

THE CLIWOC MULTILINGUAL DICTIONARY (1750 = 1850)



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CLIWOC

Why prepare a dictionary?

Logbooks from the period 1750 to 1850 contain daily notes on the weather and, very importantly, the force of the wind.

The ships of the Dutch, Spanish, English and French navies sailed the oceans of the World, recording as they went. These accounts provide a uniquely detailed and geographically wide-ranging set of observations

These descriptions are written using archaic terms, and if we want to use these data for scientific purposes they need to be expressed in modern day Beaufort Scale terms.

The CLIWOC multilingual dictionary was written to meet the needs of the project, and of other scientists wanting to explore this important source of paleo-climatic data.

Different languages: different schemes

Each language offered not only its own vocabulary, but each vocabulary was itself of a different nature.

Dutch terms: many Dutch terms were based on the effect that the wind had on the ship, using the names of the sails that could be carried under certain conditions.

Spanish terms: these were often lengthier and more descriptive.

French and English terms: both tended to be terse and scientific in character, drawing attention to the wind force and origin (Trade winds for example), and rarely to the effect of the wind on the ship.

Steady breeze: BF 5
Steady gale: BF 6
Steady trade: BF 6
Stiff breeze: BF 6, OBT, but changed to strong breeze in the 1838 Beaufort Scale

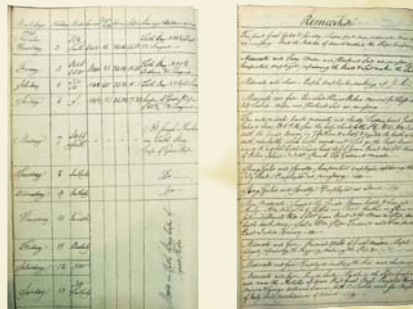
Some sample lines from the CLIWOC dictionary showing the Beaufort (BF) number expressions of archaic terms

The purpose of the dictionary

The principal purpose of the dictionary is to allow the ready translation of any archaic wind force term in use during the period 1750 to 1850 into a modern-day Beaufort Scale value.

There are sections devoted to Dutch, French, English and Spanish terms.

The dictionary includes a brief account of terms where they have a particular history or provenance.



Two facing pages of a typical English logbook from the late eighteenth century. Navigational data are on the left page, more general accounts, including wind force, are on the right.

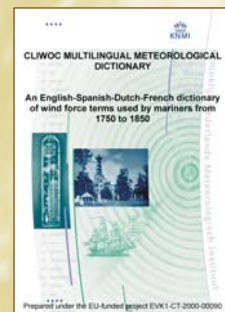
Order from linguistic chaos

Not only are there the obvious difficulties of the descriptions being in different languages, but many of the terms have changed meaning over the past two centuries. Some have long passed out of use.

For this reason the different language-based sections were prepared separately, and the dictionary brought together at the final stages.

The meaning of the many hundreds of wind force terms was estimated by content analysis and by cross-referencing with contemporary documents and dictionaries. Other logbook entries such as the ship's speed, or the sails carried provided additional clues to the meaning of terms.

Only a small proportion, less than 5 per cent, of terms could not be equated with a Beaufort force. These were rarely-used expressions, often unique to one document or recording officer.



Dictionary cover page

If you want a copy of the dictionary, downloadable versions are available in pdf format from the project website at:

www.ucm.es/info/cliwoc

Printed copies are available by contacting Dennis Wheeler at:

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CLIWOC – Climatological Data Base for the World's Oceans: 1750 – 1850.
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