The East India Company was formed in 1600 and its charter gave it a monopoly of all English (and later British) trade east of the Cape of Good Hope and west of Cape Horn. The monopoly began to be challenged in the late eighteenth century, for instance by whaling companies. In 1813 the Company’s new charter limited the monopoly to the China trade. The Company ceased to be a trading organisation in 1833 and it was nationalised in 1858.

In the seventeenth century the Company sent about eight ships each year to India, the East Indies and later China. The number grew significantly in the eighteenth century. In 1787/88, for instance, there were 33 sailings, in 1807/8 there were 43 sailings, and in 1827/28 there were 38 sailings.

By the eighteenth century the East Indiamen were not owned by the Company but were built to specifications agreed on between the Company and the managing owners on the understanding they would be hired by the Company. A Principal Managing Owner represented the shareholders in their negotiations with the Company. The owners were responsible for providing the officers and crews. At the end of a voyage the commander of a ship would normally hand over a fair copy of his journal to East India House. After the Company was nationalised, the journals were transferred to the India Office Library.

The East India Company was unenthusiastic about the formation of a convict settlement at New South Wales. The British Government, in an effort to reduce costs, was keen to use East Indiamen to transport convicts to Botany Bay. At first, the Company was sometimes willing to charter convict ships on the return voyage. For example, three of the ships in the First Fleet, the Charlotte, Lady Penrhyn and Scarborough, were charted and sailed from Port Jackson to China in May 1788. (With one or two exceptions, journals that only cover the return voyages have not been filmed.) After about 1795, a growing number of East Indiamen were charted to bring convicts, free settlers, provisions and other goods to New South Wales (and occasionally Tasmania). After visiting Port Jackson, the ships invariably sailed to China or India where they loaded tea, textiles and other goods before returning to Britain.


Explanatory note

The Downs is a roadstead in the southern North Sea, lying between the Dover Strait and the Thames Estuary, where ships sailing into or out of the Thames waited for favourable winds. Long Reach is a point near Gravesend, Kent, where East Indiamen traditionally stopped to lighten their loads before sailing up the Thames.

Whampoa, Second Bar and Lintin were anchorages on the Pearl River between Macao and Canton (Guangzhou) used by East Indiamen and other European vessels.
IOR/L/MAR/B. Ships’ journals, logs and related records, 1702-1856

Reel M1620

206A: *Coromandel*

Captain Alexander Stirling

Journal, 3 November 1801 – 4 July 1803


Convicts embarked: 138 men

338F: *Royal Admiral*

Captain Essex H. Bond

Journal, 8 April 1792 – 24 August 1793

Torbay (departed 30 May 1792) – Cape of Good Hope – Port Jackson (7 Oct. – 13 Nov. 1792) – Whampoa – Bocca Tigris – St Helena – Downs.

Convicts embarked: 299 men, 49 women

338I: *Royal Admiral*

Captain William Wilson

Journal, 8 April 1800 – 9 August 1802


Convicts embarked: 300 men
9D:  *Warren Hastings*

Captain John P. Larkins

Journal, 22 January 1787 – 23 October 1788 (Francis Leigh, Chief Mate)


**Reel M1621**

86B:  *Ganges*

Captain John H. Dempster

Journal, 27 July 1781 – 9 May 1785


195A-B:  *Sovereign*

Captain George Storey

Journal, 11 May 1795 – 24 February 1797


353A:  *Bellona*

Captain Matthew Lloyd

Journal, 24 July 1791 – 29 September 1794


Convicts embarked: 17 women

404R  *Prince of Wales*

Captain William Milner

Journal, 10 June 1796 – 18 July 1797
Portsmouth (departed 26 June 1796) – Port Jackson (2 – 24 Nov. 1796) – Macao – Whampoa – Second Bar.

**Reel M1622**

427A:  *Young William*

Captain James Mortlock

Journal, 11 September 1794 – 4 August 1796


466D:  *Resolution*

Captain Thomas Poynting

Journal, 19 December 1778 – 31 December 1780


585H:  *Warwick*

Captain James Dewar

Journal, 5 November 1759 – 7 July 1762


**Reel M1623**

215I:  *Ceres*

Captain Thomas Hedley

Journal, 22 July 1795 – 20 March 1797

14F:  *Minerva*

Captain Joseph Salkeld

*Journal, 6 August 1798 – 26 May 1801*


Convicts embarked: 165 men, 26 women

77A:  *Hercules*

Captain Luckyn Betts

*Journal, 2 July 1801 – 5 July 1803*


Convicts embarked: 140 men, 25 women

314A:  *Canada*

Captain William Wilkinson

*Journal, 16 May 1801 – 25 March 1803*


Convicts embarked: 104 men

334A:  *Nile*

Captain John Sunter

*Journal, 30 March 1801 – 5 March 1803*


Convicts embarked: 96 women

*Reel M1624*
335A-B:  *Minorca*

Captain John Leith

Journal, 30 March 1801 – 28 February 1803


 Convicts embarked: 104 men

Note: Some pages very faint.

358B:  *Friendship*

Captain Hugh Reid

Journal, 10 May 1800 – 17 July 1801

Port Jackson (departed 10 May 1800) – Malacca – Penang – Culpee - St Helena – Long Reach.

407A-B:  *Duff*

Captain: James Wilson

Journal, 21 July 1796 – 31 July 1798


420G:  *Barwell*

Captain John Cameron

Journal, 26 July 1797 – 17 October 1799


 Convicts embarked: 296 men

**Reel M1625**
27E: Atlas
Captain Richard Brooks
Journal, 16 July 1801 – 27 June 1803
Convicts embarked: 151 men, 28 women

27F: Atlas
Captain Thomas Musgrave
Journal, 15 December 1801 – 12 January 1804
Convicts embarked: 208 men

56B: Marquis of Wellington
Captain George Betham
Journal, 20 June 1814 – 3 February 1816
Convicts embarked: 200 men

73B: Henry Porcher
Captain John Thomson
Journal, 3 June 1825 – 8 October 1826 (Archibald Morris, Chief Mate)
Convicts embarked: 176 men

78A: Guildford
Captain Magnus Johnson
Journal, 14 June 1811 – 21 Nov. 1812


Reel M1626

88A:  England

Captain John Reay

Deck log, 21 Oct. 1826 – 6 July 1827

Downs (departed 6 May 1826) - Port Jackson (21 Oct. 1826) – Whampoa.

174C:  Alexander

Captain James Normand

Journal, 8 February 1802 – 18 December 1803


176B-D:  Providence

Captain Andrew Barclay

B: Journal, 7 June 1810 – 17 October 1812
C-D: Journal, 14 May 1811 – 17 October 1812  (Forrest Hamilton, Chief Mate)


Convicts embarked: 140 men, 41 women

184G:  William Pitt

Captain John Boyce

Journal, 4 May 1805 – 7 August 1807


Convicts embarked:  120 women
Reel M1627

222J-K: Ocean

Captain John Mertha

J: Journal, 15 February – 27 October 1803
K: Journal, 26 August 1804 – 15 October 1805


Note: Some pages very faint.

254A-B: General Graham

Captain William Watson

A: Journal, 12 June 1811 – 18 May 1813 (William Bendall, Chief Mate)
B: Journal, 3 July 1812 – 16 May 1813 (William Rainbett, Second Mate)


Note: Some pages very faint.

261H-I: Mary

Captain David Lachlan

Journal, 16 September 1811 – 12 August 1813


312A: Rolla

Captain Robert Cumming

Journal, 4 November 1802 – 5 November 1804


Convicts embarked: 127 men, 37 women
365A: *Perseus*

Captain John Davison

Journal, 1 November 1801 – 22 August 1802


Convicts embarked: 113 men

786A: *Indefatigable*

Captain John Cross

Journal, 7 June 1812 – 9 June 1814


Convicts embarked: 200 men

Note: Some pages very faint.