

About British Online Archives

British Online Archives (BOA) is one of the UK's leading academic publishers and online repositories. Hosting over five million records, carefully sourced from private and public archives, such as The National Archives (UK) and British Library, BOA's specially curated primary source collections cover over 500 years of world history. They boast extensive documentation from across the globe, providing invaluable source material for students and researchers working within a wide range of scholarly disciplines, including history, politics, sociology, and international relations. Our unique digital holdings offer insights into global historical events and trends, typically through a British lens. They serve to broaden our understanding of history, and help us to make sense of contemporary social, cultural, economic, and political landscapes.

Related Collections:

Our primary source collections are organised thematically so as to enhance user experience and boost discoverability. Via careful reflection on our archival holdings, and in dialogue with scholars, we have grouped our collections under eleven key historical themes.

British Mercantile Trade Statistics, 1662–1809 falls under the broad themes of “Colonialism and Empire”, “Economics”, and “Slavery and Abolition”. You can explore related collections, such as *Bristol Shipping Records: Imports and Exports, 1770–1917* and *Liverpool Shipping Records: Imports and Exports, 1820–1900*, by scanning the QR code.



B BRITISH ONLINE
ARCHIVES

britishonlinearchives.com
info@britishonlinearchives.com



B BRITISH ONLINE
ARCHIVES

British Mercantile Trade Statistics, 1662–1809

Released 2024

British Mercantile Trade Statistics, 1662–1809

Containing over 47,000 images drawn from files at The National Archives (UK), this collection charts nearly 150 years of British trade and shipping in remarkable detail. Throughout this period, Britain's increasing naval capabilities and the expansion of trade networks fuelled economic growth. Frequently built upon exploitation and enslaved labour, the establishment of British trading outposts and plantations laid the foundations for a global empire and secured access to sought after commodities, such as sugar, tobacco, and textiles. This collection includes trade ledgers, registers, and indexes that supply statistical data on trade throughout the “long eighteenth century”.

These official records catalogue the receipt and shipment of goods at ports across England, Scotland, and Wales. The sources likewise document Britain's balances of trade with other countries.

This collection also boasts the official registers of “Mediterranean passes”. A form of diplomatic passport, passes granted immunity from Barbary privateers patrolling the waters of the Mediterranean, as well as those around North Africa, North America, and the West Indies. The registers detail which vessels were issued passes, their port of embarkation and destinations, as well as information on their size, crew, and defences.

British Mercantile Trade Statistics, 1662–1809 will appeal to those investigating the colonial, economic, and maritime dimensions of British history. It should also interest those exploring broader themes, such as the development of the fiscal-military state.

“

“This collection offers a unique and fascinating window into the development of British commerce during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Global in its scope, it offers vital materials for historians of trade, empire, and those interested in the reach of the British state.”

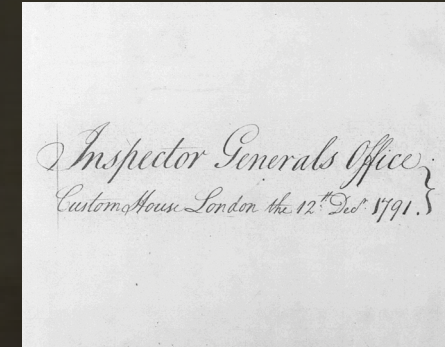
Dr James Davey, University of Exeter

This collection includes three comprehensive source commentaries written by the historians Christopher J. French, Robert Craig, and David Richardson, and edited by Walter Edward Minchinton, former Professor of Economic History at the University of Exeter. Written during the 1970s and 1980s, the essays supply vital contextual information, outlining the nature and historical significance of the archival documentation.

This collection can support various lines of historical inquiry, including the study of seasonal trade patterns, the growth of transatlantic commerce, and analysis of key economic trends.



The sources provide a comprehensive overview of the nature and development of Britain's trade routes and relationships.



The trade statistics were compiled by the Inspector-General of Imports and Exports, a position established by the Board of Customs in 1696 and which was first held by William Culliford.

THE MEDITERRANEAN PASSES

Of the 3,430 passes issued from 1771–1773, only 505 were given to vessels heading to the Mediterranean. The rest went to ships going to Africa, the Caribbean, America, and the Wine Islands.

Throughout the seventeenth century, the registers of “Mediterranean passes” were somewhat limited in terms of the information that they contained. As trade networks became more extensive and lucrative, the state required more precise data regarding, and regulation of, maritime trade. During the early 1680s, efforts to regulate and authenticate vessels increased. The registers began to include docking locations and return dates. By 1730, intended destinations were being recorded.

The trade ledgers in this collection detail key imports and exports. For example, “Cocoa nutts” and tortoise shell were shipped to Britain from Barbados; tobacco and “Indico” from Bermuda; raccoon skins and pimento from Carolina; and a good deal of linen, oysters, and salmon arrived from neighbouring Ireland. Meanwhile, Britain exported beef, butter, and vinegar to Africa; books, candles, and flax to the Canaries; whilst “Pistolls” and swords made their way to East India.

THE
NATIONAL
ARCHIVES

Sources include: The National Archives