

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

# British Arctic Whaling House of Lords Records



## British Arctic Whaling

**CITATION:**

Stonehouse, Bernard ed. 'British Arctic whaling ports and voyages during the 'bounty period', 1733 to 1824' in Nicholls, John (comp.) BAW Databank ([www.hull.ac.uk/baw](http://www.hull.ac.uk/baw))

## Summary

<b>Dataset Title:</b>	British Arctic whaling House of Lords records
<b>Subject:</b>	British Arctic whaling ports and voyages during the 'bounty period', 1733 to 1824'
<b>Data Provider:</b>	Bernard Stonehouse Maritime Historical Studies Centre The University of Hull Email: <a href="mailto:b.stonehouse@hotmail.com">b.stonehouse@hotmail.com</a>
<b>Data Editor:</b>	John H Nicholls Department of History University of Hull Email: <a href="mailto:j.nicholls@hull.ac.uk">j.nicholls@hull.ac.uk</a>
<b>Extent:</b>	0.25 Mb      4,826 records
<b>Keywords:</b>	Maritime voyages, whaling, House of Lords, bounty period, ports
<b>Citation:</b>	<p>(a) The datasets: please cite as follows: Stonehouse, Bernard ed. 'British Arctic whaling ports and voyages during the 'bounty period', 1733 to 1824' in Nicholls, John (comp.) BAW Databank (<a href="http://www.hull.ac.uk/baw">www.hull.ac.uk/baw</a>)</p> <p>(b) Supporting documentation: please cite as follows: Stonehouse, Bernard ed. 'British Arctic whaling ports and voyages during the 'bounty period', 1733 to 1824, Supporting Documentation', 1824' in Nicholls, John (comp.) BAW Databank (<a href="http://www.hull.ac.uk/baw">www.hull.ac.uk/baw</a>)</p>

## Research Context & Objectives

Arctic whaling from Europe began in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, when explorers seeking a northeast passage to Asia discovered a stock of Greenland right whales *Balaena mysticetus* off the coasts of Spitsbergen (Svalbard). Throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century mariners from several European nations competed on the whaling grounds, late. While Dutch, Danish and Germanic investors established whaling fleets, British whaling remained insignificant until 1733, when Parliament introduced a bounty to encourage ship-owners to speculate in Arctic whaling voyages. To qualify for the bounty, ships had to be 'fortified' (strengthened inside and out), equipped adequately with boats, harpoons and lines, and manned by competent crews, including experienced harpooners, boat-steerers and linesmen. Every whaling ship had to carry a surgeon. Ships were required to sail between specified dates, keep detailed logs recording daily positions, catches, ships encountered, and other significant data, and return to their ports of origin.

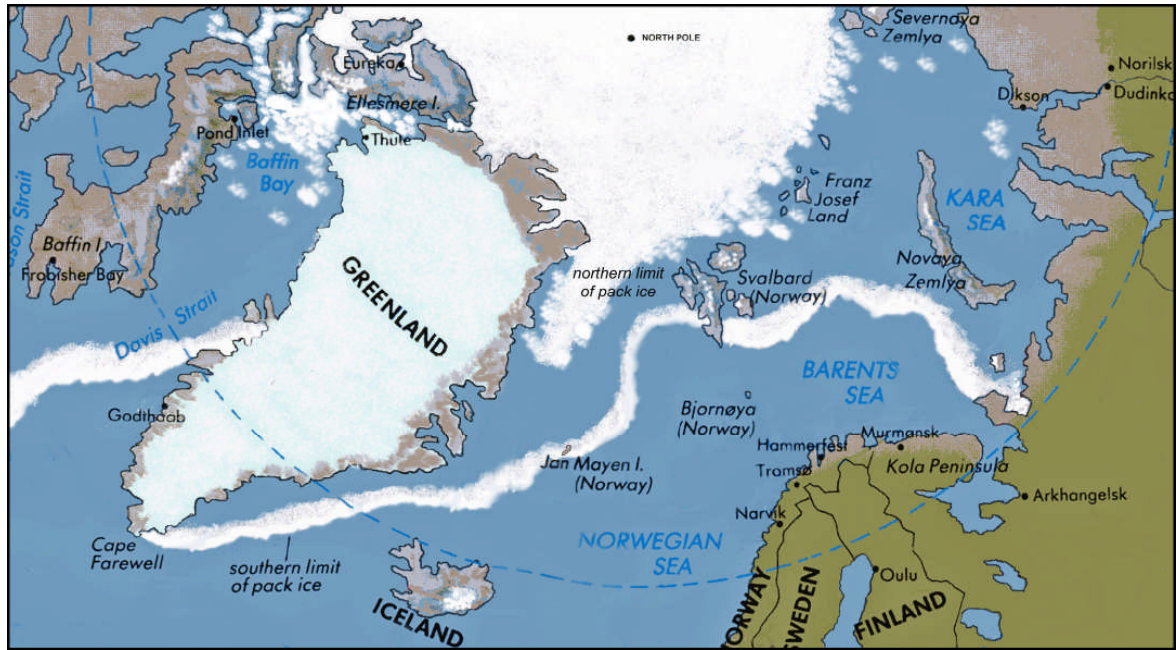
An initial offer of 20/- per ship-ton received little response. In 1749, when the offer was increased to 40/- per ton, ship owners in several ports started whaling. So began an industry that, during the following century, grew to involve 34 ports, employing hundreds of ships and tens of thousands of men. Bounty payments, intended originally as a start-up incentive, persisted to bolster the industry for a further seventy five years. Thereafter, through the mid-to-late nineteenth century, a reduced but more stable industry continued, diminishing gradually as the value of whale products declined, to disappear in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Researchers studying the industry as it affected individual ports, requiring precise information on voyages, catches, masters and crews, have found the most reliable records to be those gathered by officers Customs and Excise, who between 1733 and 1824 were responsible for administering the bounty scheme and reporting annually to Parliament. From these can be built up a reasonably accurate assessment of the contributions made by each of the whaling ports to the industry as a whole during the bounty period. Already well known to whaling historians are records of numbers of ships and ports engaged in whaling during the bounty period, published in two Parliamentary reviews covering the years 1733-1785, and 1793-1824 – the whole bounty period except for a seven-year gap. Though these provide an outline of the industry as a whole during its first nine decades, they are of limited use to scholars interested in ships, individual voyages and port details.

## Primary Source Materials

Here we present information derived from the annual reports that were tabled in both Houses of Parliament. Unlike the reviews, these manuscript documents were never printed or published, and have hitherto been unavailable. However, a set recently discovered in the archives of the House of Lords has been transcribed, and provisional data appear below. Listing individual ships, tonnages, voyages, catches and yields, the annual reports include more detail than the reviews derived from them. Also in this BAW database can be found a little-known dataset by William Coltish, based on contemporary annual customs returns, that continues the record of voyages for a further 21 years to 1845. These sources together provide some of the statistics of the industry that have hitherto been missing, covering port by port the progress of British Arctic whaling through the bounty years and onward. A study now in progress is comparing the House of Lords and Coltish data sets, validating both where possible, and will ultimately continue the account into the industry's final period.

## British Arctic Whaling House of Lords records



'Arctic' and 'subarctic' – though referring always to the northern end of the world – hold slightly different meanings for ecologists, geologists, lawyers, politicians, administrators and climatologists.

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