

MARYPORT MARITIME MUSEUM

The Industrial and Social Heritage of a Seafaring Town

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INTRODUCTION

Positioned along England's most north westerly coast, Maryport reveals itself as being a hidden treasure. The town, with its bold Roman connections and Hadrian influence, is built around the mouth of the River Ellen and a picturesque harbour, a haven from the often volatile Irish Sea. The Ellen has its source in Cumbria's northern fells which, as well as providing a backdrop to the town, form a natural barrier which isolates West Cumberland from the rest of England. Maryport is a small and closely knit community overlooking the Solway Firth: across the water is Criffel, and there is a fine panorama of the Southern Uplands westwards along Scotland's southern coast to Abbey Head, the Isle of Whithorn and Burrow Head. On a fine and clear day it is possible to identify the Mull of Galloway.

To stumble across Maryport is to discover a maritime history that is unexpectedly rich. Indications to the town's seafaring past include windswept but nevertheless cosy fishermen's quayside cottages, and a wealth of taverns – there were once as many as 37 – a number retaining a nautical atmosphere. Then there are the brightly coloured fishing vessels, some ready to put to sea on the tide, others having their catch unloaded, harvested from the waters around the Isle of Man and beyond. The weatherbeaten fishermen and their stormtorn boats are evidence of an industry that is frequently dangerous and cruel.

A town with history

Maryport is a recent appellation that was bestowed in the 18th Century by Humphrey Senhouse, Lord of the Manor, in honour of his wife Mary. This dispels the myth that Maryport was so called because Mary Queen of Scots landed nearby when fleeing from Scotland. Early maps show the town as either Elnefoot or Ellenfoot, the Romans having named it Alauna.

For centuries Maryport's economy has relied on the sea, and this once thriving community was one of the most important centres of industry in north west England. As well as flourishing trade exporting locally mined coal to Ireland and to some of the more distant parts of the United Kingdom, there was a prosperous shipbuilding industry. Ships in excess of 2000 tons were launched broadside into the narrow River Ellen. From 1838 ships were no longer required to be registered at Whitehaven, Maryport having won independence to be recognised as a port in its own right. A Custom House and Harbour Office were erected in Strand Street, the former eventually being adopted by the Hine Brothers as headquarters of the Holme Line.

Maryport was for years the haunt of smugglers trafficking in illicit trades. The wild Cumberland coast was conveniently situated for boats crossing the Solway Firth and Irish Sea, landing contraband from Scotland and the Isle of Man. There is evidence boats were beached a short distance along the coast at Bank End from where an underground passage led to a secret chamber where smuggled goods were distributed. A Royal Proclamation, one of eight in Cumberland, demanded that lawful trading be protected, and five commissioners were appointed to uphold the law. At the end of the Eighteenth Century a body known as H.M. Coastguard was constituted to combat smugglers which had formed themselves into powerful and armed groups.

The docks are built

During the middle years of the Nineteenth Century trade through Maryport boomed. In 1857 the Elizabeth Dock was built and named after Elizabeth Senhouse of Netherhall. Some twenty years later, because of increasing commerce, construction of a second dock was authorised. The Senhouse Dock opened for business in May 1884, records indicating that it was usual for the port to handle as many as 200 vessels at one time. Surviving photographs depict the docks to be so full of vessels

it was possible to cross from one side to the other by jumping from ship to ship. In the opening years of the Twentieth Century iron ore imports from Spain and Sweden were considerable, much of which was transported to nearby Workington with its prospering iron and steel industry.

Master mariners

Maryport shares a unique association with master mariners, of which no less than 91 were listed in the 1856 town directory, many recorded as living around the Fleming Square area. Nearby, and perched above the Sea Brows which overlook the Solway Firth from what is known as The Promenade, is the Royal Naval Reserve Station (the 'Battery'). Opened in 1886, up to 200 reservists were trained there annually, the building also housing the coastguard station. Today the former RNR Station is home to the Senhouse Roman Museum. The town enjoys a strong affiliation with the White Star Line and its most famous ship the *Titanic*. Thomas Henry Ismay, founder of the White Star Line, was born on 7th January 1836 at Ropery House, Ellenborough Place, a short distance from the southern end of Elizabeth Dock. Married at the age of 22, Ismay had then amassed capital of £2,000 and within a decade was worth nearly £½million. When he died in 1899 his estate was worth £1¼million.

Railways

With the arrival of the Maryport and Carlisle Railway, a locomotive and carriage construction works at Grasslot to the south of the town was established. Work began building the railway in 1837, the first section of line between Maryport and Arkleby becoming operational in 1841 carrying coal from the West Cumberland pits. As industries allied to mining, railways, shipping and shipbuilding diversified, there was an influx of workers into the region from north east England, Scotland and Ireland. The town boasted a thriving social life and was host to many dignitaries,

including George Stephenson of railway fame, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins, who stayed at the best hotel, the Golden Lion at the top of Shipping Brow on the corner of Senhouse Street.

From being the busiest port along the Cumberland coast during the formative years of the Twentieth Century, by 1914 Maryport was experiencing decline. Shipbuilding had ceased the year before, and within twelve months the shipyards had closed. The Holme Line, established in Maryport as a highly profitable concern with ships trading worldwide, also succumbed to the fiscal chill. Serious economic depression prevailed from which the town never fully recovered. With the onset of the First World War there was further gloom; when soldiers returned from hostilities they found there to be little or no work.

A street map of old Maryport shows the town to have been constructed on the grid principle, most of the streets being at right angles to each other. Viewing Maryport from the harbour, Shipping Brow is prominent, the hill rising steeply from the quayside and leading to the High Street. At the foot of Shipping Brow and adjacent to the River Ellen is the Maryport Maritime Museum which is situated in what was once the Queen's Head Inn.

Maryport's maritime history preserved

Maryport's Maritime Museum was established with the aid of Allerdale District Council in 1975 after the building had been left derelict for many years. A museum dedicated to Maryport's illustrious maritime history was first proposed by a small but enthusiastic group of local people who acknowledged the town's heritage should be made available for wide appreciation. A meeting was held in the Waverley Hotel on Curzon Street early in the 1970s, and through the efforts of the working party,

one of the most fervent members being the late local historian Annie Robinson, the scheme was eventually realised.

The 1856 town directory records the Queen's Head, which occupies a plot of land that was the first to be let in the new town of Maryport in 1749, as being the property of Jane Bryce of Senhouse Street. The inn was rebuilt in 1881 since when it has altered little externally.

The Queen's Head was a favourable lodging place for seafarers, and there is evidence that sailors were accommodated in the attic. During renovation of the property a 5 pesetas piece dated 1879 from the reign of Alfonso XII of Spain was discovered among the roof timbers. Before going to sleep, it was customary for seamen to secrete coins among the rafters for safe keeping; the 5 pesetas as found had possibly been left behind by a sailor in a hurry to join his ship.

Occupying three floors, the museum houses a diverse and fascinating collection of artefacts. The majority of exhibits enjoy a unique association with Maryport's maritime, industrial, social and political history, having been donated by townspeople and those connected with the port. The building is also host to the Tourist Information Centre.

THE GROUND FLOOR

Here is chronicled Maryport's rich industrial history. The coal trade began in the early 1700s, and in 1719 a broadsheet was published proposing the town as being the ideal location on which to build upon growing coal traffic with Dublin. Small ships sailed into the mouth of the River Ellen and were loaded with coal transported from pits in panniers attached to ponies. As illustrated by William Daniell's fine engraving, wooden piers were constructed around 1816 which simplified coal

handling and allowed larger ships to be accommodated. After 1841 coal was delivered to the pier heads in railway wagons.

Diverse industries – glass, iron and coal

From 1752 Maryport was associated with the glass trade when Lancelot Atkinson of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Penrith wine merchant George Monkhouse established a glassworks. The business is recorded as being in decline in 1783, and had been abandoned by 1813.

1752 was also the year the town began trading in iron, this business faring only slightly better than glass, and by 1784 this too was in recession. A revival in Iron working saw the establishment of the Maryport Hematite Company in 1870: business being initially good, there were six furnaces in operation within two years. Recession took its toll in 1882; bankruptcy loomed and the company was taken over by the Maryport Hematite Iron & Steel Co. Ltd. which survived until 1891 before going into receivership. Some ironworking remained which was at the mercy of fluctuating economies until 1927, when the ironworks were closed permanently.

Herring fishing flourished early in the Nineteenth Century and was a prosperous business. Many of the fishing vessels were owned by local families, and in addition the port attracted fleets from Scotland and Ireland during the herring season. On display are two surviving barrels which were used to preserve catches in salt for later consumption.

Other industries associated with Maryport were brewing, paper, pottery and tanning. Of these it was brewing that was most profitable; having began in the 1750s, the Maryport Brewery Company was established in 1780, and by the late Nineteenth

Century owned 60 public houses. State control of brewing in 1916 resulted in output being halved, and by November 1921 the business had ceased.

Much of Maryport's economy was founded on the coal trade which survived until 1961. A year after its demise, Maryport closed its docks. For thirty years the harbour and surrounding area lay derelict; idle machinery, empty and silent buildings were constant reminder of industrial wasteland. Out of the gloom, however, there emerged hope and regeneration. Huge investment transformed the harbour so that it regained dignity; the Elizabeth Dock reopened, and the Senhouse Dock was converted into a marina inviting vibrant yachts and active vessels.

Elsewhere on the ground floor are fine portraits of Humphrey Senhouse II (1706-1770) and Mary Senhouse (1712-1790). The Senhouse family lived at Netherhall, and it was on their estate that the Roman Camp was situated. Excavations were made in 1766; unearthed were streets partially paved with broad flagstones, and there was evidence of houses having been burnt and rebuilt. Altars were discovered, including one dedicated to Jupiter by Lucius Cammius Maximus, Prefect of the 1st Cohort of Spaniards.

A model of the 56 gun warship *Bulwark* is an admirable example of dedicated craftsmanship. Built in 1872 by Isacc Henderson, a ship's carpenter, this is displayed in a cabinet taking pride of place to the left of the museum entrance. Sailors often spent many months at sea, and whiled away long and lonely hours constructing models, mostly to give to their children on returning home. Conditions on boards ships for ratings were notoriously frugal; quarters mainly were devoid of natural light, any illumination would have been from a flickering oil lamp.

Look at the banner celebrating the opening of the Senhouse Dock on 27th May 1884, this being recorded as a grand occasion which attracted the town's inhabitants to

flock to the harbour. Work began constructing the dock, which extends to some six acres, in February 1880. The opening ceremony was performed by Elizabeth Senhouse from the bridge of the 658 tons vessel *Alne Holme*, a Hine Brothers Holme Line steamer built by J.L. Thompson of Sunderland in 1876 and lost at sea in 1895 off Burriana, Spain. *Alne Holme* had led a flotilla of boats out into the Solway Firth before returning to port, and as the ship entered the dock, Mrs Senhouse declared it open.

Relating to more recent events, Maryport adopted a naval vessel during the Second World War. This was *HMS Mangrove*, built by Ferguson Brothers on the Clyde and launched in 1940, one of 20 anti-submarine naval trawlers. Many naval ships were similarly adopted by communities or businesses around the country during wartime. Voluntary contributions raised money for books, games, cigarettes and other gifts which were sent to crew members. *HMS Mangrove* was loaned to the Portuguese Navy in 1943 who acquired it in 1946 and subsequently renamed it *Faial*.

During the Second World War a large number of *Liberty Ships* were built in American shipyards, their purpose to maintain provision of essential supplies to the Allied navies. The building of *Liberty ships* was an emergency measure, the vessels being massed produced and having box-like hulls and square lines. The number of vessels commissioned, and the speed with which they were produced, was sufficient to cause a serious steel shortage. The identity of the vessel from which the displayed ship's bell was taken is unrecorded.

THE FIRST FLOOR

This is reached by stairs leading from double doors opposite the main entrance. Around the walls tableaus trace the history of Maryport's shipbuilding industry which developed and prospered with the growth of the town. Predating shipbuilding

in Maryport itself, small boats known as Allonby Wherries were built for use by fishermen along the coast.

Maryport shipbuilders

It is recorded that one of Maryport's first residents, John Bell, fitted out a ship called *The Centurion* in 1752. The first shipyard was opened in January 1765 by William Wood of Whitehaven. This was situated in Strand Street, near to St Mary's Church (the sailors' church) and North Quay. One of the first ships to emerge from Wood's yard was the 106 tons brig *Sally*. It is indicated that in 1783 there were eleven ships on the stocks or contracted for, and that in excess of 100 carpenters were employed. A further report, in 1794, showed some 90 ships having been constructed, some in excess of 250 tons, that five vessels were on the stocks, and that the yard employed more than 200 carpenters. In 1811 Adam Wood launched the *Helena* which, at 270 tons, was the largest vessel built to date in Maryport. Maryport's first steamship, the 113 tons *Cheshire Watch*, was built by Kelsick Wood.

The second shipyard to be established in Maryport was that operated by John Peat in the closing years of the Eighteenth Century. Peat set up business on the south west bank of the River Ellen, launching his first ship, the brig *Thompson*, in 1784.

A short distance upstream from Peat's yard at Paper Mill Green (near to where a paper mill had once existed), another shipbuilding enterprise was founded by brothers Joseph and Isaac Middleton in 1810. In 1814 Isaac launched the small schooner *Cooper*, and Joseph the much larger brig *Janes*. The brothers, Joseph incidentally was great-grandfather of Thomas Henry Ismay, continued in business for around 30 years.

Because of the Ellen's narrowness, larger vessels were not conventionally launched. Instead they were launched broadside. John Peat introduced the method of broadside launching to Maryport in December 1837 when the ship *Airey* took to the water.

John Ritson, once manager at Peat's, began building ships on the Ellen in the 1820s, his premises adjoining Irish Street. Ritson's sons, Robert and William, joined their father in business when they came of age, and in the 1880s Ritson and Sons took over Peat's yard. It was Ritson who transformed Maryport's shipbuilding industry: until 1855 all vessels were constructed using timber, after this date iron was introduced. The last timber ship to be built in Maryport was the *Southerfield* at Ritson's yard, and the first iron vessel, built in the same yard and launched broadside, was the 1,426 tons *Ellenbank* in 1885. Rigging of vessels built at Maryport was undertaken by Monkhouse, a local family business.

By previous standards Ritson's vessels were of appreciable size, often in excess of 2,000 tons. The yard built its last ship, the 2,100 tons steamer *Acanthus* in 1902. The firm was acquired by William Walker, ship's chandler of Irish Street, on the death of one of the Ritson partners. Between 1902 and 1911 Walker was responsible for building twelve vessels to include steam coasters, trawlers and barges. Walker sold out to the Maryport Shipbuilding and Repair Company at a time shipbuilding in the town was declining. *S.S.Rhenias* was the last ship to be broadside launched, and a little time later the last Maryport built ship, the *S.S.Silverburn*, was launched conventionally on 8th August 1914. William Walker retained other business interests, and in his dockside iron foundry built shell casings during the First World War.

The decline in Maryport's shipbuilding industry can be attributed to the fact that steamships had to be towed either to the Clyde or the Tyne to have their boilers and engines installed. With fierce competition from those shipbuilders who had this facility on site, shipbuilding on the Ellen proved uneconomical.

Launching ships

Launching a ship broadside into the Ellen was a business which took great expertise, and something that was entertaining and spectacular to watch. Evidence of the launch sites remain, these clearly identifiable a short distance upstream from the Maritime Museum. The shipyards were on the right (seaward) bank of the river; Mote Hill, rising steeply for some 130 feet from the Ellen, is opposite. The river at this point is only 60 feet wide.

Crowds would gather at the top of Mote Hill, where can be found The Settlement at the end of High Street. From their vantage point spectators had a perfect view of launches, which were always executed at high tide. At a given signal carpenters knocked away the struts holding a vessel, which would allow it to slide from its berthing. Gathering speed, the ship would then tumble broadside into the water with a deafening noise, the impact causing a tidal wave to flood the road at the bottom of Mote Hill and reach far up the embankment. It was known for some people, thinking they would have a better view of the launch by finding a resting place half way up hill, to be washed off their feet by the force of water.

The present bridge across the Ellen replaces a toll swing bridge which opened to allow newly launched vessels to reach the sea, and for others to proceed to and from the shipyards for repairs and refits.

The Solway with its sand banks and shallow waters has always been a difficult stretch of water to navigate. Historically a flag was hoisted when it was safe for sailing vessels to enter port, and in later years steam tugs aided vessels in and out of the harbour and along navigable channels. The Maryport Steam Shipping Company operated the port's steam tugs from the middle of the Nineteenth Century until 1900 when the firm went into liquidation. The same year Maryport Harbour Commissioners purchased the *Netherhall* in order to maintain tug operations, the vessel being a familiar sight until 1935 when it was decommissioned.

Model ships

Displayed are models of ships which enjoy specific association with Maryport. *Mary Graham* was built in Quebec where she was launched in 1877. Her maiden voyage took her from Canada to Maryport under the command of local mariner John Temple of Ellengrove. *Laurel* is a three-masted fully rigged ship of the type that often visited the town. *S.S. Aboraca* was built by Short Brothers of Sunderland and launched on 24 February 1883. John Temple was her master who had previously captained the *Mary Graham*. Palmers of Newcastle were builders of *S.S. Antenor* launched in 1925. The model, together with the ship's wheel, an oak bench and the decorative glass window were donated to the museum by Ocean Fleets Ltd., a company owing its origins to Maryport, a former technical director having been born in the town.

Of special interest are the logs from the ships *St George*, *Eliza Moore* and *Esther and Jane*. The last mentioned was one of Ritson's early ships, a 58 tons brig built in 1831 and designed to carry coal to Ireland. The vessel, which cost £780 to build and fit out, was lost with all hands in Glenluce Bay on 28 February 1849.

Eliza Moore was launched at Maryport in 1847 and sailed between Britain and China on the Tea Trade. The log of the *St George* records the voyage from Maryport to Richibucto, USA, between 1819-1820. See also the advertisement detailing shares of ships belonging to the estate of John Peat scheduled to be sold on 18 October 1852 at the Golden Lion Hotel.

Look for the cabinet containing an optimum selection of tools and instruments connected with seafaring. Telescopes, a deep sea sextant, compasses, a cabin wall light, brass rotator, chart making instruments, and dead-eyes used for rigging tall ships are all displayed.

The Hine Brothers and the Holme Line

Any history of Maryport would be incomplete without an account of Wilfred and Alfred Hine, their families and their ardent commitment to the Baptist faith. It is the Hine brothers to whom Maryport can applaud for giving the town prosperity and prestige, and not least the repute of the Holme Shipping Line which they founded in 1873.

The Hine family were held in the highest esteem. Not only did the brothers operate a successful business, they acquired extensive grounds at the top of the town on Camp Road and built three majestic houses, Camp Hill, Park Hill and North Lodge (known retrospectively as Hine's Mansions), the architect being Charles Eaglesfield, brother of Alfred Hine's wife Mary. As well as operating their shipping line, the Hine brothers acted as ship brokers, insurance and commission agents, and coal exporters.

Before they established the Holme Line, Wilfred and Alfred Hine were already connected with the shipping industry, Wilfred operating a business in Liverpool as

well as being joint owner of several vessels. Prospering Maryport with its viable shipbuilding industry presented itself as being ideal to support a shipping line. For nearly forty years Maryport and the Hine brothers were synonymous.

Sixteen sailing vessels were owned and operated by the Holme Line between 1872 and 1877, the first being the 516 tons barque *Abbey Holme* which was built at Sunderland in 1869 by J Blumer. The oldest ship in the fleet was the 336 tons brig *Horatio*, built by William Wallace of Workington in 1824. The youngest was the 894 tons *Briar Holme*, built by Thompson of Sunderland, commissioned by the Hine brothers and taken into service in 1877. Largest Holme Line sailing vessel was the 996 tons *Castle Holme* which entered service in 1876 having been launched a year earlier by Bartrum & Co of Sunderland. Smallest of the vessels was the 103 tons schooner *Tom Roberts* built 1837-88 which the Holme Line acquired in 1874. To give an indication of the perils associated with sailing vessels, nine of the Holme Line's vessels, including the *Tom Roberts*, were lost at sea.

Captain John Rich of North Street Maryport was among the most respected master mariners of the period. Rich was in command of the 894 tons barque *Brier Holme*, a vessel renowned for its expeditious voyages between Britain and Australia. It was not uncommon for the ship to reach Tasmania in 80 days, and taking only ten days longer to complete the return voyage. In 1904 the barque was engulfed in a violent storm off Tasmania's west coast and was destroyed. It would have been Captain Rich's final mission before taking retirement.

The Holme Line operated twenty seven steamships between 1876 and 1900, the first being the 667 tons *Florence Richards*, built in Sunderland by J L Thompson. The Holme Line, incidentally, operated no fewer than seventeen Thompson built ships. *Glen Holme*, formerly the *Margaret Banks*, was the company's oldest vessel which

was built in 1870. Having been acquired in 1882, the 532 tons vessel was in collision with another ship the following May and was lost. *Isel Holme* (of which there is a painting in the museum) was the largest of the Holme steamers at 2,426 tons. Built in 1899 for the Hine brothers, she went into service in 1900, and eight years later was sold to the Nautilus Steam Company and renamed *Myrtle Branch*. Smallest steamer in the fleet was the 41 tons *Elizabeth & Ann*, built in 1875 and acquired in 1884. Six years later the vessel was sold to R Mason of Maryport. In 1900 the Holme Line purchased its last steamship *Hazel Holme*. The 1,979 tons vessel remained in service until 1911 when she was wrecked in the Bay of Biscay. Fate befell a number of Holme Line steamers, some while in service with the Hine brothers, others at later dates.

The Hine brothers used their sailing ships to trade general cargoes to Australia, the vessels returning to the UK with wool. Much of the business of the steamers was connected with the North Atlantic run, taking steel rails from Maryport to the St Lawrence, Quebec and Montreal. The first rails for the Canadian Pacific Railway were transported from the Senhouse Dock by Holme Line ships. On their return, the ships carried grain and timber.

Some famous ships connected with Maryport include the *Midas*, which was built in 1896 by Ritson's for their own shipping line, her sister ship *Ladas*, and the *Peter Iredale*. Leaving Maryport in August 1897, *Midas* set sail to the Japanese port of Nagasaki, arriving on 22 December. Having sailed from Nagasaki for Portland USA the following February, the vessel was lost en route. *Ladas* was one of Ritson's great sailing ships and noted for her swift voyages. In particular she was acknowledged for her spirited performance when she raced two American ships from Honolulu to San Francisco, arriving at her destination well ahead of her rivals, much to their crew's displeasure. Launched in 1890 at Ritson's yard, *Peter Iredale*

was a highly respected voyager of the high seas before being wrecked in a storm in 1906.

The William Mitchell Collection

Born in Ireland in 1823, the highly acclaimed artist William Mitchell spent most of his life in Maryport, and it is therefore fitting that the museum is host to several of his fine works. Mitchell joined the Maryport and Carlisle Railway in 1840 and became foreman painter at the Grasslot engine works. A popular Maryport artist, he spent much of his spare time painting local scenes and eventually left railway employment to become a highly acclaimed full time artist. William Mitchell died in 1900 and is best remembered for his maritime paintings.

The museum's collection of William Mitchell's works include the portrait of the 534 tons barque *Eleanor Wood*, the vessel being owned by D Glaister of Maryport. *A Breezy Day* dates to 1863 exemplifying a moving scene in the Solway Firth off Maryport. *A Breezy Day* dates to 1863 exemplifying a moving scene in the Solway Firth off Maryport. *Florence & Gimello* is an outstanding work; Mitchell painted this in 1884 to depict the steam tug *Florence* leading the 598 tons Italian barque *Gimello* into Maryport harbour during a heavy gale on 18 October 1883. *A Rescue At Sea* can be found on the top floor of the museum, this dramatic work portraying the courageous work undertaken by members of the RNLI often under dangerous conditions. Elsewhere can be found *A Maritime Scene* painted by James Mitchell, William's son, in 1890. *Sherwood*, a 1,823 tons vessel built by the Whitehaven Shipbuilding Company in 1883 is another painting to be found, the work being unsigned and the identity of the artist unrecorded.

The Fletcher Christian Gallery

Fletcher Christian and the Mutiny on the *Bounty* is one of those subjects known as anybody having an interest in history. The Christian family originated from the Isle of Man, settled in Cumberland and married into two of the area's most influential families, the Curwens and the Senhouses.

Charles Christian, Fletcher's father, had married into the Fletcher family of Cockermouth. Fletcher was born on 25 September 1764 at Moorland Close Cockermouth, was schooled at Brigham, a mile or so outside the town, before attending Cockermouth School. He ran away to sea at the age of sixteen, enlisted in the Royal Navy and became Master's Mate on the *HMS Bounty*. Fletcher Christian led the mutiny on the *Bounty* on 28 April 1789: unhappy at having to leave idyllic Tahiti, Fletcher and his fellow mutineers returned to port and eventually settled on Pitcairn Island in 1790. As the information in the museum reveals, the true fate of Fletcher Christian remains unaccounted.

On display in the gallery is a unique collection of artefacts relating to Fletcher Christian and the mutiny aboard *HMS Bounty*. Tableaus illustrate the history surrounding the event; see the facsimile of the *Bounty's* log, surviving drawings of the ill-fated ship together with a model of the vessel. The collection contains a sea chest belonging to Fletcher Christian, and among other items there is a model of a bird finely carved by a descendent of mutineer Edward Young who, along with others, colonised Pitcairn Island.

THE TOP FLOOR

One would expect a town having so rich a maritime history to have an equally fine social heritage. It does, and this is reflected here along with Maryport's long association with lifeboats and the RNLI.

Lifeboats

The first of several lifeboats, the *Henry Nixson*, arrived in 1865, 41 years after the founding of the RNLI. In 1931 the town received its first motor lifeboat *Priscilla MacBean*, and the last craft, *Joseph Braithwaite*, was delivered in 1934. Maryport has a long and admirable tradition of helping those at sea, and it came as a heartfelt blow that the lifeboat station closed in 1950 because of general decay in the port. William Mitchell's previously mentioned graphic portrait is to be found in this section of the museum.

White Star Line

The adjoining alcove houses the epic story of the White Star Line and its founder Thomas Henry Ismay. Together with the chilling saga of the *Titanic*, tableaus relate the fate and fortunes of some of the other White Star Liners. Included in this essay is the *Olympic*, sister ship to the *Titanic* which was heavily modified following the former's catastrophic maiden voyage, the *Oceanic* (launched in 1870), *Teutonic* and *Majestic* (both launched in 1889), and *Oceanic II*.

A Maryport Family

Displayed is a collection of Maryport memorabilia which is evocative of a northern seafaring community. In particular see the tableaus recalling the life and loves of a typical Maryport family, the Clagues, which owed their livelihood to the sea. William Clague, the son of a seaman, was born in 1868 and at the age of fourteen apprenticed with Ritson's as a sail maker. In 1889 William went to sea as a sail maker on the vessel *Horsa*; having travelled the world he returned to Maryport, married Catherine and had two sons, Thomas Robinson Clague and William Wilson Clague. Thomas was born in 1895 and when of age joined the Merchant Navy and aspired to become a fully qualified engineer. He joined the Blue Star Line as a chief engineer. Thomas had a son who decided a life at sea was not for him and instead

joined the Civil Service although he did serve in the Royal Navy during the Second World War. William Clague signed up for service in the First World War and, like so many young men, did not disclose his true age. Under age when he was sent to the front lines, he was killed in October 1917 before having reached his eighteenth birthday.

Maryport Today

A busy harbour with its steamship museum and thriving marina, unique quayside aquaria and several tourist attractions, the scars of depression are fast fading in this attractive Solway Coast town. A walk around the old Maryport reveals many surprises, not least charming and historic Fleming Square and the surrounding streets which were once home to some of the most experienced master mariners as well as the town's business folk. Much evidence remains of yesterday's Maryport, it is there for the enjoyment of looking. Remember to glance seaward at sunset to witness a most remarkable experience as the sea and the sky are engulfed in the colour of fire. Look very carefully, and in the hue there might just be perceived the vision of a fully rigged barque.

Maryport Maritime Museum welcomes visitors. Other museums in the area include Workington's Helena Thompson Museum, and nearby is Workington Hall, the seat of the influential Curwen family. It is at Workington Hall that Mary Queen of Scots spent her final three days of freedom before her nineteen year incarceration and eventual execution.

Malcolm Bobbitt, 2001