-hour day, at a time when a conference of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Brussels was considering the eight-hour day for seafarers.⁵³⁴ The stewards' union saw it as a good opportunity to push for the shortening of their working hours, but the ship owners argued that overtime in port, especially for the catering personnel, was too generous, even if they regularly worked fifteen-hour days at sea without overtime.⁵³⁵

⁵³¹ Wailey, *A Storm from Liverpool*, pp. 7 and 19.

⁵³² Marsh and Ryan, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions*, p.189.

⁵³³ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Letter from the Shipping Federation, dated 23 February, was read in the beginning of the National Maritime Board's meeting in March 17, 1921.

⁵³⁴ *Times*, 27.1.1921; *Times* 28.1.1921; *Times* 31.1.1921.

⁵³⁵ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, verbatim report 17 March, 1921. The overtime clause that irritated the ship owners the most was the clause according to which catering personnel were paid overtime in ports for hours starting before 7 o'clock in the morning. Mr Cauty, the ship owners' representative, stated that the ship owners do not consider it right 'when a man gets up to cook breakfast for the crew in port at 6 o'clock instead of 7 o'clock he is paid overtime... We find that in certain ships a man is detailed to handle the food for the Sailors and Firemen. He is called the 'Cook of the Room'. I believe that the practise some time ago was to allocate this work to the 'fool of the watch'. I have been told so by several of your members. Yet this man, for carrying out this work which is the work for he is specially allocated, draws large sums in overtime at the end of the long voyage.'

Cotter was particularly bitter at the ship owners' proposal to cut the stewards' wages more than that of the sailors and firemen. He was also of the opinion that a great part of the catering department's employment had been casualised since the big passenger liner companies, such as Cunard and White Star Line, had started to lay up ships in winter time and the annual earnings of his members had been therefore severely reduced. The ship owners' representative, Mr Cauty, admitted that the steward was a casual worker labouring long hours, but agreed that

he works under better conditions than a great many casual workers do. He is provided with a scale of living which I think is a great deal better than many casual workers get and if you place him on the basis of a casual worker he has a great advantage over many casual workers.⁵³⁶

The ship owners also justified their demands for the wage cuts by referring indirectly to the tips received by stewards.⁵³⁷ Again, the practice of tipping (of which only *some* members of the catering department benefited) was used to justify their low wages and long hours.⁵³⁸

In the meeting in April 1921 when the reduction of wages and the revision of overtime was made, Cotter refused to be bound by any section of the NMB over wage cuts and loss of overtime as these issues should have been discussed by the catering panel and not by the full board, where the majority of votes on the employees' side belonged to the NSFU, which was in favour of the wage reductions.⁵³⁹ Wilson, by contrast, was against the idea of putting these issues before the separate panels, because he knew that the catering panel would not have accepted them because greater reduction in wages and the loss of overtime was especially unfavourable to catering staff. Indeed, at the meeting of the full board in March, Wilson had stated: 'it

⁵³⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the Catering Department Panel, verbatim report 28 April, 1921.

⁵³⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the Catering Panel, Verbatim report 28 April, 1921. When Cotter asked the ship owners why the stewards were asked for larger reduction than even officers who were earning £30 and £40 a month, the ship owners' representative Sir Frederick Allen replied that some of the stewards have been earning more than that. When Cotter asked him to clarify in what way would they have earned that money, Sir Allen replied: 'In various ways'.

⁵³⁸ The significance of tipping has been discussed in Section 5.2.

⁵³⁹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the NMB, 22 April, 1921.

is a waste of time to put the issue to the front of the panels' and argued that it would be sensible to cut out the panels.⁵⁴⁰

Cotter and his fellow representatives of the NUSSCBB were left with no alternative: they knew that they would be left in a minority over the wage reductions which they could not accept, especially after they had conducted a ballot which was strongly against any cut in wages. In Cotter's opinion, the ship owners' proposal was too harsh for the catering department. He stated in a letter read to the catering panel on the 28th of April that 'the reduction or increase in wages is much more complicated as far as we are concerned than it is with the Deck and Engine Department' and that 'the hours are the most important item on our side.'⁵⁴¹ Cotter withdrew his members from the catering panel during March and April 1921 and resigned formally on the 19th of September.⁵⁴²

Marsh and Ryan interpreted the retirement of the Cotters' union's panel as having handed over union representation on the catering panel to the NSFU.⁵⁴³ However, the available evidence suggests, that Cotter did not 'give away', or mean to withdraw from the NMB permanently. On the contrary, Wilson together with ship owners wanted to push through the wage reductions and therefore took the view, rather conveniently, that Cotter together with the NUSSCBB representatives had finally retired from the panel. Sole representation on the board, which meant co-operation with the ship owners, was more important to Wilson than the solidarity of seafaring labour. Wilson had made it clear that his union would not assist the cooks and stewards. He stated at the NMB meeting that '[w]e have nothing to do with the Catering Department in any

⁵⁴⁰ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, verbatim report 17 March, 1921.

⁵⁴¹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, verbatim report, 28 April, 1921. Joe Cotter's letter to Mr Wallace, dated 25 March, 1921 and read in front of the Catering Department's panel's meeting in 28 April, 1921.

⁵⁴² UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board 18 November, 1921.

⁵⁴³ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p.113.

shape or form. They have severed themselves from us and they must take their own course.⁵⁴⁴

In reality, Cotter did not have any other option but to withdraw from the NMB: according to the NMB's rules, all the unions represented on the Board had to agree with all its decisions. However, since he felt that he could not agree with the wage reductions, he was forced to leave the Board since he only had a minority of the representatives behind him. According to Marsh and Ryan the NMB was constituted so that a party that did not agree with the joint decision of the Board had to withdraw and try to negotiate more favourable conditions with the individual ship owners (which Cotter had decided to do according to the minutes of the 17th of March ⁵⁴⁵). This clause in the NMB rules meant in practice that the union which had the majority of representation on the Board, could dictate its decisions.

The Board's constitution stated that it should be a united body, but in order to secure approval for wage reductions in the absence of NUSSCBB representation Wilson argued that 'we should not interfere with the independence of any section connected with our council'. He continued as follows:

If any one section disagrees with the majority, whatever they (the minority) do, they must stand on their own legs. That is to say, supposing we agree with you, and the other bodies who walked out don't, then in the event of a struggle they must not appeal to us for help. They must not expect that we who have agreed with you are going to stand up and support their demands.⁵⁴⁶

The catering panel was the only panel where another trade union (other than the NSFU) was formally represented. Cotter's withdrawal meant the removal of the only possible opponent to the policy recommendations of the ship owners and the NSFU. Immediately after the catering panel left the Board meeting Wilson expressed his

⁵⁴⁴ UW.MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Wilson in the NMB meeting 17 March, 1921. Wilson also assured the ship owners at the following meeting in April that 'In case of a dispute the Cooks and Stewards will get no help from us' and 'I suggest that the Panel of Stewards be convened at once, and that they fight out their own battles'.

⁵⁴⁵ Cotter said at the meeting: 'I want to meet the ship owners on behalf of our men to go into the details of the case, and I demand that this be done- if not, we will retire is you wish and discuss it elsewhere'. UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, 17 March, 1921.

⁵⁴⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, 22 April, 1921.

intention to cut overtime, if the ship owners' representatives were willing to meet his demand on wages, even though he knew how important an issue overtime was for the catering personnel.⁵⁴⁷ After the catering panel retired from the meeting, the NMB accepted a reduction of £2.10s per month in seafarers' wages. The voluntary reduction in seamen's wages and the loss of the overtime clause in 1921 not only led to a stewards' strike, but gave rise to intense lifelong hostility between Wilson and various members of his own union.⁵⁴⁸ In line with NMB policy, he opposed strike action by his own members who were against the wage reductions and very likely forged the result of the membership ballot which was rumoured to have been almost 100 per cent for the strike.⁵⁴⁹

The resolution that the same wage reductions and the rescinding of the existing overtime agreements would apply to the catering department, as well as to other departments, was made by the full Board on 5 May 1921.⁵⁵⁰ The cooks and stewards went on strike the next day.⁵⁵¹ Despite the Ministry of Labour's estimate that some 10,000 catering personnel supported the strike, it collapsed within a month. Violence between members of the NSFU and the NUSSCBB followed in Liverpool and Southampton, especially when cooks and stewards saw Wilson's union facilitating the manning of ships by their own blacklegs.⁵⁵² As well as refusing to help the catering personnel's union, they actually ended up providing strike-breakers and hence being involved in breaking the cooks' and stewards' strike.⁵⁵³ *The Communist* criticised Wilson for filling vacancies in the catering department with his own 'scab labour', and claimed that *Aquitania* sailed with 600 'scabs' on board.⁵⁵⁴ The vigilance committees, supported by the communists, that were established to oppose Wilson's policy in

⁵⁴⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, 22 April, 1921.

⁵⁴⁸ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p.112.

⁵⁴⁹ The results of the ballot were never published. Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p.112. In *Marine Caterer*, Joe Cotter accused Wilson of sending a letter to 13,000 wives in the Liverpool area, in which he told them that if their husbands voted against the wage reductions the NSFU would not have enough money to pay more than a week's strike pay. *Marine Caterer* (1921), No 5, p.1.

⁵⁵⁰ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, 5 May, 1921.

⁵⁵¹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/TSF/1/5/10. Report number 438 of the General Purposes Committee, Shipping Federation, 27 May, 1921; *Times* 6 May, 1921 and 7 May, 1921.

⁵⁵² Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, pp.112-113.

⁵⁵³ *ibid*, Lindop, *Seafarers' Trade Unionism*, p.191-192.

⁵⁵⁴ G. Garrett, 'Sailors Beware' *The Communist*. 19 November, 1921.

1921 of voluntary wage reductions, supported the stewards' strike.⁵⁵⁵ Despite several attempts to stop liners sailing, the ship owners managed to obtain stewards in all cases. According to the *Times* and Duncan Haws, during the stewards' strike in May, 2,750 passengers were carried on *Aquitania* served by between 300- 400 of Cunard's office staff and strike breakers.⁵⁵⁶ A meeting of chief and second stewards of the NUSSCBB was held in Birkenhead on 13 May when they decided to break the strike and start signing on, which suggests that the strike had started to fail within a week. Shortly after, the *Times* reported that members of the NUSSCBB were ignoring union rules and had started signing on.⁵⁵⁷ The Shipping Federation's General Purposes Committee reported in its meeting in May that there were no problems with providing substitutes for striking cooks and stewards for cargo vessels. In the case of large passenger liners, however, there were some difficulties in obtaining full catering crews. Nevertheless, with the exception of Glasgow, by 27 May no vessels had been detained.⁵⁵⁸ Similar information was given by Mr Laws, the General Manager of the Shipping Federation, who stated on 21 May that the strike of cooks and stewards 'was in the last throes of its existence'.⁵⁵⁹ On June the 4th the strike was written off as unsuccessful.⁵⁶⁰ After the strike the Shipping Federation claimed that the strike had not resulted in any detention of vessels since substitutes were found for all strikers.⁵⁶¹ Furthermore, according to *Times*, the ship owners managed to get all the catering staff they needed despite the strike. The NSFU regarded the strike as 'a great fiasco'.⁵⁶² The stewards' strike also failed because of the great number of unemployed seafarers, as it was estimated that approximately 40,000 seafarers were unemployed at that time.

At the same meeting where Cotter's letter of resignation was read, Wilson came forward with a proposal that the catering panel should be re-constituted with

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ Haws, p.67; *Times* 13 May, 1921.

⁵⁵⁷ *Times* 19 May, 1921.

⁵⁵⁸ UW. MRC. MSS 367/TSF/1/5/10. Report number 438 of the General Purposes Committee, Shipping Federation, 27 May, 1921.

⁵⁵⁹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/TSF/1/2/11. Proceedings at General and Executive Council Meetings. Shipping Federation, 21 May, 1921.

⁵⁶⁰ UW. MRC. MSS 367/TSF/1/5/10. Report No 446 of the General Purposes Committee, Shipping Federation, to the Executive Council, 25 November, 1921.

⁵⁶¹ UW.MRC. MSS 367/TSF/1/4/3. Shipping Federation's General Purposes Committee minutes 9 June, 1921.

⁵⁶² UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/1/4. National Sailors and Firemen's Union, Minutes of meetings of the Executive Council, 5 July, 1921.

representatives of his own union.⁵⁶³ He argued that since the NUSSCBB was barred from the ships and members had shifted to his union (which was only partially true), he wanted his stewards' delegates to have the same privileges as the sailors and firemen. However, in order for the NMB to re-establish the catering panel the constitution had to be changed since it stated that the representation of the catering panel belonged to the NUSSCBB. In practice the transfer of representation to Wilson's union meant that those caterers who worked on passenger liners and did not join the NSFU lost representation on this important institution. In discussing the new catering panel the ship owners attempted to push forward their own candidates, named by the members of the recently established 'Maritime Caterers' Guild', a break-away group from Cotter's union after the strike. However, Wilson managed to persuade employers to give the representation rights of the cooks and stewards' panel on the NMB to the NSFU by arguing that the ship owners' side could not select members for the employees' side of the panel- although he did agree to give the Guild a small representation.⁵⁶⁴ By 1923 the Marine Caterers Guild had ceased to exist and the sole representation of the catering panel was now in the hands of the NSFU.

In practice, therefore, the NSFU now had a majority of the employees' trade union representation on the National Maritime Board. Wilson's treatment of the NUSSCBB was symptomatic of his general strategy towards other trade unions. There is strong evidence to suggest that he aimed to eliminate other trade union organisations from the NMB almost as soon as they were granted representation on the Board. He also sought to restrict the entry of other organisations representing seafarers, such as the British Seafarers' Union (BSU) and the Merchant Service League.⁵⁶⁵

One of the NSFU's aims was to destroy other trade unions, such as the British Seafarers' Union, by giving them no representation on the NMB and therefore to achieve a monopoly of supplying seafarers - other unions would automatically

⁵⁶³ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board 18 November, 1921.

⁵⁶⁴ UW. MRC.NMB.MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board 18 November, 1921 and 16 December, 1921.

⁵⁶⁵ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of meetings, 19 December, 1919. It is revealed, that British Seafarers' Union applied for representation in a letter dated 17 December, 1919. Even if 'there was a pressure from ship owners' part to bring them so sit amongst them, NSFU opposed strongly'; MSS 175/6/AMW/4/22. Minutes of meetings, 30 November, 1925. Entry to the NMB was also refused from the Amalgamated Maritime Workers' Union (AMWU); the BSU's successor, which amalgamated with the NUSSCBB.

collapse because none of their members would be employed.⁵⁶⁶ Marsh and Ryan note that Wilson 'retained most of his membership because it could only obtain work with a paid up NSFU card (PC 5)',⁵⁶⁷ a policy which the ship owners agreed to in exchange for industrial peace. It was preferable to the ship owners that Wilson disciplined the work force rather than the BSU⁵⁶⁸, firstly because the BSU opposed wage reductions and secondly because Wilson opposed the eight-hour day which was the ship owners' worst nightmare. In fact, because the NSFU's main role became the disciplining of the workforce with the intention of avoiding strikes, it drifted far from the labour movement principles of the other labour organisations. The catering personnel's position in the NMB was an unfortunate one because of the bitter rivalry between the NSFU and the BSU, and NSFU's later hostility to the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU), which was the result of the amalgamation of the BSU and the NUSSCBB. But catering personnel were probably right in assuming that the NSFU was firstly the sailors' and firemen's organisation and did not do much good for the catering personnel - especially those on passenger liners.

6.5. The importance of the National Maritime Board

The importance of the NMB for British seafarers' labour relations cannot be overestimated. Powell, for example, calls it as an example of industrial self-government which regulated its work force 'with almost complete absence of discord'.⁵⁶⁹ In 1934, the president of the Board of Trade, Lord Runciman, stated in the Parliament that: 'there were not one industry in this country which has been so free from labour disputes as the shipping industry in the last 20 years. I put that entirely to the working of the National Maritime Board...'⁵⁷⁰ Wailey claims that the necessity of controlling and managing a seagoing labour force by the NMB was reinforced by the fact that Britain needed to maintain its imperial links with the aid of merchant seafarers. In this context, the NMB also isolated British seafarers effectively from

⁵⁶⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of meetings. Joe Cotter at the meeting on 19 December, 1919. He stated that if the ship owners only engage their crew through their unions represented in the NMB, 'the British Seafarers' Union will automatically collapse'.

⁵⁶⁷ Marsh & Ryan, *The Seamen*, p.121. PC 5 was in fact a joint supply system the card having to be stamped both by the NSFU officials and the Shipping Federation.

⁵⁶⁸ From 1921 onwards, when allied with the NUSSCBB, the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU).

⁵⁶⁹ Powell, *The Shipping Federation*, p.37.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

other national and international labour organisations. He argues that through its representation in the NMB the NSFU effectively joined 'an imperial alliance of capital and labour that was mediated by the state.'⁵⁷¹ This alliance, however, included only some sectors of the maritime labour force, as catering personnel, for example, were left without a separate vote.

The Board created an almost complete code of employment conditions. It was the sole organisation responsible for overseeing the employment conditions of merchant seafarers and did not allow any interference from other national or international labour organisations. According to Powell, independence was a positive attribute: 'The proud boast of the Board is that it has the rare talent to settle its own disputes in its own way and without calling on outsiders to advise, placate, mediate, conciliate or arbitrate.'⁵⁷² When Sir David Shackleton from the Ministry of Labour contacted the National Maritime Board about the stewards' strike and the position of Cotter's catering panel, the ship owners were reluctant even to meet him. The vice-chairman of the federation stated that:

...we do not want the Ministry of Labour interfering in these things, if they once get a finger in this pie we shall never be left alone again in any dispute we may have. We have set up a Board which is a Board to deal with all our maritime affairs, and it is agreed by both sides that if we have the ministry of labour poking its nose into these affairs we shall never know where we are. So I suggest that we should say straight away we cannot meet Sir David Shackleton and that we have got our Maritime Board and we will abide by such decision as we make on that Board.⁵⁷³

However, this alliance was especially damaging to the catering personnel. The existence of the NMB prevented other organisations from interfering with the seafarers' notoriously long working hours. The exclusion of the passenger liners' catering crew from this important organisation was a crucial factor in determining their working conditions. Since the NSFU and the ship owners represented on the National Maritime Board were unanimously opposed to any shortening of hours and

⁵⁷¹ Wailey, *A Storm from Liverpool*, pp.7-8.

⁵⁷² Powell, *Shipping Federation*, p.41.

⁵⁷³ UW. MRC. MSS 367/TSF/1/2/11. Shipping Federation. Proceedings of Stewards and Executive Council Meetings, 21 May, 1921.

especially the eight-hour day, it systematically understated the catering personnel's working hours. The Board also claimed that if they worked long hours, they did so willingly: 'Many of the catering staff are willing for financial reasons, to put in somewhat lengthy hours for their own benefit'.⁵⁷⁴

At the time of the stewards' strike the agitation for the eight-hour day was at his height. The NUSSCBB, under the leadership of Cotter, agitated against wage reductions and advocated the adoption of the eight-hour day for seafarers at the ILO conferences in Genoa and Brussels. The issue of labour hours was of enormous importance for Cotter, since the catering department on passenger liners was the most overworked group in the British shipping industry. The International Labour Organisation, which had been created as a result of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, had decided at its first conference in Washington on the principle of the eight-hour day and forty-eight hour week. The British government's representative (J. Havelock Wilson, who was elected MP for South Shields from 1918 to 1922) had already voted for the ratification at the draft conventions, but thereafter soon changed his mind. Initially Wilson had campaigned for applying the government's Hours of Employment Bill to seamen, which he thought would ratify the convention. However, when it became clear that the ship owners and British government would, in no circumstances, accept the eight-hour day for seamen, Wilson suddenly took a different stand, probably in order to secure his position in the NMB. In the end, Britain refused to ratify the convention in Genoa in 1920 with the support of Wilson and the ship owners. The adoption of the eight-hour day or any reduction in working hours would have been of vital importance to the catering personnel, as the labour intensity of catering work would have meant a huge increase in overtime pay. But again, neither Wilson nor the ship owners had any intention of improving the working conditions of this most overworked department. If the catering personnel were subject to the same working regulations as the shore-based labour force, their working hours would have been shorter and the excess overtime would have been paid by the employers (and not by the travelling public in the form of tips, which was then the case). The profit made by ship owners from the excessive hours of work undertaken

⁵⁷⁴ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/12. Letter from G. A. Vallance, General Secretary of the National Maritime Board, to the Assistant Secretary, Mercantile Marine Department of Board of Trade, 10 April, 1931.

by catering personnel on board passenger liners was so important that they decided to oppose the eight-hour bill.⁵⁷⁵ *Times* also reported that the substantial increase in payments being considered by shipping managers was a matter of 'first-rate importance'.⁵⁷⁶ As already mentioned in Chapter 5, the normal working day in other departments was notably shorter: the firemen already had an eight-hour day and deck ratings worked twelve hours per day. The wage and overtime cuts in 1921 therefore affected passenger liner companies to a greater extent than any other branch of the shipping industry, because

The crews we carry are very large and the question of the rates of pay form a very much larger percentage of our expenses in operating ships... The catering department on the big passenger liners is the largest department we carry, and the rates of pay in the catering department is correspondingly important to us and any settlement of this question with the Deck and Engine room departments would not settle the question for us.⁵⁷⁷

6.6. The NUSSCBB's amalgamation with the British Seafarers' Union

As a result of the unsuccessful stewards' strike, the membership of the NUSSCBB collapsed. Mr Donnelly, a former member of the union, estimated that as a result of the strike, its membership fell from 17,000 to 3,000.⁵⁷⁸ Marsh and Ryan claim that the membership before the strike was as high as 25,970, but had fallen to 9,800 by the end of 1921.⁵⁷⁹ In 1921 the NUSSCBB amalgamated with the British Seafarers' Union to form the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union (AMWU). It claimed to have 15,000 members mainly in liner ports.⁵⁸⁰ The Marine Caterers' Guild, which was formed by the senior members of the catering personnel during the 1921 strike, had the support of the ship owners, but only survived for two years. Another National Union of Ship's Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers, established in 1924 and based in Liverpool, appears in the NMB's records when they applied for representation. It claimed a membership of 4,000 mainly in Liverpool, Southampton and London,

⁵⁷⁵ UL. CA. B12. Letter to the Cunard's General Manager's Office from Albert Boot, the ship owners' representative in the ILO Conference in Genoa, 22 June, 1920.

⁵⁷⁶ *Times*, 6 May, 1922.

⁵⁷⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. Minutes of the National Maritime Board, 24 April, 1921. Mr A.B. Cauty, a ship owners' representative of the National Maritime Board.

⁵⁷⁸ UW.MRC. MSS 175/1/7/1. Mass meeting of NUS members in Liverpool, 17 December, 1928.

⁵⁷⁹ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p. 308.

⁵⁸⁰ Marsh and Ryan, *Historical Directory of Trade Unions*, p. 180.

which suggests that its support was mainly on liners.⁵⁸¹ However, nothing else is known of this new NUSSCBB.

After the 1921 strike, hostility developed between Cotter and Wilson. The *Seaman*, the NSFU's union magazine, became a channel through which the feelings against rivals were expressed, and a number of issues reveal a real struggle for the souls of the catering personnel between the BSU and NSFU, especially during 1921. It started attacking the NUSSCBB and the BSU, claiming that the BSU men were not sea-going men and therefore 'would hardly know a ship from a piano'.⁵⁸² Every issue of the magazine had various unfavourable stories about Joe Cotter or news on recruitment proceedings around the country. Joe Cotter's personal character was also under scrutiny: he was called 'Explosive Joe' and his ability to control himself in terms of decision-making was questioned: 'Whatever Joe touches, it must be done with an explosion: he does not mean it but it is his nature'.⁵⁸³

After the collapse in the membership of Cotter's Union, the NSFU started seriously recruiting the catering personnel on passenger liners. Despite the campaign, which offered membership in the biggest national seafarers' union, a newly established catering section and representation in the NMB, the members of NUSSCBB chose otherwise. Distrust towards Wilson's union must have been considerable, since they chose another, less promising option, the British Seafarers' Union, which was much smaller and had no representation on the National Maritime Board. Moreover, it has to be remembered that the lack of representation on the NMB could have seriously damaged its members' chances of employment. The NUSSCBB's decision not to amalgamate with the NSFU is quite understandable considering that the latter had provided blacklegs during the strike and hence furthered the union's collapse. Members of the NUSSCBB must also have been bitter about Wilson's role in the wage reductions and his opposition to the eight-hour day. On the other hand, since its foundation the BSU had enjoyed firm support among passenger liner crews. Cargo liner cooks and stewards tended to be members of the NSFU, and passenger liner

⁵⁸¹ UW.MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/4/22. Minutes of Meetings. Sailors' and Firemen's Panel and Catering Department Panel 30 November, 1925.

⁵⁸² *Seaman*, 4 November, 1921, p.1.

⁵⁸³ *Seaman*, 18 November 1921, p.2.

crews supported the NUSSCBB and later the AMWU.⁵⁸⁴ Wilson himself stated that the support for his union was weakest in Liverpool, Glasgow and Southampton.⁵⁸⁵ This difference in the pattern of organisation might reflect different working conditions and a sense of occupational affinity amongst the catering personnel on passenger liners. It is also likely that the catering personnel on passenger liners felt that Wilson's union favoured sailors and firemen and did not take their interests sufficiently into consideration. Indeed, there is little evidence of the NSFU doing much to improve the catering personnel's working conditions. On the contrary, its influence was often negative.

The AMWU became the main rival union to the NSFU. However, it never gained representation on the National Maritime Board due to the ship owners' support for Wilson's union. The AMWU applied for representation on the NMB several times, but without success.⁵⁸⁶ The fact that the NSFU was represented on the NMB and hence co-operated with ship owners hindered the AMWU's activities in ports, particularly in terms of recruitment and access by representatives to individual ships, as ship owners only guaranteed the privilege of entry on board to the NSFU's union representatives.⁵⁸⁷ From 1923 onwards, the joint supply system (a monopoly of the supply of labour between the Shipping Federation and the NSFU) which was originally confined to the deck and engine departments only, was officially extended to embrace the catering departments.⁵⁸⁸ However, another source suggests that catering crews were excluded from the joint supply system when it was introduced for sailors and firemen and remained so until the Second World War.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁴ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/3/5. Report on the position of the catering department 14. December, 1935 from the Glasgow District Secretary H. Radford. 'It is common knowledge amongst the officials, I think, that the only part of the Merchant Service that is in any way decently organised is the coastwise; part of the tramp and cargo class which are federated. With regard to the passenger class, the least said the better; they are practically untouched.'

⁵⁸⁵ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/1/1. NMB's Meeting, 30 December, 1921.

⁵⁸⁶ See, for example UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/6. NMB's meeting in 12 February, 1925.

⁵⁸⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/3. Meeting of the NMB's Catering Department Panel, 17 March, 1922.

⁵⁸⁸ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/5. Joint Supply System. National Maritime Board's Annual Report 1923.

⁵⁸⁹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/12/19. Report of a meeting of the National Maritime Board shortly after 7 October, 1938. 'Engagement of ratings at Liverpool, London and Southampton'.

The joint supply system meant that seafarers required a PC5 form from the NSFU's union office which was then stamped at the Shipping Federation Office. The actual selection of personnel, however, was made by the officers on board ship. After formal acceptance they had to go to the Shipping Office and show their union books in order to get the appropriate stamp on their PC5 card.⁵⁹⁰ Fortunately for the members of the AMWU, the joint supply system only functioned in certain ports.⁵⁹¹ For example, the Liverpool liner owners were reluctant to enforce the PC5 form on their crews.⁵⁹² Many Liverpool liner owners did not belong to the Shipping Federation but had their own organisation, the Liverpool Steam Ship Owners' Association. This supply system did not operate in Southampton either, which was another major passenger liner port, where the British Seafarers' Union had retained local representation in the NMB.⁵⁹³

Immediately after the establishment of the AMWU, the Firemen's and Sailors Union started planning a recruitment campaign of its own by calling a conference with representatives of catering personnel from 23 ports. This 'show conference' was organised in October 1921 and its purpose was to convince the members of the NUSSCBB to amalgamate with the NSFU. Wilson admitted at the executive council's meeting that conference failed to achieve any marvellous results.⁵⁹⁴ At the conference Wilson gave an assurance that the NSFU had also been originally established for cooks, stewards and stewardesses, but so far it had principally dealt with catering personnel on tramp steamers. He also claimed that his union had spent £6,000 in attempts to organise the catering department on passenger liners, but without success since they wanted their own union. This conference was part of the recruitment war between the BSU and the NSFU, and Wilson did not mince words. He warned the catering personnel of the BSU: 'If you are going to amalgamate, do not amalgamate with rats and scabs'. He also blamed Cotter for the long working hours of the catering personnel by claiming that when he had been sent to Genoa as the official government delegate, Cotter should have advised him on their long hours of work. As a final

⁵⁹⁰ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/4/9. Verbatim report of a meeting held at the National Sailors' and Firemen's union, Head Office, 23 April, 1922. 'P.C.5. J. Havelock Wilson's attempt to enslave British Seamen Exposed.'

⁵⁹¹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/2/6. Joint Supply System. National Maritime Board's annual report 1924.

⁵⁹² Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p.122.

⁵⁹³ *ibid*, p.117.

⁵⁹⁴ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/1/4. NSFU Minute Book 11 January, 1922.

gesture, Wilson had flattered his audience by calling cooks 'a class of men who come in touch with refinement.' He also emphasised that 'with the cooks and stewards we are dealing with a different class, we are dealing with a superior class', and he promised them a separate section and the advantages of a big union compared to 'that miserable thing', the BSU. He promised them their own building, their own branches, better wages, no charges for lost silver and breakages, better accommodation and an end to the hiring of 'incompetitive men' at 1s. per month.⁵⁹⁵ At another public meeting held in London in April 1922 he announced that 'the time is opportune, in my opinion, to commence a great organising campaign to organise and educate the cooks and stewards back to the Trade Union and labour movement'.⁵⁹⁶

Wilson's efforts to charm the catering personnel were part of a broader plan to take over the smaller maritime unions. The NSFU had an amalgamation policy towards the other unions represented on the National Maritime Board: in March 1920 the NSFU announced that 'the time has arrived' to amalgamate with smaller unions. On the same occasion the NSFU revealed its plans to start 'an educational campaign' among the members of the NUSSCBB. By then, some organisations, such as the Hull Seamen's and Marine Firemen's Union, had already amalgamated with the NSFU.⁵⁹⁷

The NSFU's recruitment policy reflected the impact of technological change on the composition of the seafaring workforce. Groups that had previously formed the core members of the seafaring labour force were now declining. Catering personnel, who were previously regarded as not worth recruiting, suddenly became a group of great importance for the seafaring trade unions. While the catering personnel was expanding, the numbers of firemen, who had formed a core group in the union together with sailors, had started to decrease dramatically. The beginning of the 1920s brought the transition from coal to oil, which led to a decline in the size of the engineers' department and, as the NSFU was afraid, diesel technology was to reduce their numbers even more. Therefore the NSFU wanted the catering department 'solidly and specially organised if this seamen's movement is going to be an important

⁵⁹⁵ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/2/5. Minutes of proceedings....

⁵⁹⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/4/9. Verbatim report of a meeting held at the National Sailors' and Firemen's union, Head Office, 23 April, 1922. 'P.C. 5. J. Havelock Wilson's attempt to enslave British Seamen Exposed', p. 5.

⁵⁹⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/1/4. NSFU Minute book, 26-27 March, 1920.

movement in the future'.⁵⁹⁸ There is further evidence to suggest that the demise of the stoke hold section with the transition from coal to oil was a final factor in persuading the NSFU to try to recruit catering personnel. Charles McVey, NSFU official, stated that:

But to the catering department I say this, that we want an organisation including the catering department solidly and specially organised if this seamen's movement is going to be an important movement in the future. The reason for that is this. The stoke hole section of the seafaring community is gradually going out of existence; oil fuel is reducing them by two-thirds and diesel engines will reduce them even more. Therefore it's necessary in order to keep the seamen's movement together to pay special attention, in my opinion, to the catering department, to get them organised as they were before, and their conditions as a result of that will possibly improve in the future.⁵⁹⁹

6.7. The defeat of the AMWU

The AMWU and the National Transport Workers Federation accused Wilson's union and the ship owners of operating a single union closed shop. The relations between the NSFU and the AMWU became so negative, that the Trades Union Conference had to interfere in the dispute. It decided that the quarrel had to end and promoted an amalgamation between the unions, which was negotiated in January 1925, but without success.⁶⁰⁰

Relations between the NSFU and its main rival, the Amalgamated Marine Workers Union, reached a crisis point in 1925. The AMWU was bitter about being left outside the NMB and NSFU, in turn, did its utmost to destroy its rival, which had the rapidly expanding catering personnel on its books. The wide acceptance of PC 5 with the preference given to the NSFU by many ship owners in terms employment took its toll and destroyed the AMWU in 1925. According to Marsh and Ryan, even if some AMWU members sought dual membership in order to obtain employment, many

⁵⁹⁸ UW. MRC. MSS 175A/4a. Minutes of proceedings of a conference regarding wages. June 1925.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

abandoned the AMWU as an ineffective organisation.⁶⁰¹ The NSFU was also much bigger to start with- in 1925 it claimed a membership of 55,000.⁶⁰² By 1925, the AMWU only had 1,800 paying members left throughout the country and according to the General President, had almost ceased to exist as a national union. Its support had remained strong in Southampton. Liverpool, on the other hand, had turned its back on the union and according to one AMWU member, it had been a waste of money to attempt to organise Liverpool.⁶⁰³

Now, with the collapse of the AMWU, the NSFU had a fresh chance to recruit catering personnel. In 1925 Joe Cotter joined the NSFU, despite his earlier disputes with that union, as a catering personnel organiser. In the same year, the NSFU organised a meeting on Cunard's *Mauretania* in order to recruit its crew to the union. The captain was present at the meeting and it appeared almost as if the captain was helping the NSFU with its recruitment. Cotter spoke first, explaining his career as a steward, which had ended in the *Mauretania*: he claimed that he was dismissed because of the employment of foreign stewards and hence decided to set up a separate union for stewards. He continued by describing the TUC's interference with the relations between the NSFU and the AMWU as an attempt to bring the two unions together. Wilson and himself had been for the amalgamation, but the AMWU just wanted the money. And he concluded: 'My final word is to ask every member of the catering department to make up his mind here today that there is going to be one big union for seamen.' The catering personnel were promised their own executive, equal to those of the deck and engineering departments, which would in turn form one large executive governing the whole NSFU maritime labour force.⁶⁰⁴ In 1925 'the new amalgamation of the seamen's and catering departments' was widely advertised in the *Seaman*. The magazine claimed that the amalgamation had been welcomed with 'open arms' by the catering department. However, the members of the catering department were made a special offer, a joining price of 5 shillings, which was said to be valid only for a limited period of time.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰¹ Marsh and Ryan, *The Seamen*, p. 117.

⁶⁰² *ibid*, p. 306.

⁶⁰³ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/4/22. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of AMWU.

⁶⁰⁴ UW. MRC. MSS 175/3/6/5. 'Report of Speeches. Made by men who were supposed to be afraid to meet the Seamen'. Delivered at a meeting of the whole of the crew of the *Mauretania*, held on the vessel at New York on 20 September, 1925.

⁶⁰⁵ *Seaman*, 28 August, 1925; *Seaman*, 25 September, 1925.

A mass meeting was organised in Liverpool in December 1928. Some former members of the NUSSCBB urged the catering personnel to join the union and argued rhetorically that women and children would suffer unless men of the catering department joined the NUS (NSFU had changed its name into the National Union of Seamen in 1926).⁶⁰⁶ New tactics were used in this stage of recruitment: the stewards themselves were blamed for their poor working conditions because of their failure to unionise.

For years we have hammered away at the liner stewards in regard to their attitude toward trade unionism, but without a great deal of success, and this despite what has been done for them during the years of depression which we hope are now nearing their end...They are like ostriches sticking their heads in the sand in the hope that their Trade Unionist colleagues will not notice them. They know full well that the answer is to join the union and give it power to negotiate with the owners of these particular ship, and then their grievances will speedily disappear.⁶⁰⁷

Once again, tipping annoyed the trade unionists. They were against the practice since they thought that formal wages were less important as a result of tipping and therefore catering personnel were not worth unionising:

Recently on one of the big transatlantic liners a large party occupied all the tourist accommodation on the voyage. This party took a very kindly interest in the hours and conditions of the members of the catering department and commiserated with them in regard to their arduous conditions. When the voyage was nearing its end the stewards were full of excitement. They had been made the following promise: You look after us and we will give you a good tip. When the party left the ship the stewards were told, 'You will find your tip in an envelope and this is what it contained. Not gold, not notes, not silver, nothing so cheap, but pearls of wisdom as follows: A GOOD TIP! WE BELIEVE IN UNITY OF THE WORKERS. ORGANISE AND DEMAND MORE WAGES. WE WILL SUPPORT ANY WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS. TIPPING HELPS THE SHIPPING COMPANY PAY YOU LOW WAGES. THANK YOU...BUT ORGANISE.'⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/7/1. Mass meeting of NUS members in Liverpool in 17 December, 1928.

⁶⁰⁷ 'Non-unionist stewards get a good tip from passengers' *Seaman*, 5 August, 1936, p.5.

⁶⁰⁸ *ibid.*

Another special enrolment scheme for the catering personnel was re-introduced in 1936. Members of the catering department were encouraged to become members voluntarily through a special enrolment scheme, even if there were plans to introduce a compulsory membership for catering personnel in 1938. According to the union officials it would look better, during the negotiations with the ship owners, if the catering personnel would join voluntarily.⁶⁰⁹ Membership was still offered for the same price as late as 1936 and still advertised as a concession. These terms came to end on 31 December 1938, after which the NSFU gradually made membership obligatory for the catering department.

When the NUS realised that the catering personnel were not going to join voluntarily, membership became compulsory between 1940-1943. The Joint Supply System was extended to all the large passenger liner ports including Southampton, London and Liverpool. The NUS reached an agreement, amongst others, with the Union Castle, Royal Mail, Cunard White Star and Canadian Pacific. Presumably wartime considerations made shipping companies favourable to this arrangement. The NUS took this important move towards compulsory membership because: 'there are so many men who take every concession that you and others help to get and are prepared to do nothing, unless forced, to help themselves or maintain what others have got for them.'⁶¹⁰ The same argument was used elsewhere by the NUS in order to justify compulsory union membership. At an NMB meeting in 1938 regarding the extension of the joint supply system to catering personnel on passenger liners it was claimed that:

It appeared to the Union representatives to be unfair that a man who did not contribute to the Union should benefit from Agreements concluded by the Union [in NMB], and they outlined the various benefits given by the union to its members.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁹ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/JAR/8. Advert: 'National Union of Seamen. Important Notice and Appeal to All Non - Union Seamen'; Letter from the National Organiser of the NUS to A. J. Tucker, Peak Steward of Arundel Castle, 24 November 1938.

⁶¹⁰ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/JAR/8. Letter from the National Organiser of the NUS to peak stewards on various ships, 12 December 1938.

⁶¹¹ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/12/19. Report of a meeting of the National Maritime Board shortly after 7 October, 1938.

Why did the NSFU face so severe difficulties in organising the catering personnel on passenger liners? On the one hand, catering personnel had a reputation for being difficult to organise. On the other hand, members of the catering department must have become disillusioned by trade union politics, especially when their hours of work remained long and their overtime was reduced with the full support of the NSFU. The fact that Wilson's union had provided blacklegs during the 1921 strike and implemented wage reductions in the same year must also have remained in the catering personnel's minds. Furthermore, many stewards were casual labourers, which might be the reason why they never really managed to form an effective trade union of their own after the demise of the NUSSCBB.

In 1925 Wilson had offered a wage reduction of £1 per month to the ship owners of the NMB without consulting his members. This caused opposition and unofficial strikes in several British ports. However, since unemployment was high and strikebreakers were easy to obtain, the seafarers' protest failed. The catering department panel representatives also opposed the £1 cut. In discussions relating to the proposed wage reduction, the NMB's catering panel complained that Wilson's promises of providing catering personnel with their own executive and their own place in the office (actually he had promised them their own building) had never materialised. As a result Mr Horton, a union representative, believed that the catering personnel did not have any confidence in Wilson's union or any other organisation.⁶¹²

Lindop estimates that the NUS was only able to organise 25 per cent of the catering personnel before 1938.⁶¹³ In 1937, a memorandum prepared for Mr Spence, the General Secretary of NUS, stated that on some liners there was nearly a 100 per cent membership of the catering personnel, but in ports such as Southampton, London, Liverpool and Glasgow, especially on large passenger liners, the membership rates were very low.⁶¹⁴ A National Maritime Board's report from 1938 states that catering

⁶¹² UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/4/20. 'Seamen's Dispute. The Conspiracy Exposed. How the Seamen's Wages were reduced. Published by the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union. Copy of the Minutes of the NMB meeting on 3 July, 1925. Extracts from Minutes of Proceedings of a conference of Officials regarding wages. J. Havelock Wilson, general President, in the chair.'; UW. MRC. MSS 175A/4a. Minutes of proceedings of a conference regarding wages. June 1925.

⁶¹³ Lindop, *Seamen's Trade Unionism*, p.191.

⁶¹⁴ UW. MRC. MSS 175/6/AMW/3/6. Memorandum for Mr Spence, General Secretary, National Union of Seamen. 15 October, 1937.

department ratings on passenger liners were still unorganised. The same report also revealed, that

...there was indifference on the part of some of the men, whilst others adopted the attitude that they would join when all were compelled to come in, but the important fact remained that these men could not remain unorganised and if they were not brought within the membership of the National Union of Seamen it would certainly not be long before some other body took them in hand.⁶¹⁵

These statements prove that certain big passenger liner ports remained especially reluctant to join the NUS. Personnel in those ports had a long history of resistance to the mainstream union and remained reluctant to join the NUS, despite the fact that the catering personnel did not have a serious alternative after 1925. Furthermore, it seems that there was long-term hostility in some ports, such as Liverpool, against Wilson's union.⁶¹⁶ The difficulty in organising the catering personnel might have also been due to the fact that some groups, like musicians, were organised in their own unions or guilds which were land-based.⁶¹⁷

The patterns of trade union organisation among catering personnel on passenger liners outlined in this chapter suggest that they did not see themselves as belonging to the same group as sailors and firemen, especially those working on cargo ships. It was true that their working conditions, including wages and working hours, were different. Possibly the practice of tipping, which was peculiar to the catering personnel, made them see themselves as private entrepreneurs. Probably the significance of a tipping system as a proportion of total income reduced the importance of their formal wages, the levels of which were negotiated between shipping companies and trade unions. They were also more casual in terms of their patterns of employment. The lack of trust to NSFU/NUS, and its actions in the National Maritime Board, affected catering personnel's reluctance to join this dominant union. On the other hand, the success of the NUSSCBB shows that they were interested in having trade union representation provided it was their own.

⁶¹⁵ UW. MRC. MSS 367/NMB/1/12/19. Report of a meeting of the National Maritime Board shortly after 7 October, 1938.

⁶¹⁶ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/7/1. Mass meeting of NUS members in Liverpool in 17 December, 1928.

⁶¹⁷ UW. MRC. MSS 175/1/1/2. MSFU minutes of meetings, 4 January 1913 mention a Musicians Amalgamated Union which applied for financial aid.

Indeed, there is no evidence during the interwar period that the NUS was especially interested in improving the working conditions of caterers. In reality, the leadership of the NSFU (after 1926 the NUS) was concerned primarily with securing a closed shop policy and ensuring that it acted as the sole representative of seafarers' labour organisations on the National Maritime Board.

7. Women's Employment at Sea

7.1. Introduction

*'Maritime history- the history of men in ships and boats and of those who employed, directed, or served them...'*⁶¹⁸

Until recently, historians have rarely questioned the presence or absence of women in seafaring: the dominance of men has been taken as given. When women at sea have been studied they are usually placed in limited contexts, as passengers or captain's wives, or sailors and pirates disguised as men. It is becoming clear, however, that women have had a much broader relationship with the sea than previous historiography suggests. In particular, women have been increasingly employed from the mid-nineteenth century onwards as part of the maritime labour force.

Conflicts have always occurred when women have entered male workplaces and the sea is not an exception as women's presence on board ship has caused considerable anxiety amongst male sailors. Whilst this has never stopped women from going to sea, before the nineteenth century they seldom signed ships' articles or received proper wages for their work. By the 1860s, however, formal employment opportunities became available to women, mostly in the passenger trades. Modern gender ideology, whilst granting women access to maritime employment, provided them only with strictly limited career opportunities. On the one hand, women's work at sea became more formal and regulated, whilst on the other hand their opportunities narrowed considerably. Dianne Dugaw argues that modern society consolidated the gender divide and the sea became a place where women did not belong, at least not as 'proper' seafarers.⁶¹⁹ Brit Berggreen concludes that women were made invisible by

⁶¹⁸ Ralph Davis, 'Maritime History, Progress and Problems' in Sheila Marriner *et al.* (eds.), *Business and Businessmen, Studies in business, economic and accounting history* (Liverpool, 1978), p.169.

⁶¹⁹ Dianne Dugaw, 'Female Sailors Bold. Transvestite Heroines and the Markers of Gender and Class.' in Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (eds.), *Iron Men, Wooden Women, Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700- 1920* (Baltimore & London, 1996), p.34.

maritime historians and economists alike, because they *should not* have been there.⁶²⁰ Similarly, according to the naval authorities, they should not have been at sea, and women are therefore difficult to find from official documents.⁶²¹

Maritime and gender historians' interest in women at sea began in earnest in the 1970s and the volume of research expanded considerably in the 1980s. However, some general accounts on the subject of women's contact with the sea already existed. Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard published a collection of seafaring women's letters and diaries in 1971.⁶²² In 1981, Henning Henningsen wrote an ethnographic study on gender relations in the sailing ship era, which also covered some women seafarers.⁶²³ Joan Stark and Dianne Dugaw have studied women who dressed as men in order to get a paid position as a sailor.⁶²⁴ The experiences of captain's wives on sailing ships have been explored by Brit Berggreen, Joan Druett and Catherine Petroski, and the presence of women in the Royal Navy has been discussed by Suzanne J. Stark.⁶²⁵ Internationally, Judith Fingard, Eric Sager, David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen have discussed women within the maritime labour history of Atlantic Canada and Northern Europe respectively.⁶²⁶ During the last decade, interest in women at sea has widened into the study of gender relations at sea, and of ships as

⁶²⁰ Brit Berggreen, 'Sjökvinner, om a uppdage et forskningsfelt' *Skärgård 2* (1985), p.11; 'Dealing With Anomalies? Approaching Maritime Women' in Louis R. Fischer, *et al.* (eds.), *The North Sea. Twelve Essays on Social History of Maritime Labour* (Norway, 1992), p.112.

⁶²¹ David Cordingly, *Women Sailors and Sailors' Women* (New York, 2001), pp. 88-93.

⁶²² Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *Women under Sail. Letters and journals concerning eight women travelling or working in sailing vessels between 1829-1949* (Newton Abbot, 1971).

⁶²³ Henning Henningsen, *Sömanden og Kvinden. Ett kapitel af sömandslivet i sejskibstide*. Söhistoriske skrifter XII (Denmark, 1981). Brit Berggreen was another Scandinavian scholar who was amongst the first to write on seagoing women. See, for example, 'Skibet som hjem' *NordNytt 5* (1979), pp. 40-49; 'Sjökvinner, om a uppdage et forskningsfelt' *Skärgård 2* (1985), pp. 4-12.

⁶²⁴ See, for example Dianne Dugaw, 'Rambling Female Sailors. The Rise and Fall of the Seafaring Heroine' *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1992), pp. 179-194 and 'Female Sailors Bold. Transvestite Heroines and the Markers of Gender and Class' *op.cit.* and Suzanne J. Stark, *Female Tars. Women aboard ship in the age of sail* (London, 1998).

⁶²⁵ Berggreen, 'Sjökvinner'; Joan Druett, *Hen Frigates. Wives of Merchant Captains Under Sail* (London, 1998); Catherine Petroski, *A Bride's Passage. Susan Hathorn's Year Under Sail* (Boston, 1997); Stark, *Female Tars*.

⁶²⁶ Fingard, *Jack in Port*; Sager, *Ships and Memories*; David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas* (London, 2000), especially chapter 'Maritime Women', pp. 231-253.

masculine domains.⁶²⁷ Laura Tabili, Jeffrey W. Bolster and Margaret S. Creighton have also acknowledged the connection between gender and race in seafaring.⁶²⁸ This link is especially interesting for the purposes of this study, which explores the separation of work along gender and racial lines. As will be seen, the absence of women forced some men to take over domestic responsibilities in the shipboard community, which were seen as lowly and degrading.

Despite this increasing volume of work, however, few studies have focused in detail on women's employment at sea. Even if there has been considerable interest in particular women in heroic or masculine roles, little has been written on women who performed paid work on British steamships.⁶²⁹ On the contrary, recent studies on gender and seafaring, for example Lisa Norling's excellent book on New England women and the whaling industry, have shifted the focus away from sea to maritime women in shoreside communities.⁶³⁰ There seems to be a tendency to move away from the ship itself in order to find those flesh and blood women in seafaring. Those interested in gender, especially in women's role in seafaring, tend to regard the matter of seagoing women as closed. It is true that we should move on from the trivialities of finding those singular women who have gone to sea and analyse the

⁶²⁷ One of the most valuable books on seafaring and gender is Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (eds.), *Iron Men, Wooden Women. Gender and the Atlantic World, 1700-1920*. Another good one is Colin Howell and Richard Twomey (eds.), *Jack Tar in History. Essays in History of Maritime Life and Labour* (New Brunswick, 1991). Good insights into masculinity are offered by Valerie Burton, 'Whoring, Drinking Sailors', Reflections on Masculinity from the Labour History of Nineteenth-century British Shipping' in Margaret Walsh (ed.), *Working Out Gender, Perspectives from Labour History* (Ashgate, 1999), pp. 84-101 and Margaret S. Creighton, 'Women' and Men in American Whaling, 1830-1870' *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1992), pp. 195-218. Gender in the dockers' community has been explored, for example, by Tapio Bergholm and Kari Teräs, 'Female Dockers in Finland, c. 1900-1975. Gender and Change on the Finnish Waterfront.' *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. XI, No. 2 (1999), pp.107-120.

⁶²⁸ Margaret S. Creighton, 'American Mariners and the Rites of Manhood, 1830-1870' *Jack Tar in History*; Laura Tabili, 'A Maritime Race' Masculinity and the Racial Division of Labor in British Merchant Ships, 1900-1939' in *Iron Men, Wooden Women*, p.183; Laura Tabili, 'We ask for British Justice.' *Workers and Racial Difference in Late Imperial Britain*. (Ithaca, 1994); W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black Jacks. African American Seamen in the Age of Sail* (Cambridge, Massachusetts 1997).

⁶²⁹ The notable exception is Jo Stanley, who has published several articles on the female liner workforce in the inter-war period. See for example Jo Stanley, 'The Company of Women' *The Northern Mariner/ Le Marin du Nord*, Vol. IX, No. 2 (1999), pp. 69-86 and 'Finding a Brief Flowering of Typists at Sea, Evidence from a New Cunard Deposit' *Business Archives, Sources and History*, No. 76 (1998), pp. 29-39. Studies from other European countries include Ursula Von Feldkamp, 'Die Ersten Stewardessen auf Bremischen Passagierschiffen' *Deutsche Schifffahrtarchiv* 21 (1998), pp. 83-100, which looks at the first stewardesses going out on German passenger steamers and Carola Sundqvist, 'Kvinnor Ombord' *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland*, 3 (1988), pp. 489-510 which explores women's opportunities to work at sea in nineteenth century Finland.

⁶³⁰ Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had A Wife. New England Women and the Whaling Industry, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill and London, 2000).

gendered practices and general mechanisms which led to the exclusion of women from going to sea and defined domesticity as their primary sphere in life. However, by acknowledging that there *were* numbers of women who were formally employed at sea, we could study those practices that led to a certain *inclusion* of women into the maritime labour force. This is not to say that women were included willingly. Rather, it was the development of passenger shipping that made women's employment on certain trades a necessary requirement. By the period in question, women's role on board ships had become increasingly determined by their domestic role in land-based society and gender roles in seafaring had become strictly defined. Women's formal employment was concentrated almost exclusively on passenger liners and therefore their paid work at sea was strongly related to the development of passenger shipping.⁶³¹ Although recent studies of women at sea have attempted to stress the numbers of women involved in seafaring activities, the ideology of separate polarised spheres for men and women *was* present in all sections of seafaring employment.⁶³² Even though the degree of separation varied, it appeared in most maritime trades at least in European countries and in North America.

This chapter concentrates on a particular group of seagoing women, namely those employed on British passenger liners as part of the catering personnel. The particular theme of this chapter is the relatively unchanged pattern of women's employment at sea during the period under consideration. This chapter explores this element of continuity in a period of substantial technological and social change in British shipping and discusses the mechanisms behind this phenomenon. Section 7.2, first of all, will outline some general characteristics of women's position in the labour market in order to provide a clearer focus for the following sections, which will concentrate on women's employment within a slightly narrower context. It argues that women's employment was persistently associated with their domestic role in the family. After the First World War they increasingly replaced men in jobs where they

⁶³¹ On modern passenger liners, it was very exceptional for a woman to work in other than service-related jobs. Victoria Drummond, who worked as a marine engineer between 1922-1963, was a notable exception. See, for example, Cherry Drummond, *The Remarkable Life of Victoria Drummond Marine Engineer* (London, 1994). The above mentioned studies on women's employment at sea in Germany and Finland follow similar patterns, although in Finland women could also be found providing cleaning and cooking services for the crew. Sundqvist, *Kvinnor Ombord*, p. 505.

⁶³² Jo Stanley, for example, has seriously challenged the distinction of seamen and land women in 'With Cutlass and Compress; Women's Relations with the Sea' *Gender & History*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2000), p. 232.

were cheaper or in employment which required 'flexibility', i.e. irregular working hours and lack of promotion.⁶³³ Section 7.3 analyses the origins of women's employment on passenger liners. The ideology of separating the sexes on emigrant ships created the need for women's employment- a stewardess was to act as the women passengers' representative on board and help with seasickness and other needs of an intimate nature. Stewardesses and matrons were also to oversee the segregation of the single women travellers. The separation of the sexes was completed by the 1880s, by which time stewardesses were employed on virtually all deep-sea voyages. In Section 7.4 a brief description of stewardesses' daily routines later in the period will be given. They were to provide comfortable or luxurious travelling conditions to women passengers (depending on class). Women only found employment in domestic service roles already available to them in the land-based labour market. In Sections 7.5 and 7.6 the organisation of the female workforce and their recruitment will be illustrated and their career patterns analysed. In a sense women's employment was dreaded as a cause of friction on board, and they were seen as being suitable only to positions that did not require any authority. The stewards' section was organised along the principles of sections, seniority and gender. Stewardesses, bath attendants and laundry workers were organised in their own sub-groups, the work organisation which ensured, for its part, that women were only recruited to a restricted range of positions with a heavy bias towards household tasks. The gender aspects of catering work will be examined in Section 7.7 by looking at the allocation of cooking and cleaning work on board ships when women were not available. Men who did women's work were regarded as inferior. Therefore the domestic tasks were usually performed by the very young, old or disabled.

The main sources for this chapter include the British parliamentary papers, shipping companies' archives, emigrant diaries, memoirs and other personal collections of seafarers. Furthermore, some biographical accounts are available of women who worked at sea.⁶³⁴ Guidebooks and handbooks for employment on British passenger

⁶³³ Deborah Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work, 1700 to the Present* (London, 1998), pp. 239-240.

⁶³⁴ The most relevant to be mentioned here are the accounts of those women who worked on the steam liners. See, for example, Jessop *Titanic Survivor, The Memoirs of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*; Nixon, *Ring twice for the Stewardess*; Dorothy Scobie, *Stewardess Rings a Bell* (Bolton, 1990); MMM.DX/1086. Diary of Janet Sharpe, a lady's maid (passenger) on board the s.s. *Umbria* in 1896 and MMM. DX/1166. Diary of Stewardess Rose Stott on board *Samaria* in 1923.

liners are also used. The core statistical data for this study is derived from Crew Lists and Agreements for British Merchant Ships, 1861-1938.⁶³⁵

7.2. Women's choice in the labour market

In order to understand how maritime women fit into the broader labour force, we need to explore ideas about women's employment in general. In discussing women's work, it is crucial to understand that generalisations between women's and men's work should not be made. Women's working lives were different from men's. Women did not fit into men's occupational categories, neither did they have careers. They did not normally stay in formal employment through life as men did and their choice in the labour market was very limited. Some reasons for these characteristics are detailed below.

The changes in gender politics in the nineteenth-century along with the growth of capitalist production decreased women's possibilities and freedom of choice, especially in the labour market. As Deborah Simonton notes, women's options in labour market decreased and sharper division of labour emerged from industrial change at the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁶³⁶ The notion of women as weak and in need of protection was bolstered in the nineteenth century when the breadwinner ideology and the idea of women's domesticity became a norm in gender relations in Europe. The notion of women being incapable of 'heavy' or 'dangerous' work was an important characteristic of the modern view of women, even it did not reflect the reality of most working class or single women. This view was a very effective factor in securing female exclusion from the public sphere. A notion of female limitation is not new, yet the nineteenth century tightened the idea of women's physical and emotional frailty.

Women were doing different work from men in two senses: firstly, the work itself was different, and secondly, the women were usually on a lower rung in the employment hierarchy. The view developed that women should not be competitive in the same areas as men; moreover, it was perhaps more desirable that they should not

⁶³⁵ Dataset 1861-1938.

be competitive at all. When women move into the sphere of wage-labour they often perform commercialised forms of same activities they would do at home, which centre on serving and caring for other people.⁶³⁷ The moral mission of the European woman was to provide tenderness, nurture, moral purity and support for her menfolk and, ideally, to have no contact with the world of work whatsoever.⁶³⁸ Working women, especially married ones, were seen as unnatural, immoral and bad mothers, and most importantly as taking men's work.⁶³⁹ Katrina Honeyman and Jordan Goodman have described the changes that occurred from the early-nineteenth century onwards as marking a significant period of gender conflict in the labour market (the first occurred in the late-fifteenth century to the end of the sixteenth century). The consequences of both crises were 'a more clearly specified gendering of jobs, new restrictions on the employment of women, and a reduction in the value placed on women's work associated with a greater emphasis on their domestic positions in the family'.⁶⁴⁰ Apart from short-term gains by women in the labour market during the First World War, they continued earning less than men and the majority of people were still of the opinion that a woman's place was at home. In Britain, remarkable hostility towards married women's employment persisted, and education authorities, the Civil Service and many industrial employers operated the marriage bar, which effectively hampered women's rights to work.⁶⁴¹

Historians have seen the separation of home and work as one of the most important areas in maintaining or weakening sexual segregation.⁶⁴² As the family-based work system declined and production became capital-intensive and more dependent on wage labour, sex-role segregation tightened considerably. This also happened in seafaring in Europe. In the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries sailing and fishing were more commonly family- and community-based. Groups of family members owned boats or ships, for example, in the Åland Islands of Finland, and all

⁶³⁶ Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, p.137.

⁶³⁷ Harriet Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work. A Sociological History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Employment* (Padston, 1989), pp. 8-9.

⁶³⁸ *ibid*, p.41.

⁶³⁹ Elizabeth Roberts, *Women's Work 1840-1940* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 3.

⁶⁴⁰ Katrina Honeyman and Jordan Goodman, 'Women's work, gender conflict, and labour markets in Europe, 1500-1900' *Economic History Review*, 44 (1991), pp.608-28, cited in Bridget Hill, 'Women's History: a study in change or standing still?' in Pamela Sharpe (ed.), *Women's Work. The English Experience 1650-1914* (London, 1998), p. 51.

⁶⁴¹ Simonton, *A History of European Women's Work*, pp. 188-189.

the necessary tasks were shared among the family.⁶⁴³ From the 1830s, the expansion of industry began to change this pattern. A growing number of crewmembers were hired on a wage-labour basis and women increasingly stayed at home. The bigger the ships became and the further they sailed, the more unusual it became for women to go to sea on those vessels.

From the middle of the nineteenth century ideas about 'men's work' and 'women's work' were to stabilise into the forms that are familiar to us today. David Morgan notes that these gendered practices are mainly social than natural. When defining labour, he polarises some gender-specific concepts, which apply both to women's work and to the stereotypical aspects of the catering personnel's work in general. Morgan's gender stereotyping implies that women and men (and masculine and feminine) stand in opposition to each other also in employment.

Table 7.1. Gendered polarisation of work stereotyping

<i>WOMEN'S WORK</i>	<i>MEN'S WORK</i>
Indoor work	Outdoor work
Physically undemanding	Requires strength and physicality
Light	Heavy
Clean	Dirty
Safe	Dangerous
'Unskilled'	Requires 'skill' and training
Static	Highly mobile
Repetitive	Technical
Boring	Mechanical knowledge or scientific expertise
Domestic associations	No domestic associations
Associations and requirements of beauty and glamour	Requires characteristics of creativity, innovation, intelligence, responsibility, authority and power

Source: David J. Morgan, *Discovering Men. Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities 3* (London, 1992), p.80 and Harriet Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work – A Sociological History of the Sexual Division of Labour in Employment* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 9.

⁶⁴² Bradley, *Men's Work, Women's Work*, p.42.

A certain vagueness and definitional imprecision in a professional sense is typical of women's work. Their professions are not as easily classified as men's. Seawomen are a good example of this as their classification in the professional hierarchy is sometimes almost impossible. Women's waged work has not followed the same norms as that of men. It is often difficult to draw a line between domestic work and work for wages at home (as with captains' seagoing wives), as the latter is easily confused either with work for wages outside the home or with domestic work for no wages.

7.3. The origins of women's employment in the British merchant marine and the separation of sexes at sea

The period in question saw great changes in passenger shipping. At the beginning of the 1850s, sea travel usually took place in sailing ships and the majority of passengers were subjected to great risks to their health and safety. During the following 30 years, however, technological change and international competition between liner competition changed the scene: by the 1880s, 80 per cent of sea passengers travelled by steamship. Due to the series of Passenger Acts between 1849 and 1855, the increasing flow of emigrants became entitled to more sophisticated conditions on board and by the First World War at least the first-class passengers crossed the oceans in the most luxurious travelling conditions. Moreover, by the First World War the passenger liners themselves had become artefacts and even national symbols which represented the world's latest technology.

New legislation had far-reaching consequences for the employment of women, since the ideology of separating the sexes on emigrant ships became a legal requirement.⁶⁴⁴ Before the formal separation of the sexes, women were generally not found as

⁶⁴³ Sundqvist, *Kvinnor Ombord*, p. 490.

⁶⁴⁴ Amongst other important regulations for the development of passenger shipping was the statute that some provisions were to be served in a cooked state. The 1852 Passenger Act also stipulated that there has to be at least one passenger cook and one steward who should be 'seafaring men' solely engaged with serving the passengers. The 1855 Passenger Act regulated separate water closets for women to be set, which had to be cleaned regularly. The Passenger Acts of 1849, 1852 and 1855 also stipulated permanent sleeping places for emigrants and the services of a surgeon, interpreter and a hospital provided for the steerage passengers.

stewardesses and matrons on Atlantic routes. An emigrant guide from 1829 warns male emigrants of their wives' and servants' seasickness by stating that 'there is no woman on board able to go to her'.⁶⁴⁵

By the early-nineteenth century messing and stewards were already common on the coastal paddle steamers that operated on shorter routes around the British Isles and on rivers. The early steamers were forerunners in providing 'modern' catering services and catering personnel for their passengers.⁶⁴⁶ From the very beginning, also women were employed as stewardesses. 'Female servants' can be found on those ships as early as 1815 when *The Times* described the paddle-steamer *Thames*, then trafficking between London and Margate:

Her cabins are spacious, and are fitted up with all that elegance could suggest or personal comfort require; presenting a choice library, backgammon boards, draught tables, and other means of amusement. For the express purpose of combining delicacy with comfort a female servant attends upon the ladies.⁶⁴⁷

However, most people travelled by sailing ship since travelling by steamer was a privilege of the wealthy and most of the steam liners did not enter the emigrant business before the 1860s. Until then, the catering personnel were almost exclusively engaged with servicing the first class passengers, who were accommodated in cabins and served four meals a day. However, the first class passengers were a small minority and law did not regulate their conditions.

The notorious travelling conditions of emigrants, instead, worried the legislators. The Parliamentary committee set up in 1851 discussed the problem of lost children on board ships with seasick parents unable to look after them. The question of the employment of stewardesses arose in that connection and the committee suggested that there should be two or three stewardesses in the steerage solely to attend to the

⁶⁴⁵ Cobbett, *The Emigrant's Guide*, p. 110.

⁶⁴⁶ *Report from the Select Committee on the Passenger Act*. BPP 1851. XIX, q. 4286.

⁶⁴⁷ Greenhill and Giffard, *Women Under Sail*, pp. 37-38.

females on board.⁶⁴⁸ No regulations, however, regarding the employment of women were included in the new Passenger Act of 1852.

The physical separation of the sexes and the accommodation of middle-class moral values became the ambition of legislators dealing with emigrant shipping in the second half of the nineteenth century. Women were first separated into different beds from men and then gradually into different compartments and finally into different parts of the ship. Single men and women and sometimes even families were separated from each other during the voyages, which was justified by similar practices in workhouses.⁶⁴⁹ The principle of separating the sexes led to the division of ordinary passengers into isolated groups, which was followed by the gradual provision of more private cabins in the steerage. First class passengers were not separated by sex, even if a gender division of public space can also be seen in their accommodation patterns, with separate 'ladies' cabins' for women and smoke rooms for men.

Matrons were normally engaged for third class passengers. The work of a third class stewardess or a matron was different from the work of a first class stewardess. It was not regarded as requiring any special skills, and therefore many shipping companies hired an emigrant to do the job.⁶⁵⁰ The third class stewardesses' first and foremost task was to be constantly present in the steerage section and to act as an initial point of contact for women emigrants. The general opinion was that the third class stewardess did not have to be experienced in waiting, unlike the first class ones, but instead, had to be capable of acting 'as an ever present domestic instructor', who was to oversee the chastity and segregation of the women travellers.⁶⁵¹ Usually the women employed in the steerage were of the same nationality as the majority of the passengers, which indicates that they also acted as interpreters. The procedure was

⁶⁴⁸ *Report from the Select Committee*. BPP 1851. XIX, q. 4107. Evidence of Lieutenant Lean, Emigration Officer for the Port of London,

⁶⁴⁹ *Reports with Regarding to Accommodation and Treatment of Emigrants on Atlantic Steamships*. BPP 1881. LXXXII, q. 54. Evidence of Mr. Ramsden, Guion Line. 'Emigrant Accommodation on Board Atlantic Steamers.' Inquiry held before Mr. Thomas Gray, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trade.'

⁶⁵⁰ *Reports with Regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII, q. 136. The evidence of Charles McIver, Cunard Line, Appendix C.

for female passengers to report their complaints or requests to a stewardess, which she in turn would report to a steward, and the steward to the officers or to the captain, if needed.⁶⁵² Therefore, she acted as the women's representative on board.

The passenger acts of 1849, 1852 and 1855 did not require a stewardess to be employed, as they did for a steward and a passenger cook. In the 1880s, the Board of Trade recommended the complete separation of the sexes, to the extent 'that each class may have their communications separate from those of the other classes, and so that one class shall not pass through the compartments of the other'.⁶⁵³ In those conditions, in order to carry out the separation, the recruitment of women became a necessary requirement. The parliamentary committee set up in 1881 to investigate the enforcing of the Passenger Acts (or, more precisely, the failure to implement them) recommended that a stewardess should be employed in the steerage. Thomas Gray, the Assistant Secretary of the Marine Department of the Board of Trade, suggested the following in his report to the President of the Board of Trade in 1881:

I am convinced that it is a very desirable thing to have a woman of character and experience in the position of a matron on board every emigrant ship carrying single women. Such a woman in her capacity of matron ought to act as a general supervisor of the comfort and conduct of the single women in the steerage. She should play the part of an ever present domestic inspector, and her special office should be to encourage decency and order and suppress any indecorum amongst the single females.⁶⁵⁴

After that, most of the liner companies employed stewardesses on their deep-sea voyages. They were also to be found on the Mediterranean run, but not on the Le Havre route on Cunard vessels. However, coastal vessels employed stewardesses,

⁶⁵¹ *Reports with regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII. Captain Wilson's report on questions raised in Miss C.G. O'Brien's foregoing memorandum, p.74; Report by the Assistant Secretary Thomas Gray, Marine Department, to the President of the Board of Trade.

⁶⁵² *Reports with regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII, q. 311-315,346. Mr. James Dewar's, White Star Line, and Purser C. J. Wahler's (of *Germanic*) description of a matrons' and stewardess' duties in the steerage; 'Emigrant Accommodation on Board Atlantic Steamers. Inquiry held before Mr. Thomas Gray, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trade.'

⁶⁵³ *Reports with regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII. Minutes by the President of the Board of Trade on Miss Charlotte O'Brien's complaint concerning emigrant ships.

⁶⁵⁴ *Reports with regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII. Report by the Assistant Secretary, Marine Department, to the President of the Board of Trade.

barmaids and relatively young girls as buffet assistants.⁶⁵⁵ By 1921 women were also employed as hospital stewardesses on ocean going passenger liners. Without doubt, these women were involved in caring for sick children and women, and helped with any births that occurred on board.

The separation of the sexes was completed by the 1880s. Married couples, however, were usually allowed to occupy the amidships, even if sometimes they slept in their own departments. Before the intensification of competition between the liner companies, catering personnel were not normally employed in order to provide a better service for third class passengers, but to promote morality and enforce the physical separation of the sexes.⁶⁵⁶

Apart from the great differences between shipping companies on the degree of separation, there were also considerable variations between different routes.⁶⁵⁷ By the 1880s, only a few North Atlantic liners carried matrons, unlike the Australian ships on which they were already common by the end of the 1840s.⁶⁵⁸ On Australian ships, the separation was carried out more completely and earlier than on the North American ships. The principle of separating the sexes also caused changes in the construction of passenger space on all routes. Bulkheads had to be fitted, separate toilets built, separate messes, gangways and sufficient lighting installed (which was regarded as preventing immorality). The extent of the separation varied between different liners and routes, but it usually meant that women crew were also employed in the steerage. The recruitment of a matron was regarded as necessary on Australian ships because the voyages were longer than to North America and hence more intimacy might occur on board.⁶⁵⁹ Therefore, the employment of women became common earlier on Australian emigrant ships and matrons, who had complete authority over single women, were often employed. Single women were regarded as needing protection from male travellers and from seamen alike. Single women were

⁶⁵⁵ Database comprised of Crew Agreements consisting details on 9, 800 catering personnel signed on ships in Douglas, Isle of Man, between 1863-1914. Manx National Heritage Museum, Douglas.

⁶⁵⁶ *Report from the Select Committee on the Passengers' Act*. BPP 1851. XIX, qq. 4770 and 4772. Evidence of E. A. Smith, Emigration Officer at Londonderry; q. 2899. evidence of C.D. Logan, Esq, Expert on Australian emigration; q. 5790. Evidence of Sir G. Stephen.

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸ *Report from the Select Committee*. BPP 1851. XIX, q. 325. Evidence of E. A. Smith, Emigration Officer at Londonderry.

⁶⁵⁹ *ibid.*

especially guarded and advised not to have any contacts with sailors.⁶⁶⁰ The role of a matron in guiding the single women's chastity is well illustrated by Sarah Stephens, who emigrated to New Zealand at the age of 26:

Some of the girls have been breaking the rules by writing notes to the sailors. The matron came up unexpectedly and tried to take the letter from them. There was a scruffle in which the Matron's hat (a new one) fell overboard and some knitting that she had in her hand. She is very angry. I do not know what will be done to the girls.⁶⁶¹

7.4. Comfort and guidance for female passengers

If women's role at the beginning of the period was to enforce the separation of the sexes, especially amongst emigrants, their role changed somewhat over time. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, a woman's first and foremost task on board was to provide a comfortable crossing for female and child passengers. By the inter-war period, when the emigrant element had declined and cruises had become more common, providing increasingly luxurious conditions for wealthy women passengers took most of the stewardesses' time. At the same time, slightly more employment opportunities became available for them: they were used as bath attendants, nurses, hairdressers, masseuses and swimming pool attendants. However, the essential purpose of their presence at sea remained: they were only employed to satisfy the needs of women travellers. Even if a wider range of jobs became available to them, their relative numbers increased only slightly and only on the largest liners. Nor did they manage to break away from the domestic service role assigned to them both at sea and in land-based society. Women were employed at sea in very similar roles as in British society in general, where domestic service and laundry work were traditional women's occupations.⁶⁶² In cities such as Liverpool, where there were no large factories, domestic service was the main employment sector for women.⁶⁶³

At the beginning of the period, only one woman per ship was employed to attend to the first class female passengers. By the 1870s, the carrying of a stewardess and a

⁶⁶⁰ *Report from the Select Committee*. BPP 1851. XIX, q. 2899. Evidence of Sir G. Stephen.

⁶⁶¹ MMM. DX/1071/R. Voyage diary of Emigrant Sarah Stephens from Montgomery, North Wales to South Wales to South Island, New Zealand on the *Cardigan Castle* of Liverpool, 16.10.1876.

⁶⁶² Roberts, *Women's Work 1840-1940*, p.7.

surgeon had become an asset for passenger liner companies.⁶⁶⁴ Cunard's rules for its employees already stated in 1885 that the surgeon must be accompanied by a stewardess or a friend of a patient, when visiting lady passengers.⁶⁶⁵ In 1881 the largest emigrant ships carried two or even four stewardesses and matrons and by 1911 large transatlantic liners commonly employed 16 to 19 stewardesses, even in winter when traffic was quiet. The greater need for stewardesses might also have occurred because of the fierce competition between shipping companies over emigrant passengers. Emigrants often travelled in family groups, and therefore companies offered special 'family rates' with reduced charges for children.⁶⁶⁶ Apart from legislative requirements, competition drove the shipping companies to offer improved provisions for these groups. As early as 1852 Cunard's *Arabia* had a children's nursery although the next Cunarders to have a similar facility were *Campania* and *Lucania* in 1893.⁶⁶⁷

The relative number of women crew remained small, even on passenger liners. In 1861, women made up less than one per cent of the crew on North-Atlantic liners and five per cent on Mediterranean routes, if they were carried at all. At the beginning of the period, there was usually one woman employed per ship who always worked as a stewardess. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, there were numerically more of them on the big liners, but the number of catering personnel had also increased substantially and women still comprised only one percent of the total crew. By 1914, however, up to 20 women were employed on the largest North Atlantic liners: they represented around two per cent of the crew and almost five per cent of the catering personnel.⁶⁶⁸ The census returns from the period suggest the same, even if they only give an approximate indication of the relative size of the maritime labour force, since they were recorded mainly from those who were in port on census night. The figures in the following table (7.2) can be used in conjunction with Table 2.2 to gain a rough picture of the relative number of women seafarers. Apart from very end of the period, they only formed less than one per cent

⁶⁶³ John Belchem, *Popular Politics, Riot and Labour: Liverpool 1790-1940* (Liverpool, 1992), p.7.

⁶⁶⁴ Cunard usually advertised that its ships carried a surgeon and a stewardess.

⁶⁶⁵ UL. CA. PR 4/11. Rules to be observed in the Company's Service (1885).

⁶⁶⁶ UL. CA. D 302/7/1. Letter from Charles McIver to F.A.Hamilton, 2 July 1853.

⁶⁶⁷ UL. CA. PR3/21/1-2. General information on Cunard Ships.

⁶⁶⁸ Dataset 1861-1911.

of the maritime workforce, although accurate figures on the number of women who went to sea are not available because the census data only record the number of the women employed at sea, who were enumerated at home or in port.

Table 7.2. The percentage of women among merchant seafarers, 1861-1931

Year	Percentage of women
1861	0.2
1871	0.2
1881	0.4
1891	0.4
1901	0.6
1911	0.6
1921	0.8
1931	1.1

Source: Censuses of England and Wales 1861-1931, Occupational Tables.

However, some statistical data are available on women actually employed at sea—even if not for the whole period under consideration (Table 7.3). They confirm the overall picture of female maritime employment derived from the census returns, with the number of stewardesses on sea-going vessels rising from 797 in 1888 to 1,160 by 1901 (0.4 and 0.6 per cent respectively of the total number of British seafarers). Although there was a similar number of pursers employed on sea-going vessels, there were 20 times more male stewards and cooks than women seafarers.

Table 7.3. The estimated number of British seafarers employed in the various ratings on sea-going trading vessels, 1888-1901, excluding Lascars

Year	Deckhands	%	Engineers	%	Pursers	%	Stewards & Cooks	%	Stewardesses	%
1888	114,419	63.2	41,785	23.1	643	0.4	21,641	11.9	797	0.4
1891	117,480	60.6	48,830	25.2	860	0.4	23,870	12.3	900	0.5
1896	110,830	59.0	49,710	26.4	570	0.3	24,100	12.8	880	0.5
1901	97,840	52.9	55,370	29.9	930	0.5	27,720	15.0	1,160	0.6

Source: BPP 1903. *Report of the Committee...* 'Table showing for the years 1891, 1896 and 1901 the Estimated number of British seamen, other than Asiatics, employed in the various trades upon sea-going Trading vessels registered under part 1.' Appendix M, No. 8. Evidence provided by Mr Malan, The Registrar of Shipping and Seamen. Cd 1607, Vol. III.LXII.

* Appendix M, No. 1. *Ibid.*

The employment of women became more common with the growing number of wealthy women passengers and the services offered to them. By the end of the 1930s a separate female workforce was created by the passenger liner companies in order to offer comfort and guidance for women as an expanding group of the travelling public. New technological innovations and the restrictive US immigration legislation of 1921 shifted the focus of the liner companies from emigration to tourism. Travelling for pleasure and cruising became popular also amongst women and created a demand for new service jobs on the ships. The following section will focus on different elements within the female maritime work.

As discussed in the *previous section*, the employment of women on passenger liners originated from the separation of sexes at sea and therefore had a gender-specific purpose. There was a consensus that a woman needed a female employee as an initial point of contact and for her intimate needs. Frank T. Bullen described the prevailing ideology: 'Stewardesses are of course carried in British steamers; in fact they must be, for attendance upon the ladies.'⁶⁶⁹ According to the *Queen* magazine, an ideal stewardess was kindly and obliging, who 'often shows a degree of tenderness and human sympathy with women and children under disagreeable circumstances which can excite nothing but gratitude and respect in those to whom she ministers.'⁶⁷⁰

The Ship's Steward's Handbook defined a stewardess' role as the follows: 'The stewardess on all ships is required more particularly to attend to the wants of lady passengers'.⁶⁷¹ Serving meals, especially breakfast, to women's cabins was a stewardess' duty. They were responsible for making the beds, helping women get ready for dinner, and if they were unwell, serving all meals in the cabins. Caring for seasick women and children still seems to have taken a great deal of their time. According to Maida Nixson, as long as there were seasick women on board, the stewardess was on duty.⁶⁷² Anne Smith, another stewardess gives similar testimony in her diary. She wrote of having 'rather an idle day' on nineteenth November 1927

⁶⁶⁹ Bullen, *Men of Merchant Service*, p.190.

⁶⁷⁰ 'The Stewardess Nurse' A reprint from the *Queen Magazine* in Prior Rupert, *Ocean Liners. The Golden Years* (London, 1993), p. 87.

⁶⁷¹ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p. 329.

⁶⁷² Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p.18.

onboard, since no-one was seasick.⁶⁷³ Therefore, it appears that weather conditions were a decisive factor in a stewardess' workload. Other specific women's tasks on board included looking after children and cleaning the ladies' bathrooms and lavatories.⁶⁷⁴

Taking care of the linen was another responsibility gendered as female and the linen store used to be the responsibility of a stewardess. According to Cunard's rules 'when the ship is lying at any foreign port, the stewardesses are to be constantly employed, and every opportunity must be taken by them to keep the ship's linen in order'.⁶⁷⁵ Charles Dickens travelled to America in 1842 on the *Britannia*, which carried a stewardess. He wrote of her tasks in *American Notes*: 'There was a stewardess, too, actively engaged in producing clean sheets and tablecloths from the very entrails of the sofas'.⁶⁷⁶

Although work on a passenger liner had a relatively glamorous status, it was also regarded as degrading. Coralie Stanton wrote a pocket novel on stewardesses in the 1930s from which some general images of a stewardess' job can be captured. It reveals the romance attached to seafaring and opportunities to secure a rich, handsome husband. The book's main character, Dicky, aged 22, had wanted to be a stewardess all her life, and after a short nursing training she was recommended by people already employed by a particular shipping company. She received her first post as a nursery stewardess helping the children on board. Other stewardesses envied her rare looks, she received plenty of gifts from passengers, and went ashore with officers in foreign ports. She worked with a steward, who turned out to be homosexual ('poor chap!'). Soon she fell in love with the third officer who was dishonest and unreliable. They tried to keep their romance secret, but the chief stewardess found out and reported the affair to the captain. In the end, the captain himself fell in love with her. He said to her: 'You are much too pretty to be a stewardess, you know. You are simply wasted- lost. You are simply throwing

⁶⁷³ MMM. DX 1560/3/1. Voyage accounts of Anne Smith, a stewardess with Cunard. Diary on board *Carinthia* in November 1927.

⁶⁷⁴ Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p. 329; Nixon, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p. 16.

⁶⁷⁵ UL. CA. PR14/11 Rules to be observed in the company's service (1885); Also Richard Bond highlights that taking care of the linen was one of the stewardesses' main duties. Bond, *The Ship Steward's Handbook*, p. 329.

⁶⁷⁶ Charles Dickens, *American Notes and Reprinted Pieces etc.* (London, 1890), p.13.

yourself away. Cleaning out cabins and attending to sick people'. When the captain proposed she thought that 'what could be more worth while in this world than to be the captain's wife'. The captain, however, warned her: 'You won't be able to come to sea with me. I am afraid you will have to give up the sea'. 'Of course', Dicky replied. She understood her future husband's point since captains taking their wives at sea 'would lead to all sorts of complications. Just as if soldiers took their wives into battle.'⁶⁷⁷ Dicky's career as a stewardess led to a marriage with the captain. She chose a husband over the sea and returned to land where she belonged as a woman.

The life of a stewardess in reality, however, was not that romantic. Like other maritime workers, stewardesses were subject to the dangerous aspects of seafaring life, such as drowning. In case of an accident they were also responsible for the safety of children and women passengers. Violet Jessop survived three major accidents: the collision of another ship with *Olympic*, the foundering of *Titanic* and the sinking of the hospital ship *Britannic* during the World War I. She saved a newborn baby from *Titanic* and jumped overboard from a lifeboat from the *Britannic* which was drifting towards the propellers. In the water she struck her head and swallowed lots of water, but was saved in the last moment by another lifeboat.⁶⁷⁸ A memorial fountain was erected in Southampton to the memory of stewardess Mary Anne Rogers, who worked on the *Stella*, which went aground on March 1901. The *Times* reported on the incident:

Mrs Rogers, it will be remembered, when the ship struck on the rocks, devoted her attention to the women and children, and after each has been provided with a lifebelt showed the passengers how to fasten them on. After she had fixed one round herself, a little girl was discovered who had not been provided for, and Mrs Rogers instantly gave her own belt to the young passenger. The women and children were then placed in lifeboats, and Mrs Rogers was invited to jump into the last boat. She replied that the boat would sink if she got in. A few seconds later the *Stella* sank, and Mrs Rogers and a considerable number of passengers and crew went down with her.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁷ Coralie Stanton, *The Pretty Stewardess*. Red Letter Novels (1930s).

⁶⁷⁸ Jessop, *The Memories of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, pp. 1 and 176.

⁶⁷⁹ *Times*, 29 July 1901, p.4.

Everyday life on board could turn out to be very strenuous, as the quality of service required from stewardesses could sometimes be crushing. Anne Smith, a stewardess on Cunard liners, wrote in a letter that 'it has been such a restless, worrying time up to now. I don't seem to have much pleasure at present. I have nine ladies, the people are all American as far as I can see and consequently very exacting.'⁶⁸⁰ The chance to see exotic places could also have been very restricted. Stewardesses could only go ashore for a couple of hours at a time, especially if any passengers were on board. Normally they would relieve each other for duty, especially if it was quiet.⁶⁸¹ Even if the foreign places and luxury surroundings of a ship might have lured those women to go to sea, they very soon woke up to reality. They were there for the passengers' comfort, not to amuse themselves. Anne Smith wrote bitterly: 'We have our work to do here on board, not like the passengers who have all their trips planned out etc. & go off carefree with nothing to do but sightseeing, however, beggars can't be choosers.'⁶⁸² She could not wait to go back home: 'I am looking forward to setting back in the spring. It may sound all right to say one is working one's passage around the world but it isn't all rosy and fair sailing by any means, but then hardly anyone's life is that so must not grumble and on the whole I must be pretty lucky'.⁶⁸³ Apart from all the difficulties seafaring life caused for women, usually they remembered their time at sea with warmth and pride. Dorothy Irish, who worked for Cunard as a nursery stewardess and laundress stated: 'I went off to have the most wonderful life at sea which I will treasure for always'.⁶⁸⁴

The stewardesses had to be at work before the passengers woke up and be on duty until ten o'clock in the evening. Cunard's rules and regulations for passengers published in 1840 stated that the sweeping of the saloon and ladies' cabins started at five a.m. and that only stewardesses were entitled to enter the ladies' cabin and

⁶⁸⁰ MMM. DX 1560/2/1. Voyage accounts of Anne Smith, a stewardess with Cunard. Letter dated December 7th, 1922 on *Laconia*.

⁶⁸¹ MMM. DX 1560/2/3. Voyage accounts of Anne Smith, a stewardess with Cunard. Letter dated January 2nd, 1923 off coast of Japan on *Laconia*.

⁶⁸² *Ibid.*

⁶⁸³ MMM. DX 1560/2/5. Voyage accounts of Anne Smith, a stewardess with Cunard. Letter dated January 10th, 1923 in Tsing Tao, China on *Laconia*.

⁶⁸⁴ *Liverpool Echo*, July 10 (2000), p.16; Rachel Mulhearn, 'In Service at Sea', *Room Service: Aspects of Life Aboard the Ocean Liner. Papers presented at a Research Day School held at Merseyside Maritime Museum, 15 June 1996*, p.42.

staterooms.⁶⁸⁵ Women worked in their particular sections alongside male stewards, who were expected to perform some of the heavier tasks such as making the upper berths. They had to be on call in the afternoons after the captain, purser or surgeon had inspected the ship. After the introduction of electricity to passenger liners, passengers had electric bells in their staterooms which they rang once for a steward and twice for a stewardess. Circumstances permitting, they were entitled, like stewards, to a few hours' break in the afternoon. In practice, the working hours of the stewardesses, as well as the rest of the catering personnel, were unregulated and therefore, unlimited. On more quiet trips or on those days when passengers were ashore, they received a welcomed break from the passengers. Anne Smith wrote in her diary of a *Mediterranean cruise in January 1927*: 'The ship is very quiet, nothing much to do, I have five rooms on the go and to keep the empty rooms dusted... I have just finished reading 'Kitty' by Warwick Deeping. Quite good'. After six days, she wrote that she has just finished another book, 'Onslaught' by Joan Sutherland.⁶⁸⁶

Some passengers fully exploited the service provided by the stewardess, sometimes in a manner that prompted shipping companies to intervene. In the 1930s Cunard placed an extra charge for passengers who either wanted a private stewardess, took away the stewardess from her regular work or had requested special personal attention.⁶⁸⁷ It is therefore likely that shipping companies, at least by the 1930s, had begun placing restrictions on the services provided to passengers, even in the first class.

The employment of nurses on passenger liners started during the First World War when liners were used as hospital ships. The post of a nurse was a popular one, and therefore the passenger liner companies were able to employ well-qualified nurses. P&O, for example, required its nurses to hold a professional certificate. From the 1920s onwards Cunard required a midwife's qualification from the nurses employed

⁶⁸⁵ 'Rules and Regulations' *Official Guide and Album of the Cunard Steamship Company* (1877), pp. 42-43.

⁶⁸⁶ MMM. DX 1560/3/1. Voyage accounts of Anne Smith, a stewardess with Cunard. Diary written on *Carinthia* on Mediterranean cruise in 6th and 11th of January 1927.

⁶⁸⁷ UL. CA. GM2/1-2. Memorandum to Pursers, February the nineteenth, 1931. Rates for Special Stewardesses.

on the North-Atlantic run, since it was quite common for some third class female passengers to give birth during the voyage.⁶⁸⁸

Conductresses, who were employed to assist woman emigrants to Canada in the 1920s, also acted as women's representative abroad. They were employed to encourage women emigrating alone to travel by Cunard. The Cunard magazine wrote:

During the voyage across Atlantic she will find that every provision is made for her comfort and convenience on all the magnificent steamers of the Cunard Line which are engaged in the Canadian service. Each of these vessels carries an experienced lady conductor, whose special duties are to give those travelling under their care the advantage of their first-class knowledge and advice. They render every assistance, also, upon landing in the matter of customs, money exchange, conveyance to the respective railway stations, and even to entraining for the different destinations to which they are bound.⁶⁸⁹

There were other female groups employed on passenger liners than stewardesses. By 1921 female bookstall attendants, manicurists, bath attendants, kiosk attendants, as well as laundresses, had appeared on large passenger liners. The particularities of their workplace organisation will be analysed in the following section.

7.5. The organisation of women in the shipboard community

It must be stressed that despite the expansion in female employment at sea, the vast majority of the catering department consisted of men throughout this period, and women entering into that world were limited to a very restricted number of roles. Apart from nurses, hairdressers and typists in the passenger department, stewards' department was the only section within catering personnel where women were found. There were no women in the shipboard kitchens, let alone in the deck and engineers' departments. This section will examine how the growth of female employment in this area was handled from an organisational perspective and how women were

⁶⁸⁸ UL. CA. D24/C2/259. Applications for employment 1922-1926. Letter from the General Manager T. Royden to Lord Lawrence, 18 July 1927.

⁶⁸⁹ 'Canada's Call for Women' *Cunard Magazine*, Vol. XII, No 3 (1924), p. 98. Another article in the same magazine from 1923 reveals that conductresses were also carried to take care of unaccompanied children. *Cunard Magazine*, Vol. X, No 3 (1923), p. 81.

accommodated within a maritime hierarchy which was traditionally male. It will also assess the extent to which female catering personnel were given any degree of authority on board.

It was a common fear that the employment of women on board ship would be a cause of friction, as female personnel were only regarded as being suitable for positions that did not require any authority. Such an attitude was a reflection, in part, of a deep-seated view that women could not be trusted in dangerous situations, but the denial of authority to women was also justified by ideological reasons.⁶⁹⁰

In general, women's employment in factories, or indeed anywhere away from home, was seen as dangerous to society and a factor that encouraged inappropriate behaviour in the workplaces.⁶⁹¹ During the late-nineteenth century, employment conditions were rearranged to physically separate men and women in the workplace. Catherine Hakim has argued that occupational segregation and the sex stereotyping of jobs were socially constructed by the mid-nineteenth century. The concern for the moral propriety of the working class was illustrated in the Gangs Act of 1867, which prohibited the employment of women and girls in gangs where men worked.⁶⁹² Similar action was taken by the Mines Act of 1842, which practically ended women's employment in mines. More precisely, it ended women's work underground, which was the best paid, and moved them above ground, where the work status and level of pay were low. Gradually they were completely excluded from every task in the mining industry.⁶⁹³ Gender segregation in employment was not only followed because of moral reasons, but also in order to exclude women from the better paid jobs. A similar concern was evident among urban, white-collar workers during that time, as women increasingly gained a foothold in employment.

⁶⁹⁰ 'Female Labour at Sea' *Sea Breezes* Vol. II (New Series), July-December (1946), pp. 258-259.

⁶⁹¹ See, for example, Sonya O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods. Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (California, 1992), especially chapter 6, 'Manliness, Virtue and Self-Respect- Gender Antagonism and Working-Class Respectability', pp. 126-153; Cynthia Cockburn, *In the Way of Women. Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organizations* (Basingstoke, 1991), pp. 77-78.

⁶⁹² Catherine Hakim, *Key Issues in Women's Work. Female Heterogeneity and the Polarisation of Women's Employment* (London, 1996), p. 170; *An Act for the Regulation of Agricultural Gangs 1867*. 30 & 31 Victoria.

⁶⁹³ *Mines Act 1842*, 5 & 6 Victoria XCIX; Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London, 1994), p. 124; John Benson, *British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century: A Social History* (New York, 1980), p. 31.

When clerical work for women expanded, they were kept strictly separate from men at the workplace. Different floors, rooms or at least sections with their own staircases were provided for each sex separately. Sometimes women were not even allowed to leave their offices during lunchtime, and they were provided separate dining rooms and cloakrooms.⁶⁹⁴

The gender segregation of tasks among the stewarding staff was established very soon after women became part of the workforce. Service jobs located in public places like restaurants, bars and decks were reserved for men. Men used to work as saloon-, bedroom- and smoke room stewards, barkeepers, chefs, cooks, storekeepers and linen keepers. Women worked on passenger liners mainly as stewardesses serving female passengers in their cabins. Their work was very similar to the bedroom stewards and they usually worked alongside them, but women had larger sections to cover than male stewards, especially if there were fewer women than men passengers. Other women worked as nurses, bath attendants, hairdressers, masseuses and laundresses. Women's employment in general tended to be based around different bodily functions, such as taking care of the sick, children and female passengers.

The stewards on board ships were not only organised on the basis of distinct sections and principles of seniority, but also according to gender. Men and women were always to be found with different job-titles, usually organised in separate working units. Most women workers, such as stewardesses, were organised in their own sub-groups and to some degree, were treated as separate units within the stewarding workforce. For example, they had their own forewoman, a leading stewardess, who did not have any formal authority within the ship's hierarchy.

Such gendered hierarchical patterns were not peculiar to ships. Meta Zimmeck notes that the women's hierarchy in clerical work was organised along similar lines:

The women's hierarchy, even parallel to men's, terminated well below the managerial level, so that the most women could achieve

⁶⁹⁴ Meta Zimmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls, the Expansion of Clerical Work for Women, 1850-1914' in Angela John (ed.), *Unequal Opportunities. Women's Employment in England 1800-1918* (Oxford, 1986), p.160.

was the supervision of other women. Women seldom, if ever, exercised power over men or even boys and were always, ultimately, under the control of men.⁶⁹⁵

Ships' stewardesses were an unusual group of female workers, since they enjoyed equal pay with their male counterparts and other assistant stewards. It has to be remembered though, that equal pay applied only to stewardesses and not to other female workers at sea. The establishment of pay equality between bedroom stewards and stewardesses remains obscure, but it certainly prevented the rapid replacement of men by women in the stewards' department. Furthermore, they were amongst the lower end of the occupational scale and therefore belonged to a group of the worst paid employees on board. Women did not have access to the better paid work regarded as skilled and therefore were a relatively underpaid group in the ship's hierarchy.

Bath attendants and laundry workers were organised in similar, predominantly female groups to stewardesses. Bath attendants were needed to clean women's toilets and bathing areas, while the separation of the sexes was once again the main motive for employing women. Laundresses were also employed on board to wash linen in order to relieve the pressure on port-based laundries and to guarantee that ship always had an adequate supply. When the turnabout of the liners became faster, washing of the ships' linen was a continuous problem for the shipping companies.⁶⁹⁶

Laundries became common on Cunard ships in the 1930s, although they had already appeared on other companies' ships in the 1920s.⁶⁹⁷ On longer Far East routes, on P&O for example, the shipboard laundries were a necessity due to hot climate and the long duration of voyages. If there was a laundry on board, most of its workers were women -washing the linen as well as the crew's and passengers' clothes was traditionally a woman's job in the maritime culture. In ship board laundries the head was often a woman, although one or two men or boys worked within the gang as 'hydromen', since, according to the gender ideology, women were not regarded as

⁶⁹⁵ Zimmeck, 'Jobs for the Girls', p.161.

⁶⁹⁶ UL. CA. GM9/6/9. Laundry and Bottling Establishments.

⁶⁹⁷ Jo Stanley: 'Steam Queens and steam flies: laundresses in inter-war liners.' Paper presented at the ICMH conference in Oslo in August 2000.

capable of using machinery. The 'head laundress' or 'laundry manageress' led the gang with the head washer, who was also a woman. Often a 'laundry clerk' was also employed, who might have kept account of incoming and outgoing laundry and the marking of linen and clothes. On *Samaria's* trip in January 1938, seven people worked in the ship's laundry. The laundry manageress was paid relatively well (£12), with a higher wage than waiters who received £8.17s.6d., while the head washers' pay (£9) was above the assistant steward ratings. However, the ordinary laundresses were only paid £6, while the only man in the gang was paid £7.7s.⁶⁹⁸ The women's average age was 38 and many of them were over 40 years old and employed on a temporary basis at sea. The average age of men was only 20 years.⁶⁹⁹ Not much is known about their recruitment, but it is possible that they were recruited from the land-based laundries used by shipping companies, of which there were many in Liverpool and in other large port cities. A study on the birthplaces and addresses of Cunard's laundresses shows that most of them had been born locally and lived in either Liverpool or Wallasey. By the 1960s, however, many British women had been replaced by foreign labour, such as Goanese men, particularly on P&O shipboard laundries.⁷⁰⁰

The incentive to employ women reflect the strong identification of laundering and cleaning with female work. In this sense, women performed similar jobs at sea and on land, with a heavy bias toward household tasks. The organisation of laundresses and bath attendants followed very similar lines to that of stewardesses: women were organised in their own groups within the larger structure of the catering department, and had a separate head, who disciplined the group and dealt with simple disputes.

Laundry workers had a rather different work culture than stewardesses. Laundry women worked together in the same space while stewardesses were scattered around the ship within their own sections, and their work was very different. It was more straightforward production work rather than the service work stewardesses performed, and the status of laundry workers was lower than that of other groups. The most important quality for a stewardess were sobriety, respectability and the

⁶⁹⁸ MUN. Crew Agreements, no. 145923. The crew agreement of *Samaria*, 29.1.1938-22.2. 1938.

⁶⁹⁹ Dataset 1861-1938.

⁷⁰⁰ Nelson French: 'The Purser's Tale of Women at Sea' *Sea Breezes*, 11 (1989), p. 769.

ability to please passengers, which was not the case with laundresses who were treated with much less respect than nurses and stewardesses.⁷⁰¹ The difference was also noticed by Nelson French, who worked as a purser for P&O liners. He remembers how the laundresses would work wearing just a bra and a towel around their waists and he regarded them as 'good friends, loyal servants and colourful characters'. By contrast, stewardesses presented a very different image, because they worked in the public eye and their appearance was important.⁷⁰²

The bath attendants occupied an intermediate niche between the stewardesses and laundresses in the shipboard hierarchy, although like most female employees (apart from nurses) they only had a relatively low status. Bath attendants were basically cleaners, who took care of the women's public toilets and bathrooms. Since they worked on the passenger side of the ship, they wore uniforms. There were normally four or five bath attendants per ship. The average age of all the women who worked for Cunard as bath attendants was 37 (in 1931) and 41 (in 1938), which was more than the men's average age in the catering departments during those years (34 and 37 respectively). Most of them were recruited from local ports of departure.⁷⁰³

There were some women, however, such as nurses and typists, who worked alongside men and were not organised into separate gender-specific groups. They were employed by special lady superintendents, and for administrative purposes were classified with the general group of female employees. Most of the other women employees, such as kiosk attendants, pool attendants, Turkish bath attendants, manicurists and hairdressers worked independently but catering to the need of a group of exclusively female passengers. They were irreplaceable members of the ships' crew, since the ideology of feminine modesty and the gender-specific policy of customer service followed on all passenger liners prevented men from performing these tasks. After all, wealthy female passengers could not have been left without services they were used to on land, especially if equivalent services were offered to men.

⁷⁰¹ Stanley, 'Steam Queens and steam flies: laundresses in inter-war liners.'

⁷⁰² French, 'The Purser's Tale of Women at Sea', p. 769.

⁷⁰³ Dataset 1861-1938.

Concern over the potential problems of physical proximity between the two sexes was also evident in the shipboard community. Every attempt was made to keep female and male seafarers separate on board. In practice this meant that careful attention was paid to women's behaviour in terms of a clear code of respectability. Nixson notes that female employees were forbidden to chat with stewards or passengers, except on work-related matters. She also claims that the female workforce was only entitled to spend their free time in their cabins or in carefully designated areas on deck. In addition, it was forbidden for stewards and stewardesses to be together in the same cabin.⁷⁰⁴ On board emigrant ships women seafarers had to stay on the 'women's side' and in the first and second class accommodation they were under the scrutiny of a purser and a steward. The P&O company's rules expressly advised pursers: 'You will have to see that the stewardesses are attentive to their duties and you are never to overlook the slightest appearance of levity on their part.'⁷⁰⁵ They ate separately from men in their own cabins, with child passengers or later in the period, in their own mess.⁷⁰⁶ By the 1920s, Cunard stewardesses were no longer provided their own sitting room or mess, but were requested to take their meals in their own cabins instead of in the fixed mess room.⁷⁰⁷ They were not allowed to go ashore either with male members of the crew (even if they sometimes did) or with male passengers.⁷⁰⁸ Women were constantly observed by passengers and their superiors alike, as well as by male crewmembers. In that sense, they did not have much privacy. They had to be very careful in order not to do anything inappropriate, or let something happen to them, which could jeopardise their reputation, since it would have meant the end of their career. In particular, the use of alcohol and relations with men were issues that attracted the attention of superiors and fed the ship's gossip factory. For example, Mrs Alda Wheeler was reported by the chief steward of 'being far too familiar with all the stewards and of being spoken

⁷⁰⁴ Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, pp. 49-52. However, there is no evidence as to how the rules regarding women workers varied between individual companies.

⁷⁰⁵ NMM. P&O/10/10. Instructions to Pursers and Clerks in Charge on Board the Steamships of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (1860).

⁷⁰⁶ UL. CA. PR14/11-20. Rules to be Observed in the Company's Service. 1885, 1897 and 1913 editions.

⁷⁰⁷ UL. CA. C2/154. Memorandum from the General manager to the Lady Superintendent regarding Lady Thurlow's letter to the Company, which complained about stewardesses' accommodation on board Atlantic liners. 6 December, 1922.

⁷⁰⁸ Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p.61.

to was most insolent. A change necessary.⁷⁰⁹ Miss Annie Vinten was reported as being 'too familiar with the men' and a change of ship was also recommended in this case.⁷¹⁰

In workplaces that have traditionally been all-male communities, the sexual harassment of women is one way of using indirect social control. Another one is an emphasis on traditional sexual roles and stereotypes, which emphasises male identity. According to David J. Morgan masculinity manifests itself strongly in workplaces because men consider working for wages an important part of their identity. The introduction of women into traditional male occupations upsets the balance of the sexes within working communities, such as passenger liners, and has often posed an explicit threat to men's sense of their own masculinity. It is not surprising, therefore, that when women started to pour into offices in England, this caused a crisis of masculinity for many men.⁷¹¹

In many cases, women were the victims of sexual harassment, while men were always likely to keep both their reputation and jobs.⁷¹² Maida Nixson, a stewardess, reminded her readers: 'Remember, the woman always pays, and a good name is more easily lost than a bad one'.⁷¹³ Violet Jessop, another stewardess, wrote that because she repelled the captain's sexual approaches, he reported her 'flirting with his officers' and therefore she was sacked from the company.⁷¹⁴ Stewardesses were also subject to harassment by male passengers, who might also have considered them as 'fair game'. In addition, it was extremely important to be accepted by the passengers, especially with regard to tips, and one complaint from a passenger might have had been enough for a discharge.

⁷⁰⁹ NMM.P&O/77/15. Steward's Register 1901.

⁷¹⁰ NMM.P&O/77/19. Steward's Register 1911.

⁷¹¹ David Morgan, *Discovering Men. Critical Studies on Men and Masculinities* 3 (1992), p.128.

⁷¹² Jessop, *Titanic Survivor, The Memoirs of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, pp.5 8, 62, 63, 78-81.

⁷¹³ Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p. 28.

⁷¹⁴ Jessop, *Titanic Survivor. The Memoirs of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, p. 88.

7.6. The recruitment of women and gender-segregated labour markets

Seagoing women had always existed but their position and recruitment had been informal and they were seldom given a competitive salary or a formal contract of employment. In the case of women, it is often difficult to separate formal and informal employment.⁷¹⁵ Sometimes, women on board ships did not sign ship's articles, but still performed shipboard tasks, whereas at other times the situation was the reverse.⁷¹⁶ However, with the development of passenger shipping, a woman's role on board as a carer or as a representative of female passengers became formalised and institutionalised.⁷¹⁷ In order to analyse this process, this section will examine the gendered recruitment policies of British passenger liner companies, with particular reference to catering personnel where most of women's employment was located. It is immediately apparent from the available evidence that the maritime labour market throughout the period under consideration was characterised by a substantial degree and persistence of gender segregation, which can only be assessed by an analysis of the recruitment and career patterns of female employees and the roles available to them. The main interest of this section is the extent and persistence of gender segregation over time in the maritime labour market. The recruitment and career patterns of women are assessed and the roles available to them.

Even if there were increasing public demands for employing more women on ships, there is strong evidence to show that the liner companies were reluctant to recruit

⁷¹⁵ Neither do women's employment patterns follow that of men's in many other respects. Therefore generalisations about women's employment based on that of men's cannot be made. For example, most of the women's employment during the period fits into the category of 'non-standard employment' (temporary, part-time, based on the male breadwinner ideology), in a sense that their employment patterns depend on their life-cycle and marital status more than that of men's. Further discussion about women's concentration in non-standard employment can be found in Rosemary Crompton, *Women and Work in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1997), pp. 29-31.

⁷¹⁶ Women could perform various jobs on a ship, even if they were officially signed on as captains' wives or passengers. Sometimes captains' wives, for example, would have signed on as stewardesses without working as such. A good example of this is the diary of Anne Stephens, a captain's wife, onboard ss *Anselmade Larrinaga* from Eastham to Buenos Aires from April to September 1909. MMM. DX/1128. In the 7 May 1909 she wrote, 'A fortnight today I was in Manchester signing on as a stewardess but so far I am afraid I have not earned my wages yet as I am more waited on than me wait on them.'

⁷¹⁷ Women's employment in the Navy had followed similar lines. They used to be employed as nurses to take care of the wounded and the ship's laundry. When women were first employed in Navy ships in 1696, they were over 50 years old and seamen's wives or widows. Stark, *Female Tars*, p.68.

them, especially on North Atlantic passenger liners.⁷¹⁸ The recruitment practices varied between passenger liner companies: some did not carry a permanent stewardess nor matron in steerage, but recruited them when necessary from among the passengers. Moreover, the recruitment of women depended on the number of female and child passengers on a particular trip.⁷¹⁹ By contrast, however, a permanent stewardess was normally carried in the first class, since women were encouraged to travel in that class.⁷²⁰

In contrast to men, women were never trained at nautical schools for a seafaring career nor were they apprenticed by shipping companies.⁷²¹ The negative attitude towards women's apprenticeship was not peculiar to seafaring. The exclusion of women from formal apprenticeship training by the shipping companies undoubtedly reflected the persistence of contemporary value systems, but, by implication, it also meant that women generally were expected to undertake less skilled or low-status jobs.⁷²² Indeed, the negative attitude to women's apprenticeship was not specific to seafaring: there was a low proportion of female apprentices in the eighteenth century and the risk of sexual abuse was very real.⁷²³ As late as the 1950s a guide for the training and education of young people provided evidence of a persistent discrimination of girls by employers in relation to opportunities for education and training. There was still an expectation that female employees would marry and be supported by a male breadwinner, which suggests that women's employment was seldom seen as permanent even in the period after the Second World War, as stated by A.G. Beverstock in the 1950s:

⁷¹⁸ For example, the Inman Line found them 'unsatisfactory' and discontinued them. *Reports with regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII. Appendix C; 'Emigrant Accommodation on Board Atlantic Steamers'; Captain Wilson's Report on Questions raised in Miss Charlotte O'Brien's memorandum states that, 'Carrying a stewardess has been tried and abandoned on several lines. Ship owners, I understand, find it a difficulty to obtain a really good stewardess.' p. 74. Second Report by Captain Wilson upon Miss C.G. O'Brien's indictment against the operation of the Passenger Acts.

⁷¹⁹ *Reports with regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII. Report by the Assistant Secretary, Marine Department to the President of the Board of Trade.

⁷²⁰ The trend can be seen already in the early nineteenth century emigrant guides. Men travelling with their wives were advised to travel in the first class and single men in the steerage. Cobbett, *The Emigrant's Guide*, p. 112.

⁷²¹ It has to be remembered, however, that not all the men were professionally trained. The extent to which male stewards fulfil a formal apprenticeship or attend a nautical training school is examined in chapter 4.

⁷²² Charles More: *Skill and the English Working Class, 1870-1914* (London, 1980), p.229.

⁷²³ Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London, 1996), p.40.

Employers are reluctant to assist women employees with further education since many girls marry early and give up their jobs. Moreover, many girls have the definite idea that work is only a means of filling in time until they marry, although many when they have married still pursue their job in order to make a financial contribution to the home.⁷²⁴

It is important in this context to analyse how women recruited for work on board ship. In fact, women seafarers were seldom, if ever, recruited straight from school, which suggests that employment at sea was not seen as a career in its own right. By the early 1880s a dual recruitment pattern was already evident in the case of stewardesses. Normally, only one stewardess per ship was formally signed on: she would have been employed as a first class stewardess and regarded as a regular employee of the company since individual women can be found on a number of crew agreements. By contrast, the selection of third class stewardess was made by the following method: 'When the steerage passengers come on board, the doctor and the purser select out of the number either two, three or four [stewardesses], according to their description, and the number of steerage passengers, for their duty'.⁷²⁵

The third class stewardesses were therefore selected for one trip at a time and not signed on the ships' books, which suggests that they only worked their passage out. This arrangement was also handy for ship owners, since they avoided employing someone for the return trip, when steerage was relatively empty.

Although little is known about the early recruitment patterns of the passenger liner companies, particularly in relation to catering personnel, family connections almost certainly were important in the recruitment of women. Judith Fingard has shown how almost all of the stewardesses to be found in shipping registers of Saint John's (Halifax) in the 1880s and the 1890s, with the exception of on passenger steamships, were wives of someone on the ship. To this extent, 'the employment of women was erratic and dependent on the arrangements their husbands were able to make on their behalf'.⁷²⁶ By the inter-war period, stewardesses on passenger liners usually had to be

⁷²⁴ A.G. Beverstock, *Modern Apprenticeship* (London, 1958), p.57.

⁷²⁵ *Reports with regarding to Accommodation*. BPP 1881. LXXXII, q. 136. Appendix C. Evidence of Charles McIver, Cunard Line.

⁷²⁶ Fingard, *Jack in Port*, pp. 57-59.

recommended by someone connected to the sea or employed by the company.⁷²⁷ Family connections and personal history were important and women employed on passenger liners often had a strong maritime background. Previous extensive travel experience could also be regarded a merit, especially on ocean passenger liner.⁷²⁸ For some positions, previous work experience in the company's office ashore was required.⁷²⁹ The lady superintendent or her equivalent, who was responsible for the recruitment of women staff, usually interviewed the applicants, but even in the absence of such a figure gender remained 'a crucial dividing force at this time in shipping offices.'⁷³⁰

At the beginning of the period, most of the stewardesses recruited by Cunard were Scottish, reflecting the Glasgow origins of Cunard's founding partners. By 1881, however, the recruitment had become more local and more English-born women were recruited. Cunard commonly recruited its catering personnel from the Continent after entering the Mediterranean emigrant trade in 1903. In 1911, one fourth of the stewardesses employed were Hungarian, Austrian and Italian, recruited from the Mediterranean ports of departure. Some of them were regularly employed at sea, but others just worked their passage out, deserting or being discharged in New York. Peculiarly, on passenger liners going East of Suez, even if whole catering departments sometimes consisted of Lascars or other non-Europeans, the stewardesses were still British or European.⁷³¹ In 1901, for example, 7,702 stewards out of 30,704 were Lascars, but none of the 828 stewardesses: 40 of them were, however, foreigners.⁷³²

⁷²⁷Jo Stanley, *Women at Sea. Some experiences of Canadian Pacific stewardesses sailing out of Liverpool in the inter-war years* (Liverpool, 1987), p. 7.

⁷²⁸NMM. BIS 30/38. Letter of recommendation from Clara Ward to the Superintendent of British India Steam Navigation Company 10 October 1925; Nixon, p.12.

⁷²⁹UL. CA. C2/259. Letter from Mr Royden to a commander who had acquired for a stenographer's position for his daughter. 17 January, 1927.

⁷³⁰Stanley, 'Finding a Brief Flowering of Typists at Sea', p. 34.

⁷³¹UW. MRC. MSS.367/TSF/2/3/1. Seafarers' wages on various liners in 1917.

Table 7.4. Nationalities of female catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners 1861-1938, in per cent

Year	Scottish	English	Irish	Welsh	Northern Irish	Foreign	Other*
1861	79	16	5	0	0	0	0
1871	57	29	0	7	0	7	0
1881	42	35	12	4	4	4	0
1891	23	63	0	10	3	0	0
1901	11	79	0	5	5	0	0
1911	6	54	7	1	1	31	0
1921	4	76	4	2	3	9	2
1931	1	82	3	5	1	7	2
1938	3	82	4	4	2	5	0

* colonial or born at sea

Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

Women's residential patterns can be analysed from 1901 onwards.⁷³³ Compared to the addresses of the catering personnel as a whole, (see Table 2.10) women employees tended to come from a more heterogeneous residential background, as will be seen in Table 7.5. Even if they normally lived near the port, the percentage of women who travelled from longer distances (see column 'Other') was larger than was generally the case with all catering personnel. Another remarkable feature in comparing these two tables is the small percentage of women living in Hampshire, where Southampton was located, especially in 1921 and 1931. The rapid increase in the proportion of female catering personnel from Hampshire in 1938 was a reflection of the increased transfer of passenger traffic to Southampton. By contrast, a larger proportion of female employees were resident in Greater Liverpool than was the case for catering personnel as a whole. Overall, Table 7.5 indicates a greater element of diversity and less locality in the place of residence of female catering personnel.

⁷³² *Report of the Committee appointed by the Board of Trade*. BPP 1903. LXII. 'Table showing the Numbers and Ratings of the Seamen employed on the 31st March 1901 on Sea-Going vessels (except yachts) registered under Part 1 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894. Appendix M, No. 9, Part III.

⁷³³ 1894 was the first year when addresses of seafarers were recorded in the crew agreements. Due to nature of the database collected by the author, the places of residence can be analysed only on years ending with a 1.

Table 7.5. Places of residence of the female catering personnel, 1901-1938, in per cent.

Year	Greater Liverpool	Greater London	Hampshire	Scotland, Wales and Ireland	Abroad	Not known	Other
1901	96	0	0	0	0	0	4
1911	72	2	2	0	16	0	8
1921	58	11	5	3	7	0	16
1931	62	13	7	4	0	0	12
1938	41	9	32	2	0	0	15

Source: Dataset 1901-1938.

If the surrounding counties are included in the analysis, there is no significant change in the overall pattern of recruitment. The proportion of female employees resident in Greater Liverpool and the contiguous counties (Cheshire and Lancashire) is still higher than average, while Southampton and the surrounding counties were not an important recruitment area for female catering staff, apart from in 1938. For most of the period under consideration, a far higher proportion of female employees had been born in northern England (specifically in Greater Liverpool), rather than in the South (Greater London and Hampshire) (Table 7.6). Despite a gradual shift in the location of Cunard's passenger traffic in the interwar period, the Lady Superintendent responsible for recruiting female staff continued to be based in Liverpool, which might have favoured applications from local women.⁷³⁴ Moreover, when birthplace data are compared with residential patterns, it is interesting to note that only a few women moved out of Liverpool after the start of their employment by Cunard.

Comparatively few women seafarers employed by Cunard had been born in Southampton and Hampshire in general (Table 7.6), even if practically all the company's transatlantic vessels departed from Southampton from the 1920s onwards.

⁷³⁴ Scobie, *A Stewardess Rings a Bell*, p.5.

Table 7.6. Percentage of seafaring women employed by Cunard born in Greater Liverpool, Hampshire and Greater London, 1861-1938

Area	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1938
Greater Liverpool	0	20	23	23	68	34	29	44	35
Greater London	0	0	0	3	0	8	10	14	9
Hampshire	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	1	10

Source : Dataset 1861-1938.

Despite the increasing shift of Cunard's liner traffic to the south coast, Liverpool remained the main supplier of the female maritime labour. Even in 1938, 35 per cent of the women employed by Cunard had been born in Greater Liverpool and 41 per cent of them still lived there, often commuting regularly to London and Southampton and back.⁷³⁵ It can be concluded therefore, that at least Cunard relied heavily on Liverpool for its recruitment of female personnel even if Southampton, and to a lesser extent, London became the main ports of departure. Given its nineteenth-century prominence as an international port and its role in the emigrant trade, a seafaring tradition was almost certainly more well-established in Liverpool than was the case in Southampton and its surrounding counties, and women born in Greater Liverpool (like their male counterparts) remained more attracted to a seafaring career. Being an old seafaring town, its women were much more attracted to sea likewise their female and male ancestors. Hampshire, on the contrary, did not become such an important supplier of female maritime labour.

Table 7.7. The regional origins of female catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners according to the place of residence, 1901-1938.

Year	North	%	South	%	Other	%	Total
1901	26	96	1	4	0	0	27
1911	93	92	8	8	22	22	101
1921	90	68	27	20	15	11	132
1931	172	67	60	24	23	9	255
1938	138	48	135	47	15	5	288

Source : Dataset 1901-1938.

⁷³⁵ Dataset 1861-1938.

In terms of the broader regional origins of female catering personnel (by place of residence), census data for 1901 indicate that women from northern regions of the United Kingdom, specifically from Scotland, were predominant. There were hardly any foreign women employed in British passenger vessels, in contrast to the recruitment pattern of Able Seamen, of whom 43 per cent were foreigners, mostly from Sweden, Germany and Norway.⁷³⁶ To this extent, the sample of Cunard's female employees may be taken as representative of national trends. In 1861 a very high proportion of female catering personnel came from Scotland (Table 7.4), although northern England, including Greater Liverpool, became a more important recruitment area during the latter decades of the nineteenth century (Table 7.7). By the late-1930s, however, there had been a perceptible shift to the recruitment of women resident in southern England (particularly in Southampton and its contiguous counties), which accounted for 47 per cent of Cunard's female catering personnel by 1938.

Some women tried the seafaring life only for a trip or two and decided they did not like it. Seasickness or other physical reasons occasionally stopped them from taking on seafaring as a career, and sometimes the shipping company did not regard them as suitable. However, most women who went to sea stayed there for a long period of time. A sample of female catering personnel taken from P&O stewards' registers (relating to individuals who were employed by the company over a period of time) suggests that approximately 20 per cent of female employees tried the sea life for one year or less, but the rest stayed for four years or more.⁷³⁷ By contrast, data from the Cunard sample show that five per cent of the women stayed at sea for over ten years, and a few of them for over 30 years.⁷³⁸ This is a striking figure, because women usually went to sea at a much older age than their male counterparts.

⁷³⁶ *Return of the Numbers, Ages, Ratings and Nationalities of Seamen employed 31st of March 1901 on Vessels registered Under Part I of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 in the British Isles*. BPP 1902. XCII. Tables 'Nationalities of seafarers' and 'Numbers of foreign seamen serving on board trading vessels'.

⁷³⁷ NMM. P&O 77/12-30. P&O Steward's registers. The sample of the catering personnel was taken randomly of every year ending with a 1 comprising years between 1891-1931. Stewardesses, who have been registered for the first time or transferred from the old register book during those years, have been sampled. Altogether, there is 208 women in the sample.

⁷³⁸ Dataset 1861-1911.

The stewardess' position was a popular one, at least during the inter-war years. Nixson provided advice as to how to apply for a job as a stewardess: 'You must nag and pester and push and give the Supers [superintendents, SM] no peace. Go to their offices, bluff and bluster your way in. Get them so sick of you they'll send you ten thousand miles away to get rid of the sight and sound of you! It's the only way.'⁷³⁹ A newcomer could often find a way in at a time when passenger liners needed extra stewardesses in busy seasons, and a trial trip would be given for someone recommended and interviewed by the shipping company.⁷⁴⁰ Sometimes, an extra stewardess would be employed for a particular trip, if passengers had requested special service and attention.⁷⁴¹

Age was an important factor in the recruitment of women. Maida M. Nixson, who herself worked as a stewardess, claimed that the stewardess on the trip when she crossed the Atlantic as a passenger, was 'one of those fierce old dragons, crackling with starch and scorn'.⁷⁴² Motherly qualities and 'experience', which referred to mature age, were often mentioned when the role of women at sea was discussed. The Cunard magazine described two stewardesses as follows:

There are land mothers and sea mothers... The two of them are Mrs. Agnes Stevens and Mrs. Emily Dawkins, stewardesses of the *Saxonia*, and 'Mother' Stevens and 'Mother' Dawkins to child voyagers, to nurses and soldiers during the war years, and to cabin boys, captains and other co-workers afloat the Atlantic.⁷⁴³

References to the 'motherly' qualities of stewardesses are also to be found in a purser's account of women at sea as late as the 1950s: 'a few were young and attractive, but most were motherly types who inspired confidence in children and women travelling alone.'⁷⁴⁴

⁷³⁹ Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p. 40.

⁷⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p.12

⁷⁴¹ UL. CA. GM2/1-2. Memorandum to Pursers. Rates for special stewardesses. February 19, 1931.

⁷⁴² Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p.11.

⁷⁴³ UL. CA. PR5/3. 'Mothers of the Sea' *Cunard Magazine* Vol. VI, No 4 (1921), p. 134.

⁷⁴⁴ French, 'The Purser's Tale of Women at Sea', p.769.

Table 7.8. Mean age of female and male catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938

<i>Year</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
1861	42	27
1871	39	28
1881	41	31
1891	39	33
1901	38	30
1911	33	28
1921	39	32
1931	38	34
1938	40	37

Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

The Cunard data set confirms the extent to which female catering staff were noticeably older than their male counterparts (Table 7.8). At the beginning of the period, in 1861, there was a very marked age difference between male and female catering personnel. There was very little change in the mean age of women employees between the mid-nineteenth century and the late-1930s, although the interwar years witnessed a consistent upward trend in the mean age of male staff and a significant narrowing in the gender-specific age differential. In fact, most large passenger liner companies had a relatively high minimum age of 25 for female employees, whereas male members of the catering department could be recruited from the age of 14 years upwards.⁷⁴⁵ The adoption and retention of an age-specific recruitment policy for catering personnel was justified by the claim that younger women were ‘unreliable’, which reflected a broader concern over the potentially disruptive effect of young women in workplaces traditionally dominated by men.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁵ The required age for Cunard remained 25 for women at least until 1938. Scobie, *A Stewardess Rings a Bell*, p.5.

⁷⁴⁶ UL. CA. C2/264. Correspondence regarding staff. Letter from Sir Thomas Royden, Chairman of Cunard to Mr Bearsted 21.1.1928.

Table 7.9. The percentage of male and female catering personnel under 25 years of age, 1861-1938.

Year	Stewardesses on Cunard	Stewardesses on all ships	Stewards on Cunard	Stewards on all ships
1861	0	14	42	33
1871	0	14	36	36
1881	0	11	28	38
1891	3	13	25	n/a
1901	8	10	35	n/a
1911	7	13	40	33
1921	2	16	25	24
1931	3	11	24	28
1938	2	n/a	18	n/a

Source : Dataset 1861-1938, Occupational Censuses of England and Wales, 1861-1931.

As tables 7.8 and 7.9 suggest, stewardesses were much older than their male counterparts and Cunard stewardesses were older than women seafarers in general, perhaps because of the difficulty in securing employment on the company's ships or *as a result of its policy of not employing young women*. As a whole, women went to sea at a more mature age than men. Apart from formal age restrictions, family commitments might have stopped some women from taking a berth at an earlier age. The employment of younger women was more common on the other shipping companies: Edith Mary Williams, for example, went to sea at the age of 21 as a junior shop assistant and stayed at sea without any extensive breaks until 1937 when she married.⁷⁴⁷ Indeed, Cunard itself did not always follow company policy: prior to the First World War a number of stewardesses below the age of 25 were employed on its ships, although they never constituted a significant proportion of the female catering personnel in the interwar period (Table 7.9).

Hardly any married women were recruited, and most of the women employed in the catering department were either single or widowed, a tendency that cannot be found in the recruitment of men. Women were often employed as a form of charity: the widows of company officers were employed instead of paying pensions to employees' families.⁷⁴⁸ In letters of application, women themselves appealed to

⁷⁴⁷ MMM. DX 1670. It is not actually clear, whether she left her job when she got married, but it is very likely. Discharge Certificates of Edith Mary Williams.

⁷⁴⁸ Stanley, *Women at Sea*, p.7.

employers by underlining their poor economic situation and the absence of a male breadwinner.⁷⁴⁹ The 1881 Liverpool Shipping Schedules, which reveal the marital status of seafarers, confirm that most of the stewardesses were widowed or unmarried. There was only one exception: a married woman of 38 years of age, who served on a coastal schooner *Voltaire*. On board, there were two males with the same surname, and their ages indicate that one of them could have been her husband.⁷⁵⁰ There was an equal number of widows and unmarried women in the shipping schedules, but their average age varied (42.5 and 34 years respectively). The evidence suggest, therefore, that women could either go to sea in their twenties and early thirties and then marry, or take up seafaring occupation as a widow. In any event, there was a strong consensus in society to keep married women out of employment and Cunard operated a marriage bar for its female office workers. Whether they had the same policy towards their female seafaring staff is unclear, but there is no evidence of married women being employed on British passenger liners *during the period, and women employed by P&O invariably left their posts when they got married.*⁷⁵¹

Margaret Davies went to sea at the age of 38 after her husband's death in 1885 and her older children took care of the youngest son whilst she was at sea. She worked as a matron and then as a stewardess on the North Atlantic and Mediterranean routes until she was 60 years old.⁷⁵² The fact that she had to leave the children by themselves indicates that going to sea was an economic necessity. Violet Jessop, a stewardess who went to sea in 1908 says in her memoirs: 'In those days, there were comparatively few posts at sea for women, therefore the ones who did choose the life were treated with deference and a consideration that is unknown today.'⁷⁵³ The single or widowed status of these women indicates that they were the sole breadwinners of their families and economic reasons were therefore a major factor in determining their career choice.

⁷⁴⁹ UL. C2/259. CA. Letter from LR to the Chairman, dated 17.6.1927. 'Applications for Employment 1922-1926'.

⁷⁵⁰ Liverpool Record Office (LRO). Census 1881. Shipping Schedules of Liverpool, no. 3604.

⁷⁵¹ NMM. P&O 77/12, 77/15, 77/19. Steward's registers 1891-1894, 1899-1901 and 1909-1911.

⁷⁵² MMM. DX/1086. Certificates of Discharge and news cuttings of Margaret Davies, stewardess and matron

⁷⁵³ Jessop, *Titanic Survivor: The Memories of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, p. 52.

The available evidence suggests that most women regarded their earnings as the most important factor in being at sea, although many also stressed how addictive the lifestyle was. Some were desperate to obtain employment in the absence of a male breadwinner, but it has to be remembered that travelling was still essentially the privilege of the wealthy and visiting America and tropical ports was like a dream for many women. Violet Jessop's reason for choosing a career at sea, for example, was money as her mother had become ill, but there was also the attraction of 'changing scenes and faces, and perhaps a romance'.⁷⁵⁴

Even if poor economic circumstances might have been a motive for women going to sea, choosing a maritime career required further reasons. Many sea-going women had a strong maritime background and many of them were officers' widows.⁷⁵⁵ Seafaring could be inherited in a female line as well: Violet Jessop's mother, for example, was a stewardess. Evidence from the later period implies the same: women who went to sea often came from seafaring families.⁷⁵⁶ Dorothy Scobie, who applied to Cunard for a berth as a stewardess in 1938, was the daughter of a Cunard employee⁷⁵⁷

The available evidence, despite its fragmentary nature, indicates that there were three distinct types of women seafarers in the catering department of shipping companies. The first type of women employed at sea was someone like Violet Jessop, who spent most of her career at sea and may well have remained single. The second type was someone who worked at sea for a limited period of time, before either marrying or seeking an alternative employment (perhaps because she did not like a seafaring life or failed to retain company support). Finally, a considerable number of female employees were widows, who went to sea after the death of their husband, especially if their children were already old enough or because of an overriding need to obtain independent support. The heroic stewardess Mary Ann Rogers, who died at the

⁷⁵⁴ Jessop, *Titanic Survivor: The Memories of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, pp. 51-52.

⁷⁵⁵ *ibid*; Stanley, *Women at Sea*, pp. 6-7. The inheritance of career choice was a relatively common feature in the late-nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries. It is analysed in more detail in Section 4.4.

⁷⁵⁶ Stanley, *Women at Sea*, p.1.

⁷⁵⁶ Scobie, *A Stewardess Rings a Bell*, p.5; NMM. P&O/77/23. Steward's register at P&O 1920-1924 reveals that some stewardesses of the company were daughters or sisters of stewards and stewardesses.

⁷⁵⁷ Scobie, *A Stewardess Rings a Bell*, p.5.

shipwreck on *Stella*, is a good example of this type. She started her seafaring career shortly after her husband's death (he died at sea), obviously in need of earning a living, since they had two little children, with a third child born shortly after her husband's death.⁷⁵⁸ In that sense women's employment was different from men's, for whom marriage and children were not factors which prohibited them from obtaining employment.

Not only marital status, but also personal appearance was very important in job interviews and good looks played a peculiar part in the recruitment of women.⁷⁵⁹ Sometimes attractiveness and youth acted against women in those situations. The evidence suggests that women should not appear as too attractive. The presence of a young woman onboard was -as Violet Jessop, a stewardess, puts it -almost a fetish for seamen. She wrote of her first interview in her memoirs:

The meeting seemed to go well from the start, until he remarked that he had misgivings. He enumerated his objections: I was far too young, they generally took officers' widows, and then again, I was too attractive...I gave him my word to be most circumspect and careful if he gave me a post as stewardess. I also made a mental note not to seek too eagerly for my dream hero, that wonderful, chivalrous man of faultless manners and integrity, who was bound to be waiting for me somewhere.⁷⁶⁰

The stewardesses' outfit was meant to asexualise them. Even at the end of the 1930s the uniform regulations for Cunard-White Star stewardesses stated that grey stockings and plain black shoes, with part or whole rubber heels, were required. No short sleeves, skirts more than ten inches from the ground, or jewellery was to be worn when in uniform.⁷⁶¹ Jessop remembers the grey stewardesses' uniform resembling a nurse's outfit- or more precisely, 'those of a prison wardress'.⁷⁶²

⁷⁵⁸ *The Times*, 29 July 1901, p.4.

⁷⁵⁹ UL. CA. C2/259. Applications for Employment. In a letter for Mr Royden, a chairman of Cunard, from someone recommending a nurse, described her; 'She is a very nice girl- tall and very good looking, and also a capable nurse'. Valerie Burton emphasises that smart appearance was the most important factor in recruitment of stewards. Burton (1989), p.145.

⁷⁶⁰ Jessop, *Titanic Survivor: The Memories of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, pp. 52-53, 58.

⁷⁶¹ Scobie, *A Stewardess Rings a Bell*, p. 7.

⁷⁶² Jessop, *Titanic Survivor: The Memories of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, p. 53.

Article in the *Queen* magazine from the 1930s demanded that knowledge of nursing should be required of stewardesses and criticised the recruitment practices of the big passenger liner companies:

The stewardess generally does her utmost; and the captain himself can do no more. But she has not had, like the captain, any special training for her duties. Steamship companies are too apt to regard the post of stewardess as an appointment for bestowal on a woman related to some member of their crew. The idea that a man's widow or daughter will be provided with a comfortable berth as stewardess it thought to make the service of passenger vessels more attractive.⁷⁶³

A nursing background or previous work experience as a nanny was regarded as useful. Towards the end of the period the nursing qualifications became increasingly important- almost a prerequisite- for someone who wanted a post as a stewardess on a passenger liner. Cunard announced in 1920 that preference should be given to applicants with nursing qualifications, and due to the large numbers of stewardesses being out of work, no new hands would be taken on.⁷⁶⁴ At that time, there was a high level of unemployment amongst seafarers and a post of a stewardess or a nurse was extremely popular. For example, Lilian Frith, a stewardess on Cunard, applied for a similar position with the British India Steam Navigation Company underlining her four years' nursing experience and special experience in nursing patients with tropical diseases.⁷⁶⁵ In the late 1920s, a midwifery certificate was required from a matron or a nurse employed on Cunard's Atlantic liners, since 'quite a number of our steerage passengers have a habit of producing babies during the voyage'.⁷⁶⁶ The register of female applicants to the British India Steam Navigation Company in 1921 reveals that out of 44 applicants to the stewards' department, 29 had previous seafaring experience. Seven candidates had a nursing background, four came from domestic service and four were related to someone connected with the company or had been recommended despite the lack of previous experience at sea.⁷⁶⁷ During period of high unemployment, when jobs in the catering department were less easy to

⁷⁶³ 'The Stewardess Nurse' A reprint from the *Queen Magazine* in Prior Rupert, *Ocean Liners. The Golden Years*. (London, 1993), p. 87.

⁷⁶⁴ UL. CA. ASC 12/10. Memorandum, April 9, 1920.

⁷⁶⁵ NMM. BIS/30/38. Letter from Lilian Frith from *Lancastria*, New York, to J. Mone, Superintendent of British Indian Steam Navigation Company, 22 September 1926.

⁷⁶⁶ UL. CA. C2/259. Applications for Employment. Letter from T. Royden, the General Manager, to Lord Lawrence 18 July 1927.

obtain, the large passenger liner companies intensified their screening processes and monitored the background of female applicants in a more detailed fashion. Whereas detailed information on individual candidates was seldom retained prior to the First World War, by the early 1920s the P&O's Stewards' Register frequently reveals a careful listing of the each applicant's background and the reasons for recruitment. The annual register recorded information on the background of over 65 per cent of the company's female employees in the 1920s and in the 1930s, while most of the remainder were women with long service with the company. In 1921, of those whose background was known, 50 per cent were recommended by someone connected to the company, 19 per cent were related to someone employed by P&O and a further 19 per cent had previous nursing experience.⁷⁶⁸ In 1931, however, only 31 per cent of the stewardesses' background was recorded, which might be due to the fact that most of the women were former employees and their background was already known. Most of the newly recruited female staff had previous seafaring experience in another company, or were recommended by someone influential connected to P&O. Only one was noted as having previous nursing experience.⁷⁶⁹

Table 7.10 reveals the restricted nature of women's employment on passenger liners. *There were remarkably less job titles available for women as compared to men in catering departments.* The gender-division of labour on passenger liners and the restricted employment of women in certain positions was partly maintained by the development and maintenance of separate channels of recruitment.

⁷⁶⁷ NMM. BIS/30/38. Stewards Department. Applicants No 2. 1916-1927.

⁷⁶⁸ NMM. P&O /77/23. Stewards register 1920-1924. The sample comprised all the stewardesses (43 cases) registered in 1921.

⁷⁶⁹ NMM. P&O /77/26. Stewards register 1929-1932. The sample comprised all the stewardesses (43 cases) registered in 1931.

Table 7.10. Different job titles available for male and female catering personnel on Cunard passenger liners, 1861-1938

<i>Year</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
1861	31	1
1871	35	1
1881	25	2
1891	34	2
1901	37	2
1911	98	6
1921	142	6
1931	198	11
1938	209	15*

*Job titles available for women in 1938 were: Bath Attendant, Bookstall Attendant, Electric and Turkish Bath Attendant, Hairdresser, Laundress, Head Laundress (or Laundry Manageress/ Head Washer), Laundry Clerk, Masseur, Nurse, Nursery Stewardess, 1st class Stewardess, Tourist Class Stewardess, Third Class stewardess, Leading Stewardess (or 1st Stewardess/ Chief Stewardess) and Swimming Pool Attendant. The stewardesses employed in different classes are listed separately since the distinction was regarded as important.

Source: Dataset 1861-1938.

By the 1920s, big passenger liner companies like Cunard had a special Lady Superintendent, who specifically handled the recruitment of women and the practice made it virtually impossible for a woman to break into any other positions than those traditionally gendered as female. The existence of separate recruitment channels for women and men maintained the gender segregation of labour, in a similar manner to the employment of Lascars and Chinese with their own 'serangs', who were responsible for both discipline and recruitment.

There were hardly any possibilities of career advancement for women, at least not into supervisory positions. Career development was only evident in a transfer from third to second class and, ultimately, to stewardess posts in first-class where tips from passengers were significantly higher. By the 1920s, however, a limited number of managerial positions had been created which were open to women, including the post of leading stewardess and head laundress. That a woman would gain authority

over a man on board ship, however, was something completely unheard of. It seems that a head stewardess did not have any formal authority over women stewardesses, but her task was that of a team leader or equivalent. Women's employment or their career patterns did not follow that of men's. They were treated as a separate group within the catering department, even if they worked alongside their male counterparts. They had their own leading stewardesses and could only work their way up the career ladder within their own group. There was normally only one leading stewardess on the large passenger liners. Compared to similar male managerial posts, the wage differential was remarkable in favour of men. In the interwar period the head waiter, for example, was paid approximately £2 more per month than the head stewardess.⁷⁷⁰ Most female employees, however, simply retired or left the service of a shipping company in the same position as they had started employment. For example, if a woman initially took a berth as a stewardess, it was almost certain that she would retire as one.

The retirement age for women varied between different companies. It was, however, relatively common for a stewardess to work until her 60s. The eldest woman to be found in the Cunard sample was 67 years old.⁷⁷¹ Some women, however, left their seafaring career earlier. P&O's Stewards' Register from 1911 reveal that Miss Emma Elliott retired from seafaring at the age of 56. The P&O's Stewards' Register also reveals that during the interwar period the company adopted a pension plan and set the official retirement age at 60 years.⁷⁷²

7.7. Gender, ethnicity and the division of labour

As already mentioned in Section 4.2, cooking on board was not regarded as requiring special skills before the twentieth century. Why did the seafarers have to wait for so long before it was realised that the cooking affects the quality of food and requires special knowledge? In this section, gender analysis will be used to explore this issue, while the close connection between cooking and both femininity and domesticity provides a possible explanation for the low status of work in this area. This section

⁷⁷⁰ Dataset 1861-1938.

⁷⁷¹ Dataset 1861-1938. Finding is from year 1901.

⁷⁷² NMM. P&O 77/23. Stewards' register.

will also analyse the gender and ethnic composition of cooks and assess whether cooks and stewards were seen as less masculine by the shipboard community. It will also compare the gender composition of cooks both ashore and onboard.

Cooks and stewards were the longest established groups of catering personnel already familiar on sailing ships. They were generally divorced from normal channels of promotion and their posts were regarded as too lowly to attract able seamen. In sailing ships cooks were usually very young or relatively old, men who were thought of as not being physically capable of surviving the deck hand's work.⁷⁷³ The cook's profession was also one where black men often found employment. Black people on American and British ships usually had the lowest *status jobs and their opportunities* for career advancement were severely restricted. W. Jeffrey Bolster has shown how in times of intensifying competition for berths, black seamen were restricted to being cooks or stewards on American sailing ships, at a time, when there were hardly any black officers in seafaring.⁷⁷⁴ Women's maritime employment follows a similar pattern: until the end of the nineteenth century, if a woman wanted to go to sea, she had precisely one option: to become a stewardess. On the passenger liners, neither women nor black people gained supervisory roles or benefited from career advancement. As late as 1946, the Seamen's Union took action against the British ship owner of the cargo ship *La Pampa*, who hired women to manage its catering department.⁷⁷⁵ Generally speaking, the employment of women, black men and children tended to be concentrated in jobs of a similar status within the shipping industry. Laura Tabili and Leonore Davidoff have shown how in Britain and in the colonies women and the colonised people performed roles involving subordination, physical closeness and a servicing of personal needs.⁷⁷⁶ Even if there was a long tradition of men performing household tasks themselves, 'women's work' was stigmatised on board. Hence washing, cooking and cleaning were often delegated to the black, to the young or to men beyond their

⁷⁷³ Press, *The Economic and Social Conditions of the Merchant Seamen of England, 1815-1854*, p.37; Dixon, 'Pound and Pint', p.166.

⁷⁷⁴ Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p.176.

⁷⁷⁵ 'Female Labour at Sea' *Sea Breezes*, Vol. II (New Series) July-September 1946, pp. 258-259.

⁷⁷⁶ Tabili, 'A Maritime Race', p.183; Leonore Davidoff, 'Class and Gender in Victorian England' in Judith L. Newton *et al.* (eds.), *Sex and Class in Women's History* (London, 1983), pp.17-71.

prime age.⁷⁷⁷ Perhaps the fact that after the Second World War many women's tasks on passenger liners were replaced by the Goanese illustrates the interchangeability of women and black people as a source of cheap labour in the maritime industry.⁷⁷⁸ As will be shown, sexual and racial harassment frequently occurred onboard, and women and black men (there is no evidence of black women being employed on British merchant marine) were most vulnerable.

In the sea cook's profession race and gender notions interact in many interesting ways. On American ships, the cook was often a black man. According to Martha Putney, blacks were working in positions on ships that white people had turned down *and the job of cook was one of them. Black children, both slaves and free, worked as waiting boys, cabin boys and cook's apprentices before the Civil War.*⁷⁷⁹ Especially from the mid-nineteenth century onwards blacks were increasingly classified in feminine roles by whites.⁷⁸⁰ Laura Tabili pays attention to the gender distinctions in the all-male workplace. The personal services performed by wives at home are unpaid, being facilitated by a male breadwinner, whose 'skill' brings home the money. Men who do 'women's' work, by contrast, may be seen as weak, effeminate or homosexual.⁷⁸¹ Frank T. Bullen writes of stewards: 'Every seaman feels a certain kind of a disdainful sense of a superiority towards them. He can never get quite rid of *the feeling that they are menials.*'⁷⁸² Judith Fingard notes that stewards, cooks and black crewmembers in general were particularly vulnerable to mistreatment and violence on board ships. They were at great risk of being attacked by the crewmembers and the captain alike.⁷⁸³ Margaret S. Creighton has reached a similar conclusion in her study of American sailors in the nineteenth century: the most violent punishments were inflicted on black stewards and cooks by the ship masters.

⁷⁷⁷ See, for example, Creighton, 'American Mariners and the Rites of Manhood', p. 151; Tabili 'A Maritime Race', pp.172-173; Bolster, *Black Jacks*, p. 176.

⁷⁷⁸ Nelson French notes that women in the purser's department and laundries were replaced by the Goanese in 1960's in the P&O. French, p. 769.

⁷⁷⁹ Martha S. Putney, *Black Sailors. Afro-American Merchant Seamen and Whalemens Prior to the Civil War* (New York, 1987), p. 31.

⁷⁸⁰ Bolster, 'Every Inch a Man', p. 168.

⁷⁸¹ Tabili (1996), pp. 172-173.

⁷⁸² Bullen, *Men of the Merchant Service*, p. 179.

⁷⁸³ Fingard, *Jack in Port*, p. 172.

Furthermore, the crewmembers accepted black men only in positions that were subordinate to every one else.⁷⁸⁴

Cooks and stewards were also often black on British ships. Lascar and Chinese seamen were to be found as cooks, especially on ships trading to the east. Racial segregation between the three main occupational groups (deck, engine and catering departments) was also much evident on British ships. Laura Tabili has revealed how each job carried a status as manly or menial and how they often followed racial lines. The less a 'man's work' was at stake, the more often black men were likely to perform that task. White men dominated deck crews on most shipping lines, since it was regarded as a real seaman's work.⁷⁸⁵ Different shipping companies favoured diverse nationalities in their catering department, although Cunard preferred British and other European staff.⁷⁸⁶ P&O, which employed Indians in the catering department, repeatedly reported violent incidents occurring between British and non-European stewards, as well as between female and male members of the department. Usually the white male stewards were reported for physical attacks against the Indian and the female workforce, even though their behaviour was equally aggressive against their superiors, especially when drunk. A bedroom steward was transferred to another ship after striking a stewardess in 1933.⁷⁸⁷ An assistant steward was logged for assaulting a Goanese in 1934. He could not 'understand why he was not allowed to strike natives'.⁷⁸⁸ Some stewards were reported as having been unwilling to work with the Goanese.⁷⁸⁹ A violent incident occurred on the Allan Lines' steamship *Mongolian* in 1891. Whether the case was about sexual harassment, we do not know, but the argument must have been serious, since the leading stewardess fired at the purser with a revolver on the way from Montreal to Liverpool. *The Times* reported that when the shot missed the purser, the stewardess fired again, the bullet striking his body. Furthermore, she fired a third time, before the purser got the gun away from the stewardess. The story does not tell what

⁷⁸⁴ Margaret S. Creighton, *The Private Life of Jack Tar. Sailors at Sea in the Nineteenth Century*. Boston University. Unpublished PhD thesis (1985), pp.99-101.

⁷⁸⁵ Tabili, *We Ask for British Justice*, p.48.

⁷⁸⁶ Dataset 1861-1938.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁸ NMM. P&O 77/32. Other such attacks against the Indian workforce were reported in the same volume. Steward's Register 1929-1932.

⁷⁸⁹ NMM. P&O 77/32. Steward's Register 1929-1932.

happened to the stewardess and the seriously injured purser, although both left the ship after its arrival in Liverpool.⁷⁹⁰

The complete sample of the certificates of competency issued to ship's cooks in 1922 shows that 15 per cent of the certificates were issued to men born overseas, of whom the majority came from Hong Kong and China (24 cooks). The next biggest groups were Europeans (18) and Indians (9).⁷⁹¹ In 1902, a quarter of the pupils of the North Shields Nautical Cookery School were foreigners. The Superintendent of the school was 'sorry to say we have so many foreigners, and they are so large a number of foreigners employed on British ships, that we must have them, and they make better pupils than a Britisher'.⁷⁹² There were also many Asiatic students in the London Nautical Cookery School, which justified the high intake of foreigners in its reports by the big demand for certified cooks in 1908. For example, in November 1908 nine of the 24 pupils were Asiatics.⁷⁹³

Women were hardly ever to be found as cooks on foreign-going British vessels, even if by 1901 the majority of non-domestic cooks ashore were women. In 1911 of 23,874 non-domestic cooks 13,538 were women and they also performed most of the cooking in the households.⁷⁹⁴ Sometimes, however, young girls were to be found as cooks on small river and coasting vessels where only family members were employed.⁷⁹⁵ Nevertheless, women were active in the training of sea cooks. The superintendent of the North Shields Cookery School was a woman, Miss E. E. Bell. The London cookery school's examiner was a woman, Miss Whitby.⁷⁹⁶

In the absence of women, men who performed domestic duties were described in female metaphors and their masculinity was often under question. Jan de Hartog, a seafarer, writes about sea cooks:

⁷⁹⁰ *The Times*, 19 November 1891, p. 9.

⁷⁹¹ Of 521 certificates issued in 1922, 82 of them were born overseas. NMM. X97/052. Cooks certificates, 1915-1958.

⁷⁹² BPP 1903. The evidence of Mrs E. E. Bell, q. 15182. LXII.

⁷⁹³ NMM. SAH 63/1. London Nautical Cookery School archives. 'Visiting Comments and Notes'.

⁷⁹⁴ Censuses of England and Wales, 1901 and 1911. Occupation Tables.

⁷⁹⁵ In a 45-tonnage river vessel, *Industry*, a 10-year girl was employed as a ship's cook. There were only four people employed, who appear to be members of the same family. LRO. Census 1881.

Enumerator's Books. Shipping Schedules. No. 3618.

⁷⁹⁶ NMM. SAH 63/2. Minutes of the London Nautical Cookery School 11.1.1917.

For some people, the cooks are the most unpleasant members of the ship. One could call them mothers of the ships or housewives; the feminine element is dominant. It is not only the messing around with pots and pans, the talking about menus while tossing back imaginary curls, it is the gossip and the superstition that give every sea-cook this touch of femininity. After some time the young sailor may even come to the conclusion that his cook is a pansy. This is rarely the case. It is just that the job has left its indelible imprint on the man.⁷⁹⁷

Catering was gendered as feminine even if white men did it and they were stigmatised and treated as less masculine: perhaps therefore they have also been ignored as a group by maritime historians. It was universally agreed that the stewards ranked at the bottom of this informal status hierarchy, while the deckhands usually were accorded the higher standing.⁷⁹⁸ There is strong evidence to suggest, that homosexuality among stewards was a much-discussed subject on shipboard communities, by women and men alike. It seems that stewards were more suspected of having homosexual qualities than other crewmembers, since their work was regarded as feminine, implying that homosexuals were seen as less masculine. Violet Jessop claims in her memoirs, that stewards were disliked by other crewmembers for their alleged feminine qualities, such as their passivity. She wrote about a fifth engineer: 'I found he hated stewards unreasonably. There was something vital about him that rebelled against their passivity. He despised their cupidity, their lack of manliness, their submissiveness, and that they mostly subsisted on tips brought forth his bitterest scorn.'⁷⁹⁹

Maida Nixson offers further references to homosexual feminine stewards, 'Sheilas', and the negative attitudes towards them on board liners.⁸⁰⁰ In her opinion, the homosexual activities of stewards were exaggerated, because '... the dearth of women persuades many others to let pansydom be thrust upon them'.⁸⁰¹ The frequency of homosexuality is difficult to measure from historical documents, due to the secrecy surrounding homosexuality. I have only found one piece of factual

⁷⁹⁷ Jan de Hartog, *A Sailor's Life* (London, 1956), p. 54.

⁷⁹⁸ Bruce Nelson, 'Focs'le and Sailortown: The Life, Work and Subculture of Merchant Seamen' *Workers on the Waterfront. Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s.* (Urbana and Chicago, 1990), p. 31.

⁷⁹⁹ Jessop, *Titanic Survivor: The Memories of Violet Jessop, Stewardess*, p. 65.

⁸⁰⁰ Nixson, *Ring Twice for the Stewardess*, p. 32.

evidence of homosexual activities occurring amongst stewards. An official letter from the purser of *Arabia* to Mr Roche in the P&O office reveals an 'indecent insult' having occurred during a trip from Bombay to Aden in 1904. A steward was accused by another of trying to have sex with him while sleeping next to him in the forecabin. Because the purser did not have proof, he reported the incidence unofficially. The purser continues, however, 'I think it only right to mention, that it has been reported to me that Mr X [SM] was guilty of attempting the same thing when he was in the *Oceanic* and when I taxed him with it he did not deny it.'⁸⁰²

The stewards were regarded as effeminate also because their work (as women's work in general) was regarded as relatively unskilled. Stewards' work was not seen as endorsing their masculinity, and therefore women were allowed to join their department. On the contrary, catering jobs, like cooking, which succeeded in professionalisation, were reserved for men.⁸⁰³ On passenger liners, where cooking had become a great asset for shipping companies, the allegations against the cooks' 'pansyness' stopped. The cooks' and chefs' applications to the British Steam Navigation Company reveal them as having an average of 19 years' seafaring experience behind them. Only 11 per cent had *less* than ten years' sea experience. The definition of work and skill accompanying the shift from sail to steam was at the same time gendered, racialised and politicised.⁸⁰⁴ Furthermore, Elliot J. Gorn emphasises that the presence of a working-class male 'oppositional culture that defined itself against domesticity' was very much evident on board ships.⁸⁰⁵ Gorn also argues that the mythology associated with seafaring was a typical expression of masculinity. Nowadays boys relate their masculinity to footballers or rock stars, a century or two ago their idol was the mythical, virile and unattached seafarer. According to Gorn, 'Jack the Sailor' and other legends were fascinating because they represented a masculine world in which women and everything connected to the

⁸⁰¹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰² NMM. PRO 77/15. Steward's Register 1891-1894. Letter from the Purser to Mr Roche onboard *Arabia*, Marseilles, 12 November 1904.

⁸⁰³ The Merchant Shipping Act of 1906 called for the registration of cooks which began in 1908. Cooks could obtain their certificates as a result of examination (Certificates of Competency) or by exemption due to long service (Certificates of Service). A sample collected comprising of all the certificates issued in 1921 and 1922 (1141 individuals) shows that they were 100 per cent men. NMM. X97/052. Cooks certificates, 1915-1958.

⁸⁰⁴ Tabili, *A Maritime Race*, p.169.

domestic world were nowhere to be seen. Perhaps one of the reasons men went to sea was to escape the territory of women, which was synonymous with home. The women's role in seafaring, especially in the era of sails, was in the first place that of providing service to the sailors; as prostitutes, as founders of seamen's homes, or in the seamen's mission movement.

By focusing on the *intersection* of several factors (class, gender, ethnicity), we can study linkages between systems of oppression that are too often treated as discrete and independent.⁸⁰⁶ Also, the gendered nature of seafaring has too often been taken for granted.⁸⁰⁷ Furthermore, it was long forgotten that it is possible to discuss gender even if focusing on male-dominated communities: the study of gender is not identical to the study of women. Sailors' masculinity varied and could take on more feminine attributes even in a single-sex group. Creighton has shown how male stewards and cooks provided domestic relief - the 'wifely' tasks of housekeeping and cooking- for the master and the officers.⁸⁰⁸ Therefore, we can think of the men of the catering department as having possessed female roles and represented feminine gender in the shipboard community.

New passenger acts in the mid-nineteenth century concerning emigrants represented new ideas in passenger shipping. Particularly the separation of sexes and the idea of pure and virtuous conditions on board passenger liners became the ultimate aim of the legislators. Furthermore, the accelerating competition between the liners increased travelling conditions of the general public. The development of passenger shipping created more service jobs at sea and therefore more employment for women. The formal employment of women at sea was almost exclusively concentrated on passenger liners over the period as the separation of sexes on board made the employment of women a necessity. The development of passenger shipping institutionalised women's formal employment at sea. However, their role remained very restricted on shipboard communities, women's functions arising from their role in society ashore. Their first and foremost function was to attend the passengers,

⁸⁰⁵ Elliott J. Gorn, 'Seafaring Engendered, A Comment on Gender and Seafaring' *International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. IV, No. 1 (1992), p.225.

⁸⁰⁶ Judith M. Bennett, 'Feminism and History' *Gender and History* Vol. I, No.3 (1989), p. 257.

⁸⁰⁷ Gorn, 'Seafaring Engendered', p. 220.

⁸⁰⁸ Creighton, 'Women and Men in American Whaling', p. 204.

especially to take care of the women and children. The attitudes towards women's employment in general also reflected their employment on board. Only single, unmarried or widowed women were employed on British passenger liners. They differed from their male counterparts also in age: women on British passenger liners were considerably older than their male counterparts.

It does not seem that women went to sea only out of economic necessity, but the maritime background influenced their decisions. Their career choice was, to a certain extent, inherited. Even if the sea did not introduce remarkable career prospects for women, nor were they on offer onshore. Women seemed to like the sea life, since it also offered a reasonable income and a chance to see the world.

The physical separation of sexes and a certain uneasiness concerning women's presence on board limited their liberty and role at sea. Therefore, their numbers remained small and their employment opportunities and career prospects limited. *Women's position remained subordinate to men's.* Within catering personnel, women gained some status as leading stewardesses and head laundresses but always within the female context. Throughout the period, women crew's occupational status was to offer comfort, moral guidance and protection for women from male passengers. Women on board British vessels were seen as a necessary evil, but not as a major threat (as were foreigners) to the British men's employment before the Second World War.

8. Conclusion

This thesis has located catering personnel in the context of seafaring labour. It has done so by presenting their working conditions as unique to seafaring by pointing out the factors that made their work different from shore-based employment. Equally importantly, the thesis has stressed how exceptional their position was among seafarers, especially in terms of working hours and wages. Earlier attempts to analyse the working conditions of seafarers have often resulted in generalisations because the position of catering personnel has not been adequately taken into consideration. This, in turn, has led to a distorted image of maritime labour, which this thesis has aimed to correct.

Catering personnel became an important group within the maritime labour force with the expansion of the passenger liner trade, and from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards they formed the majority of the workforce on passenger liners. Despite their numerical increase, however, the majority of the catering personnel remained in the lowest paid category of seafarers throughout the period under consideration, and their work was seldom highly regarded in terms of relative status within the seafaring community. A few members of the catering department managed to earn respectable sums of money or reached important positions as head stewards or chefs on the largest passenger liners. At the other end of the scale gangs of bell boys earned only half of the salary of adult male employees. They constituted the youngest group of workers on passenger liners, who performed a range of tasks, such as scrubbing the stairs, cleaning the ashes from fireplaces and waiting at the officers' tables. Legislation which restricted the employment of juveniles in other sectors of the economy, such as The Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act of 1920 and The Merchant Shipping Act of 1925, did not apply to catering personnel. In spite of trade union resistance, the employment of boy ratings increased during the period under consideration.

There was a consensus in the seafaring community that only sailors' work was regarded as valuable. The established hierarchy of a ship continued to reinforce the view that only sailors were real seafarers and that 'newcomers', such as members of the engineers'

department and the army of service personnel, were simply intruders, despite the fact that the cook had been a member of the crew from earliest times. A cook's work was regarded as unskilled. In the sailing ship era there was an assumption that the cook's work was a transient job on the way to becoming a sailor, i.e. to work on deck. In other words, time that a boy spent as a cook (or a cook's boy) served as an initiation or apprenticeship to seafaring.

It seems that many maritime labour historians have internalised this belief that the work of *cooks and stewards* was not an important contribution to seafaring, since catering staff have been virtually excluded from earlier historical accounts. This thesis argues that domestic-related service jobs were as important to seafaring as the tasks performed on deck and in the engine room. It is true that the complicated catering arrangements aboard ship were performed mainly behind the scenes and this fact alone has made the recognition of catering work difficult for both historians and the travelling public, simply because a smooth running service was almost by definition invisible. The thesis has aimed to demonstrate that work done in catering departments on board ship and the experiences of seafaring by catering staff should constitute an integral part of our understanding of the maritime labour force. From the end of the nineteenth century catering personnel have formed such a major part of the maritime workforce that without the inclusion of their experiences maritime historiography is far from complete.

This thesis has portrayed seafaring work as having been more versatile and complex than earlier historical accounts of maritime labour have indicated. Seafaring has often been associated primarily with outdoor work - steering ships, working with sails, climbing the rigging or generally standing against the wind in a storm. However, as demonstrated in this study, seafaring work in the steamship era also involved many other things. With increased technological change and the expansion of passenger traffic there was a significant shift in the structure of the maritime workforce and employment on steamships became more indoor-based than had previously been the case. Most seafaring tasks were performed inside the ship rather than on the deck, which was previously the case. In that sense, the work of catering personnel represents the changed

working conditions of the maritime labour as a whole. It is important to note, however, that the shift in employment patterns on board ship also reflected the growth in service occupations within the economy in general.

The maritime workforce was also a much more heterogeneous group in terms of working conditions than has been acknowledged. On passenger liners, in general, working patterns were more regular compared to tramps both in terms of the length of trips and fixed destinations. It was also easier for a seafarer to plan the periods spent at home and at work. However, the work of the catering personnel remained unstable, since their numbers, unlike other seafarers, varied according to the number of passengers. Their work was seasonal, with the summer and spring months being invariably best in terms of employment.⁸⁰⁹ As a result, career stability and predictability was remarkably lower for the catering personnel than for other groups of seafarers on passenger liners, although their working patterns were still more regular than those seafarers who worked on sailing ships and steam tramps and they also suffered from inferior conditions and pay. This thesis has shown how the maritime workforce was segregated hierarchically in terms of nationality and ethnicity. The best paid trades, such as the north-Atlantic passenger trade, were reserved for white British or European seafarers. The recruitment of catering personnel was extremely local, which demonstrates the relative ease of obtaining crew in contrast to sailing ships which used foreigners often willing to work for lower wages than British seafarers. Steamship crews were generally regarded as better; more sober, reliable and disciplined. However, these arguments were often used by ship owners to justify the low wages and employment of foreigners. During the technological transition from sail to steam, seafaring labour underwent a fundamental change. The degree of hierarchical segregation became far more extensive, both between and within individual categories of crew. The new sections of the crew, namely the engineers' department and the catering personnel, struggled to be recognised as 'proper' seafarers. The deck department, in contrast, was the highest in the inner hierarchy of a ship, especially in

⁸⁰⁹ See Table 2.13.

terms of masculinity. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century the new elements of seafaring labour outnumbered the deckhands.

With the catering personnel now seriously rehabilitated as seafarers, the principles of pay and hours of work of the maritime labour force start appearing as more intricate and diverse. Stewards were exceptional workers compared to the land-based working population and other seafarers, in the sense that they had no official working hours. The custom of working them exceptionally hard would have been impossible without the *prospect of high tips as a means of supplementing low wages*. However, within the seafaring community as a whole there was an ambiguous attitude towards the practice of tipping. On the one hand, there was plenty of jealousy over stewards' tips and, on the other, a sense of deep repugnance. The custom of working for tips was regarded as unmanly and 'unseamanlike': it was symptomatic of class-dependency and an expression of snobbish behaviour. However, the low status assigned to the role of catering personnel reflected the seafarers' attitude towards service work in general. Since service-related tasks had strong class and gender connotations, it was not regarded as a proper man's job in terms of independence and pride. Moreover, the gendering of tasks on board ship was an integral element in the hierarchical structuring of maritime labour. This was an especially important aspect in the maritime community, since seafaring had traditionally been very highly rated in terms of masculinity. In such an explicitly manly environment feminine tasks used to be allocated to those who were not regarded as *potential competitors for 'dangerous' men's jobs*, such as climbing the rigging. The catering personnel could be said to have carried such a stigma throughout the period under consideration, even if other jobs, such as that of a sailor or engineer, had also changed fundamentally and lost some of their masculine status.

On passenger liners catering facilities became more ambitious and both stewards and cooks were better trained than before. Catering, therefore, became a career for many seafarers. By choosing a career on passenger liners, a boy had a chance to become a true catering professional, earn more than on tramps and to have a more respectable career. The rhythm of work would be more regular, he would be wearing a uniform and enjoy

more civilised accommodation and living conditions than on tramps. However, it was not easy to obtain work on large passenger liners because of the general perception that wages were good and most of the catering personnel were either experienced seafarers or had solid experience of similar work on land.

Parental and family background also played an important part in the career choice of staff employed in the catering department, whether as bellboys or stewardesses. On some liners it was practically impossible to obtain employment without a reference and most seafarers' testimonies suggest that many applicants were recommended by their parents or by *other close relatives who were already employed by the same shipping line*.

The career patterns of the catering work force were also different and more complicated than those of the other seafarers. Their career was characterised by excessive casual employment and therefore constant negotiation over jobs. Work contracts were signed separately for each individual trip and therefore a good position on one trip did not guarantee a similar position on the next trip, especially if better candidates were available in port. In terms of structure and hierarchy, the distinction between ratings and officers was further complicated by the internal division within passenger classes. The principle of seniority was a crucial factor in the division of labour into skilled and unskilled. Workers had their place in the hierarchy and were paid accordingly. Work processes were divided into sub-sections: for example, three bakers might have been involved in baking the bread and several specialist cooks might have been involved in preparing one dish. Pay was adjusted according to the individual's place in the production process, in which all tasks were judged by the different levels of skill that they required. Assistant cooks who would be peeling the potatoes were paid less than a sauce cook, for example, since preparing various sauces was regarded as requiring a higher level of skill. By breaking down the work processes into distinct tasks the employers succeeded in reducing wage costs.

Weather conditions at sea and the extremely cramped living and working conditions made the work of caterers on board very different from that of their counterparts in hotels or restaurants on land. The rhythm of work on board ship and the lack of family life also gave maritime employment a distinctive flavour. However, the organisation of work on board became increasingly controlled by land-based authorities, particularly as the control of ship owners increased over time. Supervision and management also became increasingly effective due to the increasing size of the workplace and new ideas of work organisation. For example, Taylorist ideas of scientific work organisation were adopted by many large companies, such as Cunard, by the 1920s. This led to an increased sub-division of tasks, job fragmentation and heavier workloads. When ships became larger with a concomitant increase in the size of the catering personnel, extended hierarchies and complex organisational structures were created. Cunard, for example, increased the number of managers substantially. When business was depressed in the interwar period, the shore-based management became increasingly interested in reducing the workforce on board ship. Catering departments, in particular, became a target group, which meant that their work became much more strenuous. Simultaneously, performance-related pay was introduced in the form of bonuses. More complex, multifarious levels of control were created to supervise work processes in other major industries, but maritime discipline, which had its origins in the Navy and was based on various shipping acts, remained dominant on passenger liners. The high levels of discipline were partly due to the shipping lines' concern over their reputation and the tightening competition between passenger liner companies.

The 1849 and 1852 Passenger Acts represented new ideas in passenger shipping. They reflected, in particular, the intention of legislators to guarantee the existence of suitably moral conditions onboard passenger liners with clear separation of the sexes. Furthermore, accelerating competition between the liner companies made travelling conditions much better. These new Acts, as well as improved conditions for all the passengers, established the preconditions for the mass employment of catering personnel on passenger liners.

The need for trained catering personnel was acknowledged for the first time in the *Merchant Shipping Act of 1906*, but the development of passenger shipping made training vital in maritime catering. The training required of a ship's cook was too short to make a real difference to individual cooking skills. On passenger liners, on the contrary, both cooking and the level of service was so demanding that a long apprenticeship, a suitable training course or former experience in service or cooking was essential. Various courses were provided for this purpose, even if they were not obligatory. During the era, the period of training became longer, and more advanced courses were offered as the requirements of passenger shipping grew. In other words, rather than a concern for the seafarers' wellbeing, it was the requirements of first-class passengers on luxury liners that really boosted maritime catering. More skilled people were now required to serve the passengers and the quality of their training became increasingly important. The quality of service, not the speed of the ship, had become the most important criterion for selecting the right liner by the beginning of the twentieth century.

This thesis has also attempted to critically examine the effect of trade unions on the working conditions of the catering personnel. As far as the role of the National Union of Seamen was concerned, its policy towards the catering personnel places in doubt the assumption that trade unions, in general, have always sought to improve the working conditions of their members.

Prior to the Second World War the National Union of Seamen did not represent the majority of catering personnel. They either preferred representation by their own union, *the National Union of Ship's Stewards, Butchers and Bakers (NUSSCBB)*, or by rival organisations, such as the *British Seafarers' Union (BSU)*, to the NUS. Membership of the National Union of Seamen was only taken up by catering staff as a last resort. Catering personnel, however, were a key group in the struggle with ship owners for the eight-hour day. The working conditions of the catering personnel were also affected by

other factors, including the intervention of the state and a system of corporate bias.⁸¹⁰ The National Maritime Board (founded in 1917) which regulated British seafarers' working conditions during and after the First World War, was originally a tripartite organisation with representatives from the government, trade union and employers' associations. The National Union of Seamen soon gained practically sole representation in the Board. Joseph Havelock Wilson, the NUS leader, was supported by the ship owners partly on the understanding that he would aim to exclude British shipping from the principle of the eight-hour day. The NUS managed to replace the NUSSCBB with its own representatives on the catering panel, which meant that catering personnel on passenger liners (who formed the majority of membership in the NUSSCBB) were left without representation on the National Maritime Board. The existence and nature of the National Maritime Board (Wilson's union and the ship owners together) prevented interference from the International Labour Organisation, the Ministry of Labour and even the Board of Trade into seafarers' working conditions.

The catering department was the sector in seafaring in which women first gained formal employment opportunities. The general development of passenger shipping created more service jobs at sea and also employment opportunities for women. The formal employment of women was almost exclusively concentrated on passenger liners over the period under consideration, as the separation of sexes on board made the employment of women a necessity. Paradoxically, gender segregation was the factor that actually brought women to sea. The notion of different spheres (also in a physical sense on ships) brought stewardesses on board as women *passengers became more common*. However, their role remained very restricted in shipboard communities and their functions were derived essentially from their role in the family and society in general. The physical separation of the sexes and a certain unease concerning women's presence on board limited both their liberty and role at sea. As a result, their numbers remained relatively small and their employment opportunities and career prospects were limited. Throughout

⁸¹⁰ 'Corporate bias is a system which encourages the development of corporate structures to the point at which their power, divergent aims, and class characteristics can be harmonised, even if that harmony involves a partial loss of class distinction, individuality, and internal coherence.' Keith Middlemas,

the period, the occupational role of the female crew was to offer comfort, moral guidance and protection for women passengers.

Although commercialisation, modernisation and the decline in family-based forms of work organisation led to the loss of some of women's tasks, they also provided new forms of female employment. On the one hand, modern society developed the concept of women's work, which enforced the gender segregation in the labour market.⁸¹¹ On the other hand, the arrival on board of large-scale domestic tasks, such as laundering and nursing created more employment opportunities for women. Laundry work and nursing, which were gendered as feminine, became increasingly important with the development of steam and passenger shipping. The association of these tasks with women was not new in maritime culture and the perceived correlation between women's work and domesticity had wider implications for the low status of catering personnel amongst maritime labour.

Contemporary attitudes towards women's employment in general were also reflected in their maritime role. Only single, unmarried or widowed women were employed on British passenger liners. They also differed from their male counterparts in age, as the female catering staff on British passenger liners were considerably older than their male counterparts. It does not seem that women went to sea only out of economic necessity. Their decision to go to sea, in many cases, was influenced by a maritime background and, to this extent, their career choice was inherited. Even if the sea did not offer women remarkable career prospects, this was equally the case in relation to land-based job opportunities. Women seemed to like the sea life, since it offered a reasonable income and a chance to see the world. Women's employment patterns at sea remained relatively unchanged over the period. They did not find employment opportunities outside the catering department: nor did they gain supervisory positions. It was possible for a

Politics in Industrial Society (London, 1978), cited in Wrigley, 'Labour and Trade Unions in Great Britain', p. 2.

⁸¹¹ Gertjan de Groot and Marlou Schrover, 'Introduction' in Gertjan de Groot and Marlou Schrover (eds.), *Women Workers and Technological Change in Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (London, 1995), p. 12.

woman to gain a team leader position as a leading stewardess; nevertheless, even in this position no authority over men was granted to her.

The complete analysis of the catering personnel would have benefited from a more comparative approach to other elements of the maritime labour force. More comparisons could be made between crew on different trades, between catering personnel on passenger liners and tramps, as well as between different departments on passenger liners. Due to the size of the crews and the long period analysed, a comparative method was impossible within the time available. A more in-depth comparison between crews in the sailing ship and steamship era would also be an interesting approach. Due to the chosen methodology, it was impossible to follow the career patterns of individual seafarers systematically, something which could provide another interesting insight into the working lives of catering personnel.

The approach to maritime labour adopted in this study, however, offers a corrective to most earlier accounts, since catering personnel and their working conditions have been mostly ignored. No academic studies, to date, have concentrated solely on the catering personnel. The present study on the catering personnel inevitably reflects broader patterns of change in the shipping industry within the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the 1930s, including technological change and its impact on the maritime workforce in terms of labour market segmentation, the shift to the service sector, and female maritime employment. All these issues have been tackled before in maritime history, but not from the perspective of a rapidly increasing workforce, such as the catering personnel on passenger liners, whose increasing role onboard ship effectively reflects many of the underlying structural changes in the maritime labour market.

Note on Dataset 1861-1938

The catering personnel dataset consists of a sample of Cunard employees from 1861 to 1938 derived from the Crew Lists and Agreements. First, data on Cunard's ship and voyages during the years ending with a 1 were collected to form the SHIP and VOYAGE files outlined below. Second, all the available data on catering personnel working on the first voyage of the years sampled was entered into the CREW file. The core data, called 'Dataset 1861-1938' is therefore a database comprising three main components, 'ship', 'voyage' and 'crew'.

There were some difficulties in locating all the crew agreements of the ships active in the sample years. The Crew Agreements have been scattered in various archives and some have not survived. However, the amount of ships whose voyages and crew could not be identified was relatively small, as can be seen in the following table. For example, using the method explained above, in 1861 the Crew Agreements analysed in depth (the first voyage of the year) included 471 members of the catering department. In that year, 23 ships were identified as active and made 83 voyages during the year. However, the Crew Agreements of five ships that were identified as being active in 1861 were not located.

The size of the Dataset 1861-1938

Year	Catering personnel	Voyages	Ships	Ships not found
1861	471	83	23	5
1871	412	136	30	10
1881	446	121	28	8
1891	495	118	24	8
1901	348	78	17	7
1911	2762	109	25	7
1921	2781	85	21	2
1931	2963	102	25	8
1938	2863	83	21	8

Overall, database includes details of 13,541 seafarers and 915 records of the trips they made. In addition of recording all the information on catering personnel on the first voyage of the year, general information on other voyages, such as the crew size by departments, dates of departure and arrival and routes, have been recorded. In the following section, the content of each variable is explained and possible problems revealed regarding information as displayed in crew agreements.

1. Ship- file:

This consists of the following 15 variables:

Number. The official number of the ship.

Name. The name of the ship.

Years. Years in which the ship had been active.

Renamed. If the ship has had another name before or after being owned by Cunard.

Type. Wheel/Paddle/Single Screw/Twin Screw/ Triple Screw etc...

Vessel. Passenger/cargo/tender. A slight problem in this case was that it was sometimes difficult to identify exactly whether a ship carried passengers or not on a particular trip.

Gross Tonnage. The information on gross tonnage varies slightly according to the source. The crew agreements often reveal different gross tonnage than Bonsor and Haws. Exact tonnage measurement was not crucial to this project and therefore much effort was not devoted to resolving minor discrepancies and data provided by Bonsor has been used.

Passengers. Number of passengers carried in different classes. The problem in this case is that information about the number of passengers the ship carried is difficult to find. The information I have is taken from Bonsor or Haws, when it has been available. The numbers could also change due to re-fitting etc.

Crew. Number of people employed onboard. The number of the crew, as discussed in chapter 2, varied considerably, depending on the number of passengers on a particular journey. This is important in itself, since it affected the stability of employment and the working conditions of an individual seafarer. Later in the period the Crew Agreements begin to specify the number of sailors for which the accommodation was certified, but these figures were not equivalent to the crew actually employed.

The remaining fields are self-explanatory:

Built.

Registration Date.

Port of Registry.

Source Location.

Miscellaneous source location.

Miscellaneous ship. Other information regarding the ship

2. Voyage-file:

This consists of the following eight variables:

Number. Official number of the ship.

Name. Name of the ship.

From. Port of Departure.

To. Port of Destination. The exact route of a voyage was not always recorded. In crew agreements, the port where the voyage commences and the port where the vessel returned is revealed. Often the information on the ship's route in an agreement is vague: it perhaps tells that an agreement is made, for example, to any port in the North Atlantic or to any port in the Mediterranean or Black Sea. There are often, however, other means to find out the destination, as the consular office where the crew agreements were deposited after arriving in foreign ports stamped the agreement. Sometimes the ports a ship visited can be ascertained by checking the places where members of crew signed on, discharged or deserted.

Date of Departure.

Date of arrival.

Crew ratio. I have aimed to calculate the ratio between catering personnel, engineering department and deck department on winter, spring, summer and autumn voyages. Sometimes, though, all year round information was not available or the ships were only active at certain times of the year. Often, especially from the 1920s onwards, the ships were cruising and stayed on a voyage for most of the year, so calculations of seasonal variations have not been possible. Later on, when the size of catering departments grew, I

recorded a more detailed breakdown of the catering personnel calculating how many worked in the pursers', stewards' and cooks' sections. The data are also problematic, since the crew ratio has been counted at the moment a ship sailed out, i.e. normally at the beginning of a trip. Crew who joined in a foreign port after the journey had begun have not been counted. Also those crewmembers who did not sail, even if they had signed on, have been left out. Consistency with this principle was important, otherwise the relative numbers of crewmembers in each department would have been distorted, as well as the differences between seasons. This method meant that those crewmembers who signed on in foreign ports- and sometimes were discharged there- have not been counted in the crew ratios. However, the crew ratio at the moment of departure is a very good indicator of the average crew size during different periods, since the crew, and especially the catering personnel, were hired on a basis of passenger numbers.

Miscellaneous. In this field, miscellaneous information on ships' voyages was collected as well as the availability of a log book for that particular voyage. If anything else unusual occurred during the voyage (such as a high desertion rate) it was recorded in this section.

3. Crew-file:

This consists of the following 18 variables:

Number. Number of the vessel

Name. Name of the vessel

Seafarer's name. Surname, Firstname. I have recorded the names from the years 1861-1901. Some names, such as women's, have been recorded throughout the period. Names are problematic in terms of clarity. First of all, they are difficult to read since most of them are signatures; secondly, several versions of spelling exist.

Seafarer's Number. The official number given to each seafarer enables us to follow their career patterns, although such research is very labour intensive. The numbers are recorded from 1921 onwards in my sample. I have concentrated on only a few groups of people in the systematic collection of their official numbers, namely bedroom stewards, ship's cooks, bellboys, women in general and some senior positions. For the purposes of this study, a systematic follow-up of catering personnel's career patterns was not made.

The construction of the database does not allow the tracing of an individual's career pattern from one ship to another.

Gender. Female or Male.

Age. This information seems to be very inconsistent and unreliable. People's ages as they appeared on crew agreements could vary considerably.

Place of Birth. Usually town or county recorded. The inconsistency in recording this information is regretted since the complete analysis of place of birth was not possible. A slight confusion also occurred because several towns had the same name. The reliability of this data is questionable, since knowledge that shipping companies favoured local people in recruitment might have encouraged applicants to give false information on their place of birth. If the person was not British, this field simply stated their nationality. The problem with this information as it appeared in the agreements is that it was difficult to read. Sometimes it was impossible to locate or interpret the given place name. Also the information was inconsistent, e.g. often the actual town has been given as the place of birth, at other times only the county. I have classified the raw data into countries, such as English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, born in a colony or overseas. If the birthplace was within Great Britain, the information was arranged in counties and analyzed accordingly.

Address. The Crew Agreements started recording seafarer's addresses from 1894 onwards, so they appear in this sample from year 1901 onwards. I have only recorded the area where the person lived, but have a sample of exact addresses of the 1901 sample. The street names were problematic since they were difficult to read. The street names are also difficult to locate because they involve many towns and cities and changed over time.

Ship last served. The name of the ship previously served or "1st voyage" if a person had no previous ships. This information available in crew agreements is very useful, since it allows us to trace a seafarer's career patterns even if only one ship is known. The number of first trippers on a particular trip, trade or company is interesting since it often reveals the wage level and status of a particular trade or a shipping company.

Discharged from the previous ship. Gives the year, except the crew agreements in 1861, which give the exact date. This gives information on the ratio of free time to time of duty. Unfortunately, later years only reveal the year.

Signed on this ship. Not necessarily the date of joining the ship, or the date of starting a job on board. Signing on usually happened a few days before the actual start of work, sometimes at the end of a previous voyage and before a few days' holiday. The joining date was normally the date of departure.

Rank. In Crew Agreements very specifically stated, for example 2nd Assistant extra cook. For analysis, the information was somewhat simplified. The difficulty in analyzing this data was the different principle in recording the ranks over time. In some years information regarding job titles was extremely unspecific: for example, in some years all the stewards were called waiters.

Left this ship. Date and Place of Discharge, desertion, transfer, leaving sick or death at sea. As mentioned earlier, a person who failed to join or deserted before ship's departure, has been left out of the sample.

Wages. Monthly, weekly or daily salary. If catering personnel's and other departments' wages have been compared and catering personnel have been on weekly pay, their pay has been multiplied by four. It is not the most accurate method, but the only feasible way to compare their wages.

ARCHIVAL SOURCES

University of Liverpool, Special Collections

The Cunard Archives:

Board of Directors Papers

B12 Conference on hours of labour at sea, 1919-1920, and International Labour Conference, 1946.

Chairmen

Correspondence and associated papers of Chairmen:

C1 Sir Alfred Booth (chairman, 1909-1922)

C2 Sir Thomas Royden (chairman, 1922-30)

C3 Sir Percy Bates (chairman, 1930-46)

Company Secretary's Papers

S7 Files re. *Mauretania*, *Lusitania*, *Laconia*, *Franconia*, *Aquitania*, *Andania* and *Alaunia*, 1903-1915.

Accounts Department

AC8 Ledgers (agency accounts, voyage accounts, revenue accounts, etc.), 1878-1938

AC12 Abstracts of accounts of voyages and summaries of voyage results, 1880-1938

AC14 Transfer cases: correspondence, accounts, reports, etc. regarding various subjects, 1886-1938

General Manager's Office

GM1 Ship Movement Books, 1889-1938

GM6 Ship's Abstract journals for *Servia*, 1891-3, and *Umbria*, 1893-1903

GM7 Staff Registers, c.1880-1930

GM9 Requisition for War Service, 1930-45.

GM14 Various Ship's Records

GM20 Staff wages books, passenger agreements, ships descriptions, etc., 1857, 1902-42.

GM21 Voyage and cruise reports, copies of agreements and press cuttings, 1937-45; comparisons of rates of pay of crews on six Cunard passenger liners 1914-1932.

GM24 Instructions

GM23 Lists, notes and wage registers of staff, 1891-1926.

Public Relations Department

PR1 Albums of photographs of ships, portraits of captains, subsidiary industries, and of postcard reproductions of ships, etc 1880s-1965.

- PR2** Loose photographs of ships, captains, sea and shore staff, life onboard
PR3 Posters, leaflets, bulletins, general correspondence, notes etc.
PR4 Notes, press cuttings, information sheets, etc., on individual ships, ports, and directors and senior staff
PR5 Cunard Magazine 1918-1927
PR14 Ships Instructions; Captains Instructions, Chief Steward and Pursers Instructions 1913-58, Cunard Rules and regulations 1881-1927; and miscellaneous regarding seamen's accommodation etc., 1939-51.

Records of companies associated with the Cunard Company
ASC12 White Star Line

Miscellaneous

M6-7 Materials for a history of the company: seagoing staff rates of pay and manning scale and crew costs on several ships 1936-1950.

Cunard related archives deposited at Liverpool University archives

D302/7/1 Charles McIver's letter to F. A. Hamilton Esq., Liverpool 2 July 1853

D138 Papers of Charles McIver and his son: correspondence, legal papers, etc., 1841-1907

D173 Continuous Discharge Certificate Book of Edith Harriet Worrall, stewardess on *Baltic*.

D182 Photocopies of a diary kept by John Holme, a chemist from Kindal, who sailed from Liverpool to New York, via Queenstown, in 1871.

D626 National Union of Seamen papers regarding the Cunard Steamship Company: Correspondence, agreements, minutes, press cuttings, etc, 1959-90.

D650 Photocopies of memorandum from the Chief Steward from s.s. Pasteur and s. s. Murchie to the Superintendent Caterer

Liverpool City Record Office

Crew Lists and Agreements:

<i>Ship's name</i>	<i>Official No</i>	<i>Year</i>
Campania	102086	1901
Carmania	120901	1911
Catalonia	84126	1881
Franconia	131315	1911
Gallia	78837	1881
Ivernia	110643	1901,1911
Lucania	102105	1901
Russia	58312	1871
Saxonia	110648	1911

Scythia	71693	1881
Servia	84172	1891
Ultonia	109478	1901

Shipping Schedules of Liverpool 1881

The Maritime Archives and Library, Merseyside Maritime Museum, Liverpool

Ocean Archive, Blue Funnel Line:

6.C. Victualling Officers

6.C.1842 Service Records 1914-1957.

6.C.2213 Statistical details and staff details 1914-1966

7.B Passengers

7.B.2.1361 Passenger Advertising 1938

7.B.2.2229 "The New Century Cookery Book 1906"

7.B.3.45 Information for passengers. 1892

Cunard Plans:

E2

Cunard Ship plans:

15/1 Atlas

15/2 Marathon

24 Britannia

25 Calabria (First Cunard Mail ship)

32 China

3 Cuba

39/1 Hecla

39/2 Olympus

48 Malta

51 Morocco

54 Palestine

Parthia

58 Persia

67 Scotia

69 Siberia

Sylvania/Corinthia

Franconia

E2/7/2

The 1914 Cunarder R.M.S. Aquitania. Published by the Cunard Steam Ship company Limited.

Cunard Collection:

A.23 Black List Book No.9, 13.7.1929-1935, Catering Department. White Star ships.

DX- collection:

DX/231

Career Documents and photographs of Mary Scott, bath attendant for Cunard 1946-1967.

DX/313

Nautical Catering College Prospectus, c.1960's.

DX/753

Discharge Certificates of a Matron/Steward/Cook G. Fowler and Abigail Watson, 1913-1952.

DX/829

Twenty Certificates of Discharge of John Fleming, Steward, 1850-1880.

DX/835

Discharge book of Emily Jones, a Matron of Liverpool, 1912-1917.

DX/908

Diary of an emigrant from Liverpool to Australia on *Morning Light*, 1856.

DX/1046

Diary of Passenger Arthur Gollifer onboard "Nelson" from Liverpool to New Zealand, 1867.

DX/1050c

"How to Obtain Berths on the Large Liners"
A guide book published by Seale & Co, Stockport.

DX/1054/b

Cunard Line Company Contract of Joseph Aindow, Steward, 1935-1962.

DX/1055 a,b,c,d,e

Blythyn/Knill Collection

Robert William, Robert James and William Blythyn and George Knill were all born and lived at Bootle, Merseyside and were employed by the Cunard Line.

DX/1071/R

Voyage Diary of an Emigrant Sarah Stephens onboard *Cardigan Castle of Liverpool*, 1876-1877.

DX/1086

Certificate of Discharge papers of Margaret Davies 1888-1893.
Margaret Davies (1847-1919) worked at sea after her husband's death as a Matron and as a Stewardess.

DX/1093

Diary of Janet Sharpe (1863-1940), a passenger (lady's maid) aboard the S.S *Umbria* Liverpool to New York, and return voyage on the S.S *Campania*, 4 September- 17 October 1896.

DX/1097/2

Diary Letter from Mr William Midgey onboard *Grasmere*, 1899.

DX/1099

Manuscript account of a voyage from Liverpool to New York on *Servia* in 1884 by R.E.Walker.

DX/1128

Voyage Account of Anne Stephens, a Captain's wife, Aboard SS *Anselmada* Larrinaga from Eastham to Buenos Aires April-September, 1909.

DX/1166

Diary of Stewardess Rose Stott onboard ss *Samaria* World Cruise, 1923

DX/1201

Photo Book from a cruise 1924-32.
Photographs taken on RMSP *Araquaya* (Mediterranean Cruise) and on *Alcantra* (Cruising to South America)

DX/1231

Documents of Mary Scott
Comprises photographs of bath attendants and accounts of wages from years 1947-1964

DX/1242

Magazine *The Chief Steward and the Floating Hotel*, 1913

DX/1271

Certificate of Discharge belonging to Ship's Butcher, L. Jones, 1922

DX/1282.a

A letter from a passenger to Australia, 1882

DX/1282b

An Advert "Orient Line from London to Melbourne & Sydney"

DX/1301

Certificates of Discharge of Joseph Walsh, Steward on Canada route, 1911-1924

DX/1331

Sailor's letter to his wife from Hong Kong, 1878

DX/1359

Two Certificates of Discharge Books belonging to Albert Parr of Liverpool, served as a telephone boy on Lusitania, first class waiter on Ivernia & later as a Chief Steward, 1907-1924

DX/1389

Personal & Career Papers of Edward Maughan, served as a Steward and Purser, 1893-1949

DX/1481

Diary of a Voyage from Auckland, New Zealand, to Liverpool on "Phoenix". Recorded by passenger William Hodkinson, 1860

DX/1486

A xerox letter concerning the writer's emigration to Canada on SS Montclare, 1926

DX/1560

Voyage accounts relating to Anne Smith, Stewardess with Cunard Line 1921-1930.

Letters and diaries were sent to the family containing references to ports of call, *Laconia*, *Corinthia* and *Franconia*.

DX/1636

Book "Royal Baker & Pastry Cook" New York, 1912

DX/1670

Discharge Certificates of Edith Mary Williams

Edith Mary Williams was born in 1905 in Liverpool. She worked as a shop assistant on several passenger liners, 1926-1937

DX/1676

Diary of passenger William Culshaw Greenhalgh aboard the Marco Polo 1853

DX/1727

Letter from S. Vessey written onboard the first Cunard Iron Mail Steamer RMS Persia to his father in Lincolnshire, 1859

DX/1731

Diary of Robert Pendlebury, Emigrant to Australia onboard the SS Medic 1910

DX/1740

Three Photograph Albums of Harry Gregory, Steward, 1924-1960

DX/1875

Article from Cassels Magazine: A.G. Payne, "Cooking at Sea" 1885

SAS- collection:

SAS 23A/1/13

Discharge Certificates of Eliza Brown, Stewardess onboard City of Paris. Also notes on female seafarers, 1889

SAS 23A/2/7

The Discharge book of John Davies, Steward

SAS 23A/3/3

Continuous Certificates of Discharge of Daniel Callagher, Steward and photographs from WW1, 1918-1966

SAS 23A/12/4

Wage Accounts of 2nd Steward A. G. Warburton, 1894-1905

SAS 230/4/12

Richard Bond: *Sea Cookery*. Glasgow, 1917.

Bond was an instructor of the City of Liverpool Technical Education Committee, Cookery Classes for Seamen. Was also, at least in 1917, the head of Liverpool Technical School of Cookery

SAS 230/4/13

Alexander Quinlan & N.E. Mann: *Cookery for Seamen*. Liverpool, 1894

SAS 23A/6/1

Continuous Certificates of Discharge & National Union of Seamen Contribution Books plus other items of William Jackson, Steward on Transatlantic, 1912-1958

Other:

710. MAR/PM

Handbook of Employments in Liverpool. Ed. By F.J. Marquis. Liverpool, 1916.

Manx National Heritage Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man

Database comprised of Crew Agreements consisting details on 9, 800 catering personnel signed on ships in Douglas, Isle of Man, between 1863-1914. Derived from the CLIP project. Data collected by volunteers.

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

British India Steam Navigation Company:

BIS 30/38

Applicants to Steward's Department 1921

BIS 31/1

Service Regulations 1887

BIS 30/34-35

Stewards' Staff Afloat 1913-1927, 1927-1937.

Orient Steam Navigation Company:

OSN 24/1-3

Stewards. Report on character 1908-1913 (OSN 24/1) 1913-1925 (OSN 24/3) and 1926-1927 (OSN 24/2).

P & O (Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company):

P & O 10/10

Instructions to Pursers and Clerks in Charge on Board the Steamships of the Peninsular and oriental Steam Navigation Company. London, 1860.

Steward's Registers

P & O 77/12 1891-1894

P & O 77/15 1899-1901

P & O 77/19 1909-1911

P & O 77/23 1920-1924

P & O 77/26 1929-1931

P & O 77/30 1937-1939

London Nautical Cookery School, Part of the Sailors' Home archives:

SAH 5/4

Sailors' Home, letters sent in the 1910s

SAH 63/1

"Visiting Comments and Notes"

SAH63/2

"School of Cookery". Minutes from 10.8.1909-6.1.1938

SAH 58/3

"Classes for Ships' Stewards and Cooks. Held at the Nautical Training School for Ships' Stewards and Cooks."

Prospectus, 1936.

Crew Lists and Agreements:

Arranged by the official number of a ship

<i>Ship's name</i>	<i>Ship's number</i>	<i>Year</i>
America	1609	1861
Arabia	22347	1861
Asia	1284	1861
Atlas	28477	1861
Australasian	19492	1861
Balbec	1288	1861
British Queen	1540	1861
Canada	1285	1861
Europa	25943	1861
Kedar	28890	1861
Marathon	28220	1861
Melita	1891	1861
Niagara	7074	1861
Olympus	28216	1861
Persia	11523	1861
Stromboli	13532	1861

Other:

AHL H/8

Service documents of A. Thrower, butcher and a cook on the Navy and the Merchant Marine

BRA 128/9

Certificates of service including two cooks in the Navy, 1759-1820

JOD 94/1-7

The Diaries of Mrs Winifred Lloyd on *Herzogin Cecilie*, *Viking* and *Olivebank*

MSS/73/084

Discharge Certificates of William John Harris, the engineering officers' cook and steward

X97/052

The ship's cooks' certificates 1915-1958

Maritime Archives, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Canada

Crew Lists and Agreements:

Arranged by the official number of a ship

<i>Ship's name</i>	<i>Official Number</i>	<i>Year</i>
Abyssinia	63765	1871, 1881
Albania I	110797	1911
Albania II	143704	1921
Aleppo	50370	1881, 1891, 1901
Algeria	63784	1881
Atlas	28477	1871, 1881
Aurania I	87839	1891, 1901
Aurania III	147277	1931, 1938
Ausonia	145970	1931, 1938
Balbec	1288	1871, 1881
Bactria	160411	1931, 1938
Bantria	160500	1931, 1938
Batavia	63756	1871, 1881
Berengaria	144301	1921, 1938
Bosnia	160388	1931, 1938
Bothnia I	68094	1881, 1891
Bothnia II	160475	1931, 1938
Brescia	118021	1911, 1921
British Queen	1540	1871, 1881, 1891
Campania	102086	1911
Caria	131328	1911
Carinthia	147318	1931, 1938
Carmania	120901	1921, 1931
Caronia	120826	1911
Catalonia	84126	1891
China	50370	1871
Cuba	50357	1871
Cypria	109406	1901, 1921

Franconia	147216	1931
Gallia	78837	1891
Java	52626	1871
Kaiserin Auguste Victoria	144375	1921
Laconia	145925	1931, 1938
Lycia	106521	1911
Morocco	43696	1871, 1881
Malta	53378	1871, 1881
Marathon	28220	1881, 1891
Nemesis	20478	1871
Kedar	28890	1871, 1881, 1891
Olympus	28216	1881
Palmyra	53391	1871, 1881, 1891
Pannonia	118080	1921
Parthia	63797	1871
Pavia	106853	1921
Pavonia	86215	1891
Phrygia	110973	1911, 1921
Samaria I	60370	1871, 1881, 1891
Samaria II	145923	1931, 1938
Royal George	125643	1921
Saxonia	110648	1901, 1921
Servia	84172	1881, 1901
Scotia	43711	1871
Scythia I	71693	1891
Scythia II	143730	1921, 1931
Sidon	43687	1871, 1881
Stromboli	13532	1871
Tarifa	50378	1871, 1891
Thracia	109921	1911
Trinidad	67981	1891
Tyria	106870	1911, 1921
Ultonia	109478	1911
Verbania	141875	1921
Veria	110564	1901, 1911

Public Record Office, Kew

**Crew Lists and Agreements:
(arranged by the reference number in brackets)**

<i>Ship's name</i>	<i>Official Number</i>	<i>Year</i>
Africa	1821	1861 (BT99/4)
Aquitania	135583	1931 (BT100/357-358)
Caronia	120826	1921 (BT100/319-320), 1931 (BT100/334-335)

Carpathia	118014	1911 (BT100/155)
Etruria (BT 100/90),	91187	1891 (BT100/80),1901
Lancastria 1938 (BT 100/593)	145943	1931 (BT100/587-588),
Lusitania	124082	1911 (BT100/193-200)
Mauretania 1931 (BT100/587-588)	124093	1911 (BT100/226-231),
Palestine	21385	1861 (BT100/4)
Queen Mary	164282	1938 (BT100/572-573)

Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick

**National Union of Seamen (MSS.175 & MSS.175A):
MSS.175A is a later deposit and uncatalogued.**

MSS.175/6/AMW/1-6

National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers & Bakers
Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union: legal papers, 1926; publications, 1921-5

National Union of Ships' Stewards, Cooks, Butchers and Bakers: accounts, 1919; correspondence, 1910; Marine Caterer, 1910-11.

MSS.175/1/1/1-8

Minute books of the National Union of Seamen, 1887-1939.

MSS.175/1/7/1

Mass meeting of NUS members in Liverpool, 17 December 1921.

MSS.175/3/6/5

"Report of Speeches. Made by men who were supposed to be afraid to meet the Seamen. Delivered at a meeting of the whole crew of the *Mauretania*, held on the vessel at New York on Sunday 20th September 1925."

MSS.175/3/13/11

The Communist November 19, 1921.

MSS.175/5/3

The British Seafarer

MSS.175/5/34

The Marine Caterer, November 1921, Vol. XII, No.5.

MSS.175/6/JAR/8

Letters regarding the organising of stewards, 1938.

MSS.175/10/1

Newspaper cuttings 1903-1910.

MSS.175/10/5

Scrapbook

MSS.175/3/6/5

Report of speeches made by men who were supposed to be afraid to meet the Seaman. Delivered as a Meeting of the whole of the Crew of the *Mauretania* held on the vessel at New York on Sunday 20th September 1925.

MSS.175A/4

The Seaman 1908, 1912-90.

MSS.175A/4a.

Minutes of Proceedings of a Conference regarding wages in June 1925.

MSS.175A

'Reductions of Stewards' Wages'

MSS.175A.Box 118

Merchant Shipping Act 1906; Suggested Amendments and Proposed Merchant Shipping Act of 1944

MSS.175A/129

Run Agreements

MSS.175A/137

1899 Rules Revision Conference

MSS.175A/154

Memorandums regarding casual shore catering employees at Southampton

MSS.175A/154

Agreements between shipping companies and the National Union of Seamen concerning working conditions of catering personnel

MSS.175A/156

Agreements between shipping companies regarding catering personnel

MSS.175A/Box 200

Wages of Able Seamen and Firemen, 1920-1945.

National Maritime Board (MSS. 367/NMB):

MSS.367/NMB/1

Minutes of the full board and the catering panel 1920-1939.

The Shipping Federation (MSS.367/TSF):

Proceedings at General and Executive Council Meetings

MSS.367/TSF/1/2

February 1894-December 1896

May 1921- November 1923

May 1924-November 1926

May 1930-November 1932

May 1936-June 1945

General Purposes committee minutes

MSS.367/TSF/1/4/1-3

1890-1931

Legal and indemnity committee minutes

MSS.367/TSF/1/4/11

1907-1923

Compensation committee minutes

MSS.367/TSF/1/4/21

1907-1932

Manning Committee minutes

MSS.367/TSF/1/4/28-30

1913-1936

Printed Transactions of the Federation, committee agendas and reports

MSS.367/TSF/1/5

1893-1902

1920-1923

Trade Union Congress Archives (MSS.292):

MSS.292/655/3

Miscellaneous material relating to seafarers.

MSS.292/85/9

Rules, leaflets and the judgement of the NUS 1924 case against the Amalgamated Marine Workers' Union; the *Marine Worker* 1923-24,

MSS.292/655/91/1

Memoranda relating to the International Maritime conference in Geneva, 1929-30.

The British Library, Newspaper Library, Colindale

Marine Caterer, 1911-1921.

Southampton Record Office

Crew Lists and Agreements:

Ship's name	Official Number	Year
Ausonia	129735	1911
Ascania	131342	1911

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Reports with regarding to accommodation and treatment of emigrants on Atlantic Steamships. BPP 1881. 1881, LXXXII.

Tables showing the progress of British Merchant Shipping. BPP 1882, LXII, p.24.

Changes in rates of wages. Table showing the ordinary monthly rates of wages of Able Seamen who shipped at the undermentioned ports in the years 1893, 1894, 1895. BPP 1897, LXXXII. Table XXIX, p. 122.

Annual Statement of Navigation 1873. BPP 1874, LXXXII.

Annual Statement of Navigation 1881 BPP 1882, LXXVIII.

Annual Statement of Navigation 1891. BPP 1892, LXVII.

Return of the Numbers, Ages, Ratings, and Nationalities of Seamen employed 31st of March, 1901 on vessels registered under part I of the Merchant Shipping Act 1894 in the British Isles. BPP 1902, XCII.

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Mercantile Marine Act 1850, XCII.

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