

Letters to the Commissioners 1786 - 1788

Transcribed from the Book held at the National Archives reference CUST 61/7.

17 August 1786 In return to your Order of 3rd Instant accompanying an Extract of an order from the Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade & Foreign Plantations dated 21st July 1786, we beg leave to report that on Examining the Register kept at this Port we find but few instances of Parish Boys being put apprenticed to the sea Service under the Act of 2nd & 3rd of Queen Anne Chap. 6.

There was time when Masters of Ships & Coasting Vessels found it difficult to get seamen they appealed for apprentices in order to get *protections* for them, but no instance has for some years occurred here to our knowledge of Church Wardens applying to Masters of ships to take apprentices under the 18th Section of that Act owing to it being an old Act, and the Powers of it not being generally known by those whose province it is to enforce the Regulations thereof.

We would beg leave to submit to your Consideration whether the Provision of that Act are still thought to be satisfactory, it may not be proper by a General Order to transfer the observance of those Clauses of it which relate to the Officers of Customs and to cause Copies of the Act or particular Clauses thereof to be distributed to Church Wardens of the different Parishes or in Districts where Houses of Industry are established to the Guardians of the Poor as the means of having the Act more generally known of causing more poor lads to the sea Service than now are.

And we take the Liberty of suggesting whether, if a small Premium was to be paid by the Parish officers to the Masters of Ships compelled to take Apprentices in time of Peace it might not be the means of inducing them more readily to take them & of properly instructing them & qualifying them as seamen.

No Ship being fitted out from this Port for the Newfoundland & other Fisheries, we have not an opportunity of informing ourselves how far the several Laws relating to the Fisheries are enforced with Respect to Apprentices & fresh Men to be employed on board Ships in that Trade.

On Enquiry we find it is generally the Practice for Mariners entering on board ships to sign Articles of Agreement with their Masters for the Wages they are to receive, but we believe the Practice is not so much attended to in small Vessels engaged in the Coasting Trade or on short voyages.

How far the Laws for bringing home British Seamen left in Foreign Ports are properly executed we are not able to say, no complaints in this Port from any seaman of their having found difficulty in getting home have been made to us or come to our knowledge.

19 August 1786 As directed by your Order of 29 Ult. we have caused a Plan to be taken of the Custom House at this Port with the Storehouse underneath it part of which it is proposed to appropriate to enlarging the Land Surveyors & Land Waiters Offices as represented in our letter of the 20th Ult. The Office when enlarged is intended to accommodate the Land Surveyor and two Land Waiters the present Office being only capable of containing one desk and having no Fireplace in it is found to be not only inconvenient but in the Winter season too cold for the Officers to sit in to transact any Business.

Inclosed we transmit a plan of the Premises which is submitted to your Consideration and we are humbly of the opinion that the alteration proposed is necessary for the Service. (The plan was not included in the Book.)

28 September 1786 We beg leave to report that Mr John Miller Tide Surveyor whose appointment by your Honors to survey the Ships & Vessels at this Port previous to their Registry appears in our opinion to be to be Competent to Execute that Duty, and we shall take care to give him every Assistance and Information in our Power in computing the Tonnage of the Vessels after he has ascertained the exact dimensions thereof pursuant to your Orders.

30 October 1786 Enclosed we transmit a letter from Lieut. Wilby Commanding his Majesty's Cutter Expedition, praying to be permitted as a Tender to cruise against the Smuglers a small Cutter which was seized by him that has since been condemned.

We beg to report the said Cutter was seized by Mr Wilby on the 20th June last is of the Berthen of 25 Tons was *entered* into the Court of the Exchequer in Trinity Term by Indenture **G** dated 4th July last appearing at One hundred and twenty pounds, has since been condemned and by your Order of 14th Instant directed to be broken up.

4 November 1786 Having found cause to be dissatisfied with the conduct of Mr John Jeram a Riding Officer at this Port who having made a seizure neglected to bring the same to the warehouse or make any return thereof for two Months we thought it our Duty to Charge him therewith, which Charge with his answer thereto our observations and Report and a letter from Mr Grimes, Supervisor of Riding Officers are herewith transmitted, and to which we beg to refer.

18 July 1786 Charge to Mr Jeram It appearing to us that you have been very remiss in your Duty in neglecting to bring to the Custom House a Seizure made by you in conjunction with an Officer of Excise till a considerable time after the seizure was made whereby we have been prevented from returning the Seizure to the Honorable Board in time to obtain their Order for Prosecuting the same to Condemnation before the Expiration of the last Term. We think it necessary to call upon you to answer the following Charge:

1st That having on the 11th May last in Conjunction with Mr Dawe an Expectant Officer of Excise Seized about 5 Gallons of Foreign Spirits in the House of John Woods of Godshill you did not deliver the same into the Custom House at Cowes nor make any return thereof until the 14th of this Instant at which time the Seizure consisted only of 3 Gallons and 3 Quarters of Brandy and Geneva.

2nd And it appearing by your own declaration that the Seizure when delivered to us was not in the same packages in which the Spirits were found at the time of Seizure but that the same had been started out of stone bottles into Casks, you are to give your reason for doing so and to account to us why you left the packages which were liable for Forfeiture and took those which it does not appear you had authority to Seize.

To which several matters you are hereby required to return plain and distinct Answers in writing on or before Monday the 24th Instant taking care to avoid all scurrilous and abusive expressions and to return this Charge with your answers at the time above mentioned.

20th July 1786 Mr Jerams Answer On the Seizure made on the 11th May last in conjunction with Mr Dawe Expectant Officer belonging to the Excise not knowing but he had a Commission to Seize and called me to assist him in his Information and in starting the Liquor out of stone bottles into the Casks was the reason it was handy carriage and not likely to be broken and in keeping the Liquors so long till 13th July not knowing but it was to be carried to the Excise Office till the 10th July.

Letter from Mr Grimes, Supervisor of Riding Officers In answer to your letter of the 2nd Inst. I am sorry to acquaint you that the Admonition given to Mr Jeram have not made effectual reformation in him I could wish yet he is by no means addicted to intemperance as he has been & if you were to recommend to the Honorable Board his removal elsewhere I am of the opinion it would intirely reclaim him by breaking off his connection in his neighbourhood.

Observations on Mr Jerams Answer by the Collector / Comptroller The only reason assigned by Mr Jeram for keeping the Seizure at his House from the 11th May till the 13th July before he made any return of it or brought it to the Custom House is that he did not know but it was to be carried to the Excise Office, as the Seizure had been made in consequence of an Information given to a Person who was then under Instructions for an Employment in the Excise and who Mr Jeram says he thought had a Commission to Seize & that as soon as he was informed which was not before the 10th July that the Collector of Excise would not receive the Seizure he brought it to the Custom House.

He does not in his Answer to the Charge account for the deficiency in the Quantity which in the Return made by him of the Seizure is called about 5 Gallons but which when brought to the warehouse was only 3 Gallons and 3 Quarters – we do not find that the Quantity was measured at the time of Seizure but *composed* about 5 Gallons it is therefore possible that the computation might be erroneous and that the Quantity brought to the Warehouse was the whole Quantity Seized nor is there any proof of Embezzlement and the Officer alleges it was under lock during the time it remained at his House. The reason given by Mr Jeram for starting the Spirits out of the stone bottles, in which it was found & seized, as being more handy for Carriage and not so likely to be broken does not appear to be

satisfactory to us, as we think it was incumbent on him to have seized the packages which contained the Spirit and which alone he had the right to Seize, we are however inclined to think that this error proceeded more from ignorance than any intention to do wrong as it was from himself we were informed of the Fact of his having at the time of the Seizure started the Spirits out of the stone bottles into Casks, and he promises not to be guilty of such Errors in future.

We are humbly of the opinion the Mr Jeram being too much addicted to drinking is the cause of his impropriety of Conduct in this and other respects. He was in pursuance of your Order of 11th May last admonished for that fault and having called on Mr Grimes Supervisor of Riding Officers to report what his General Conduct has been since, we herewith transmit his answer by which it appears that the admonition has not made the effectual reformation in him as was to be wish'd but that he is not so much addicted to drink as he has been, and he recommends the removal of Mr Jeram to some other Station as a likely means of breaking off his connections with the Neighbourhood where he now is and which being the Station where much Smugling is carried out, we are humbly of opinion requires an Officer of great activity & sobriety.

We have withheld this report for some time hoping Mr Jeram would have so profited of the repeated exhortations to sobriety which have been given to him as to have enabled us to have made a more favourable representation of his Conduct, but we are sorry to say that from once having been an Active, Diligent Officer he is now become indolent and inattentive to his Duty, and we concur with the Supervisor of Riding Officers that the removing him to some other Station at another Port would be for the benefit of the Service and the means of breaking his connections amongst the Smuglers by whom we believe he has been seduced into the habits of Drinking to afford them greater opportunities of carrying on their illicit trade in his District.

7 November 1786 William Saunders in pursuance of your Order of 17th September 1784 has been under Prosecution of the Kings Bench for obstructing Joseph Atwell and other Officers in the Execution of their Duty having been arrested and since paid the Penalty of Fifty Pounds and the same being remitted to Mr Litchfield your Solicitor.

The Officers who were obstructed humbly pray your Honors to allow them part of the Fine recovered after the expence of the Prosecution have been defrayed.

6 December 1786 Inclosed we transmit a Surgeon's Bill amounting to Two Guineas which has been paid for extracting bullets and dressing the wounds of sundry Mariners belonging to the Swan Cutter who were fired upon by a gang of Smuglers as was more fully reported to your Honors in the Collectors Letter of 22 May 1784 & an Affidavit transmitted on 13 July following.

And Mr. Sarmon, the then Commander having also Certified that the men were wounded when employed in the Execution of their Duty, the Collector humbly prays to be reimbursed the said sum of Two Guineas.

6 December 1786 We are desired by Mr James Jacob, Bricklayer of this place to transmit to your Honors the enclosed Letter from him praying to be paid the sum of Seven Pounds Eighteen shillings and two pence part of the Bill for repairing the Custom House at this Port and which by your Order of the 11th March 1786 was allowed in his Bill. The facts stated in the inclosed letter are true and it was thought for the good of the Service and done with a view to saving the Crown Expense, that the job was ordered to be completed when the roof was open and the scaffolding up.

3 January 1787 Mr John Taylor having been nominated to be a Landing Waiter in this Port in the room of Lancelot Focquet resigned. Inclosed we transmit in pursuance to your Order of the 29th Ultimo a Copy of the Registry of Baptism of the said Taylor by which it appears that he is in the Twenty sixth year of his age, and we beg leave to report that he is not at present employed in the Service but appears sufficiently active and we doubt not that he will be capable of performing the Office to which he is now nominated & when he has gone through the usual course of Instruction. (He was Baptised in Newport on 12 August 1761.)

9 January 1787 As directed by your Order, we transmit enclosed a Copy of the Registry of Baptism of Richard Craddick nominated to be a Tidesman & Boatman in the room of James Hopgood

resigned. It appears by the said Register that he is in the Forty first year of his Age. (He had been an Extra Tidesman for over 20 years)

1 February 1787 Inclosed we transmit an Information against Cornelius Rose a notable Smugler & 3 other Persons employed by him in Smugling at different times sundry quantities of Foreign Spirits particularly One Hundred and six small Casks containing about Two Hundred and twenty four Gallons of Foreign Spirit which on the 27th November last were unlawfully in a vessel belonging to the said Rose of the Berthen of Twenty three Tons or thereabout.

We beg leave to submit the said Information to your Honors Consideration and pray your directions for seizing the vessel which appears to have been illegally employed and that the said Rose may be prosecuted with the other Persons concern'd with him for the Penalties incurr'd by them respectively & we further submit if *Carter*, this Person who appears to have been principally concerned in rescuing 32 Casks from Mr Grimes the Supervisor of Riding Officers is not liable to a separate Prosecution for the said Offence and we are humbly of the opinion that it is necessary to proceed with severity against the principals of the gang who are notorious Smuglers. (Rose had in 1784 been acquitted at the Old Bailey of Assaulting a Customs Officer with a Hatchet at Langston Harbour.)

9 March 1787 (extract) Pursuant to your directions we have enquired into the allegations in the inclosed Petition complaining of the Conduct of Stephen Saunders one of the Coal Meters at this Port, and we beg to report that the charge of drunkenness appears in the present case to originated from the servants of the Petitioners more than from any real knowledge of the Facts on their parts and we find there had been some dispute between the Men who work'd in the lighters and the Coal Meter which probably gave rise to the complaint.

The Tide Surveyor who visit'd the Ship frequently during the time the Cargo was discharging reports that he did not observe or discover the Meter being in a state of intoxication or in any way incapable of doing his duty at any time when the cargo was delivering, tho' we observed on examining the Book that there were Instances of irregular *scoring* which at least indicated Carelessness if it was not the effect of intoxication.

Upon the whole we are of the opinion that the present complaint against the Meter has not been properly substantiated and at the same we think it necessary to observe that his behaviour to Mr Pike one of the Gentlemen subscribing to the Complaint made to your Honors at the time Mr Pike attended an examination into the Charge was so impertinent and very unbecoming a Person in his Station and so much so that we thought it our Duty to reprimand him for the same in the Public Office.

13 March 1787 The Deputy Comptroller humbly prays your Honors to be absent from the Port a Fortnight on his Private Affairs. We beg leave to report that the Remittances have been made & the Accounts for the last Quarter sent away and it appearing by the Secretary's Letter of the 3rd Inst. that the same have been duly received

27 March 1787 Being directed by your Order of the 9th December last to sell Eighty nine Pieces of Stripp'd and Spotted Muslin which had been seized and condemned, we beg leave to represent that on letting the same for sale we find Fifty four Pieces part of the aforesaid Quantity are what is call'd *Inisbour* Work and the Act of the 7 of this present Majesty Ch 47 Sec 9 having directed that all Foreign Needle Work that has been seized and condemned shall after condemnation be sold only for Exportation. We humbly beg to be informed whether the said *Inisbour* work'd Muslins do not come under the description of Foreign Needle Work & as such liable to be sold for Exportation only, respecting which we request your directions.

We beg also to represent having observ'd that a Quantity of Leather Gloves which some time since were sent to the Warehouse in London from this Port for Sale produced considerably more that could be obtained for sale here when offered for Sale, and having now in the Warehouse at this Port 21 Cards containing 1327 Yards of Black Silk Lace which has been condemned & ordered to be sold for Exportation. We submit as our opinion that it will be more for the Crown & Seizing Officer that the said Lace together with the Muslin before mentioned if the same are liable to be exported, as well as all other Goods which after condemnation are to be exported should be sent to the Custom House

Warehouse in London for sale where that are much more likely to sell for their real value than if afforded for sale here where there are seldom many buyers of Exportation Goods.

12 April 1787 William Robey lately appointed a Riding Officer at this Port in the room of John Jeram dismiss'd was admitted to his Employment the 11th Instant having previously with two Sureties giving Bond for the due & faithful discharge of his duty.

23 April 1787 Mr Grimes Supervisor of Riding Officers at this Port on 27th November last seized on the shore 31 small Casks of Foreign Spirit for being run on shore out of a large Boat then upon the Coast, Fifteen of the Casks being then rescued from him as stated in a Affidavit transmitted on the 5th Ult. Mr Grimes could not at the time seize the Boat, but falling in with it some days after made a seizure thereof.

Before the Officer had an opportunity of sending the Boat round to the Custom House it happen'd that the Juno Dutch Frigate was stranded on the Coast when Boats being much wanted to assist in saving the Lives of the Passengers and Crew an application was made to the Officer for the use of the Boat which he had seized & he very properly in our opinion complied with the requisition.

When employ'd in that service which was a very hazardous one the Boat was entirely broken to pieces & lost, since when a charge of Twenty Pounds has been made in the Salvage Account for the said Boat and the Boat having been valued on Oath before the Justices at the time of Adjusting the Salvage Account and the same was accordingly allowed as compensation for the loss of the Boat.

The proprietor of the Boat Alleges that the Boat not having been regularly condemned he is entitled to the money allowed by the Justices for the same & Mr Grimes the seizing Officer also puts in a claim to the same. We therefore beg leave to submit to your Honors the following mode of proceeding as in our opinion the properest way of settling the dispute, namely that the Boat should be return'd into the Exchequer as a seiz'd Boat, appraised by the Persons who valued her on Oath before the Justices at Twenty Pounds, that the proprietor should have notice given him thereof, that he may if he pleases claim thereto in the Court of the Exchequer, and if the Boat is thereto recovered that he be then paid the Twenty Pounds which had been allowed by the Justices for the same or in case the Boat be condemned being paid between the Crown and the Seizing Officer in the manner such seizures are usually divided and that in the meantime the Twenty Pounds should be paid by the Agent into the Collectors hands. (The Juno, berthen 900 Tons, went ashore at Sudmore Point (Chilton Chine) on 9th December 1786 with 250 men on board, 5 or 6 were drowned)

12 May 1787 (extract) Streeter and White the two persons who escaped out of gaol as stated in the enclosed petition were notorious smugglers and both appeared to be men of property.

We have not the smallest reason to suspect that they effected their escape through any misconduct or negligence of Sheriff himself but we are not so well satisfied that it was not owing to great remissiveness if nothing worse on the part of the gaoler and persons employed under him.

If reports are to be credited a considerable amount of money was paid for their enlargement but whether such reports are founded on truth we have not been able to get proof of, indeed it must be a circumstance very difficult to prove if true, it however may not be improper to remark that these two Smugglers were the only persons who made their Escape at that time, indeed it is rather extraordinary that Persons charged at the suit of the Crown for such large sums and practices so prejudicial to the Revenue should be kept in the most insecure part of the prison, as it must be presumed that none of the rest of the Prisoners got out.

22 May 1787 The Six Oar'd Boat used by the Tide Surveyor at this Port having some time since been drove on Shore stove & much damaged and not to be worth repairing, the said Boat being more than thirteen years old. Inclosed we transmit an Estimate of the Expense of building a new Boat for the Service and providing materials for the same amounting to the sum of Twenty four Pounds Eighteen shillings and humbly pray that we may receive your directions for having the said Boat built.

7 June 1787 Henry Dore Mate of the Swan Revenue Cutter in the Service at this Port having delivered up his Deputation *seeking* to resign his employment. I beg to recommend Richard Comben who is at present one of the Deputed Mariners on board the said Cutter to succeed Henry

Dore and Thomas *Carley* one of the Mariners having been recommended by the Commander of the Cutter as a proper person to act as a Deputed Mariner in the room of Comben. I humbly pray your Honors will be pleased to grant Deputations accordingly.

12 June 1787 Inclosed we transmit a Letter received by us from Mr John Miller Riding Officer at this Port praying that he may be permitted to Exchange Districts with Mr Edward Dixon another of the Riding Officers at this Port. Mr Miller is at present stationed at Ride & Mr Dixon at Newtown, the reason for Mr Miller desiring this Exchange is that he has a House of his own at Shalfleet which is in Mr Dixons District

We beg leave to express that we have no objection to the Exchange which would certainly be an accommodation to Mr Miller & no prejudice to the Service, Shalfleet being a proper place for the Residence of an Officer in that District.

But we beg leave to further propose that Mr Dixon instead of being stationed at Ryde should be stationed at Niton in the room of John Jeram sometime since dismissed and that William Robey lately appointed a Riding Officer in this Port in the room of John Jeram may as soon as he is properly instructed to act as a Coast Waiter at Ryde in the room of Mr Miller, and that Mr Dixon who is thoroughly acquainted with the Country and the places where Smuglers frequent may succeed to Mr Jerams District and be stationed at Niton which arrangement Mr Grimes Supervisor of Riding Officers is of Opinion may be for the benefit of the Service & it will also be agreeable to all the Parties. (The arrangement was agreed to by the Board on the 21 June 1787.)

26 June 1787 The Hydrometer which has been sent to this port from Mr Gilbert of London in consequence of our application to your Honours of 16 December last is found on tryall not to agree with the like instrument used by the officers of Excise hereon which account we are subjected to great inconvenience and difficulty in the disposal of seized goods.

For spirits which by our Hydrometer appear to be of the strength of one in six under, proof when try'd by the officers of excise are only one in five under proof and as such they refuse to admit them into dealer's stocks tho' purchased at Custom House sale.

We know not from what cause the difference between the two instruments arises, both appear to be Clarke's Hydrometers and the officers of Excise contend that theirs has been try'd by other Hydrometers and found correct, it does not correspond with the one sent to us.

We therefore have thought it necessary to send back the instrument to Mr Gilbert and submit to your Honors if you will not be pleas'd to give directions that the same may be examined and made correct & that the difficulties we have experienced in the disposal of condemned Spirits may not occur again on account of the Hydrometer not corresponding with the one used by the Officers of Excise.

26 June 1787 Cornelius Rose a noted Smugler of whom your Honors by an Order date 24th April last directed a Prosecution be commenc'd for Smugling was on the 23rd Inst. arrested by Warrant upon a writ of Capias & has since been lodg'd in Winchester Goal.

But having on his Passage from here to Southampton endeavour'd to escape by jumping overboard and attempting to swim to Shore, which however he was prevented from effecting by the action of the Officers who took their Boat with some difficulty secur'd him again, and being a very resolute Man & daring Offender of which description some who were confin'd on smugling Charges in Winchester Goal, have found means to effect their escape.

We beg to submit to your Honors, if it may not be necessary that the keeper of the Prison should, under your directions, be caution'd to be particularly careful the said Rose does not improperly obtain his liberty, or in case the Goal at Winchester is not sufficiently secure that application be made to have him remov'd to a place of greater safety.

31 June 1787 John Powis one of the Extra Tidesmen & Boatmen at this Port who by our Letter of 28th November last we acquainted your Honors was directed by us to repair to Niton to do the duty of a Riding Officer at that Station during the vacancy occasioned by the dismissal of John Jeram, having officiated in that capacity from the 28th November to the 11th April both dates inclusive humbly

prays your Honors will be pleased to allow his pay of Two Shillings a day to be made equal to a Riding Officers Salary during the time he was employ'd.

We beg leave to represent that it appears by the Certificate Mr Grimes Supervisor of Officers that Powis has performed his duty properly and that he kept a horse the whole time he was acting as a Riding Officer, if your Honors think proper to grant his request he will be entitled to Five Pounds nineteen shillings and ten pence as more fully appended by the statement below.

A Riding Officers Salary from 28 th Nov. to 11 th April at £50 per annum for 135 days.	18 – 19 – 10
Of which Powis has already received Day Pay of 2/- per day for 135 days.	<u>13 – 10 – 0</u>
Amount due	5 – 19 – 10

4 August 1787 Herewith you will receive the Copy of the Certificate of Registry which has been granted at this Port in the last month. (The Registry of British Ships was a role carried out by Customs at Cowes from 1786 until about 1990.)

9 August 1787 Mr John Taylor lately appointed a Landing Waiter at this Port in the room of Lancelot Focquet resigned has this day been admitted to his Employment.

13 September 1787 Application having been made to us by Messrs. Mackenzie & Co. Importers of Sundry Cargoes of Rice at this Port for an Allowance of Duty on Account of Damage thereon, and the cause of the said Damage having been prov'd on Oath, we in conjunction with the Land Surveyor & Land Waiters having examined the same judge the several quantities particularized in the account in the back hereof to be reasonable & proper allowance for damage on each Ships Cargo, we humbly pray your Honors to allow the Bonds entered into at Importation to be cancelled for the amount of Duties on the said damaged Rice and the usual Damage Certificate to be pass'd.

13 September 1787 A Cutter called the Somerset of the Berthen of 25 Tons navigated with 8 men and belonging to Margate, having put into this Port, the Master who reports that he is bound for the Dover Channel to look for Boats to Pilot to the Eastwards, produced the enclosed Register, but on being ask'd for his Licence said he had none nor did he know it was necessary the Vessel being smooth Bottom'd and that no Cutter Clink worked Bottom'd vessels ever sail'd with Licences.

We beg leave to observe that by the 4th Sect. of the Act of 24 of the present Majesty Ch. 47 all Vessels called Cutters of whatever build soever are Forfeited, unless sailing under a Licence obtain'd from the Lords of the Admiralty.

The Vessel in question has a running Bowsprit, appears in every Respect fitted and rigg'd as a Cutter & what is more is described in the Certificate of Registry as a Cutter, notwithstanding which the Master contends that because she is a Carvel build Vessel she is not a Cutter nor compell'd to sail under a Licence, that at Dover & other Ports to the Eastwards Vessels similar to his are allowed to sail without Licences & that he has been in many Ports before without being stopped.

But it appears to us that by the words of that Act that Cutter of what build soever are prohibited & the Vessel in question being Registered as a Cutter, we think it is incumbent on the Master to have obtain'd a Licence and if she is not a Cutter she is improperly Registered & must be considered as sailing without a Register, that in either case we conceive her to be liable to Forfeiture, have therefore thought it our Duty to direct the Tide Surveyor to stop the Vessel to afford us an opportunity of stating our case to your Honors on which we humbly pray your directions.

21 September 1787 In return to your order of reference on the inclosed Petition of John Rowe Junior praying the delivery of a Vessel under detention at this Port. We beg leave to report that the Vessel in question detained for the reasons set out in our Letter to your Honors of 13th Inst. and by your Order dated the following day, we have been directed to proceed with the Prosecution of the said Cutter.

We do not think it likely that the Vessel's being called a Cutter in the certificate of Registry can have proceeded from any mistake of the Collector, Sandwich as stated by the Petitioner for we presume the Certificate of Registry was granted on the previous Affidavits of the owner & Certificate of the

Surveying Officer and we submit your Honors will not think it right to direct those documents to be transmitted from the Port where the Vessel was Registered, to see if they correspond with what is alledged in the Petition, or with the Certificate of Registry which was produced here by the Master, and which accompanied our letter of 13th Inst.

With respect to the Instrument of Sale herewith returned, & which has been laid before your Honors with a view to proving that the Vessel was originally called a yawl or a smack, we very much doubt if that was the original Bill of Sale, or at least we suspect it was not fill'd at the time it was dated viz 22 August 1786 & when the Purchase Money as appears by the Receipt on the back was paid, for we think your Honors will observe a manifest difference not only in the colour of the Ink but in the handwriting in the Body of the Instrument of Sale and that of the date thereon. Add to which the Affidavit which has been laid before you & is also herewith return'd, states that the original Bill of Sale is dated 18 May 1786 whereas the date of the Instrument of Sale now produced is 22 August 1786, all of which is respectfully submitted.

1 October 1787 Mr John Miller Tide Surveyor at this Port being at present very ill & unable to attend his Duty, we have thought it necessary for the Service to direct Robert Willis one of the Established Boatmen on a salary of Thirty pounds per annum to officiate for the Tide Surveyor during his illness and we shall take care that Mr Willis's Station at Yarmouth be in the meantime supplied by a proper Extraman if the Service is to require it.

17 October 1787 In return to your order of the 6th Inst. directing us to call upon Cornelius Rose, a prisoner in Winchester Goal for smuggling, to state if he has any objection to be moved to Newgate, we beg leave to acquaint your Honours that the Keeper of Winchester Gaol informs us that Rose applied for a writ of Habeas Corpus to remove himself to the Fleet Prison soon after he had been committed to Winchester Goal and that he was accordingly conveyed to Fleet Prison on 10 July last where he believes that he now is.

18 October 1787 On the 14th Instant died Mr John Miller Tide Surveyor at this Port and in pursuance of directions in your Order of the 18th September 1782 we beg leave to remind your Honors of your resolution to discontinue on the first vacancy the incidental allowance of Ten Pounds per annum which has been paid to Mr Miller in addition to his Salary on Establishment of £40 per annum.

24 October 1787 A Vessel called the Fox of Folkestone of which one Thomas Hall a noted Smugler is the Master having been seized with a cargo of Spirits and brought into this Port by the Excise Cutter, we called upon the Seizing Officer to know if the Certificate of Registry had been delivered to him by the Master of the Seized Vessel.

But he informed us that when he fell in with the Vessel she was at Anchor and that the Master and Crew had all quitt'd her before he got on board.

We therefore beg leave to submit to your Honors if you will not think it expedient that the Collector & Comptroller at the Port to which the Vessel belongs should be directed to call from the Owners or Master for the Certificate of Registry in order that the same may not be cancelled & to prevent it being made use of to *protect* any Vessel.

6 November 1787 In return to your Order of the 2nd Instant we transmit a Certificate of the Age of Thomas Francis who is nominated to be Tide Surveyor at this Port in the room of John Miller Deceased and we beg leave to report that the said Thomas Francis in not at present employed in the Service but appears to us to be sufficiently active and capable of performing the Duty of the Office to which he is nominated. (He was admitted to Employment on the 24th November.)

15 November 1787 The several Seizures of Tobacco and Tobacco Stems particularized on the back hereof having been condemned and burnt pursuant to your Order for that purpose. The Seizing Officers humbly pray your Honors to allow them the usual rewards for the same being for the 4744 lbs of sound Tobacco after the rate of 3d per lb Fifty nine Pounds Six shillings and for 4296 lbs of Tobacco Stems at 1d per lb Seventeen pound eighteen Shillings which is respectfully submitted.

1786		lb
Nov. 28	Geo. Granger & Wm Cooper – sound manufactured Tobacco	3
Dec. 25	Wm Ferris – sound manufactured Tobacco	134
1787		
Feby. 23	Chas Richie– sound manufactured Tobacco	34
March 12	Edward Pellew– sound manufactured Tobacco	3346
May 20	Richard Craddick– sound manufactured Tobacco	23
June 8	Chas Richie– sound manufactured Tobacco	28
May 12	Francis Sarmon– sound manufactured Tobacco	1000
June 2	Wm Ferris– sound manufactured Tobacco	184
	Wm Ferris– sound Tobacco stems	<u>4296</u>
	4744 lb sound Tobacco @ 3d per lb	59 – 6 – 0
	4296 lb Tobacco Stems @ 1d per lb	<u>17 – 18 – 0</u>
		<u>77 – 4 – 0</u>

19 November 1787 Mr John Scriven a Tidewaiter and Boatman upon the Establishment at this Port died on the 16th Instant.

2 December 1787 Having in obedience to your Order called upon Roberts, contractor, of the “Speedwell” cutter stationed at this port to report if he had any and what objection the contract being discontinued on the 5th Jany. next, Mr Roberts acquainted us that having been called upon by the Collr & Compr. of Shoreham to answer the same enquiry he has already sent his answer of which we enclose a duplicate.

28 December 1787 The purchasers of Spirits and other Exciseable Goods at the Sales at this Port complain much of the inconvenience that they are put to by the delay which they are frequently subject to in waiting for Excise Permits to enable them to *remove* the Goods they have purchased from the Custom House Warehouse.

We beg leave to report that the Custom House being situated at East Cowes and the Excise Officers Residence on the other side of the water the distance which purchasers are obliged to go for the purpose is considerable, and the Excise Officer having other Business to attend and a District out of Town to Survey he is often from House when Permits are applied for and when it happens that he does not return until after four o'clock in the afternoon it is then too late to issue Permits which prevents the purchaser from returning here the same day whereby they not only incur greater expense but also a loss of time which together operate much to the prejudice of Sales.

We do not mention this or complain against the Officer of Excise who we believe attends this Port of his Duty as much as he can consistently with his attention to other Business, but we humbly hope if the Officers of Customs are not thought of as competent to issue Permits to protect Condemned Spirits sold at Custom House Sales in their removal from the Houses of the Purchasers. That your Honors will be pleased to apply to the Commissioners of Excise that an Officer may be ordered to attend at Custom House for the purpose of granting Permits during the time allotted for delivering the Goods after every sale which is generally about Ten days or a Fortnight.

31 December 1787 Mr John Miller late Tide Surveyor at this Port who by your Order of August 8th 1786 was nominated to survey such Ships or Vessels as were required to be Registered at this Port under the late Act of Parliament being deceased. We beg leave to recommend Mr Thomas Francis the present Tide Surveyor as a proper Person to succeed Mr Miller as Surveyor of Ships and Vessels pursuant to the Registry thereof, for which employment we deem him very capable and well qualified.

7 January 1788 Inclosed we transmit a Memorial delivered, to us by Mr William Ferris, Mate of the Speedwell Cutter, late in the Contract employ at this port, and which at his request we transmit to your Honours, he therein humbly praying that your Honours will in consideration of his long and faithful Services be pleased to continue him in your Service either as a Commander or Mate of some one of the Cutters which may be put upon Incidents.

In justice to Mr Ferris, we deem it incumbent on us say that we think him a very good & active officer in all respects qualified for the command of a Cutter, that he has conducted himself with great propriety since the Cutter has been stationed at this Port, that we deem him a man of integrity and is he continues to discharge his Duty in the Manner he hath hitherto done, we trust he will prove deserving any encouragement your Honors may think proper to give him.

29 January 1788 In return to your Order of 23rd Instant we beg leave to report that James Russell who is nominated to be a Tidewaiter & Boatman at this Port is not the Person of that name who was dismissed from the Employment of a Establish'd Waterman in the Port of London on 13 October 1786, the person now nominated never yet having been employed in the Service. Inclosed we transmit his Age & Qualification which we beg to refer. (Russell was stated to be in "his Forty First year of age" and "Qualified for the Management of a Boat".)

26 February 1788 Inclosed we transmit a Letter received by the Collector from Robert Willis, a boatman upon the Establishment of this Port and at present stationed at Yarmouth where he has the management & care of a Boat signifying that he has been drawn to serve in the Isle of Wight Militia.

We beg leave to observe that if Officers of Customs in general cannot plead a legal exemption from serving in the Militia, we apprehend those of the Waterguard cannot be compelled to serve. We think also in the present case, Willis having a Family of six Children to support upon an income of Thirty pounds p. annum might with 'no impropriety, plead an exemption as a Poor man add to which he is by your Honor's Deputation appointed a Boatman upon the Establishment of this Port and as such we humbly apprehend liable to be called upon to do duty at any part of it where his Service may be required notwithstanding his present residence is at Yarmouth for which *Guard* he has been drawn.

We beg leave further to inform your Honors that James Russell one of the Established Tidewaiters and Boatmen at this Port and John *Herbert* and Extraordinary Tidesman and Boatman by Certificate have also been drawn Militia Men, and we are likewise told that neither ourselves nor any other Officers of Customs are exempted from serving in the Militia that our names must be included in the Lists returned and that if balloted for, we must either serve or find substitutes, respecting which we humbly pray your directions for our government.

28 February 1788 By your order of the 9th Ult. you were pleased to signify your *agreement* of continuing on incidents the Swan Cutter & six oar'd Boat stationed at this Port and their employ if under contact with the Collector, and the Swan Cutter should be continued under the same Commander with the allowance specified in the Order.

No particular directions are given in the order respecting the continuance of Charles Ritchie Sitter of the six oar'd Boat, nor were we ordered to call in his Deputation

We therefore thought it for the benefit of the Service for him to keep the Boat Employ'd as he had before until we should receive your further orders, which we humbly hope will meet your approbation.

We beg leave to represent to your Honors, that we think it would be proper if the Sitter of the said Boat should be directed to keep a Journal, in the same manner as the Commanders of Cutter do, that we may be able to ascertain how and where the Boat is employ'd and that and that we should be authorised to direct the Boat occasionally to shift her station and rendezvous at different places on the Coast of the Island as we may judge necessary in order to more effectually counteract the schemes of the Smuglers, and we have already found it necessary to direct the Sitter of the Boat on no account to send out his Boatmen by land under a pretence of searching for run goods without their being accompanied either by himself or the Chief Boatman who has also a Deputation which regulation we hope your Honors will approve.

And we further beg leave to submit to your consideration the following arrangement in the waterguard of this Port which we think it will be for the benefit of the Service to adopt, namely that the two Boatmen who are stationed at St Hellens shall as long as the six oar'd Boat continues to rendezvous there, be employed at Yarmouth where with the assistance of the two Boatmen now stationed there and one additional Man to be selected out of the Established Boatmen or from the most active on the Extra List a Boats Crew of Four Men & a Sitter would be formed who from their station would be enabled to board & examine all Vessels passing in or out at the Needles and might occasionally *meet*

with the Boat stationed at St Hellens and by keeping a good lookout in the daytime on the contiguous Hills would be enabled to intercept or detect the Smuglers who land goods in the different Bays at the South West part of the Isle of Wight and would also be enabled to act with the other Revenue Boats against the Smugglers in the Neighbourhood of Hurst Castle and on the North Shore between thence and Christchurch Head, and which the two Boatmen now at Yarmouth are not able themselves to do.

This arrangement would we think operate as a check upon the Smuglers and be attend with the additional expence of one Mans Salary of £30 per Annum (unless your Honors should think it expedient to allow by way of management an additional £10 per Annum to the Sitter of the Boat who we humbly recommend to be Robert Willis one of the Boatmen at Yarmouth who is an active Officer and in every way qualified for such a situation) we are humbly of the opinion it will be for the benefit of the Revenue to make Tryal of it for a Year. (A marginal note states 'Charles Ritchie to be continued Sitter – to keep Journals as proposed, but the removal of the Officers at St Hellens not approved.)

29 March 1788 As directed by your Order of the 18th Instant we have called upon Mr Sarmon Commander of the Swan Cutter to account for his Conduct in craving sundry articles for the Cutters use before the same were wanted and inclosed we transmit his Answer thereto and as to that part of your Order directing us to assign our reasons for supplying such craves to be made without first informing ourselves of the necessity. We beg leave to report that always having considered the Commander of a Cutter to be the best and prepared Judge of what was necessary for the use and service of the Cutter we did not think we should be warranted in objecting to any crave made by him unless we had any particular reason for supposing which in the present case we had not; that any such craves were unnecessary or improperly made, but if any accident should happen to a Cruizer from her not being supplied with such articles as the Commander thought necessary, we might be deemed *responsible* for opposing our judgment to his in matters which we cannot be supposed to be such competent judges as the Commanders themselves.

And as it may necessarily be some time after the application is made and Estimates transmitted before an Order can be received for providing the articles and the Tradesmen to furnish the same, we have thought it right to recommend to the Commander of Cutters to always give in their craves for stores in time that the Service might not suffer by waiting for them.

On referring to our Letter of 21st February we find that by mistake we called that a cable which by your Order of the 21st August was ordered to be provided, it was only the Hawser and which we presume may have led your Honors to suppose the Cable craved in December 1786 and ordered on 2nd January following had not been provided, but which is not the case.

14 April 1788 In return to your Order of the 1st Instant, we beg leave to report that William Gregory a Tidewaiter & Boatman at this Port was absent through indisposition between the 1st March 1787 & 1st March 1788 at different times, six Months in whole.

He has now been upon duty since the first of March last, and appears as capable of doing his Business as he has been for some years past, but the Apothecary who attended him informs us that his Complaints having originally been brought on by former Excesses in Drinking the Continuance of his Health will in great measure depend on his refraining from Liquor which he promises most faithfully to do & indeed has conducted himself with sobriety for some considerable time past.

16 April 1788 A Schedule of Accounts sent to the Honorable Commissioners of Customs:

No.1	Collectors Quarter Book
2	Comptrollers Quarter Book
3	Customers Quarter Book
4	State of Bonds
5	Merchants Bonds in Process & Wool Bonds under discharge
6	Personal prosecutions
7	Ships discharged from the Plantations
8	Wool brought Coastwise
9	Wool sent Coastwise
10	Uncertified Bonds for Lead, Tin & Coal
11	Masters Reports Inwards

- 12 Masters Reports Outwards
- 13 Ships Inwards ordered as Coastwise
- 14 Corn Exported and Bounties paid.
- 15 Naval Stores Imported
- 16 *Surveyor & Jerquer* Account of Imports and Exports
- 17 *Surveyor & Jerquer* Account of Coals
- 18 Tobacco Coastwise for H Halcombe Esq. – Nil
- 19 List of Certificates of Registry granted & Endorsements added
- 20 Cancelled Certificates of Registry
- 21 Prohibited East India Goods for year ending 5th April 1788

18 April 1788 The Tide Surveyor having represented to us that a new Boat is much wanted for the use of the Boatmen stationed at Yarmouth within this Port. Inclosed we submit an estimate of the Expencc which will attend providing the same and which amounts to Thirteen pounds one shilling and three pence.

We beg leave to report that the Boat now craved is to supply the of one that is worn out in the Service and which was some time since sold pursuant to your Honors order for that purpose.

We should have transmitted the Estimate sooner but waited to know your determination of our proposal of adding two additional Boatmen to the Yarmouth Station which had your Honors acceded we would have submitted an Estimate for a larger Boat but the Tide Surveyor reports and we concur in opinion with him that Boat applied for is necessary for the Officers now at Yarmouth to board Ships and Vessels in Yarmouth Road and occasionally to go upon the lookout in the various Bays between Yarmouth and the Needles, and that a Boat of the dimensions proposed may be managed by themselves, or upon occasions reinforced by those Extramen should the Service in any emergency require it.

24 April 1788 Inclosed we submit for your consideration a charge which we have thought it necessary to give to Stephen Saunders one of the Coal Meters at this Port for inattention to our orders and for not taking proper care of two Coal Bushels which were entrusted to him.

We also transmit his answer thereto, upon which we beg to observe that if the Coal Meters will take it upon themselves to deliver more Coals out of any Ship to which they may be appointed than they are authorized by Warrant to do, it puts it out of our power to stop any surplus quantity of Coals which the Master may have on board after the quantity specified on their Certificates & Cocketts are delivered, if we should see cause to do it or suspect any Fraud.

In the present case the Duties have been paid on the *surplus* which was ten Chaldrons, the Cocket being for Ninety four Chaldrons Newcastle measured and the quantity discharged was Two hundred Chaldrons *Winchester* measure.

We have no reason to suspect any Fraud was intended and the Meter appears to be sensible of this Error which we believe proceeded more from ignorance and inattention than any intentional disobedience of our order, and he promises to be more carefull and attentive in future if your Honors will have the goodness to pass over his Offence.

He says he desired the Master to make another *declaration* and that it was his intention to have note of whether he might deliver the surplus Quantity if he had found any Superior Officer at the Office but he confesses it was before Eight O'Clock in the Morning that he appeared there.

With respect to the second Article of the Charge, we are now satisfied that the Coal Bushels were not broken intentionally through any fault of the Meters. Two persons belonging to the Ship proved that the Bushels were not misused on board, and a Smith who we employed to examine them has reported that the Handles we weak and defective and that one appear'd to have been solder'd and the other in part broke through before.

But it being somewhat unusual a thing to have two Coal Bushels (almost new ones) broke in a day that we could not but suspect they had been abused and therefore thought it our Duty to charge the Meter therewith.

PS Saunders has not before had any Charge given him.

The Charge given by the Collector & Comptroller to Stephen Saunders Coal Meter

1st That notwithstanding the positive and repeated orders given you by us at different times, not to deliver of any Ship to which you may be appointed a Meter a greater quantity of Coals than your Warrant expresses that the Duties have been paid or secured upon without previously receiving our permission or directions for so doing, you did on the 14th Inst. deliver out of the Resolution of Sunderland John Wood Master, to which Ship you appointed a Meter Ten Chaldrons of Coals more than you had any Warrant or authority to deliver & that also the Quantity express'd in the Cocket had been discharged,

2nd That you either intentionally or through negligence broke off the Handles of two Coal Bushels entrusted to your care as a Coal Meter to admeasure Coals from the aforementioned Ship Resolution.

To the aforegoing Charges you are hereby required to give plain and distinct answers in writing on or before Friday the 18th Inst. taking care to avoid all scurrilous and abusive language and to return the Charge with your answer.

The Answer

I received your dated the 15th of this Instant you say Gentlemen that I have done contrary to your orders, I asked of the Master of the Ship to make a fresh Entry whereof he declared that there was no occasion for it as he had made two Entry's before. I came to the Custom House twice in the same Morning for to change the Bushels which two of the Handles came off in my Hands as I was doing my Duty and my intention was to have ask'd if any Superior Officer was there, their advice, Gentlemen, as I have committed an Error, I am determind to do so no more, Gentlemen, as for the Handles of the two Bushels you examined two sufficient witnesses which proved it was no intention of mine to do any injury to them.