

English East India Company Logbooks – Early Instrumental Marine Observations

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The English East India Company (EEIC), best known for trading exotic goods from India and China back to Europe, is now providing a wealth of historical weather observations for climate research. Left untapped for many centuries, archived logbooks containing daily barometric pressures and air temperatures are currently being digitized to extend instrumental marine records back to the late 18th Century. The EEIC logbooks offer the earliest and largest organized collection of marine observations available spanning the years 1789-1834, and cover the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Early analyses of the data are yielding surprising results and may provide clues to climate impacts of significant global events of the past, including the Tambora eruption of 1815. Discoveries of previously unknown tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean as well as rare sympiesometric pressure readings, a compact and lightweight type of marine barometer that was widely used on ships in the 19th century, are also some of the highlight discoveries within the logs. The opportunity for additional significant finds is high. As digitization progresses, spatial and temporal coverage for this early period will continue to be enhanced and will yield valuable information for various research and reanalysis groups to aid in understanding the earth's historical climate.