

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

British Arctic Whaling

The Coltish Manuscript



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CITATION:

Stonehouse, Bernard ed. 'Coltish Manuscript: British Arctic whaling ports and voyages, 1772 to 1842' in Nicholls, John (comp.) BAW Databank (www.hull.ac.uk/baw)

Summary

- Dataset Title:** British Arctic whaling The Coltish Manuscript
- Subject:** British Arctic whaling port landings, especially Hull, during the period 1772 to 1842'
- Data Provider:** Bernard Stonehouse
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The University of Hull
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- Extent:** 0.25 Mb 3,739 records
- Keywords:** Maritime voyages, whaling, ports, Hull
- Citation:** (a) The datasets: please cite as follows: Stonehouse, Bernard ed. 'Coltish Manuscript: British Arctic whaling ports and voyages, 1772 to 1842' in Nicholls, John (comp.) BAW Databank (www.hull.ac.uk/baw)
- (b) Supporting documentation: please cite as follows: Stonehouse, Bernard ed. 'Coltish Manuscript: British Arctic whaling ports and voyages, 1772 to 1842, Supporting Documentation' in Nicholls, John (comp.) BAW Databank (www.hull.ac.uk/baw)

Research Context & Objectives

The Coltish Manuscript is in the possession of the Hull History Centre, ascribed to William Coltish, a 19th-century ships' husband based in the port of Hull, includes a listing of voyages by British whaling ships to the Arctic

(a) from Hull between 1772 and 1842, and

(b) from 18 other English and Scottish ports between 1814 and 1842.

Many, though not all, of the entries include the name of the ships' masters, plus catch data and yields of oil and whalebone. The information appears to have been derived from annual Customs returns, many of which are no longer extant. The manuscript is therefore a record of annual Arctic whaling voyages from Hull over 70 years, and from 18 other ports for 28 years, during a period in which whaling from several of the ports declined significantly.

The main bulk of the work (pp. 9-159), entitled '*An account of the success of the ships at the Greenland and Davis Straits fisheries 1772-1842 inclusive*', covers only Hull ships for the whole period. From 1814 voyages by ships of 'the whole of the ports' appear. The 18 ports listed are all that were involved in whaling in that and subsequent years. The initial entries, all for Hull, include only names of ships and catches. Names of masters appear in 1810 and then from 1812 onward. A provisional listing of ships and catches is tabled below. 'Gr' and 'DS', where present, indicate the Greenland (i.e. Svalbard) and Davis Strait fishing grounds.

The document is currently being examined and so far as possible checked for accuracy against other sources. To the extent that it can be validated, it will prove a useful addition to the listing of ships and voyages during the 'bounty period (1733-1824), recently discovered in the House of Lords archives.

Primary Source Materials

The manuscript, in the form of a notebook, was previously in the possession of the Hull City Reference Library. It is unsigned, and gives no direct indication of who compiled it or for what particular purpose. Though possibly known to earlier investigators, its value was first recognised in 1978 by A. G. Credland (then keeper of Maritime History in the former Hull Town Docks Museum), who arranged for it to be transcribed into typescript. Credland identifies it with a work reported in a near-contemporary history of Arctic exploration by Leslie, Jameson and Murray (1855: 479), who in commenting on a dearth of information on whaling produce, mentioned that:

'... Mr Coltish of Hull, who was accustomed to collect an annual statement of the produce, died in 1844, and no one has undertaken in his stead the same good work.'

Though no firmer link with Coltish has been established, it seems likely that one concerned with shipping, and possibly with the local whaling industry and its products, might well have kept a record of this kind.

Enquiries regarding the information contained in this document and the accompanying dataset should be directed to John Nicholls (j.nicholls@hull.ac.uk).