

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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THE INVENTOR OF THE BEAUFORT SCALE

The Beaufort scale, according to which sailors throughout the world generally express the force of the wind, was invented about 1806 by Francis Beaufort, who was then a commander in the British Navy and who later became Rear Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort. The son of a clergyman, he was born at Collon, Ireland, in 1774 and entered the navy in 1787. He saw much active service afloat in the early days of his naval career and in one engagement received no fewer than 19 wounds. It was while in command of the "Woolwich", during the three years 1805-07, that he drew up his wind scale and also a system of symbols for recording the state of the weather, now called the Beaufort weather notation.

Beaufort devised both the wind scale and the weather notation for use in his private logs, where they first appear in an entry for Jan. 13, 1806. Apparently they were never used elsewhere until 1838, as they are not found in the official logs of the "Woolwich" or in those of any of the other ships in which Beaufort served. They were officially introduced into the British navy in 1838, but were not adopted by the British merchant marine until some years later.

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