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**The Royal Navy and Northeastern North America, 1689-1713**

**William R. Miles**


**A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts (History)**

**Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia**


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**23 August 2000**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**The Royal Navy and Northeastern North America, 1689-1713**

**William R. Miles**

**23 August 2000**

**This thesis examines warships of the English/British Royal Navy sent to North America during the Nine Years War (1689-1698) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1713). Particular attention is placed on station ships and convoys sent to New England and Newfoundland. The Royal Navy represented a routine and constant transatlantic link as North Atlantic colonies began to merge with a centralised imperial bureaucracy . The ships and men sent overseas were not afterthoughts of naval administration, but directly connected with their brethren serving in the main fleets. Given the erratic nature of squadron deployment to North America during this period, the dispatch of small groups of ships offered a more stable naval presence. Trends within naval and colonial historiography have often determined such links to be unimportant. However, utilisation of recent transatlantic analyses can provide a framework for studying the smaller ships of Europe's largest navy.**

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## DEFINITION OF TERMS

This thesis examines warships of the English/British Royal Navy off North America between 1689 and 1713. Several terms and phrases used within require specific definition. The geographic boundaries of this work represent what has become known as Northeastern North America. This region encompasses the land mass from New England to Newfoundland. However, references simply to North America or America imply inclusion of the eastern seaboard of North America but exclude the Caribbean, which will be identified separately. These distinctions are necessary as certain conclusions concerning convoys and station ships apply to the whole English Atlantic while others are specific to Northeastern North America.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century the term “convoy” meant any warship performing convoy duty and less frequently referred to merchantmen and their accompanying warships. So long as no confusion results, both definitions will be employed. The twentieth century equivalent, “escort,” will be used as sparingly as possible. Also seldom used will be the word “frigate.” Frigate was in general use to describe any small warship and only came to represent a particular type towards the end of the eighteenth century. The same is true of the term “cruiser” which describes any vessel on detached duty from a fleet or squadron. Cruiser is frequently used to make a clear distinction from a ship on convoy, hence the Cruisers and Convoys Act of 1708.

Spelling within all quotations will be modernised although syntax remains as found. Geographic locations will also be modernised although ships with names



corresponding to places will be left as originally spelt. Many ship's names had multiple spellings and those used here represent the more frequently found variations within the documents. For extreme examples, such as the *Arundell*, usage will correspond to those found in David Lyon's *The Sailing Navy List*. All general information on ships is based the Admiralty List Books, again supplemented by Lyon and other sources.

Some authors, including Lyon, have questioned the accuracy of exclusively employing the term "Royal Navy" to describe what was arguably one of the least royal navies in Europe. Expediency and force of tradition has dictated the continued identification of Royal Navy as the English/British navy. Given that the English/British navy is the only body discussed at length presently, its usage will be retained. However, the abbreviation "H.M.S." was not used during this period and will not be employed. The titles "His/Her/Their (the latter used when William and Mary were both alive) Majesties' Ship" were written out longhand. If any abbreviation was used it was "H.M. Ship(s)." English warships, British after the 1707 union with Scotland, will usually be identified according to their rate and name (see Introduction and Appendix). Use of "English" and "British" should be assumed to mean the same system of naval administration although recognising changing aspects of government and nationality after 1707.

All dates from primary documents are in old style (Julian calendar), although the year is adjusted to commence on 1 January and not 25 March. Dates employed from secondary sources are as printed. It should be noted that many naval documents, although following the old style, slashed the date of the year: i.e. 5 March 1710/11. Additionally, several transcripts and translations of correspondence with French officials are found

within some of the Admiralty records. It is unclear whether the dates were changed or left according to the new style (Gregorian calendar). These dates will be left as printed.

## INTRODUCTION:

### THE USE OF ADMIRALTY RECORDS FOR ATLANTIC HISTORY

The years 1689-1713 have been viewed, often implicitly, as a fulcrum of British Imperial history. The two wars within the period under discussion, the Nine Years War (1688-1697) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714) are often portrayed as representing England's entry onto the world stage. For the first time the British Isles spent considerable sums of money and human resources to support a lengthy international war effort. Geoffrey Holmes states that the psychological impact upon the population resulting from the transition was immense.<sup>1</sup> Yet these years often do not have a life of their own within imperial history, being identified either as marking the end of the seventeenth century with the Revolution of 1688 or as the beginning of the "long" eighteenth century and its wars with France lasting to 1815. The first two volumes of the recent *Oxford History of the British Empire* typify such attempted generalisations in that the first two wars with the French empire often do not figure in wider analysis of imperial trends but are included as the jump-off point for the evolution of empire.<sup>2</sup>

What the *Oxford History of the British Empire* attempts to demonstrate is that the development of empire was based on a series of reciprocal relationships that require

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Holmes, *The Making of a Great Power: Late Stuart and Early Georgian Britain, 1660-1722* (London: Longman, 1993), 233.

<sup>2</sup> P.J. Marshall, "Introduction" to *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1998), 1-27.

evaluations beyond traditional economic determinants.<sup>3</sup> One manifestation of this idea is the utilisation of Atlantic History in explaining the development of the North Atlantic World. This mode of analysis suggests that between the sixteenth and mid-eighteenth centuries, the height of water-borne travel and communications, the Atlantic ocean acted as a bridge, rather than a moat, between European and North American societies.<sup>4</sup>

Historians of British North America have been especially diligent in exploring transatlantic relationships prior to the American Revolution. Studies dealing with issues such as economics, society, politics, administration, labour, intellect, commerce, to name a few, have all been improved by the expansion of study parameters.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, one topic that has yet to be explored extensively is the relationship between the British navy and the Northeastern colonies of North America prior to 1713.

The English-- British, after the 1707 Act of Union-- navy was the largest employer in post-revolution England and represented the height of technical, bureaucratic, and logistical achievement in advance of most other aspects of early modern British society. Naval development after 1688 represented the epitome of wartime expansion along with the administrative and tax system needed to finance it.<sup>6</sup> France recognised not only the power of the Royal navy, but also the relationship between trade

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1986), 3-18.

<sup>5</sup> Alan L. Karras, "The Atlantic World as a Unit of Study," in *Atlantic American Societies* ed. Alan Karras and J.R. MacNeill (London: Routledge, 1992), 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 34-37.

and the English economy supporting it and restructured its maritime efforts accordingly.<sup>7</sup> Extensive commerce raiding by privateers and the French navy required the British Admiralty to procure increasing numbers of small warships. This was to provide convoys to all merchant destinations and station ships at particularly vulnerable ports. Convoys and station ships were not innovations, but their use intensified over the period in question. While merchant fleets and their naval convoys are duly recognised in the literature, they are rarely examined outside narrow considerations of European trade, and from a North American perspective more rarely still.

Warships and those who sailed on them represent a regular and constant link between North America and Europe. The navy is not however, usually identified as such until after the Treaty of Utrecht.<sup>8</sup> In the era before the establishment of regular bases overseas, fleets and admirals only infrequently visited North America. For this reason the study of the navy in North American waters is often limited to descriptions of ship-to-ship contests and the few squadrons occasionally sent to North America. Meanwhile, individual captains and their crews routinely traversed the Atlantic and sailed along the North American coast. The original intention of this thesis was to examine the transatlantic links between sailors on board the smaller warships used for convoys and station ships. It is at this level that the navy interacted with overseas societies.

Unfortunately while interest in the subject was sparked by asking what role captains and

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<sup>7</sup> Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 78-79.

<sup>8</sup> See Julian Gwyn, "The Royal Navy in North America, 1712-1776," in *The British Navy and the Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century* ed. Jeremy Black and Philip Woodfine (Leicester: Leicester U.P., 1988), 128-148.

sailors played, the lack of existing research has generated more basic questions of how the navy sent ships overseas and what convoy and station duty entailed. Therefore, this work represents a preliminary examination of the Royal Navy's role off North America between 1689 and 1713.

The records of the British Admiralty have only been sporadically employed for the study of colonial history during the early modern period. This is obvious within works attempting comprehensive examinations of naval deployment to North America but based on documents sent to the Admiralty or Board of Trade by colonial governments or other interests. Records culled from the Admiralty concerning North America come from the highest offices of the navy. Often the discourse concerns policy and not the physical nature of naval deployment. While it would be a grave mistake to ignore these sources in any discussion of the navy overseas, documents that deal with the actual ships themselves have not been extensively studied with a view to creating a broader narrative.

Conclusions based solely on Colonial Office records, or more commonly, the abstracts of the *Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series America and West Indies*, leave the impression that naval coverage of North America was haphazard and ineffective.<sup>9</sup> This is because naval captains and their ships only appear in correspondence when their services were required or problems arose. The day-to-day activities of a ship on convoy duty or at a station were not consistently catalogued by colonial governments writing to London.

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<sup>9</sup> See Philip S. Haffenden, *New England in the English Nation, 1689-1713* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 227, *passim*; Joseph D. Doty, "The British Admiralty Board as a Factor in Colonial Administration, 1689-1713" (PhD. Thesis: U. Of Pennsylvania, 1930; published, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1980). Great Britain, Public Record Office, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* (London: H.M. Stationary Office 1901-1926) Vols. 13-25, 1689-1714.

The result is a not entirely false, but oversimplified view of the operation of the early modern navy and the face-to-face relationships between warship crews and overseas societies.

The primary sources for this thesis come from the Admiralty Records (ADM) held in the Public Record Office at Kew in London, England. Other documents from the Colonial Office (CO) and State Papers (SP) have also been utilised. Essential are the surviving letters sent by ship's captains to the Secretary of the Navy's office. Captains were required to write the Admiralty as often as possible describing their situation. This provided an important source of information to the Admiralty. Written in duplicate, letters had to be sent back across the Atlantic via whatever ship happened to be returning to England. However, not every letter written has survived. Many letters simply did not reach their destination or withstand the ravages of time. Indeed there exists a ten-year gap in the captains' letters between 1688 and 1698 where the only surviving specimens are those sent or copied into other document classes. Still, the documents culled for use at present represent only a small selection of those that could be applied to the history of North America.

The captains' letters must be supplemented where possible with ship's log books. Log books themselves are often passed over as a detailed source. Captains' logs copied weather and movements from the master's logs supplemented with whatever additional information the captain felt proper. Most often the information dealt with sailing and the

loss or acquisition of stores.<sup>10</sup> When discussing overseas convoys where the determination of movement and location is meaningful, logs provide invaluable information. The drawback to relying only on captains' letters and logs is that they can be very ship-oriented. The primary consideration of the naval captain was keeping his ship afloat, secondary were circumstances surrounding his assignment. The ship's crew members often fade into the background as part of the vessel itself. In some cases, more can be learned about merchants and privateers in places such as Newfoundland than about the sailors sent there in warships.

Other important documentary sources include the Admiralty List Books and the Orders and Instruction Books. The List Books were monthly references kept by the Admiralty. All navy ships were accounted for in the Admiralty Lists. The lists provided information as to the rate, officers, complement, number of guns, when the ship's pay began, when the ship was last cleaned, and most importantly, where it was and what it was doing. The lists are roughly divided into the major squadrons and assignments performed by sections of the navy at any particular time. Although essential for determining how the fleet was divided up, the lists display varying degrees of accuracy, based on the natural lag in communications, and must be augmented with other sources.<sup>11</sup> The Orders and Instruction Books contain the Admiralty's copies of all issued orders and

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<sup>10</sup> Public Record Office, *Operational Records of the Royal Navy, 1660-1914*, Records Information Leaflet No. 3 (no date), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Sari Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade: A Study in the Peacetime Use of Seapower* (Adlershot: Scholar, 1991), 53. The Admiralty Lists for the Nine Years War through to the War of the Spanish Succession are located in Public Record Office (PRO), Admiralty (ADM) 8/2-13, 1689-1713.



are extremely useful for establishing the mandate under which each ship operated.<sup>12</sup>

During the seventeenth and eighteenth century warships of the Royal Navy were classified according to rate. There were six rates, first rate being the largest (See Appendix 1). There was also a series of unrated ships such as fireships and bomb vessels. Originally, rate reflected the scale of captain's pay. Although captains continued to receive their pay depending on the size of their ship, rate came to be identified as the number of guns carried. The turn of the seventeenth century saw the rating system alter somewhat in that the number of guns for each rate generally increased for third rate ships and lower. The key example lay with the fourth rate, usually acknowledged to be the workhorse of the navy for this period. In the 1680s ships as small as 40 guns could be classified as fourth rates. By the beginning of the eighteenth century the fourth rate was a vessel of between 50 and 58 guns. During the seventeenth century vessels of this size sailed in the line of battle but they came to be considered too small by 1688. At this stage the fourth rate fell into the role of trade protection and formed the principal rate on overseas station. Fifth rates numbered in at between 32 and 48 guns while sixth rates carried between 10 and 30 guns. Most ships had two or three classifications within their rate. The first were the number of men and guns carried in wartime. The next classifications were the number of guns during peacetime and while on overseas duty, usually one and the same.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Orders and Instructions books for 1689 to 1713 are located in PRO ADM 2/2-46.

<sup>13</sup> David Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List: All The Ships of the Royal Navy- Built, Purchased and Captured- 1688-1860* (London: Conway, 1994), xi-xv. Lyon's numbers for the fifth and sixth rates (the latter he gives no definitive number) have been adjusted based on samples from the List Books. Lyon

The distinction between rates of vessels sent overseas could sometimes be of only marginal significance as pieces of ordnance and crew numbers were reduced. Most references to rate are taken from those within the Admiralty List Books. Ships larger than third rate were never dispatched outside Europe during this period. Lack of dockside facilities was one reason but the limits to naval architecture necessitated the laying-up of first, second and larger third rates during the stormy winter months. Third rates (60- 80 guns), the smallest ships of the line, were frequently dispatched to the Caribbean, but only occasionally sent to mainland North America and Newfoundland. In both instances the third rate was usually the backbone of a squadron with a specific purpose. Convoy and station duty was performed by fourth, fifth and sixth rate ships captained mostly by the junior officers of the navy. However, as will be demonstrated, some of these junior officers had upwards of twenty years experience as sea captains by the end of the War of the Spanish Succession.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter attempts to place convoy and station ships within the historical literature on the British navy for this period as well as explain why captains, crews and ships have been passed over by historians and how they can be incorporated into advances in recent historiography and broader schemes of empire. Chapter II summarises aspects of naval deployment to North America and colonial security as generally understood and how these were served by the navy. Emphasis is placed on the expeditions launched against French holdings in North

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acknowledges that in certain cases the system for rating was not as precise during the early period as they would be later in the eighteenth century.

America. The goal of this chapter is to act as a bridge between two aspects of the Royal Navy that were quite different but frequently sailed the same bodies of water. Chapter III outlines the process by which the Admiralty dispatched convoys and station ships overseas and some of the considerations distinctive to these services.

Chapters IV and V are case studies. The wealth of material discovered necessitated using such an approach at this level of study and although some suggestions for application as part of a wider whole will be put forth, the intent is the demonstration of how a variety of sources can be applied that will illuminate hitherto understudied aspects of transatlantic links. The first case study at New England between 1691 and 1693 examines the dispatch of the *Conception Prize* and *Nonsuch* to station duty at Boston. As Captain Richard Short of the *Nonsuch* has already been examined in detail the centre of attention will be Captain Robert Fairfax of the *Conception Prize*. Short's dealings with governor of New England Sir William Phips offer a vivid picture of the problems of transfer of governmental power overseas and have been frequently cited within statements on the state of armed forces-colonial relations. The experience of Fairfax and his crew is markedly different from that of Short. It is hoped that by focusing on Fairfax and the warships themselves, this chapter will reinforce the more recent, and increasingly multifaceted, approaches to the history of Northeastern North America.

The second case study will reconstruct the round-trip of the 1711 Newfoundland fishing convoy. For a variety of reasons a considerable parcel of source material concerning this convoy has survived. This convoy represents one of the few instances of a third rate warship being dispatched to Newfoundland and the final report of the

convoy's commodore, Captain Josiah Crowe, has been cited in examinations of the nature of life at Newfoundland during the early eighteenth century.<sup>14</sup> However, the warships themselves almost never factor into histories of the Newfoundland fishery despite their constant presence. Captains, as authority figures, are mentioned but the warship as the principal mode of defence is not acknowledged as a regular transatlantic link.

Although some analysis will be offered as to the placement of the two case studies within the larger whole, the limitations to such an approach are acknowledged, especially for areas outside Northeastern North America, such as the Caribbean and Virginia. It is anticipated that the expansion of study in a similar mode to the whole Atlantic World will correct this problem. Additionally, any conclusions reached in this thesis should only apply to the years 1689 to 1713. Although circumstances exist common to the entire period of sailing navies, many situations appear unique to the Nine Years War and War of Spanish Succession. As naval history becomes more sophisticated, more work needs to be done to delineate changes within the history of the Royal Navy under sail, a period frequently represented as a constant by historians seeking continuity in British, American, and Canadian national histories.

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<sup>14</sup> John G. Reid, "1686-1720: Imperial Intrusions" in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation* ed. Phillip Buckner and John G. Reid (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1994), 93.

# **CHAPTER I**

## **STATE, EMPIRE AND THE HISTORY OF BRITISH SEA POWER, 1689-1713**

In order to construct a framework for studying the Royal Navy off the coast of northeastern North America between 1689 and 1713, it is necessary to identify several bodies of historical writing. The significance of small warships whose operational range spanned the entire Atlantic Ocean has for the most part not been examined or has been considered only within certain traditional, and sometimes myopic, formats. Conclusions drawn from discussions that apply only to one side of the Atlantic Ocean or to the more direct spheres of English/British influence (the Caribbean and Mediterranean) may distort the impact of warship deployment to North America. Fortunately, a means of rationalising the present study can be found in the evolving literature on navy, empire and the Atlantic World over the last few decades. Nevertheless, while new developments lend theoretical support for the present study they provide little methodological assistance and therefore necessitate the examination of several modes of analysis.

This chapter will explore the nature of historical writing for the key areas of the Royal Navy, the British State, and the Empire. The intention is to establish a framework for relating convoys and station ships to the development of a fourth level of analysis, the Atlantic World. Although the orientation of various aspects of naval history will be brought into question, an outright challenge of naval scholarship is not the final goal. In practical terms, the bulk of naval activity for the early modern period occurred in European waters and that is where attention has remained. Rather, this chapter is

designed as a basis for demonstrating alternative avenues for studying naval activity.

Naval historians can be reluctant to expand their horizons. This hesitation results from the need to revise existing studies but is also a consequence of the evolution of naval history.

Fundamental problems within naval history lingered through to the 1990s to the degree that entering into uncharted territory was often not considered. One reviewer, W.J.R. Gardner, identifies a paradox in the study of British naval history. Although its importance for national development is well known, the topic has often received scant attention from academic historians. Attempts at producing a viable history are caught between the attention to physical detail expected by a “ghetto” of amateur enthusiasts and retired naval officers, and the requirements of relevance demanded by the historical discipline.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, Richard Harding states that specialist works often are not properly incorporated into the body of literature while studies using older methodologies dealing with operations and biography are dismissed outright.<sup>2</sup> The inability to come to terms with all manner of writing has created a disjointed synthesis. Studies of strategy and technology remain the prerogative of those writing for a popular audience while scholarly works on topics such as class and labour are scattered within other sub-disciplines.

N.A.M. Rodger has written several analyses of the current state of naval history.

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<sup>1</sup> W.J.R. Gardner, “The State of Naval History,” *Historical Journal* 38, no. 3 (1995), 696.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Harding, *The Evolution of the Sailing Navy, 1509-1815* (New York: St. Martin's 1995), vii.

Both general and scholarly interest in maritime and naval history have increased in recent years, Rodger has argued, yet the growth of the latter as an autonomous subject has been surprisingly lethargic.<sup>3</sup> Academic studies concerning all aspects of the navy have multiplied and improved manifold, but often lack a centralising purpose. A shrinking British university system that disperses maritime historians is offered as one problem, but the legacy of naval historical writing operates against comprehensiveness. In addition, retired officers and others without historical training have often formed the majority of researchers and are not taken seriously by academics. The emphasis placed by amateurs on studies of material and strategic matters has fostered scholarly mistrust. Ultimately an attempt at holism must be championed, as naval history is inherently a multidisciplinary subject. The inseparability of navies from non-military aspects of maritime history such as social, economic and political relationships warrants the treatment of naval history as equivalent to any other sub-discipline.<sup>4</sup>

In the absence of thorough consideration of wider contexts, movement beyond strategic issues and antiquarian studies of ships and sailors is essential. Rodger goes so far as to challenge the relevance of histories of the Royal Navy that do not include works

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<sup>3</sup> Naval history has gained the most inroads in the study of sailors themselves. Two of the most important works on the social history of sailors with relevance to present studies are N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Collins, 1986), and J.D. Davies, *Gentlemen and Taraulins: The Officers and Men of the Restoration Navy* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991). There is no corresponding social history of Royal Navy sailors for the middle period 1689-1713.

<sup>4</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, "Britain," in *Ubi Sumus? The State of Naval and Maritime History* ed. John B. Hattendorf (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1994), 41-58; "Considerations on Writing a General Naval History," in *Doing Naval History* ed. John B. Hattendorf (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1995), 117-28. Rodger has recently published the first volume of his own synthesis, *Safeguard of the Seas: Naval History of Britain* (London: Harper Collins, 1998).

completed on other navies or in other languages. This raising of the historical bar may be an utopian vision, but it is meant to demonstrate that historians may not be doing all they can to illuminate their discourses.<sup>5</sup>

The legacy of late Victorian strategic writing has been another problem for the study of naval history. Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783* has been the most well-known volume concerned with, among other issues, the development of the Royal Navy during the age of sail.<sup>6</sup> So powerful was Mahan's impact on the writing of history and strategy that modern scholars still debate his theses.<sup>7</sup>

It is important when reading Mahan to recognise that the author's partisan motives were shaped by wider imperial tendencies prevalent within western ideological thought. *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* in particular was designed to use history for demonstrating the importance of battle fleet navies to an isolationist United States government. Mahan employed a 'scientific' approach to formulate a series of laws and principles that would form a basis for further study on naval power. Mahan's methods were original even if his premise of battleship power was not. The American captain became an instant celebrity in Britain where the book's emphasis on Royal Navy victories

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1890; 25th edition, 1917).

<sup>7</sup> See John B. Hattendorf, ed. *The Influence of History on Mahan: The Proceedings of a Conference Marking the Centenary of Alfred Thayer Mahan's "The Influence of Seapower Upon History, 1660-1783"* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1991).



fed egos and validated the current strategic orientations.<sup>8</sup>

Mahan's was not a solitary voice but one contributing to a dialogue on naval strategy, which included many writers and journalists. The contentious French *jeune école* led by Admiral Theophile Aubé and British writers such as the Colomb brothers, Sir John Knox Laughton, and Mahan's counterpart, Sir Julian Corbett, all represent what has been labelled 'new navalism'. Their writings and debates created world-wide interest in the development of navies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. New navalism presented history as the evolution of strategy and was specifically designed to correspond to pre-determined beliefs of what naval power represented. Treatises such as *The Influence of Seapower Upon History* provided an outlet for what was thought but seldom articulated.<sup>9</sup>

To summarise Mahan as representative of his genre, he argued that international struggles always had their outcomes affected by command of the sea during times of war. Once peace was established, water-borne commerce dictated national wealth and strength, being easier and cheaper than overland routes. Securing command of the sea to protect commerce was not easy but its wartime alternative, strategies of commerce raiding (*guerre de course*) associated with the *jeune école*, was considered wasteful and indecisive. Commerce protection was not based on the development of convoys to

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<sup>8</sup> John B. Hattendorf, "Alfred Thayer Mahan and his Strategic Thought," in *Maritime Strategy and the Balance of Power* ed. John B. Hattendorf and Robert Jordan (New York: St. Martin's, 1989), 83-84.

<sup>9</sup> Barry D. Hunt, "The Outstanding Naval Strategic Writers of the Century," *Naval War College Review* 37, no.5 (1984), 87-88. See also James Goldrick and John B. Hattendorf, ed. *Mahan is Not Enough: The Proceedings of a Conference on the Works of Sir Julian Corbett and Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1993).

protect against privateers and small raiders but on the clearing of the sea-lanes by powerful fleets. Above all else, sea power was based on the development of ships of the line (battleships) and was considered to be held by only one maritime force at any given moment.<sup>10</sup>

At one point in *The Influence of Seapower Upon History*, Mahan appears to contradict himself by implying that the *guerre de course* practised by the French between 1689 and 1713 nearly succeeded.<sup>11</sup> Also, throughout later works Mahan placed a caveat, recognising that it was unwise to over-emphasise sea power. But the initial euphoria following his first volume was irrepressible. Fleet power became a beacon for those seeking an intellectual framework to justify lobbying for battleships. Little discussion was generated concerning the limitations to sea power. Eventually, the applications of Mahan's strategic principles expanded beyond an analysis for modern naval power. Paul Kennedy suggests that those writing in the era of British naval supremacy came close to developing an analytical framework for history by retroactively applying Mahan's principles to other eras.<sup>12</sup> Although Mahan used history to develop contemporary arguments, it was not his intention to formulate a historiographical methodology.<sup>13</sup>

Much writing from the twentieth century lends credence to Kennedy's proposal

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<sup>10</sup> Paul M. Kennedy, "The Influence and Limitations of Sea Power," *International History Review* 10, no. 1 (1988), 2-5.

<sup>11</sup> Mahan, 193-94; Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 79.

<sup>12</sup> Kennedy, "The Influence and Limitations of Seapower," 5-6. Kennedy is reluctant to fully endorse this statement perhaps because *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* is the legacy of such an approach, still relying on discourses over controlling naval power.

<sup>13</sup> Hattendorf, "Alfred Thayer Mahan and his Strategic Thought," 86-87.

that Mahan came to represent a methodological approach. Two principal works dealing with the early development of British naval power are specifically centred on the notion of control of the seas and England's ability to retain it.

While the orientation of John Ehrman's *The Navy in the War of William III* is administrative, not strategic, its opening statements point out English domination of the seas. The Royal Navy's triumphs rendered France incapable of mounting any serious sea-borne challenge during the course of the Nine Years War and none at all during the War of the Spanish Succession. The problems encountered by the English navy were not caused by defiant French squadrons but stemmed from administrative considerations. The navy had grown so large it outstripped its organisational mechanisms.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the diversity of operations requiring the redeployment of forces for commerce protection later in the war curtailed fleet operations, thereby weakening overall strength.<sup>15</sup> Contrasting with this view was that of others who emphasised the elaborate expansion of French naval capabilities beyond mere numbers, including advantages in ship design and construction throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century. It was argued the England and the Dutch Republic were forced to challenge French superiority, as the battle fleets were roughly equal.<sup>16</sup> Ehrman did recognise this, but maintained that once the English won their victory at Barfleur (1692), command of the sea, and therefore victory,

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<sup>14</sup> John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III, 1689-1697: Its State and Direction* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1953), xv-xix.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 602-03.

<sup>16</sup> Geoffery Symcox, *The Crisis of French Sea Power, 1688-1697: From Guerre D'Escadre to Guerre De Course* (The Hague: Marinus Nijhoff, 1974), 2.

was never in doubt. For North America, Ehrman justified ignoring colonies as they had no bearing on the administrative working of the fleet and were incidental to the outcome of the war. Although important to the colonies themselves, he argued the expeditions to America were neither decisive nor were they critical to objectives in Europe.<sup>17</sup>

Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond employed a broad time frame but reiterated the argument that establishment of sea command was essential for English interests. Richmond's wider concerns were questions of how statesmen and the English/British government used command of the sea for political purposes. Between 1689 and 1713, the primary issues revolved around the continental strategy of sending armies to Europe versus a maritime strategy of disrupting the French Empire and giving sea-borne support to allied forces. Which strategy was thought more effective for the united war against France and how this affected the ability of the navy to retain command of the sea were other considerations.<sup>18</sup>

Richmond's narrative of operations, *The Navy as an Instrument of Policy*, is filled with detailed descriptions within a Mahanian framework. To take one example, the inability of the French to assume command of the sea at Bantry Bay (1689) was concluded to have ultimately stymied French attempts at supporting the Jacobites in Ireland.<sup>19</sup> Yet, the principal English-language history of the French navy for this period

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<sup>17</sup> Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III*, 608-10.

<sup>18</sup> Herbert Richmond, *Statesmen and Sea Power* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), Ch. III.

<sup>19</sup> Herbert Richmond, *The Navy as an Instrument of Policy* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1953), 203-04. This volume existed in manuscript form at the time of Richmond's death and was subsequently edited and published.

takes issue with reducing the explanation to one of simple battle fleet strategy. Although lack of strategic initiative accounts for the poor French tactical show, it seems likely that the shifting priorities of Louis XIV and his administration at crucial moments were equally (if not more) important for the loss of Ireland.<sup>20</sup>

Richmond acknowledged that the English were at a marked disadvantage at the commencement of the Nine Years War and required Dutch allegiance so as to reach parity in battle fleets. He also pointed out the strategic significance of having continental France rather than the maritime Dutch Republic as the enemy. France was less prone to pressure from the sea and therefore in a position to dictate the terms of engagement.<sup>21</sup> But beyond this Richmond tended to gloss over physical defeats and setbacks. In another instance, Richmond did not suggest that the defeat of the Anglo-Dutch fleet off Beachy Head in 1690 had any impact on command of the sea. Yet, other writers have noted that it caused an invasion panic in England.<sup>22</sup> Richmond implicitly assumed that the French were incapable of invading due to lack of fleet power, not that they chose to redirect their grand strategy to a more continental orientation.

Although Richmond paid closer attention to colonial affairs than did Ehrman, his analysis still asserted that greater assistance was not possible, owing to commitments in Europe.<sup>23</sup> Richmond concludes that by the end of the Nine Years War the ability of

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<sup>20</sup> Symcox, *The Crisis of French Sea Power*, 78-86.

<sup>21</sup> Richmond, *The Navy as an Instrument of Policy*, 201-202.

<sup>22</sup> G.J. Marcus, *A Naval History of England*, Vol. 1 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1961), 202-03.

<sup>23</sup> Richmond, *The Navy as an Instrument of Policy*, 269.

England to mobilise government and resources had worn down the French navy through attrition.<sup>24</sup> Intensive building programmes increased the numerical advantage of the Royal Navy in the face of steadily declining French forces. But the degree to which English fleet power helped wear down the French by 1713 is open to debate. France's transferring of resources coupled with England's own difficulties over manpower, payment problems and inability to check vigorous French commerce raiding campaigns raise questions concerning complete victory.<sup>25</sup>

While elements of the discussion so far apply generally to the years 1689-1713 or to the entire course of the Anglo-French wars, the Nine Years War has remained the centre of ongoing attention. In naval terms, the War of the Spanish Succession has rarely been treated separately from its earlier partner. There are two possible, and interlocking, reasons for this. First, the presence of several significant fleet actions between 1689 and 1692 has caught the attention of strategists and historians.<sup>26</sup> The principal sea actions between 1702 and 1713 (except for the engagement at Malaga in 1704) involved tedious blockades and unglamorous convoys duty. Second, no monograph covering the navy for the entire war has been produced. J.H. Owen's *The War at Sea Under Queen Anne* represents the nearest attempt at comprehensiveness. Unfortunately, Owen concluded his discussion in 1708, following the passage of the Convoys and Cruisers Act, leaving the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 274-75.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare* (London: UCL, 1999), 179-80. It is important to note that even if victory at sea was less than complete, Britain came out of the War of the Spanish Succession as the primary naval power.

<sup>26</sup> J.D. Davies "The English Navy on the Eve of War, 1689," in no ed., *Guerre Maritimes, 1688-1713* (Vincennes: Service historique de la Marine, 1996), 1-2.

last four years of the war unstudied.<sup>27</sup>

Surprisingly, Owen's 1938 volume often presents a more balanced view (one that would be reiterated by later historians) of British naval power than the post-war works of Ehrman and Richmond. Owen argues the Navy was slow to respond to the French strategy of laying up their larger warships and transferring resources to commerce raiding. The presence of several strong French squadrons created uncertainty and subsequent action reflected this.<sup>28</sup> Owen calculated that half of the Royal Navy's sailors and two-thirds of its ships were engaged in trade protection at the expense of putting some of the navy's larger rates into 'Ordinary' (reserve). Nevertheless, the main fleet was still kept at full readiness until late in the war. This contributed to the inability of the Royal Navy to check what was not an attempt to wrest command of the sea through other means but rather a grab at England's wealth.<sup>29</sup>

Richmond, Ehrman, and Owen remain essential works but their conclusions have been reworked and elaborated upon by the subsequent generation of scholars, acknowledging more fully the relationship between sea power and other variables.<sup>30</sup> Daniel Baugh has expanded, modernised, and polished the approach germinated by

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<sup>27</sup> Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 325, note 64. A monograph contemporary to Owen does exist for the West Indies. Ruth Bourne, *Queen Anne's Navy in the West Indies* (New Haven: Yale, 1939).

<sup>28</sup> J.H. Owen, *The War at Sea Under Queen Anne* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1938), 36-39.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>30</sup> Gardner writes that Ehrman elevated naval history from its campaign and strategy doldrums through his combination of administration and elements of grand strategy. Gardner, "The State of Naval History," 696. Another reviewer, H.M. Scott, "The Second Hundred Years War," *Historical Journal* 35, no.2 (1992), 453, identifies Daniel Baugh's *Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1965) as the commencement of modern historical writing.

Mahan. Baugh refers to his definition of British sea power for most of the Dutch and French wars as a “blue water” policy. In home waters, the role of the Royal Navy was one of defence against invasion. This strategy entailed control of the English Channel and North Sea. Secondary to this objective was sustaining the financial network supporting Britain’s ability to construct an ocean-going navy through the protection of trade and shipping. Trade supplied liquid funds and government revenue in the form of customs. The shipping industry supplied profits (for tax or lending), auxiliary vessels in times of war, shipbuilding skills and facilities, and trained seamen. The Navigation Acts after 1650-51 restricted shipping and glued the system together. Colonies were viewed as useful only if they contributed to the enhancement or protection of trade.<sup>31</sup>

The concept of a blue water policy is considered to be economically and politically stable. Baugh concludes that:

In sum, blue water policy, aside from reducing military necessities, was cost effective, practical and mundane; it installed a calculating commercialism at the heart of the most important task of government.<sup>32</sup>

The blue water policy was designed to minimise taxes and the need for a large standing army. This arrangement suited all levels of society in Britain. Landed interests were not overly burdened by the problems of financing war and the population at large was saved from the pressures of conscription.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel Baugh, “Great Britain’s Blue Water Policy 1689-1763,” *International History Review* 10, no. 1 (1988), 40-41. Baugh extends and updates his thesis with “Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce,” in *An Imperial State at War* ed. Lawrence Stone (London: Routledge, 1994), 185-223.

<sup>32</sup> Baugh, “Great Britain’s Blue Water Policy,” 42.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*



Scholars such as Baugh (and also Paul Kennedy) have expanded the scope of maritime study by moving away from Mahan's battle fleet analysis to include economic factors and show due consideration to the continental campaigns dominating the period. The results represent a plausible platform for presenting more moderate proposals in support of British naval strength. However, in the eyes of more recent academics, sweeping conclusions such as Baugh's still ring of determinism and continue to be based on old standards of inquiry that rely too heavily on the premise of perpetual British naval strength. Michael Duffy suggests that the loss of British naval supremacy after the Second World War may account for the road to revisionism, however slow, in the 1990s.<sup>34</sup>

Those writers focusing specifically before 1713 paint a different picture of British naval power from those who undertake sweeping examinations of British maritime strength. J.R. Jones and Jeremy Black argue individually that a lack of appreciation for contrasting Dutch and French naval policies during the seventeenth century contributed to the inability of Britain to adapt successfully to the malleable French *guerre de course*. Explanations for the dearth of strategic acumen lay in the constant fear of invasion, despite the decline of French fleet power following the battle of Barfleur. As a result the fleet concentrated in the English Channel even when enemy activity was minimal. While Black, more than Jones, also explores attempts by British statesmen to enhance their diplomatic power by using the navy to compensate for limited military capabilities, both

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Duffy, "Introduction" to *The Parameters of British Sea Power, 1650-1890* ed Michael Duffy, (Exeter: U. Of Exeter Press, 1992), 1.

authors reach the same conclusion that the strategic orientation of the English fleet rendered it ill-prepared to deal with French commerce raiding. The War of the Spanish Succession brought little reprieve from the wrath of privateering as the aforementioned fleet concentrations in the English channel were maintained despite the complete lack of centralised naval deployment by the French.<sup>35</sup>

In slightly different vein, David Davies argues that in their effort to demonstrate the link between strategy and policy, the blue water authors still suggest that British naval power was a decisive factor in the outcome of European land war.<sup>36</sup> Rather, as Davies suggests, policy during the period leading up to the Revolution of 1688 revolved around the inability of the navy to employ one strategy consistently. Although official policy was the deployment of the largest possible fleet in the North Sea during the Dutch Wars, it was compromised by commerce raiding by English warships or the defence of trade (particularly to the Mediterranean).<sup>37</sup> By the time war broke out again in 1689, the ratio of large vessels to smaller ones for escort duty dictated a fleet strategy at the expense of trade protection.<sup>38</sup>

Michael Duffy continues on Davies' theme by arguing that real British naval

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<sup>35</sup> Jeremy Black, "British Naval Power and International Commitments" Political and Strategic Problems 1688-1770," in *Parameters of British Sea Power* op. cit., 39-40; J.R. Jones "Limitations of British Sea Power in the French Wars," in *The British Navy and the Use of Naval Power in the Eighteenth Century* op. cit., 38-44.

<sup>36</sup> David Davies "The Birth of the Imperial Navy? Aspects of Maritime Strategy c. 1650-1690," in *Parameters of British Seapower* op. cit., 14.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-21.

<sup>38</sup> Davies, "The English Navy on the Eve of War," 3-4. At the beginning of the war there were only 2 fifth rates and 6 sixth rates out of a fleet of 173 ships of all type. Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III*, 625.

power did not manifest until sufficient support networks were developed. During the Dutch wars and in the Restoration era, large vessels were in vogue but lacked proper support facilities for victualling and dockyard repairs. Correspondingly, a consolidated strategy had still not been developed for fleet deployment once war broke out again in 1689. On the surface these conclusions appear similar to those reached by Ehrman. However, the more recent authors view the actions at Beachy Head, Bantry Bay, the destruction of the Smyrna convoy (1693) and even the victory at Barfleur as demonstrating the weakness of the navy, not its strengths.<sup>39</sup>

According to Duffy, the English may have denied the sea to the French Fleet, but the navy could not guarantee comprehensive security until the creation of a western squadron based out of Plymouth. This plan intended to free up units to combat the powerful French squadrons deployed for commerce raiding and support of colonies. Unfortunately, as mentioned above, Royal Navy planners did not appreciate the evolving nuances of French naval strategy. The practical restructuring of ship deployments or the construction of shore facilities was not successfully arranged during the period in question.<sup>40</sup>

Revisions to British naval history are both welcome and timely. However, wrestling with the history of English/British naval activity off North America requires the expansion of study parameters, as remaining within a strictly naval setting does not

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<sup>39</sup> Michael Duffy, "The Establishment of the Western Squadron as the Linchpin of British Naval Strategy," in *Parameters of British Naval Power*, op. cit., 60-61.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 62-63.

provide a framework for examining the smaller rates of ships. To those studying the post-1713 period of naval and imperial history, the correlation of strategy and societal development within the empire is perhaps more straightforward and, in many cases, benefits from a more comprehensive base within the secondary literature.<sup>41</sup> Historians revising the navy's role up to and during 1689-1713 have retained focus on Europe and the defence of Great Britain. Given the orientation of the traditional literature, this limited approach has been justified. However, it would seem desirable to push the boundaries further, although naval historians have only obliquely recognised this.<sup>42</sup>

The belief that the main fleets of the Royal Navy may not have been operating from positions of strength raises questions as to how trade was defended. If the Royal Navy was incapable of providing complete security, then how could it protect trade through mere fleet strength? Curt statements to the effect that colonies and convoys were under-protected and denied resources based on analysis of fleet power are unsatisfactory, since this was not the level at which convoys and station ships operated.

Despite great differences in scale between naval deployment in Europe and North America, to dismiss activity in the latter as important only for colonists is no longer a sufficient excuse for limiting the scope of historical investigation. Such perceptions are increasingly being deemed unacceptable for explaining developments of most other

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<sup>41</sup> See Gwyn, "The Royal Navy in North America, 1712-1776," and Christian Buchet, "The Royal Navy in the Caribbean, 1689-1763," *Mariner's Mirror* 80, no. 1 (1994), 30-44. Events such as the building of Louisbourg, the founding of Halifax, and the regular dispatch of squadrons represent a more visible presence following the Treaty of Utrecht.

<sup>42</sup> Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade*, 30-31. In dealing with the Restoration period Hornstein's focus is on Europe and is unsure of the nature and rationalisation behind what ships were sent to North America.

aspects of colonial societies, given recent work on the Atlantic (transatlantic) World, the British Empire and the history of the early British state.

The question arises as to why corresponding links have not been developed for naval history. British naval power, regardless of its definition, is still recognised as one essential factor in the study of empire.<sup>43</sup> It is true that much naval activity in America outside the Caribbean was launched through colonial initiative and government-sponsored expeditions formed the exception rather than the rule.<sup>44</sup> However, the attitude that naval power or naval presence should be measured by organised expeditions of a particular size ignores the regular deployment of warships for routine duty overseas. The assertion that North America was separate and unimportant would not be made for the periods approaching the American Revolution.

Gerald Graham's *Empire of the North Atlantic: The Maritime Struggle for North America*, is perhaps the only monograph focused exclusively on broad examinations of sea power within a North American context. A contemporary of Richmond and Ehrman, Graham was a product of the same historiographical trends. All action, whether ship-to-ship battles or group engagements, has been clearly outlined. Nevertheless, the discussion is somewhat vague concerning interrelations between Europe and North America for the Nine Years War and War of the Spanish Succession. Only during the

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<sup>43</sup> N.A.M. Rodger "Sea Power and Empire, 1688-1763," in, *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume II* op. cit., 169-183. Rodger still identifies naval warfare beyond Europe as a hit-and-miss affair during the eighteenth century.

<sup>44</sup> Baugh, "Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce," 202. See also James Alsop, "The Age of the Projectors: British Imperial Strategy in the North Atlantic in the War of Spanish Succession," *Acadiensis* 21, no. 1 (1991), 30-53.

battle for continent and empire after 1713 did more concrete transatlantic links appear. In one sense *Empire of the North Atlantic* represented a mirror image of Mahan, Ehrman and Richmond. The focus was on command of the sea, North American style. The two continents were not connected and the underlying assumption is that small-scale sea-borne activities on the western side of the Atlantic had little bearing or importance for the grand scale of fleet warfare in Europe.<sup>45</sup> It should be noted that Graham later pointed out the limitations to Mahan's approach even if the premise of *Empire of the North Atlantic* supported concepts of fleet power and command of the sea.<sup>46</sup>

Still, a body of literature does exist that at least indirectly incorporates North America into the fold. This is the small group of works dealing with trade protection. Patrick Crowhurst's basic study, *The Defence of British Trade, 1689-1815*, while outlining the nature of convoys, is concerned primarily with trade and encompasses the entire era of the French Wars.<sup>47</sup> An older article by Arthur P. Middleton, dealing with Virginia, examined convoys from the perspective of tobacco merchants and their ships.<sup>48</sup> A.W.H. Pearsall describes the make-up of convoys from the perspective of the warships

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<sup>45</sup> Gerald Graham, *Empire of the North Atlantic* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1950), especially chapters IV and V.

<sup>46</sup> Gerald Graham, *The Politics of Naval Supremacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P. 1965), 4-7. Graham chastised Mahan for ignoring politics, downplaying continental conflicts, overemphasising the feats of admirals, and not framing his work within a conceptual framework.

<sup>47</sup> Patrick Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade, 1689-1815* (Folkstone, Kent: Dawson, 1977).

<sup>48</sup> Arthur P. Middleton "The Chesapeake Convoy System, 1662-1763," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series, 3 (1946), 182-207.

but attends primarily to activities on the high seas and the eastern half of the Atlantic.<sup>49</sup>

J.A. Johnston has explored the relationship between Parliament and trade protection for the crucial first half of the Nine Years War but goes no further.<sup>50</sup> More useful is Sari Hornstein's examination of the Restoration navy, which provides a balance between examining trade and the captains and ships performing convoy service. Hornstein explores how trade was essential to the peacetime economy of England and how the navy was required to establish a modest convoy system to deal with Barbary corsairs, pirates and over-zealous competition. Unfortunately, with the exception of Newfoundland (and even here not in detail), Hornstein cannot provide information on warships going to the North American colonies.<sup>51</sup>

One possible tool for analysing reciprocal relationships for the purpose at hand is what has developed into the study of the Atlantic World. This approach postulates that the Atlantic Ocean operated as a two-way bridge rather than a divide between nations, empires and societies. Ian K. Steele argues those who uphold land as the prime medium of human activity forget that water was the principal method of communication during the early modern period. Persons comfortable with sea travel expected and adjusted for journeys that could take many weeks or months. Individuals who provided harrowing accounts of overseas travel or described the ocean as a void usually had never been to sea

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<sup>49</sup> A.W.H. Pearsall, "The Royal Navy and Trade Protection, 1688-1714," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* 30 (1986), 109-123.

<sup>50</sup> J.A. Johnston, "Parliament and the Protection of Trade, 1690-1694," *Mariner's Mirror* 54, no.4 (1971), 399-414.

<sup>51</sup> Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade*, 30-31.

or were interested in utilising such imagery in nation-building and social construction.<sup>52</sup>

At its best, the Atlantic World approach assists in the escape from limited nationalistic histories to develop a more seamless outlook towards societal development on both sides of the ocean between the late fifteenth and late nineteenth centuries. In this manner the interaction of all peoples from Africa, Europe and the Americas can be taken into consideration. The drawback, according to Alan L. Karras, has been the appropriation of this process by historians of Great Britain and North America who imply throughout their work that the Atlantic World was an English/British phenomenon.<sup>53</sup>

Karras goes on to state that understanding the Atlantic World is an incomplete and ongoing exercise, as transnational interaction at the societal and imperial levels is understudied and what has been done centres on economics, politics, and military issues.<sup>54</sup> Some writers have made headway using panoramic analyses of the Atlantic World, but again with particular regard to economic and labour systems. This has been identified as one legacy of Annales style analysis, and of Immanuel Wallerstein's *The Modern World System*.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the disproportionate number of studies, the English Atlantic has provided

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<sup>52</sup> Steele, *The English Atlantic*, vii-ix.

<sup>53</sup> Alan L. Karras, "The Atlantic World as a Unit of Study," 5-6. Karras levels this criticism at Steele, 6 note 10.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Paul E. Lovejoy and Nicholas Rogers, "Introduction" to *Unfree Labour in the Development of the Atlantic World*. ed. Paul Lovejoy and Nicholas Rogers (London: Frank Cass, 1994), 2; Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System II* (New York: Academic, 1980). Another important pioneering work is K.G. Davies, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1974).



fertile ground for ideas. A plethora of works within the last twenty years has confirmed that although various societies developed alternative paths within the English Atlantic, they remained connected through a common network of communications, institutions, and interests.<sup>56</sup> Transatlantic studies have not taken into consideration the navy as an instrument of societal transfer despite the frequent appearance of its employees. Sailors of all stripes have been argued to be the forerunners of organised labour being among the most highly skilled, collective, mobile and numerous of workers during the era of expanding pre-industrial economies.<sup>57</sup> While merchant ships and shipping are well represented, warships are not. This is surprising given that the nature of seafaring labour and enlistment in the navy often blurred the distinction between naval and merchant seamen.<sup>58</sup> The disarray within naval history could explain this, but it could also be related to the navy's position as an arm of the English/British government. For the period prior to 1713 this distinction is particularly salient, as the state was considered decentralised by

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<sup>56</sup> A sampling of useful studies from a variety of topics include: David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy, 1450-1700* (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1991); David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1987); Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1988). Even biographical formats have been employed to demonstrate wider transatlantic links. See Emerson W. Baker and John G. Reid *The New England Knight: Sir William Phips, 1651-1695* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1998).

<sup>57</sup> Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo- American Maritime World* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1987), 289-90. See also Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker "The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves and the Atlantic Working Class in the Eighteenth Century," in *Jack Tar in History* ed. Colin Howell and Richard Twomey (Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1991), 11-36.

<sup>58</sup> Davies, *Gentlemen and Tarpaulins*, 78-80.

modern standards and the navy represented one of the few areas of direct control.<sup>59</sup>

Once more the recent evolution of historical writing offers a partial solution. The same questions that sparked the use of the Atlantic World as a mode of analysis had already been at work transforming studies on the English/British state. Debates over the direction of the 'new British history' have gone on for three decades or more. As David Cannadine outlines, the debate continues to revolve around the Whig interpretation of history. Whig history assumes that the development of Britain and the British Empire can be sufficiently explained through the exploration of specifically English institutions. This deterministic, usually celebratory, modernisation theory assumes the correlation of what was British with what was English. The rise and fall of state and empire can easily be explained away with recourse only to the English constitution and its government. Fortunes may have been won and lost but the English way was globally exported and accepted. Cannadine argues that this legacy is resilient and enduring. British politicians late in the twentieth century were still arrogantly proclaiming Britain's greatness in apparent disregard for changing circumstances in their own country and abroad.<sup>60</sup>

Recent works attempt to come to terms with the vigorous reactions against Whiggish and other more limited methods of British history. The orientation of some of these newer works is the belief that the history of four nations (or kingdoms) could be more relevant for explaining many facets of British history and is better suited for the

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<sup>59</sup> Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, 9-12.

<sup>60</sup> David Cannadine, "British History as a 'New Subject': Politics, Perspectives and Prospects," in *Uniting the Kingdom?: The Making of British History* ed. Alexander Grant and Keith Stringer (London: Routledge, 1995), 20-21.

incorporation of newer histories not based on the concept of parliamentary and constitutional omnipotence. However, as writers such as Cannadine note, it is possible to journey too far in the opposite direction. Championing the study of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales as successors of the Anglocentric Great Britain often does not acknowledge that these subdivisions are not monolithic and themselves contain many conflicting questions and perspectives. The mere superimposition of one form of political history for another may not significantly advance knowledge.<sup>61</sup>

Where newer approaches differ from merely rejecting a centralised history in favour of four separate yet equal national histories is in the recognition of over thirty years of social history. Using new sources and methodologies to include groups not found in political and military treatises demonstrated how a variety of perspectives could contribute to an understanding of identities and beliefs that contrast with the deterministic Whig ideal of a common nationalism. Many people living in the British Isles may not have been as British as once thought. John Morrill scolds that this should come as no surprise to anyone who has bothered to read the literature on the formation of nation-states. Most states are merely politically convenient assemblages of disparate political groups whose territories usually encompass several nationalities. For Morrill, Great Britain as a whole is no different. He concludes that there remains a place for both the study of four distinct national histories and a corresponding British one.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 24-26.

<sup>62</sup> John Morrill, "The Fashioning of Britain," in *Conquest and Union: Fashioning a British State, 1485-1725* ed. Steven Ellis and Sarah Barber, (London: Longman, 1995), 9-12. Naval history has itself been frequently branded as Whig history. See Jones, "Limitations of British Seapower," 33.

One legacy of social and cultural history is the argument that early modern Britain was based on a series of social and class-based identities. It rejects Whig interpretations that viewed the majority of social groups as identifying with, or consenting to, a universal English nationality, state and culture. Modern notions of nationalism and identity were foreign to most people and their world view was created through different, usually local, influences. If so, what was the relationship between the fledgling English state and all of this social differentiation?<sup>63</sup>

The concept of many or perhaps limited, identities is convincing. The concept of limited identities has been used by Canadian historians to debate the nature of regionalism in history. One method of defining Canada is based on the interplay between regional and national identity. The two coexist and one does not necessarily dominate over the other.<sup>64</sup> However, historians of the British state reply that the majority of people still operated within an encompassing English bureaucracy even if they did so unconsciously or harboured no ideological sympathy towards it. This explains the inconsistencies between a decentralised British state based on a variety of social groups and interests, and the ability of England to generate income for the financing of war after 1689. Put another way, the strengthening of the English tax system and naval infrastructure did not interfere with a weak central government overall, social differentiation, or the evolution of a constitution that promoted and protected liberty and

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<sup>63</sup> Cannadine, "British History as a New Subject," 23-24.

<sup>64</sup> John G. Reid "Writing About Regions" in *A Handbook for Modern Canadian History*, ed. John Schultz (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 74.

property.<sup>65</sup>

According to some historians, fractured nationalism and decentralisation of relations between social groups and the state have effectively returned the study of government and empire to the fore, albeit from different perspectives. This is the underlying theme to the articles in *An Imperial State at War*. Lawrence Stone and John Brewer argue that various studies of society have uncovered new and useful insights. However, notwithstanding a few notable exceptions, relationships between disparate groups and a central governing body were never successfully placed in context. The media conventionally employed for negotiating power, namely government and bureaucracy, have not been given adequate attention and have not kept scholarly pace with social history.<sup>66</sup>

Brewer questions the utility of the new British history, in its tendency to create a narrative of empire that does not include the London metropolis. With the exception of historians such as E.P. Thomson and Douglas Hay, he levels a blanket criticism of social history for not properly explaining how the actions and reactions of the central government, which did indeed exist, affected the lives of even the most humble of persons. Postmodernism and the work of Michel Foucault have been presented as a solution but Brewer argues that the subjects chosen for analysis, for example the asylum,

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<sup>65</sup> Lawrence Stone, "Introduction" to *An Imperial State at War*, *op. cit.*, 5-7; Brewer, *Sinews of Power*, xvii.

<sup>66</sup> Stone, "Introduction," 1-2; John Brewer, "The Eighteenth Century State: Contexts and Issues," in *An Imperial State at War*, *op. cit.*, 52-53.

are outside the sphere of where real power is negotiated.<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, Stone wonders how such a fractured, decentralised nation-- and a minor player in pre-1688 European diplomacy-- managed to perpetuate and balance ideals of liberty and property and keep them separate from its global trade networks, all the while maintaining an enormous armed resistance to European (French) hegemony for 124 years? This question, according to Stone, is what has become known as the Brewer paradox and has only recently been studied in any depth.<sup>68</sup>

John Brewer's pivotal work *The Sinews of Power*, has pointed the way for interpreting the British state not as a monolithic national body but as a series of identities encompassed by a single professional tax-gathering service. This bureaucratic body and the military institutions it supported proved the exception to the fractured British state. Conventional understanding attributed Britain's development to the absence of strong centralised government. However, Brewer points out that British taxpayers were heavily burdened with the costs of war, though not to the same degree as their European counterparts. The years following 1688 witnessed unprecedented borrowing by the English/British government and the creation of a national debt. Unlike continental regimes, this arrangement did not impede constitutional development. The emergence of a strong bureaucratic system after 1688 to support military efforts had been overlooked by the self-congratulatory Whiggish history of battles for empire. Brewer describes the

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<sup>67</sup> Brewer, "The Eighteenth Century British State," 66.

<sup>68</sup> Stone, "Introduction," 5-7.

maturing of the English bureaucracy as the creation of “the fiscal-military state.”<sup>69</sup>

Yet even revisionist interpretation of British history should not be simplistically presented. Cannadine suggests that for the seventeenth century, acceptance of an active yet decentralised state by historians was never an issue since the formulation of the modern British state was in its gestation. The existence of four distinct kingdoms was a physical reality. In this instance the new British history may not be as innovative as many think. However, until recently analysis of the British transatlantic world as a multifaceted entity was simply not considered. Now, the significant body of works identifying transatlantic links and the development of various British peoples throughout the globe directly contrast with the older, singular view of empire.<sup>70</sup>

Although writing on the period following the American Revolution, C.A. Bayly provides some contexts that are applicable for the study of empire generally. Anglocentric or not, most interpretations of British history incorporate empire into their equations as a matter of course. Bayly identifies traditional imperial historiography as arising out of the need to categorise and evaluate the transfer of British political institutions abroad. Later this was accompanied by attention to Britain’s economic successes. Post-Second World War writings often reflected the use of imperialism as a straw man for the cultivation of colonial nationalism. In all of these cases the discussion, even for emerging colonial societies, centred on the metropolis. Focusing on relationships outside of the ‘British Empire in Europe’ is not novel, but Bayly suggests

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<sup>69</sup> Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, xvii.

<sup>70</sup> Cannadine, “British History as a New Subject,” 22-23.

that events in the periphery have not been sufficiently identified as impacting the decisions within the London core.<sup>71</sup>

Jack P. Greene, in outlining the concept of 'negotiated authorities,' explains that misinterpretation of the seventeenth and eighteenth century state has led to skewed recreations of colonial relationships. Rather than coercive empires imposing their will upon colonists and native societies, the outposts of all major imperial powers (Spain, Portugal, the Dutch Republic, France and England) were required to negotiate a power structure with their respective metropolises. Prior to the American Revolution, colonial growth in British America was physically impossible without ties to Europe despite the tangents taken as colonial societies asserted their individuality.<sup>72</sup>

Colonies, not unlike their parent states, were required to compromise with regional powers within and without their own borders or areas of influence. While control over disparate colonial components (especially in New France) may sometimes have been more absolute than in Europe, the idea of monolithic empires is false.<sup>73</sup> Local power bases or groups of elites saw advantages in remaining within the bureaucratic and ideological frameworks established by their parent state. Both they and those who controlled the governments in Europe recognised that deference to a central government could not be legislatively or militarily enforceable to any level of consistency. Within

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<sup>71</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian* (London: Longman, 1989), 14.

<sup>72</sup> Jack P. Greene, *Negotiated Authorities: Essays in Colonial Political and Constitutional History* (Charlottesville: U. of Virginia Press, 1994), 4-11.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.



this mutual understanding, concessions could be sought or given within relative safety.<sup>74</sup>

What this meant to a warship, sometimes the only visible symbol of the metropolis's authority, will be explored in Chapter IV.

The debates over nation and transatlantic empire have impacted the role of the navy in a positive fashion. In his quest to create a new understanding of naval history, N.A.M. Rodger has recently updated his view of the relationship between the navy and empire. In this instance, Rodger is arguing against the influential view that the navy existed as the prime mover in an organised scheme of empire. The relationship between the navy and colonies was not based on a comprehensive strategy worked out by the Admiralty, Crown or Parliament. In fact, Rodger argues that the concept of strategy was foreign to seventeenth and eighteenth century statesmen and admirals. Those in charge of the navy had a practical idea of how to run their service in the face of various challenges, but their decisions were not governed by any concerted theoretical developments. This view is consistent with the more fluid ideas of empire and, like negotiated authorities, has important implications for the following chapters. Unfortunately, it is still tuned in to the notion that naval history must be studied from a Eurocentric perspective.<sup>75</sup>

The decentralising tendencies that envelop Atlantic World paradigms and have crept back into aspects of imperial history have only made preliminary steps in examining the relationship between navy and empire. This explains why even revisionist histories

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. For the region of northeastern North America specifically, see John G. Reid, "An International Region of the Northeast: Rise and Decline, 1635-1762," in *Atlantic Canada Before Confederation* ed P.A. Buckner and David Frank (Fredericton: Acadiensis, 1990 2nd edition), 31-46.

<sup>75</sup> Rodger, "Navy and Empire," 170-71.

still treat the navy as a centralised European institution. Transatlantic histories, faced with the task of explaining cultural transfer, have limited their scope to sailors but not, in the naval sense, the parameters in which they operated.

Therefore, the framework for this thesis can be said to incorporate a naval topic with imperial overtones, the goal being the explanation of transatlantic relationships. Naval and transatlantic literature has only peripherally dealt with convoys to, and station ships in, North American waters. With the bulk of attention focused on the English fleet and operations in Europe, what remains to assist the study of warships travelling overseas is circumstantial. As will be explained more fully in chapter three, the war effort against France began to alter the physical (if not the conceptual) parameters of the English fleet. The overall number of smaller, more versatile, warships came eventually to outnumber and supersede larger rates as war progressed. Still, in comparative terms, the number of smaller ships sent to North America at any time represents a fraction of vessels used for all manner of duty by the navy. Therefore, while it may be lamentable, it is not surprising that they should remain obscure.

## CHAPTER II

### COLONIAL SECURITY AND NAVAL DEPLOYMENT, 1690-1711

Warfare in North America did not commence in 1689. As Ian K. Steele writes, this date is the convenient choice for examining Anglo-French rivalries and bypasses the often racially motivated violence of the 'discovery and settlement' period. For Steele, the origins of conflict date back to 1513 with the first Spanish expeditions to America.<sup>1</sup> In his monograph *Warpaths*, Steele considers the period between 1689 and 1713 as less important for examining the evolution of organised violence between Native North American cultures and intruding Europeans. The two chapters he devotes to the years 1687-1748 represent a bridge connecting the initial contact period with the more concerted battles for empire eclipsing the haphazard efforts during the Nine Years War and the War of the Spanish Succession.<sup>2</sup> Anglo-French warfare in North America at the turn of the seventeenth century comprised a series of grim and sometimes confused affairs embroiling a variety of interests. While indelibly tied to Europe after 1689, local conflicts retained their own texture and spacial boundaries. The combatants had self-serving reasons for fighting and if they coincided with imperial objectives, however ill-defined, the opportunity for soliciting outside assistance increased.<sup>3</sup>

The twenty-one years between Sir William Phips' attack on Port Royal and

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<sup>1</sup> Ian K. Steele, *Warpaths: Invasions of North America* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1994), "Preface" (no page numbers).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Chapters 7-8.

<sup>3</sup> Davies, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century*, 292-304.

Admiral Sir Hovenden Walker's expedition against Quebec formed but one small portion of constant warfare and diplomatic exchange over control of North America by European and Native societies. Nevertheless, it can be easily compartmentalised for the sake of maritime analysis. The degree of visible naval presence rose noticeably owing to the escalation of warfare in Europe and America. It also reflected broader trends in the physical standardisation of navies, but predated the establishment of permanent naval bases in North America.<sup>4</sup> This state of affairs has traditionally been characterised as reflecting imperial neglect and inadequacy by historians arguing from a colonial perspective.<sup>5</sup> Unimportance and lack of resources are explanations often advanced by naval historians.<sup>6</sup> Although recent analyses are more sophisticated, correlates to older views exist. Steele argues that a lack of maritime support resulting from concentrations of naval efforts in Europe effectively hemmed in North America and contributed to the erratic yet vicious nature of warfare.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, Daniel A. Baugh maintains that the basis for cost-effective colonial security depended on the safeguarding of commerce on the high seas (and therefore in Europe).<sup>8</sup>

Imperial historians however, have sometimes viewed this period as one of

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<sup>4</sup> J.S. Bromley and A.N. Ryan, "Navies" in *The Cambridge Modern History Volume 6: The Rise of Great Britain and Russia 1668-1715/25* ed. J.S. Bromley (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1970), 790-792.

<sup>5</sup> Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period in American History Volume 4: New England's Commercial and Colonial Policy* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1938; reprint 1964), 275-77.

<sup>6</sup> John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III*, 608-610.

<sup>7</sup> Steele, *Warpaths*, 133.

<sup>8</sup> Baugh, "Maritime Strength and Atlantic Commerce," 185-86.

increased cooperation between core and periphery.<sup>9</sup> Those confronting regional problems have been seeking a common denominator to imperialism and warfare but mindful of local diversity. Imperial security in the North Atlantic rim is portrayed as a multi-layered affair involving the interrelations between numerous First Nations, imperial elites and officials, their local equivalents, and the local populace.<sup>10</sup>

Aspects of maritime warfare can similarly be scrutinised as operating on two different planes. Naval deployment from England to North America between 1689 and 1713 came in formal and informal, or semi-formal, varieties. Informal deployment occurred in the form of private warships, either carrying letters of marque (privateers) or ships owned, hired, commandeered or volunteered for duty at the behest of local government. Formal deployment by the Royal Navy was manifested through station ships, convoys, and squadrons and expeditions. Station ships and convoys are interrelated, as ships going to and from their station often acted as convoy. The mechanisms for their selection and departure will be dealt with more fully in the following chapter. Squadrons and expeditions, however, are frequently factored into wider questions of empire and mainstream notions of colonial security. This chapter will discuss the interrelation of war and maritime linkages between London and North America utilising more familiar narratives. Although more visible than station ships and convoys, the marginal historical importance hitherto attributed to demonstrations of

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<sup>9</sup> W.T. Morgan, "Some Attempts at Imperial Co-Operation During the Reign of Queen Anne," *Royal Historical Society Transactions* 4th series, 10 (1947), 171.

<sup>10</sup> John G. Reid "Preface" to Unpublished manuscript (2000), 3-4. This, and two other works in manuscript form by Reid cited below: "Imperialism, Diplomacies and the Conquest of Port Royal, 1710" and "The Conquest of Acadia: Narratives," are to be part of a forthcoming collaborative work.

English/British sea power in North America limits this overview without further primary research. Instances such as the Norris squadron and Walker expedition have wider implications for transatlantic imperial naval policy requiring more detailed analysis than can be provided here. However, the instances of Royal Navy squadrons appearing between 1690 and 1711 can be easily tabulated and briefly outlined. This chapter, therefore, is not meant to be a comprehensive dissection of the squadron and expedition but to describe the manner in which official deployment came to pass. As discussed in Chapter I, a common view of warship deployment to North America is based on notions of command of the sea and naval deployment as an adjunct of grand strategy. Although examining deployment to North America through a standard lens, this chapter recognises revised interpretations concerning both grand strategy and colonial defence. The intended purpose is to provide a point of comparison to convoys and station ships occupying the same ocean but operating on different administrative planes.

The multi-layered configuration of imperial security that arose after 1689 materialised from an amalgam of conflicting interests. These interests came to be increasingly exploited by a clique of aspiring imperialists who insisted on upsetting a status quo that had unconsciously grown up around the northeastern area of North America. John G. Reid points out that during the first three quarters of the seventeenth century, an international region evolved in northeastern North America. The conglomeration of four European states (England, Scotland, France and the Dutch Republic) with many more Native American nations within a relatively localised area dictated that a certain degree of discretion, interaction and sometimes cooperation was

necessary for mutual survival. Trading, alliances, or simple coexistence with one's neighbours were among the methods employed to foster stability. Such arrangements did not preclude conflict, but produced a recognition that protracted violence could be detrimental to all. Imperial officials on-site, especially those realising that the small European populations were located in the centre of Native influence, recognised that the fragile nature of frontier societies dictated caution, even at the expense of imperial policy.<sup>11</sup>

Violence prior to 1688 frequently arose out of local considerations. Conflict in Newfoundland, and between Acadia and New England, seemed as much, if not more, a struggle for control of the fisheries as it was a clash of imperial powers. Animosity between Native societies and Europeans had always initiated regional conflict unrelated to the European struggles. The Abenaki, for example, periodically formed alliances with the French but fought their wars with the English irrespective of French assistance or larger conflicts broiling in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Conflict was not limited to ethnic or imperial considerations as the English colonies steadfastly refused to enter into any lasting agreements for common defence. The advantage of population the English held as a group was effectively nullified by disunity. The resulting confusion and division was routinely manipulated by, for example, the Five Nations and the French and was compounded by the dishevelled demeanour of what small numbers of imperial soldiers

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<sup>11</sup> Reid, "An International Region of the Northeast," 31-46.

<sup>12</sup> Reid, "Imperial Intrusions" 81.

were deployed to North America.<sup>13</sup>

Unfortunately for the inhabitants of North America, the expansion of European imperialism after 1689 began to undermine pre-war arrangements. Warfare with imperial overtones began to superimpose itself upon local conflict as closer imperial ties brought opportunity to myriad groups and individuals. Originally it had been thought that core responses to peripheral opportunism within the empire were based on mercantilist economic policies and therefore within a concerted plan of empire. More recently historians such as J.D. Alsop have argued that colonial policy prior to the American Revolution was based on a series of pragmatic responses to immediate needs, and not necessarily dictated by economics. If any consistent English/British colonial strategy was visible for the war years between 1689 and 1713 it was one of persuading the diverse American colonies to provide for their own defence. Until late in the War of the Spanish Succession, the official platform of the English/British government was not to upset the status quo in North America. Its resources were taxed to the limit and directed towards Europe. Therefore, the government refused to waste inordinate amounts of time, money and troops to defend colonies or extend war to North America. However, if individuals or groups submitted viable proposals minimising risk and expense they were given consideration. War-weariness of the sort that prompted Britain to enter into European peace negotiations a year earlier than its allies conversely stimulated support for local initiative as an attractive alternative to stagnating European fronts as well as for personal

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<sup>13</sup> Richard R. Johnson *Adjustment to Empire: The New England Colonies, 1675-1715* (New Brunswick, N.J., Rutgers U.P., 1981), 256-57.



gain within government.<sup>14</sup>

The intermediaries for the implementation of conquest were individuals known as projectors. Projectors harboured inside information or influence and would undertake the major part of lobbying and organisation. Most projectors were merely seeking employment but others, especially those coming from New England, came to represent the ambitions of their local seats of power, or portions thereof. Some, like Samuel Vetch, would put forth ambitious schemes for a unified empire. Although not as high-profile as the individual projector, mercantile interest groups lobbied Parliament to obtain acceptance of their needs throughout this period. Newfoundland fishing merchants for example, were especially diligent in courting, as well as being sought out, by all levels of government as well as the Admiralty, to seek protection for the fishery. Apart from the elimination of French fishing interests in Newfoundland, merchant groups did not put forth aggressive plans for conquest.<sup>15</sup> Any scheme would require maritime assistance, as ocean travel was the principal mode of transportation and communication. Projectors representing local imperialists utilised both informal and formal methods of naval deployment.

New England (including present-day Maine) had the most at stake in war being at the crossroads of northeastern North America. New Englanders perceived themselves as surrounded by the aggressive French at Quebec, lurking privateers from Port Royal,

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<sup>14</sup> J.D. Alsop "The Age of the Projectors," 30-32; D.W. Jones, *War and Economy in the Age of William III and Marlborough* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 16. Jones describes Britain's distribution of money and armies on the continent and the Navy in the Mediterranean after 1690 as Double Forward Commitment.

<sup>15</sup> Alsop, "The Age of the Projectors," 32-33.

openly hostile Abenaki, opportunistic Five Nations, and the belligerent Mi'kmaq. Apathetic colonies, such as Connecticut and pirate-harbours New York, frequently refused to contribute to the common defence preferring to use their larger neighbour as a buffer against attack from land and undertake strictly defensive measures by sea. New England consistently faced problems of raising money and troops for its own defence as colonists saw little value in encouraging the frontier system of raid and counter-raid.<sup>16</sup>

Projects were not limited to military undertakings but warfare offered greater opportunity for projectors to attract government attention. William Phips' second project (1686-87) made him rich after he salvaged a sunken Spanish bullion ship in the Caribbean using resources provided by the navy. Phips, although of humble birth himself, had important familial connections in England and powerful friends in Boston, not least the Reverend Increase Mather and his son Cotton. Phips attempted two more imperial projects in 1690, but without assistance from London. Although steeped in controversy, neither the success at Port Royal nor the failure of the attack on Quebec prevented Phips from being appointed royal Governor in 1692. Phips clearly operated out of personal ambition but his actions conformed to wider colonial themes of defence and expansion and unrealised imperial dreams of subduing New France. Phips, like most projectors, was not a singular force but the link between groups on either side of the Atlantic.<sup>17</sup>

While violence against New England usually came overland via raiding, New

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<sup>16</sup> Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 256-57.

<sup>17</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, xi-xii, xvii.

Englanders greatly feared economic deprivations due to privateering, and the threat of physical destruction at the hand of French squadrons. Whether or not fears and losses were exaggerated in the interest of soliciting assistance, they were nonetheless easy to prove.<sup>18</sup> The most practical method of retaliation lay through maritime excursion.

Expeditions to Port Royal and later Quebec, led by Phips, were organised entirely by New England, without assistance from London and without even the benefit of local naval vessels. A gap existed for over a year and a half following the recall of the *Rose* in 1689 when no station ships were dispatched to New England.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, New England hired or outfitted local vessels to act on the government's behalf. For example, the sloop *Swan* was commissioned in 1690 by the government to deter privateers from the coast in the absence of a naval guard.<sup>20</sup> As there was little money in the Massachusetts treasury, the expedition to Port Royal was financed largely by local merchants. Merchant John Nelson and his associates envisioned the mission and asked for the Massachusetts government to provide two small sloops. The government supported the idea but objected to Nelson as commander and appointed Phips instead. Still, the expedition experienced disagreements on organisation, leadership and had difficulty recruiting volunteers for the militia. Finally the Massachusetts General Court conscripted 500 souls

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<sup>18</sup> Donald Chard, "The Impact of French Privateering on New England," *American Neptune* 35 no.3 (1975), 156.

<sup>19</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 94; PRO ADM 8/2, 8/3 28 June 1689-1 September 1690. The *Rose* was recalled in Sept. 1689 but given lag in communication and the need to escort a homeward bound mast convoy, did not leave until May. The unfortunate *Rose* was subsequently severely damaged by a French man-of-war and was finally home and listed as at Portsmouth in September of 1690.

<sup>20</sup> Chard, "The Impact of French Privateering," 154.

and the attacking force came to comprise 736 men.<sup>21</sup>

Leading the expedition was a locally outfitted frigate, the *Six Friends*, with 42 cannon and 120 crew members. There were four other vessels in the expedition, the *Porcupine*, with 16 guns and 117 men, the government sloop *Mary*, and two unarmed ketches. The small expedition arrived off Port Royal on 9 May 1690. The next day the dilapidated fort surrendered and on 12 May Phips' troops began to sack the town. The attack on Quebec in the fall of the year was more elaborate but suffered similar problems of manpower and recalcitrant allies. Except for an appeal to the Lords of Trade for arms and ammunition, the attack on Quebec (like that on Port Royal) was accomplished using strictly local resources.<sup>22</sup>

The armada that sailed to Quebec was comprised of 34 vessels of various sizes, led by the *Six Friends*. It left on 10 August 1690 and reached Quebec on 6 October. The assault force consisted of 2300 New Englanders and 50 Natives. An overland attack on Montreal to stretch French defences was to have been made by 600 New York and Connecticut troops supporting 1500 from the Five Nations. Native indifference (it was in the best interest of the Five Nations to maintain the European status quo) and factional fighting reduced this invasion to small raids in the Montreal hinterland. The lack of a diversionary attack permitted Governor Frontenac to reinforce Quebec.<sup>23</sup> The attack against superior forces in a well defended position failed. The New England seaborne

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<sup>21</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 83-85; Donald Chard, "Lack of a Consensus: New England's Attitude to Acadia," *Nova Scotia Historical Society Collections* 38 (1973), 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 96.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

forces, suffering from seasonal weather and inadequate stores and provisions, came to suffer around 400 deaths to disease and shipwreck and only 30 to enemy gunfire. More still would perish when sickened militia soldiers returned home. Without plunder and prizes the Massachusetts government fell seriously into debt but faced continuing frontier defence expenditures.<sup>24</sup> This did not deter Phips from soliciting support in London for another attempt. Phips had discovered that the reduction of Quebec would take greater resources (especially warships) than New England could muster on its own and reported such in person to the Lords of Trade on 30 June 1691.<sup>25</sup>

The other form of private or informal maritime warfare, privateering, was much more successful for individuals drawing letters of marque from either of the European belligerents. Evidence also exists of Mi'kmaq individuals engaging in their own form of privateering off Nova Scotia during English/British occupation of Port Royal and beyond.<sup>26</sup> Sustained privateering campaigns, or more precisely *guerre de course*, posed a considerable physical threat and represented the principal strategy of the French navy after 1692. With the French unable to maintain the high cost of parity with the Royal Navy, their largest men-of-war were laid up. In addition to letters of marque, the remaining warships were organised into powerful raiding squadrons or loaned out, crews and all, to private interests (*armateurs*) who outfitted and victualled the ships in return for

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<sup>24</sup> Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 197-98.

<sup>25</sup> Phips to Lords of Trade, 30 June 1691, abstracted in *Calendar of State Paper, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* Vol. 13 no. 1600.

<sup>26</sup> John G. Reid, "Imperialism, Diplomacies and the Conquest of Port Royal, 1710," Unpublished manuscript(2000), 1.

profits from prize taking.<sup>27</sup> An example of an individual who blurred the lines between privateer and naval officer was Pierre le Moyne D'Iberville. Operating under order from Quebec, D'Iberville led some of the most destructive raids against New England (at Pemaquid) and Newfoundland in 1696-97.<sup>28</sup> Naval historians often downplay privateering as a secondary and strategically indecisive affair based on traditional analysis of fleet power. However, the resources distributed to defend against *guerre de course* and the disruption caused to the English/British naval war effort were considerable.<sup>29</sup> A survey of warships taken by the French indicates that their principal mode of attack was to divide and conquer and then swarm English ships in convoy or on patrol.<sup>30</sup> The misguided notion of naval planners that privateering was ineffective resulted in complaints by merchants and others affected by inadequate protection.<sup>31</sup>

Privateering had certain advantages for French colonies. French privateers calling on colonial ports assumed an important role in the supplementing of vital supplies disrupted by the war.<sup>32</sup> The disruption of shipping, both naval and merchant, gave

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<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey Symcox, *The Crisis of French Seapower, 1688-1697*, 7.

<sup>28</sup> See Alan F. Williams *Father Baudoin's War: D'Iberville's Campaigns in Acadia and Newfoundland, 1696, 1697* (St. John's: Memorial, 1987).

<sup>29</sup> Robin Ranger "The Anglo French Wars, 1689-1815," in *Seapower and Strategy* ed. Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1989), 168-70.

<sup>30</sup> This analysis is based on examining entries in David J. Hepper, *British Warships Losses in the Age of Sail, 1650-1859* (Rotherfield, Sussex: Jean Boudriot, 1994). If a loss occurred from a single ship engagement, it invariably involved a larger French opponent.

<sup>31</sup> David J. Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: U. of Exeter Press, 1997), 85-86.

<sup>32</sup> Chard, "The Impact of French Privateering on New England," 157, 159. The role of the French navy in North American waters is yet another maritime topic requiring attention.

privateers and navy commerce raiders increased importance as links between Europe and New France and often the latter's only source of maritime defence. *Guerre de course* offered not only a method of aggressive attack but an opportunity for employment and wealth in the face of disrupted trade.<sup>33</sup> The drawback to privateering as a form of maritime warfare on the western half of the Atlantic rim was its sporadic nature. The nomadic habits of privateers did not guarantee sustained coverage. Only the largest of privateers were capable of standing up to warships and this duty was frequently left to French naval vessels, which for the most part were engaged in their own commerce raiding ventures and do not appear to have offered any sustained defence of places such as Plaisance and Port Royal. The perception that every French privateer on the eastern seaboard of America was based at Port Royal did not act as a deterrent. On the contrary it encouraged the formulation of attack plans by New England and in no instance were the attacking forces met by any privateers defending Port Royal.<sup>34</sup>

English/British privateering rose considerably from the Nine Years War to the War of the Spanish Succession. Letters of marque increased from 490 to 1622 from one war to the next and correspondingly the number of prizes taken.<sup>35</sup> Privateering was especially useful to a trade-based economy such as New England's. Outfitting privateer vessels was a potential source of income in the face of trade disruption and the expense of financing colonial wars. Colonial governors received mandates to issue letters of marque

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<sup>33</sup> J.S. Bromley, *Corsairs and Navies* (London: Hambledon, 1987), 230-31.

<sup>34</sup> Chard, "Impact of French Privateering on New England," 153.

<sup>35</sup> Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 175.

and establish Vice-Admiralty courts.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, privateers from Britain expanded their cruising across the Atlantic. Newfoundland was the scene of considerable privateering activity during the War of the Spanish Succession as large privateers outfitted for long cruises crossed the Atlantic in increasing numbers.<sup>37</sup> An added bonus to this tactic was the propensity to reach agreements on ransoming vessels rather than undertake the arduous process of delegating prize crews to sail captured ships back to Europe.<sup>38</sup> Like Acadia, New England and Newfoundland could not count on privateers for colonial defence. The profit motive and French commerce raiding using squadron tactics precluded any such notions.

In turning to formal deployment to North America, the squadrons and expeditions appear difficult to analyse. However, a common thread of hardship or failure ran throughout. Phips' conclusion that imperial assistance was necessary for any siege of Quebec was at least partially acknowledged by the London government. Although expeditions designed specifically to conquer New France only came with Sir Hovenden Walker's expedition in 1711, Quebec and Plaisance became secondary targets for squadrons sent to the Caribbean if their cruises there proved unsuccessful. The first example was the dubious assistance offered by Admiral Sir Francis Wheeler's squadron to New England in 1693. Wheeler had been instructed to cruise the Caribbean and attack French holdings. The plan was conceived by the Secretary of War, also secretary to the

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<sup>36</sup> Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 245-46;

<sup>37</sup> Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Bromley, *Corsairs and Navies*, 244.



Lords of Trade, William Blathwayt, under the encouragement of the Earl of Nottingham, then Secretary of State. Leaving England on 10 January 1693 the squadron was to attack French islands in the Caribbean until May when Wheeler was to travel to New England to assist in the capture of Canada. The Caribbean portion of the cruise was notable only for a failed attack on Martinique.<sup>39</sup>

By the time Wheeler arrived in Boston on 12 June 1693 he commanded a force of 2 third rates, 3 fourth rates, 3 fifth rates, 2 fireships, a bomb vessel, store ship, hospital ship and 5 merchant vessels. Upon arrival in Boston Wheeler judged his ships to be in good order and required no provisions or ammunition. However, the expedition was devastated by contagious disease. All warships had their complements reduced by at least half, with only about one third of the remaining number being actual seamen. Of the two army regiments assigned to Wheeler, only 650 men remained.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately for Wheeler, he discovered there was to be no action against the French at Quebec that year. The New England government was supposed to have received orders to expect Wheeler and furnish him with supplies if need be but by the end of April 1693 the orders had not yet been dispatched. Among the impediments were recalcitrant messengers and packet boats, adverse winds, Nottingham's mistrust of a particular military messenger and the Admiralty's refusal to send a special packet boat.<sup>41</sup> Finally, as noted in the Admiralty Board Minutes of 5 May 1693 the Admiralty was requested on behalf of Queen Mary:

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen S. Webb, "William Blathwayt, Imperial Fixer--Muddling Through to Empire, 1689-1717," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series 26 no.3 (1969), 383-85.

<sup>40</sup> PRO Colonial Office (CO) 5/857 ,Wheeler to Phips, 8 July 1693, 212.

<sup>41</sup> Webb, "William Blathwayt," 392.

"That pursuant to her Maj. Pleasure signified to this board, the governor of New England be desired to furnish Sr. Francis Wheeler with naval stores."<sup>42</sup> By this time it was too late and Wheeler arrived without any warning.

Despite the pestilence on board his ships, Wheeler inquired of Phips as to whether the survivors would be capable of carrying Quebec nonetheless.<sup>43</sup> Phips replied that in no way could Wheeler succeed so late in the season and without more men. Phips and his council suggested that at least 4000 troops were needed but that the number and type of warships would correspond to what Wheeler currently possessed. Wheeler could expect no assistance from New England at this juncture and it was proposed that Wheeler execute his secondary plan of attacking French Newfoundland on the return voyage as any destruction of the fishery would aid the war effort.<sup>44</sup> The squadron did attack Newfoundland but could not capture Plaisance and had to settle for prize-taking and the destruction of fishing boats.<sup>45</sup>

Even if lessons not been learned from 1690 and had New England not been smarting financially, the political turmoil surrounding Phips' governorship might well have precluded any assistance from New England. In any event it would be bad business for Phips, as a seasoned projector, to invest in a project for which he would not receive a large portion of the credit or reward. Except for raids in Newfoundland, no more

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<sup>42</sup> PRO Admiralty (ADM) 3/8 Admiralty Board Minutes, 5 May 1693.

<sup>43</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Wheeler to Phips, 8 July 1693, 212.

<sup>44</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Phips to Wheeler 12 July 1693, 214.

<sup>45</sup> R.D. Merriman, ed. *The Sergison Papers* (London: Navy Records Society, 1950), 286, 296-98.

attempts would be made on French strongholds during the Nine Years War. During the War of the Spanish Succession, a local invasion was again attempted against Port Royal. An expedition was launched in late May 1707. Despite the assistance of the fourth rate *Deptford*, then stationed at New England, the force of 1300 could not breach the thinly garrisoned but creatively defended Port Royal. A second attempt was made in July, ending with similar results.<sup>46</sup> Making the most of what he had, the governor at Port Royal, Daniel d'Auger de Subercase strengthened the fort, encouraged privateering and relied on disorganisation among the attacking forces.<sup>47</sup> The defeat prompted Samuel Vetch, as principal projector for New England during the latter years of the war, to persuade the government to implement a plan to subdue New France on its own terms and not part of any other venture. Vetch distributed a report, *Canada Survey'd*, describing New France in detail and outlining a plan for its subjugation. The treatise travelled around political circles in several forms after 1708 and was inspiration for the aborted 1709 attempt at Quebec, the 1710 capture of Port Royal and finally, the 1711 Walker expedition.<sup>48</sup>

After 1708 the atmosphere in London was more conducive to overseas schemes as the increasing cost in Europe made them attractive. Vetch used charisma and intimate knowledge of North America skilfully to weave plans of conquest and consolidation that

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<sup>46</sup> Reid, "Imperial Intrusions," 90; Gerald S. Graham, *Empire of the North Atlantic*, 85. It should be noted that Port Royal was not the only Acadian settlement to experience violence. For example, New England raiding parties attacked Beaubassin in 1696 and Minas Basin in 1704.

<sup>47</sup> Dale Miquelon, *New France, 1701-1744* (Toronto McClelland and Stewart, 1987), 41.

<sup>48</sup> Alsop, "The Age of the Projectors," 43-44.

caught the attention of British officials who were looking for any victory in a war that increasingly had become mired in stalemate. Vetch's innovative and progressive thoughts on empire meant little to long-term British policy decisions. Imperial projects as Vetch proposed them were low-risk, low-expenditure methods of achieving military ends. Once a plan was initiated, the project was turned over to its initiators. Vetch had originally envisioned a full-scale joint imperial-colonial expedition against Quebec in 1709. Although the Board of Trade was supportive, the promised resources were instead sent to Spain. An alternative plan to capture Port Royal was developed for the next year and this time the promised naval support was dispatched.<sup>49</sup>

While not technically an expedition or a squadron, the ships sent to support the 1710 attack on Port Royal fitted the pattern of warships without the confines of convoys and station duty. Two fourth rates, the *Dragon* and the *Falmouth* were dispatched from England with the bomb vessel *Starr*. Also donated were 397 marines, 103 short of the number requested by New England and of dubious quality. The small squadron was joined by the fourth rate *Chester*, already on station at Boston, and the two fifth rates from New York, *Lowestoft* and *Feversham*. Another fourth rate, the *Norwich*, was in the area convoying mast ships to New England but does not appear to have taken part in the actual assault. Despite this considerable force given the size of Port Royal's garrison, it still required a week's siege to negotiate a surrender.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 44-45.

<sup>50</sup> PRO ADM 8/11, 1 October 1710; Graham, *Empire of the North Atlantic*, 91; Reid, "The Conquest of Acadia: Narratives," 3-4.

The destination of the three ships sent from Britain was not listed in the Admiralty List Books in the manner of other vessels sent abroad. Until it was evident they were returning to England their location was simply stated as “on a private service.” This distinction is curious, as the Admiralty Lists were an in-house reference for the Admiralty and Navy Boards and such a description would not have been for the purposes of secrecy. Navy packet boats, for instance, were routinely listed with both their purpose and destination. Ships entered as “on a private service” at first appear to reflect the lassitude of the Secretary’s office towards ships that were unavailable for other duties. When the Admiralty gained intelligence that *Dragon*, *Falmouth* and *Starr* were returning, their status switched to “coming home from New England.”<sup>51</sup> Listing the whereabouts of several small ships as beyond the scope of the Admiralty’s knowledge might only represent a clerical expedient. But it may also reflect the inability of the Admiralty Board to dictate policy in certain areas. This perspective becomes more plausible if the circumstances surrounding the dispatch of the Walker expedition are examined.

The squadron sent out under Sir Hovenden Walker in 1711 represented the largest deployment of sea and land forces to North America to that date. Of the 5000 regular troops sent from Europe five regiments were veteran units from Flanders accompanied by three from England and a regiment of Marines. Longtime colonial officer Francis Nicholson, also instrumental in organising support for the expedition, was to lead an

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<sup>51</sup> PRO ADM 8/11, 1 December 1710, 1 January 1711.

overland assault against Montreal with 2000 colonial troops.<sup>52</sup> The navy originally listed 5 third rates, 4 fourth rates and 2 bomb vessels in the squadron.<sup>53</sup> Another ship, the fourth rate *Windsor*, was not originally listed with the squadron but left with the expedition from Boston. A fourth rate and a fifth rate from England joined the squadron off Cape Breton. Attending on the expedition were some of the ships stationed at Virginia, New York and New England totalling 1 fourth rate, 3 fifth rates and 1 sixth rate. One of these ships never joined the squadron while another, the fifth rate *Feversham* foundered off Cape Breton convoying supply ships.<sup>54</sup>

When the Walker squadron was first entered into the Admiralty List Books it was placed in the Designed on Foreign Service section of the lists where it was described as “Designed for a Foreign Voyage” from February 1711 until May when it was listed as “At Plymouth. Going on a Foreign Service, under the Command of Sr. Hovenden Walker Rear Admiral of the White.” The next month the squadron was placed in the Abroad on Foreign Service section where it was listed as “Gone on a Private Service under the Command of Sr. Hovenden Walker, Rear Admiral of the White.”<sup>55</sup>

The 1711 expedition, like its 1690 counterpart, suffered from problems endemic to campaigning in early modern America. Local enthusiasm for the expedition was

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<sup>52</sup> Richard Harding, “The Expeditions to Quebec, 1690 and 1711: The Evolution of British Trans-Atlantic Amphibious Power,” in *Guerre Maritimes* op.cit., 205.

<sup>53</sup> PRO ADM 8/11, 1 June 1711.

<sup>54</sup> Gerald Graham, ed. *The Walker Expedition to Quebec, 1711* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1953), 23, 216. Walker originally published the journal in 1720 to clear his name in public circles. Graham summarises the journal in a lengthy introduction.

<sup>55</sup> PRO ADM 8/11, 1 February 1711 to 1 June 1711.

lukewarm and manpower and desertion became a problem once again. New England, with the most at stake, nevertheless managed to levy ten percent above its quota of volunteers.<sup>56</sup> More serious was the impact of the arrival of so many naval vessels and troops in Boston. Richard Harding calculates the complement of the force as representing eight percent of the white population of New England.<sup>57</sup> Stores were difficult to come by in the necessary quantities. Established lines of credit were only grudgingly given out and even payment in cash brought no guarantees as securing the necessary quantities of items such as beef risked depleting the countryside. Walker was forced to ask the Massachusetts government for credit and cash advances and appoint two pursers to act as victualling agents in the negotiations over stores as no local merchant would assume the responsibility. To compound matters, the warships from England were only provisioned with four months victuals at full allowance. The normal rate of supply was eight months victuals at full allowance. Several ships were damaged considerably during the crossing but the two largest third rates could not be repaired at Boston's facilities. Eventually it was determined that in any case, these vessels were too large even to sail down the St. Lawrence, and they were sent home. Manning the fleet created further problems. Due to a severe labour shortage, the expected sailors in America to supplement under-manned naval vessels did not materialise. On the contrary, sailors began deserting from the fleet, which Walker blamed on a general shortage of seafaring labour resulting in higher wages throughout the colonies. Also wanting were pilots with experience in navigating the St.

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<sup>56</sup> Graham. *The Walker Expedition*, 26.

<sup>57</sup> Harding, "The Expeditions to Quebec," 207.

Lawrence river.<sup>58</sup>

Interpretation of what seems at first like an episode of simple ill-planning and indecisive command is complicated by high politics between Whigs and Tories. This, in addition to strategic necessity, contributed not only to the acceptance of the scheme but to its lack of depth. One of the new Tory government's Secretaries of State, Henry St. John (Viscount Bolingbroke), was determined to secure a victory for his party. The Duke of Marlborough, a Whig supporter and in command of the army, had won decisive victories in Flanders. If a Tory naval expedition could succeed it would mean political advantage. In terms of strategy a victory in Canada could mean a valuable negotiation tool and a break from the current stalemate in Europe. Also at stake was the trust of merchant classes and colonial elites, traditionally suspicious of the Tories.<sup>59</sup>

Secretary St. John required two conditions. First, in order to gain favour for the expedition at court, political appointments were required. The commander of the army contingent was newly promoted General John Hill, brother to the Queen's favourite, Mrs. Masham. Although questioning Hill's ability, Marlborough promoted him anyway as an attempt at distancing a mediocre officer from his crack troops in Flanders. Admiral Hovenden Walker, an officer with much experience but average ability, was chosen as commander of the naval forces.<sup>60</sup> It is uncertain what were the reasons behind Walker's appointment. Gerald Graham concludes he must have somehow had connections or,

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<sup>58</sup> Harding, "The Expeditions to Quebec," 206-07; Graham, *The Walker Expedition*, 26-28, 107.

<sup>59</sup> William T. Morgan "Queen Anne's Canadian Expedition of 1711," *Queens Quarterly* 35 no.4 (1928), 463.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 467.



more likely, was the only senior officer with knowledge of North America and not otherwise employed.<sup>61</sup> However, it can be surmised that someone as ordinary as Walker would have been less likely to protest the mysterious circumstances under which the expedition was organised.

The second condition required of St. John required was secrecy. At the field level, the French would have noticed the diversion of regiments from Flanders. The accumulation of large amounts of naval stores would also arouse suspicion. Political opponents might protest the diversion of ships and men from the front where they were most needed and halt the expedition before it set sail. The French did become suspicious but did not intercept the squadron despite tense moments when French naval concentrations were spotted.<sup>62</sup> The Lords of the Admiralty were intentionally deceived and kept completely unaware of the expedition's destination or intent while the normally omniscient Navy Board was kept only partially informed. So as not to alert the naval administrative body, some ships were ordered to set sail damaged or undermanned.<sup>63</sup> The Secretary of the Navy, Josiah Burchett, was particularly incensed by these covert dealings and criticised after the fact an unnamed member of the government (who can be identified as St. John) for his underhanded ways. Had St. John consulted the Navy Board he would have been informed that under-victualling the squadron was not a wise decision. Burchett and the Navy Board knew provisions for so large a force would be

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<sup>61</sup> Graham, *The Walker Expedition*, 14-15.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

difficult to come by in North America. Additionally, the Admiralty was apparently already aware of the lack of navigational information available and the unlikelihood of the two 80 gun third rates making the voyage safely up the St. Lawrence.<sup>64</sup> It would have come as no surprise to the Navy Board that the expedition would have to abort before even reaching Quebec. Although no warships were lost other than the *Feversham*, 750 persons (including 35 women) and 150 sailors were lost to shipwreck in and around the Gulf of St. Lawrence.<sup>65</sup>

That the Admiralty could remain unaware of the condition and usage of its own ships reflected the peculiar evolution of the Admiralty Board since 1688. In theory the Admiralty Board was to control all actions of the navy proper and report to Crown and Parliament through the Lord High Admiral. The reality was considerably different. Suspicious of politics and powerful individuals, William III saw the pre-revolution post of Lord High Admiral as a threat to central power and preferred a committee of Lords Commissioners instead. Even so, important decisions usually came from the Crown or offices of the Secretaries of State (especially the Southern Department).<sup>66</sup> As with the Lords of Admiralty, William III preferred that the Secretaries of State be kept at arm's length. While the Secretaries of State were not necessarily important officials either for the development of national policy or European diplomacy during this period, they did

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<sup>64</sup> Josiah Burchett, *A Complete History of the most Remarkable Transactions at Sea from the Earliest Accounts of Time to the Conclusion of the Last War with France* (London, 1720), 778.

<sup>65</sup> Graham, *The Walker Expedition*, 44 note 1.

<sup>66</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Admiralty* (Dalton: Lavenham, 1979), 36. The position of Lord High Admiral was resurrected periodically in a titular sense, especially as a make-work project for Queen Anne's Husband, Prince George of Denmark.

hold substantial influence in the formulation of naval policy.<sup>67</sup> Whether the issuing of instructions for fleets or for the refitting of individual ships, orders regularly came from William III and his Secretaries, frequently bypassing the Admiralty Board altogether in favour of the Secretary of the Navy.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, the Board of Admiralty as a policy-making body was ineffective and sterile, with membership being largely a patronage post during the Nine Years War. Matters improved only marginally during the War of the Spanish Succession. Absenteeism from Board meetings was endemic, to the point that sessions were sometimes held without the necessary quorum of three members. The Lords of the Admiralty were so ill-informed that they were often reduced to asking one of the Secretaries of State for information on the fleet.<sup>69</sup> While unimportant for determining high policy, the Admiralty Board acted as a liaison between the navy and Parliament, explaining policy and often absorbing criticism. The administrative Navy Board, while well informed as to the smallest of naval minutiae, retained a professional, and therefore unquestioning, obedience of its superiors. Therefore, it appears plausible that the Navy Board would follow orders from the Secretaries of State with a greater degree of deference than they would to the Lords of the Admiralty.<sup>70</sup>

It has been pointed out that the Phips and Walker expeditions fitted into a wider

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<sup>67</sup> Mark A. Thomson, *The Secretaries of State, 1681-1782* (London: Frank Cass, 1932, reprint 1968), 7-8, 78-80.

<sup>68</sup> Rodger, *The Admiralty*, 36-38.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

trend of the patent inability of combined operations to succeed anywhere in the western hemisphere. A lack of support facilities and the physical and command difficulties of launching combined operations were important reasons for failure. Also frequently cited is an inadequate general knowledge of North America displayed by the dictators of military policy. However, as will become clear in the next chapter, members of the Board of Trade, especially William Blathwayt, and the Navy Board, were becoming well aware of conditions in North America. Their responses however were dictated by lack of control over policy and the natural lag in communications. This gap in the decision-making process and the apparent lack of accountability explain the erratic and ineffective deployment overseas. Ironically, in the Caribbean, which was granted sustained naval coverage and better planning, the wastage in men and ships far outweighed losses on mainland North America where climates were more temperate. This was indicative not only of the productive power of the plantations but also of contemporary fascination with strategic issues of trade and bullion.<sup>71</sup>

The apparent lack of accountability derived from the detached nature of the Phips, Walker and Wheeler expeditions could be, and was, conveniently covered up. Their existence is barely mentioned in the transcripts of Parliament dealing with North America, except for any financial considerations.<sup>72</sup> Although Phips' escapades could be shrugged off without ramifications in London, his petition concerning the need to conquer Canada was at least obliquely listened to. There were no immediate repercussions for

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<sup>71</sup> Jones, "Limitations of British Sea Power", 44.

<sup>72</sup> Harding, "The Expeditions to Quebec," 197-98.

Walker and Hill and those transpiring later had more to do with their political connections than to the failure to reach Quebec, although Walker believed otherwise. Walker was well received at court, while Marlborough lost all office not a month after Walker returned to England. Walker himself made a lot of noise to distract attention from his own foibles but in the end no-one was overly concerned except the merchants of New England, who five years later were petitioning a surprised Parliament for payment of bills it had not sanctioned. The secretive nature of the expedition and St. John's desire to downplay intrigue for his own safety account for the coverup. Fortunately, only one warship was lost, and not to enemy action, while in London much of the blame could be attributed to the irascibility or incompetence of New Englanders.<sup>73</sup>

This contrasts with the squadrons sent to Newfoundland, which were very much in the public eye of England and offer a different perspective. Shows of force in Newfoundland beyond regular convoys, like expeditions to New England, were not planned affairs but responses to immediate needs. Raiding occurred constantly over the period in question but the forces involved were incapable of sustained occupation. The squadron to retake Newfoundland in 1697, under Captain John Norris as commodore, consisted of 4 fourth rates, 2 fifth rates, 2 sixth rates, 2 bomb vessels and a fireship. Scattered throughout were 760 soldiers.<sup>74</sup> D'Iberville had razed all fishing harbours save Bonavista and tiny Carbonear Island the previous year but did not leave an occupying

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<sup>73</sup> Graham, *The Walker Expedition*, 45-46.

<sup>74</sup> Burchett, *Most Remarkable Transactions at Sea*, 559-62; Graham, *Empire of the North Atlantic*, 77; Board of Trade Minutes, 8 April 1697, abstracted in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies* Vol. 15, no. 906.

force. Originally the squadron was to be a particularly well-equipped fishing convoy but in the wake of circulating reports of new French attacks, the government changed its plan and sent out the squadron as an independent expedition.<sup>75</sup> The convoy arrived in Conception Bay on 7 June 1697.

Norris' squadron ran into troubles considerable enough to be debated in Parliament. While the squadron was rebuilding St. John's, a French force of 16 ships appeared outside the harbour under the Marquis de Nesmond, who had made several passages to Newfoundland in the last few years. On 24 July a vote was taken by all officers (both sea and land) whether to sail to attack or assume a defensive posture within the harbour. Remaining in harbour won the majority vote. This tactic was successful in checking the French who made only a reconnaissance attack on the English defences. Norris meanwhile, sent out the *Mary Galley* (Charles Desborough) to cruise and scout the enemy's strength on three different occasions between 26 July and 9 August. Norris was unsatisfied with Captain Desborough's efforts and court martialled him on the spot for disobedience and neglect of duty. Desborough petitioned Parliament upon his return and accused Norris of negligence. Desborough and other witnesses alleged that the stowage of prize goods in Norris' and other ships prevented them from being cleared for action and thus rendered them incapable of fighting the French even if they had voted to do so.<sup>76</sup> A popular outcry in England against the conservative strategy of Norris' apparent refusal

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<sup>75</sup> Ian K. Steele, *The Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968), 35.

<sup>76</sup> Leo F. Stock, ed. *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America Vol. II, 1689-1702* (Washington: Carnegie, 1927, reprint 1966), 249-50, 252-57, passim.

to engage the French added fire to Desborough's allegations. It was publicly opined that Norris gave undue deference to land officers during his council-of-war. Desborough was eventually reinstated while Norris, despite all the public attention, carried on in the navy and eventually became an Admiral.<sup>77</sup>

Newfoundland, like the Caribbean, was considered vital to the economy and defence of Great Britain (and in the case of Newfoundland, also as a nursery for seamen) and was visible to public and Parliament.<sup>78</sup> But, as with most overseas projects, sustained activity was a low priority to those running the war in Europe. The official policy of discouraging large permanent settlement also discouraged active defence lest precedents be set.<sup>79</sup> Merchants troubled with inadequate trade protection often complained to and petitioned Parliament. Although Crown and Privy Council controlled foreign policy, the power of Parliament had at least gained financial power and control over public opinion to the degree that it could influence governmental decision making.<sup>80</sup>

The public attention given to the Norris expedition to Newfoundland sets it aside from the low-key attention granted both captures of Port Royal and the greater indifference surrounding the Phips, Walker and Wheeler expeditions. Other differences are more obvious. Phips' expeditions to Port Royal and Quebec did not utilise ships of

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<sup>77</sup> "Norris, Sir John" *Dictionary of National Biography Volume XIV* ed. Leslie Stephen, and Sidney Lee (London: Oxford, 1901), 569; Stock, ed. *Proceedings and Debates Volume II*, 302.

<sup>78</sup> Keith Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland* (St. John's: Breakwater, 1988), 23-24.

<sup>79</sup> Gerald S. Graham "Britain's Defence of Newfoundland," *Canadian Historical Review* 23 no.3 (1942), 269-71.

<sup>80</sup> John B. Hattendorf, *England in the War of the Spanish Succession: A Study of the English View and Conduct of Grand Strategy, 1702-1712* (New York: Garland, 1987), 1-2.

the Royal Navy while those enlisted for the 1710 attack on Port Royal were a combination of ships already on station with a small force sent from England planned entirely within New England. The Walker expedition operated under the same principle but this time aspects of planning, however deficient, originated on both sides of the Atlantic.

The seemingly disparate undertakings described above nevertheless have several key aspects in common. They were not part of any consistent attempt to subjugate the French in northeastern North America. Although the goal was supported in theory, the budget-conscious government refused to delegate any consistent amount of funds. Projectors' claims of economy combined with bureaucratic and political factionalism resulted in poor planning, insufficient material and minimal coherence. Whether or not the dangers were clearly recognised, many inhabitants of North America refused participation and attempted to distance themselves from oncoming violence.

Squadrons and expeditions were conceived at the highest levels of government, whether imperial or colonial, and did not utilise the central planning mechanisms of the navy. Rather, government passed over the titular heads of the navy and in the case of the Walker affair, the naval administration itself. Despite some similarities, Phips, Vetch, Walker, Wheeler, and Norris do not represent a consistent, regular, warship deployment to North America but have been demonstrated as such to prove notions of "command of the sea." The fractured system of authority within the Admiralty only compounded matters as the Crown or Secretaries of State could push through orders without any professional input.



This chapter cannot offer a comprehensive treatment of major operations in North American waters and analyses only in general terms the distinctiveness of squadrons and expeditions from other forms of deployment. This is designed to suggest that there were many interrelated aspects of maritime warfare within aspects of colonial security. However, while traditional explanations of neglect and lack of resources are not necessarily invalidated by this analysis, they do obscure a duality between both ship deployment and colonial 'strategy'. On one level were the infrequent expeditions and squadrons while on the other were the regular deployment of station ships and convoys. Expeditions would come and go, resulting in short-term inconvenience but the ships deployed by the Admiralty as convoys and guard ships represent a sustained presence and the level at which most inhabitants interacted with sailors.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **“ABROAD ON FOREIGN SERVICE”**

All ships under Admiralty jurisdiction operated within a system of deployment that tied the line of battle to the smallest boats and ships performing myriad tasks around the Atlantic World, the Mediterranean and even in Asia. Remembering that the navy was by far the largest corporate undertaking in early modern England, this system required huge accumulations of manpower, material and money. Convoys and station ships sent to North America were a relatively small part of wider naval deployment and performed their duty within similar parameters to convoys in Europe as well as the larger ships-of-the-line. Nevertheless, individual men-of-war were clearly defined separately from both the fleet and overseas squadrons, although they were frequently conscripted into them. Ships travelling throughout the North Atlantic developed certain idiosyncrasies not always clearly recognised from their brethren operating closer to Europe.

In order to determine the impact of individual warships within the Atlantic World it is necessary to discuss the process by which the Admiralty sent its ships and convoys across the ocean and outline the experiences of the convoy captains and their crews. Primary attention will be given to the structural aspects of deploying a small warship. Some considerations, such as orders and instructions, will be superficially mentioned here and illuminated more fully within the following case studies.

The system of naval administration that sent men and ships abroad was not based on a comprehensive strategy worked out by the Admiralty, Crown, or Parliament. To

reiterate N.A.M. Rodger's statement on navy and empire, actions were dictated by the principle of solving problems as they arose. Rodger argues against the influential view that the navy existed as the prime mover in an organised scheme of empire.<sup>1</sup>

Administration on an *ad hoc* basis meant that every issue, regardless of size or import, was at least acknowledged by the navy's chief administrators as it became known. This does not mean solutions came to everyone's satisfaction or timetable. Maintenance of the navy consisted of dealing with seemingly intractable tasks such as manning, pay, and victualling, manifesting themselves as an endless series of small problems.

Although the Admiralty Board had no influence on the formulation of policy it had come to be directly responsible for the organisation and dispatch of convoys. This modification of duty did nothing to intensify the work ethic of the shiftless Lords Commissioners. Rather, the effective dispatch of convoys and cruisers depended on the efficiency of the Navy Board. If anything, William III's proclivity for relying upon select men in government increased the necessity of efficient administration. The emasculation of the Admiralty Board forced the Navy Board, and in particular the tiny office of the Secretary of the Navy, to count on the appointment of professional, non-partisan, administrators.<sup>2</sup> The need for capable civil servants became acute. When Clerk of the Acts Charles Sergison, one of the four "Principal Officers and Commissioners of the Navy" tried to retire on several occasions owing to ill health, it was stated that he was too valuable to be spared. Sergison (born 1654) had already spent nearly twenty years as a

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<sup>1</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, "Sea Power and Empire," 170-71.

<sup>2</sup> Rodger, *The Admiralty*, 47.

government clerk when appointed Clerk of the Acts full time in 1690. He would serve until retirement was finally, and somewhat ungraciously, granted in 1719.<sup>3</sup>

The Navy Board after 1688 represented a transition from the personalised administration of Samuel Pepys, whose considerable service record included the office of Secretary during the 1673-79 and 1684-88 periods. In addition to making the position of Secretary an extension of himself, Pepys had a firm hand in the determination of naval policy. Increasingly, the Secretary's office, as with the Navy Board generally, became a professional service operating outside of partisan politics even if its appointees still relied on patronage to receive their postings. Although Pepys as Secretary held considerable power, his professionalism encouraged the training of a series of administrators who would fill the ranks of the Navy Board when circumstances surrounding the 1688 revolution changed the nature of naval offices. In this manner the organisational skills of the Navy Board were greatly valued, while the professional status of its members erased any pretense to the control of policy. The increasing ability of office holders to remain neutral and still profit from their positions beyond salary and sinecure doubtless encouraged loyalty to the government at large.<sup>4</sup>

Another governmental organisation factoring into overseas naval considerations was the Board of Trade. This body was created in 1696 as a response to Parliamentary encroachments upon Royal prerogatives. In part these advances on the Crown's power resulted from growing financial problems compounded by the increasingly successful

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<sup>3</sup> Merriman, *The Sergison Papers*, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, 79-80.

French *guerre de course*. The primary role of the Board of Trade for naval policy did not change from that of its predecessors, the Lords of Trade, in that it was the principal information gathering service for overseas colonies. Thus a close working relationship developed between the Navy Board and the Board of Trade. However, tension with the Admiralty could arise via the Board of Trade's role as a cipher for the increasing number of merchant complaints over commerce protection. The result was numerous unsolicited suggestions for the deployment of ships sent as convoys. Bereft of both ships and money to carry out requests for more comprehensive commerce protection, the Admiralty Board viewed the Board of Trade as egregiously interfering in navy business.<sup>5</sup> Although these tensions eased as the Board of Trade evolved more strictly into an information gathering service, sparks could still be created over trade, especially to Newfoundland during the War of the Spanish Succession. The Board of Trade repeatedly lobbied to see more ships provided to all aspects of the Newfoundland trade, something the Admiralty opposed during the first half of the war.<sup>6</sup> These complaints inevitably appeared in Parliament, forcing the hapless Lords of Admiralty to defend actions they did not even initiate.<sup>7</sup>

Although Parliament had no direct control over foreign policy, and therefore over the war effort in Europe, it did have financial leverage and provided a forum for public debate, especially over the seemingly inadequate coverage the navy gave to trade.

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<sup>5</sup> Doty, "The British Admiralty Board as a Factor in Colonial Administration," 17-18; Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy*, 10, 31.

<sup>6</sup> Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy*, 101-02.

<sup>7</sup> Rodger, *The Admiralty*, 44-45.

Unfortunately, overseas merchants had yet to gain significant influence in the House of Commons and those merchant complaints that led to debate often concerned losses only to the coastal trades. Any inclusion of foreign trade in Parliamentary debates originated not from any growing concern for merchants and colonies but as a method of attacking political opponents.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, crises over trade protection led to the passage of two bills in 1694 and 1708 requiring the Admiralty to set aside more ships for convoy and cruising duties. Although these only partially fulfilled expectations, the latter bill, the Convoys and Cruisers Act, at least placated all complainants for the remainder of the conflict.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the principal contribution of the Admiralty to the war effort lay in its ability to process information and requests for assistance while performing the everyday duty of maintaining the navy in fighting condition and controlling the movement of warships and all manner of their construction, repair, manning, and supply. The Admiralty needed to disseminate information from a variety of sources and determine when to send ships, what orders and instructions to provide them with, and the size and frequency of convoys based on the nature of trade and the number of ships usually travelling to each destination. The Navy Board was shouldered with much of the actual work. The Crown and Privy Council could, and did, issue direct orders for convoys but they themselves relied upon the Board of Trade and Admiralty for information.<sup>10</sup> Such orders were issued

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<sup>8</sup> Johnston, "Parliament and the Protection of Trade," 411-12.

<sup>9</sup> Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 177-78.

<sup>10</sup> Rodger, *The Admiralty*, 48.

through the Secretaries of State, often bypassing the Lords of Admiralty completely and sent directly to the Navy Board. Rarely were the Lords of Admiralty, dependent themselves upon the Navy Board, capable of overseeing, and thus interfering with, the actions or decisions of their junior administrators.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to orders and requests from the various government bodies, the Admiralty held discussions directly with merchants for determining when convoys should sail and how large the escort should be. Convoys for local trade and for those based out of London were relatively straightforward. Certain coastal convoys, especially coal, were essential and therefore not an issue. However since access to merchants outside of London was limited, organisation for overseas convoys such as Newfoundland, largely run by Westcountrymen, remained difficult despite Newfoundland's high public profile. The Admiralty tried to find the names of leading merchants in each trade, but rivalries and disparate needs meant that a small cross-section of merchants could not be expected to give reliable or comprehensive information. The Admiralty believed that merchants tended to exaggerate the value of their cargos and the number of ships needed for each convoy as well as the number of sailings each season. Or, merchants were suspected of being less than straightforward about the needs of their competitors in the interest of gaining an advantage. In order to reduce confusion as the Nine Years War progressed, it was decided that the Admiralty would unilaterally fix convoy departures based on their meetings and information gathered rather than negotiate them with all manner of

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 42.

interests.<sup>12</sup>

The Admiralty made the details of sailing dates known to the merchants concerned and instructed naval captains to stop at various ports to rendezvous with any trade going their way. Letters from the Admiralty were sent directly to the chartered companies while information was displayed in places frequented by merchants, especially the Royal Exchange and Billingsgate (for coal merchants). The information was also distributed to organisations such as the Society of Merchant Venturers in Bristol. For out-ports the Admiralty often wrote directly to a senior official such as the mayor, chief magistrate or harbour master. Naval captains themselves were responsible for sending ahead letters to each port at which they would be stopping. Each port was to have the convoy's approximate time of arrival so as to allow the trade at each port to assemble and not unduly waste valuable time.<sup>13</sup> Despite the bevy of complaints over the quality of commerce protection, merchants desired protection and would actively seek out assistance. This appears likely to be a carry-over from the pre-war period when the dispatch of convoys was based predominantly on merchant requests.<sup>14</sup>

An example of how this process could work can be found in the deliberations over the sending of a mast ship convoy to Maine during the Nine Years War. The procurement of masts was of the utmost importance and the abundance of suitable large

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<sup>12</sup> Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 47-49.

<sup>13</sup> See PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Goodall, 21 March 1711, 234.

<sup>14</sup> Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade*, 25.



trees encouraged the development of the North American mast trade.<sup>15</sup> The capture of unescorted New England mast ships during the final Dutch war resulted in the wartime policy of providing mast convoys with one warship.<sup>16</sup> As most convoys were small, the dispatch of even one frigate to convoy and guard perhaps three mast ships was disproportional to the usual ratio of warships to merchant vessels. For comparison, the official list of London ships going to Virginia and Maryland in January of 1692, given to Captain Townsend of the *Assurance*, totalled sixty merchantmen between three (ultimately two) warships. Townsend was also under orders to stop at various ports to collect any more trade desiring convoy.<sup>17</sup> Mast ships were so important that, similar to the Newfoundland fishing fleet, they could be permitted to circumvent the law of the Navigation Acts. In the interest of securing vital naval stores, it was suggested that, in the case examined below, two of the specially built and outfitted mast ships be allowed to proceed despite being foreign built.<sup>18</sup>

The importance of the mast trade notwithstanding, merchants were still required to make their intentions known to the Admiralty if they expected convoy protection. Two such merchants, William Wallis and John Shorter, signed a contract for masts with the Navy Board in December of 1691, and arrangements commenced to send a convoy.<sup>19</sup> The

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<sup>15</sup> Robert G. Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy, 1652-1862* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1965), 240.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>17</sup> PRO ADM 2/8, Instructions to Captain Townsend, 29 December 1691, 480-83.

<sup>18</sup> PRO ADM 1/3565, Navy Board to Southerne, 1 February 1692, 235.

<sup>19</sup> PRO ADM 1/3565, Navy Board to Commissioners of the Admiralty, 11 January 1692, 87-88.

merchants, under Admiralty direction, attended the Earl of Nottingham's office (then Secretary of State), to have their license confirmed. Nottingham's secretary replied that the license would not be signed until direction was received from the Admiralty. Wallis and Shorter wrote a lengthy precis to the Navy Board describing the process by which trees were harvested as a plea for speed as delays were detrimental to the smooth harvest of trees as winter approached.<sup>20</sup> The Navy Board wrote to Secretary of the Navy James Southerne requesting he bring the matter before the Lords Commissioners immediately. Although requiring ratification by the Admiralty Board, the details were mostly worked out between the merchants, the Navy Board and the Secretary of the Navy. The ships requiring convoy consisted of one ship from Wallis and Shorter and two more from John Taylor, the principal London mast merchant.<sup>21</sup> The fourth rate *Samuel & Henry* was designated convoy for the mast ships by the Lords of the Admiralty on 19 April 1692.<sup>22</sup> The convoy did not leave until sometime May of 1692 and returned that December.<sup>23</sup> On 9 May 1692, intelligence of French naval activity along the route reached Secretary Southerne to which he requested the *Samuel & Henry* stop with the mast convoy until further notice, probably to the dismay of Wallis and Shorter.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, the Admiralty's procedure for deploying ships as convoys and guard

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<sup>20</sup> PRO ADM 1/3565, Wallis and Shorter to Navy Board, 2 March 1692.

<sup>21</sup> PRO ADM 1/3565, Navy Board to Commissioners of the Admiralty, 11 January 1692, 87-88; PRO ADM 1/3565, Navy Board to Southerne, 4 March 1692, 407-10.

<sup>22</sup> PRO ADM 3/8, Admiralty Board Minutes, 19 April 1692.

<sup>23</sup> PRO ADM 8/3, 1 May 1692- 1 December 1692.

<sup>24</sup> PRO ADM 2/382, Southerne to Navy Board 9 May 1692.

ships between 1689 and 1713 was an extension of the peacetime system of trade protection. As each war progressed warships were sent convoy in greater numbers under less confusing circumstances, as the initial problems of mobilisation subsided. But the underlying structure remained constant. Between the Dutch Wars and the Revolution, the Royal Navy had established a small yet reasonably efficient convoy system designed to cope with the corsairs of the Barbary states along the north coast of Africa as well as any other assorted privateers, pirates, or competing interests. On average, one to three ships were sent along the normal lines of trade with no limits to the number of merchant vessels within any given convoy. The most visible routes were those to the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Asia, the Virginia tobacco trade, and the Newfoundland fisheries. These convoys were supported by cruising squadrons at strategic points in the Mediterranean, the Soundings (western approaches to England), and the Channel. Convoy defence was based in Europe, on the assumption that convoys were at the greatest danger on the closing leg of their journey.<sup>25</sup>

This rationale for the distribution of station ships and convoys did not substantially change between 1689 and 1713 except that convoys were required for coastal trades and more individual cruisers were dispatched on station around the British Isles and overseas colonies.<sup>26</sup> The pre-war system was satisfactory for dealing with local pirates and privateers, but naval captains expressed concern such measures would prove

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<sup>25</sup> Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade*, 53-56.

<sup>26</sup> Owen, *War at Sea Under Queen Anne*, 56; Pearsall, "The Royal Navy and Trade Protection," 112; Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 46.

insufficient should any major maritime power challenge English shipping.<sup>27</sup> Convoys were automatically continued with the English declaration of war in 1689. However, nothing was done to account for the discrepancies between deployment to defend against the Dutch maritime power (channel oriented strategy) versus the French (western approaches and high-seas oriented strategy). Additionally, naval development during the early years of the Nine Years war was the product of a shift away from trade protection as the Royal Navy mobilised for war in the Mediterranean and home waters against the French fleet. A curious discrepancy emerged whereby trade was acknowledged as the backbone of the English economy but the Admiralty's preoccupation with the Mediterranean and home waters rewarded French privateers and cruising squadrons with spectacular catches culminating in a successful attack on the 1693 Smyrna convoy. The success of French swarming tactics that overwhelmed even ships of the line illuminate the low priority given to trade protection.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, judging the overall effectiveness of convoys, even within a consensus of low priority, depends on a variety of factors. A.W.H. Pearsall argues that one or two warships were usually sufficient to deter small privateers on the open ocean. Despite the visible attacks on convoys in force, most vessels lost to commerce raiding had chosen to sail individually, left their convoy, or had become separated from it.<sup>29</sup> Bad weather frequently scattered merchant fleets and warships could go for days before

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<sup>27</sup> Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade*, 92-93.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, "Limitations of British Sea Power," 38-39; Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 75-76.

<sup>29</sup> Pearsall, "The Royal Navy and Trade Protection," 113-14.

sighting any of their charges. Tabulating losses to merchant shipping has traditionally been difficult given the length of the wars, the sporadic nature of surviving records, and inflation or deflation of numbers for partisan purposes. Increasing use of ransoming and the existence of unfortunate ships made prize more than once, further compromise the reliability of statistics. Figures for captured ships range from 500 to 900 to 4000 for the Nine Years War and 1146 to 2000 to 4544 (with 2118 more ransomed off) for the War of the Spanish Succession.<sup>30</sup> Some economic arguments, based on the substantial numbers of capture, maintain that the English economy was so strong it survived in spite of brutal commerce raiding, not due to any victory at sea.<sup>31</sup>

That the convoy system barely expanded beyond its pre-war roots was due to inadequate numbers of smaller warships which could not provide sufficient coverage to increasing needs. As losses mounted the Admiralty began to be attacked in Parliament over the poor state of commerce protection. On 10 April 1693, the Admiralty Board tried to defend itself by producing a document listing 59 smaller vessels ordered for commerce protection since 25 January. Closer examination uncovered that 13 of these ships had not been used for cruising, 32 were named as convoys, 12 had escorted overseas shipping, and some ships were mentioned several times as they were transferred to new duties.<sup>32</sup> Any intentional subterfuge by the Admiralty aside, the supposed confusion within their

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<sup>30</sup> Nicholas Tracy, *Attack on Maritime Trade* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1991), 52-54; Bromley, *Corsairs and Navies*, 223; Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (London: St. Martin's, 1962), 315-17.

<sup>31</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 70-71.

<sup>32</sup> Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 46-47.

list of convoys and cruisers is a plausible, though chaotic, breakdown of resources if warship dispatch procedures are examined. The organisation of convoys precluded precise tabulation of the number of ships to be designated. Frequently ships performed dual or multiple tasks. Ships guarding the Irish coast were ordered to look for smugglers while squadrons in the Channel assisted in the convoying of merchant ships in local waters.<sup>33</sup> The cyclic nature of convoys and station duty, together with the need to juggle scarce resources and unforeseen difficulties meant ships for convoy were chosen when it was calculated they would be needed.

Notwithstanding debates over European convoys, it has been frequently concluded that the warships dispatched to convoy and station duty in North America, although minimal, were adequate to in most cases maintain parity with the French as the real danger lay in the homeward bound voyage.<sup>34</sup> This does not mean that the Board of Trade or interest groups with stakes in North America were satisfied with naval coverage. The numbers and regularity of convoys for North America was in constant debate, especially once French privateers began to cross the Atlantic in increasing numbers. Virginia for example, was caught between calls for a yearly convoy, and a biannual one. A single convoy favoured larger growers and merchants while two convoys each year meant lower prices for consumers as well as benefitting smaller growers.<sup>35</sup> Availability

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<sup>33</sup> Hattendorf, *England in the War of Spanish Succession*, 168.

<sup>34</sup> Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy*, 105 ; Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 52; Owen, *War at Sea Under Queen Anne*, 58

<sup>35</sup> Middleton, "The Chesapeake Convoy System," 188-90; Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy*, 103.

of warships fourth rate and under was the determining factor. As more naval vessels became available, the numbers of ships assigned for a convoy increased slightly. Yearly convoys were sent to Newfoundland and Virginia. New England was given a convoy whenever one was needed. Ships bound for Maryland and New York or any other colony were included within the Virginia or New England convoys. New York requested its own convoy early in the Nine Years War but it was decided that the trade bound there could make do with either of two operational convoys in that area. This became a durable policy.<sup>36</sup> New York was given a guard ship, sometimes two, while Virginia was allowed two ships. New England was given two ships during times of heightened tension but this was not automatic. The most ships to New England were convoyed whenever deemed necessary. Sometimes an advise boat was sent to Maryland and on at least one occasion, a ship was sent to guard the New England fisheries.<sup>37</sup>

When at all possible convoys and station ships overlapped their duty. Ships designated to a station were arranged so as to escort convoys and carry the orders for their predecessors to return home. The returning station ship would escort the homeward bound convoy and the ship designated in its place would remain. If the Admiralty saw fit not to change the guard, a convoy would still be sent but its escorting warships would remain until the homeward convoy was ready. On 29 December 1691 Captain Isaac Townsend of the fifth rate *Assurance* received orders to lead a convoy to Virginia

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<sup>36</sup> PRO State Papers (SP) 42/2, Admiralty to the Queen, 4 September 1693.

<sup>37</sup> This is based on a sampling of the Admiralty List Books for 1689-1713, PRO ADM 8/2-12. The ship sent to protect the New England fisheries in 1712-13 was the sixth rate *Squirrel*.

accompanied by the *Conception Prize* and *Albrough*. *Conception Prize* was to take up station at New England while *Albrough* was destined for New York to replace the *Archangel*. Townsend was to direct Captain Chant of the *Albrough* to deliver orders for Captain Hicks of the *Archangel* to join him at Virginia where they would accompany the return convoy after a wait of two months. The guard at Virginia, the *Henry Prize*, was to remain. *Albrough* was subsequently damaged and sailed after the convoy. Nevertheless, the orders were carried out and *Archangel* returned home as convoy with the *Assurance*.<sup>38</sup>

Occasionally, packet boats or warships with dispatches and expresses were sent out individually. Usually they travelled the circuit of colonies from Newfoundland to the Caribbean as was the case with the sixth rate *Dunwich* in 1712, listed as "Gone with Proclamations to Bermuda, Virginia, New England and New York."<sup>39</sup>

Generally, all ships not serving with the main squadrons in Europe or the Mediterranean were grouped together in each month's entry into the Admiralty List Books. At the end of each list was a section often entitled "Ships Not of the Main Fleet." During the War of the Spanish Succession the various subdivisions became even more specific to include the exact number of ships listed as overseas (separate from Europe) and the number preparing for overseas service. These ships were found under headings such as: "Gone on Foreign Service or "Abroad on Foreign Service." It is this section where cruisers, convoys, station ships, or ships on special duty were placed. The

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<sup>38</sup> PRO ADM 2/8, Instructions to Captain Townsend, 29 December 1691, 480-83; PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Chant, 8 January 1692, 516; PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Townsend, 12 January, 1692, 520.

<sup>39</sup> PRO ADM 8/12, 1 September 1712.



Caribbean, which had its own listings, was the exception. The loose division of ships based on location and duty was not exclusive in that ships could be transferred back and forth to the main fleet if needed. Also, many smaller rates would be given repeated assignments abroad but were not necessarily sent directly back whence they had just returned. In other words, a ship coming from Virginia could be sent immediately back to America or perhaps to Newfoundland or the Caribbean. And of course, a ship returning from North America could be transferred to fleet duty for its next assignment.

As the number of smaller rates within the navy was disproportionate to need, deployment patterns revolved around the necessity of predetermining another ship to assign in place of that arriving, and the need for an immediate refit once a ship returned from any assignment, whether abroad or not. The use of a "Going on Foreign Service" section during the War of the Spanish Succession reflected the need to keep track of ships designed for overseas voyages. The opportunity was also taken to change the ship's company, including replacing lost men and commissioned officers transferred to other ships and postings. The only permanent members of any crew were warrant officers, who still could be promoted and transferred individually. The lengthy refit process frequently dictated that the next available small rate was the ship recently returning. In 1692-93 the aforementioned *Samuel & Henry* was given successive assignments convoying ships to New England, albeit with a new captain, officers and presumably some of the seamen. Also, for the second voyage, the ship's complement was reduced and ten guns removed.<sup>40</sup> Captain Townsend of the *Assurance*, upon his return to England, was transferred to the

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<sup>40</sup> PRO ADM 8/3, 1 April 1692- 1 December 1693.

fourth rate *Foresight* and send back with the next Virginia convoy in company with the ship that had just accompanied him home, the *Archangel*.<sup>41</sup>

In August of 1692 the fourth rate *Reserve* was listed as ordered convoy for Newfoundland with two other fourth rates, the *Sheerness* and the *Bonadventure*. By 1 March 1693 *Reserve* was listed as at Longreach and ordered to Deptford for a refit, and was subsequently ordered back to Newfoundland on 29 May 1693. While at Deptford, *Reserve* had one lieutenant replaced and by 1 July the vessel had again departed for Newfoundland with the fourth rate *Assistance*. On 1 February 1694 *Reserve* was listed as returning from Newfoundland, and on 1 April as coming home from Cadiz. The next month *Reserve* was listed as ordered to attend the King's convoy to Holland but instead spent June at Woolwich in refit and by July was at Longreach once more and ordered to the Nore.<sup>42</sup> It seems reasonable to assume, from examining the monthly lists in conjunction with whatever correspondence came into the Admiralty Office, that the *Reserve* was available on paper to go to Holland but after going to Newfoundland and Spain, the ravages of the voyages probably dictated an immediate refit.<sup>43</sup> Although the Admiralty Board obviously consulted the List Books and incoming correspondence, exactly how it came to decisions cannot be determined by its minutes alone, as only the final decision would be recorded.

Discussions to assign ships to particular duties were held at the Admiralty Board

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<sup>41</sup> PRO ADM 8/3, 1 December 1692.

<sup>42</sup> PRO ADM 8/3, 1 April 1692-1 July 1694.

<sup>43</sup> PRO ADM 8/3, 1 May-1 June 1694.

meetings based on the day-to-day administrative work of the Navy Board. The decisions were noted in the minutes. The Secretary of the Navy would then have appropriate orders written out and sent to where each ship was located or due to arrive based on the previous set of orders sent to its captain and any returning correspondence. The orders themselves were noted as coming from the Secretary's office, and incoming correspondence was usually addressed there. The decisions of the Admiralty Board concerning the issuing of orders were not necessarily final, as certain contingencies could arise or become apparent. In a board meeting dated 3 July 1693, one Captain Ripely was to receive orders to replace Captain Short of the *Nonsuch*, then at New England. However, by 12 July the Admiralty was sending out a request for Captain Taylor to attend the Board for the same assignment.<sup>44</sup> Despite the change, under whatever circumstance, the written decisions in the Admiralty Board minutes represent the official action taken by the Admiralty, even if the decision was initiated elsewhere.

While the decisions copied into the List Books and Admiralty Board minutes may be considered a guide as to the Admiralty's intention, more concrete sources are the orders copied into the Orders and Instructions books by the Secretary's office. Only occasionally would a clerk return to write "cancelled" next to orders already written out. Therefore it is safe to conclude that, once copied, the orders would be sent to the corresponding captain, and any additional or subsequent orders would be sent via the same process. Whether orders were successfully carried out was a separate consideration. Again this process followed certain pre-war conventions and continued through for the

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<sup>44</sup> PRO ADM 3/8, Admiralty Board Minutes, 3 July 1693, 12 July 1693.

entire period in question.<sup>45</sup>

Such a complex system involving many small parts and run by a small office did not operate without problems. The physical limitations of sailing warships combined with lack of resources, administrative lethargy, independent captains and officials, error, and fate. The conditions for the case study in the following chapter came about after a series of oversights left New England without its naval guard. In the several years prior to 1689, the fifth rate *Rose* had been stationed at Boston. During the turmoil over the accession of William and Mary, which included the division of the ship's company and the arrest of Captain John George on conspiracy charges, the *Rose* had been recalled to England and no ship ordered in its place. Eventually, following complaints from New England interests, the fifth rate *Conception Prize* was ordered to attend there following convoy duty to Virginia and Maryland. Subsequently, it was pointed out that *Conception Prize's* preliminary duties would add several months to its journey. Meanwhile the coast of New England would be defenceless as rumours abounded concerning a French plan to retake Port Royal while privateers were believed to be roaming in increasing numbers. It was suggested that a second ship be sent directly to Boston. The Admiralty's response was not immediate but a second fifth rate, the *Nonsuch* was eventually dispatched to carry over newly appointed governor William Phips and New England was to have two ships on station for the time being.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade*, 54-56.

<sup>46</sup> PRO Colonial Office (CO) 391/7, Board of Trade Journal, 15 December 1691, 39 and 11 January 1691,40; PRO ADM 8/3, 1 April 1692.

The length of time a ship spent on a specific duty reflected several factors.

Travelling distance was one consideration. Convoys faced a fixed routine but time could vary. Station ships could be as long as three years at one port, but their dispatch and return was usually correlated to make use of them for convoy or other duty. The fifth rate *Tryton's Prize* was listed as at the Nore storing for Virginia on 1 May 1710. By 1 October 1713 the ship had returned to England and was ordered to be laid up and its crew paid off. The length of the assignment including travel covered roughly 42 months.<sup>47</sup> The partner of *Tryton's Prize* in Virginia, the fifth rate *Enterprize*, was on a mission to carry packets to Newfoundland, New England and Virginia before taking up station in the latter. The approximate length for *Enterprize's* assignment was 53 months.<sup>48</sup>

A ship going convoy to Newfoundland would fall within regular temporal boundaries, but fluctuations would occur based on distance, length of fishing season, weather and the return leg to the Iberian peninsula where the catch was sold and traded. The whole trip, from departure to Newfoundland to guard the fishing fleet, travelling to Spain and Portugal, to awaiting the homeward bound trade, and returning to England, could take up to a year. Although actual time spent travelling was shorter to Newfoundland than the rest of the English Atlantic, delays could still occur, especially those related to weather. The fourth rate *Warwick* was listed as designed for Newfoundland by 1 February 1710. *Warwick* was required to go to Lisbon and escort salt ships to the fishing fleet and return to Portugal with the sack ships when the season

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<sup>47</sup> PRO ADM 8/11-12, 1 May 1710- 1 October 1713.

<sup>48</sup> PRO ADM 8/10-12, 1 July 1709- 1 October 1713.

ended. Adverse weather, a poor fishing season and severe damage on both legs of the voyage kept *Warwick* at both Newfoundland and Portugal longer than was stipulated in the original orders to the convoy. The whole ordeal took 17 months.<sup>49</sup>

Another important influence on overseas voyages, again related to travel, was the length of time a ship could stay at sea. Wear and tear took its toll, but so did inadequate food preservation techniques and the need to store as great a volume of supplies as possible for the voyage. An important determinant was the availability of victualling and dockyard facilities. Voyages could be prolonged if a ship could be victualled and repaired locally. A further problem was the availability of sailors to replace wastage due to death and disease and competition from civilian employment opportunities ashore in America and the Caribbean, encouraging desertion.<sup>50</sup> The most obvious examples of voyages limited by physical factors are found in ships assigned to the Caribbean. Ships and crews decayed faster in the tropics, while stores and repair facilities were scarce.<sup>51</sup> Ironically, the more temperate climes of Northeastern North America, though of less strategic import, were more favourable for the deployment of individual ships and convoys for longer periods of time. One or two ships were less of a strain on local resources and tempers, as the Admiralty did not establish proper victualling agents in America until after the period discussed presently.<sup>52</sup> Vessel maintenance was a serious

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<sup>49</sup> PRO ADM 8/11-12, 1 February 1711-1 July 1712; PRO ADM 1/2281, Partington to Admiralty, 8 May 1712; PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 1 October 1711, 23 December 1711.

<sup>50</sup> Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 43-48.

<sup>51</sup> Buchet, "The Royal Navy and the Caribbean," 30-32.

<sup>52</sup> Harding, "The Expeditions to Quebec," 210-11.

issue for navy captains who were held responsible for the maintenance of their ships and crews. More importantly, a sound ship was essential for the survival of all on board, whether in Europe or overseas.

In turning to the victualling of navy ships, the task of feeding an average of 30,000 men daily was difficult at the best of times. The Victualling Board was required to purchase, process and transport foodstuffs to ships throughout Royal Navy theatres of operations.<sup>53</sup> The familiar concerns over food spoilage and substandard quality were exacerbated if a ship was required to store the standard overseas ration of eight-months victuals in its hold. More serious was the problem of confined storage space within warships, which could prevent them from complying with orders. Ships in Europe sailing with full armament and complement in many instances had difficulty storing even three or four months victuals. Through the creative book-keeping of victualling agents and pursers the facade of a full ship was created to solve the problem. As would be expected, questions arose when supposedly fully provisioned ships came into port or unexpected problems arose causing shortage.<sup>54</sup> At least ships on European duty had bases and victualling agents within relative proximity; ships going abroad were not blessed with this luxury.

Official procedures for stretching out stores for overseas duty included placing the ship's company on reduced rations of four men to six men's allowance and reducing the number of guns and crew to increase hold space and reduce the total volume of provisions

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<sup>53</sup> Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III*, 144.

<sup>54</sup> Merriman, *The Sergison Papers*, 235; Owen, *War at Sea Under Queen Anne*, 24.

needed.<sup>55</sup> Other more immediate solutions were sometimes sought. During the 1711 convoy to Newfoundland, the fifth rate *Arundell* did not have room for its allotment of stores. Captain Douglas requested the Admiralty order the Victualling Office to arrange to ship freight on board a merchant ship. Despite the Admiralty Board's efforts, the victuallers at Portsmouth reported to Douglas that no orders were received. Although ships were available with space for hire, nothing was to be done. The Admiralty promised further action. Not to be discouraged, Douglas finally reported back to the Admiralty that the master of a merchant ship offered to carry bread to Newfoundland free of charge.<sup>56</sup>

Another fifth rate convoying the same fishing fleet, *Milford*, encountered similar problems. Captain Goodall wrote the Admiralty throughout March, 1711 outlining several problems encountered during his preparations to sail for Newfoundland. *Milford's* company were in extreme want, not having been paid for five years, and were pleading that they could not prepare themselves for the upcoming voyage. Goodall could not procure any short allowance money as the Victualling Office claimed there was none to give him.<sup>57</sup> As well, the remainder of *Milford's* oatmeal, butter and cheese was late in arriving despite repeated enquiries to the victuallers.<sup>58</sup> Whether or not *Milford's* men

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<sup>55</sup> John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III*, 156; Owen, *War at Sea Under Queen Anne*, 24-25. Sailors on reduced rations were provided with short allowance money as compensation. This money was to be paid immediately and not held over as regular pay commonly was. Due to shortages and erratic supply going on short allowance was a habitual practice for ships in Europe and not restricted to those going abroad.

<sup>56</sup> PRO ADM 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 24 March 1711, 7 April 1711, 24 April 1711.

<sup>57</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 2 March 1711.

<sup>58</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 19 March 1711.



were paid their short allowance money is unclear, but the provisions eventually were provided following some prodding from the Navy Board.<sup>59</sup> Seventy bags of bread that could not be stored were to be sent via the *Warspight*, travelling later in the season. Captain Crowe's men of the *Warspight*, however, were paid their short allowance money on 14 July prior to departure for Newfoundland four days later.<sup>60</sup>

The lack of overseas bases compounded the problem of victualling ships going convoy for over a year or ships on station that could be years at the same post. The network of supply ships hired by the Admiralty was the immediate solution. The problems of securing goods would still remain, and were compounded by the many obstacles that could impede the timely arrival of a store ship. Therefore, contingency arrangements were needed. A nervous Captain Fairfax reported from Boston in 1693 that he had not received any directions for resupply although the provisions issued by the Admiralty had been expended for some months.<sup>61</sup> The Admiralty discovered a solution to the victualling of overseas ships quite by accident. In December of 1692 the Admiralty noticed that their captains in North America, including Fairfax, were taking out lines of credit with local merchants. The Navy Board seemed happy enough with these arrangements as the ship hired to carry supplies to New England had been delayed.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 13 April 1711.

<sup>60</sup> PRO ADM 51/4387 pt. 6, Log of *Warspight*, 14 July 1711. It should be noted when searching for references to *Warspight*, that the later spelling, *Warspite*, is more often used for classification purposes.

<sup>61</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 31 January 1693.

<sup>62</sup> PRO ADM 1/3567, Navy Board to Commissioners of the Admiralty, 26 December 1692, 1035-36.

Local merchants sold provisions and stores at rates of interest reflecting the lack of consumer choice in America. In 1713, for example, Captain Richard Girlington of the *Tryton's Prize* entered New York seeking supplies and a refit. On 22 August 1713 he wrote to the Admiralty that he could find no person willing to perform services on credit with bills of exchange on the Victualling Board until he put up his personal bond in case of non-payment. Several merchants then offered to provide him with cash so long as he agreed to their rates of interest. The rate of exchange offered by Benjamin Tunnell was 40 percent with 5 percent added on to the final bill. The late penalty was 20 percent on every 100 pounds sterling if the bill was protested double the time past which it was drawn. Similar arrangements were made with Henry Lane. This rate of exchange, 45 percent and upward, was what the merchants claimed they charged themselves but Girlington observed that this was 10 percent higher than two years previous and implored the Admiralty to pay the bill promptly as to restore good credit with the local merchants.<sup>63</sup> Captains were usually given the name of the contact in London whereby the Admiralty was to furnish payment. Transatlantic connections between families and business interests ensured that merchants would be diligent in their collection of payment.<sup>64</sup> Captain Fairfax bemoaned such arrangements but as Girlington's experience demonstrates, such dealings had become second nature to naval captains by the War of the Spanish Succession.

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<sup>63</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Girlington to Admiralty, 22 August, 1713.

<sup>64</sup> Bernard Bailyn, "Communications and Trade: The Atlantic in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Economic History* 13 no.3 (1953), 380-82.

Superficially, Newfoundland appeared to offer captains a more barren environment but on closer examination this does not prove to be the case. Evidence exists of seamen making spruce beer while in Newfoundland once their regular stocks of beverages expired while the replenishment of water and firewood was rarely a problem anywhere in northeastern North America.<sup>65</sup> Captains to Newfoundland were given permission to catch and/or sell fish so long as it was for the sole use of the ship's company.<sup>66</sup> Officers and seamen were known to frequently fish for pleasure during the Georgian era.<sup>67</sup> Fish was part of the sailor's weekly allotment of foodstuffs so it seems reasonable that sailors could easily supplement their diets with fresh fish.

In addition to contingencies such as fishing and making spruce beer, resourceful crews could keep themselves stocked with local supplies. As a major entrepôt and refuge for transatlantic traffic in both directions, Newfoundland was easily accessible to vessels from all corners of the English Atlantic.<sup>68</sup> New England ships were especially useful as their merchant interests were engaged in the semi-legal business of supplying fishermen and planters.<sup>69</sup> One warship from the 1711 convoy was able to procure some bread from

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<sup>65</sup> PRO ADM 51/606 pt. 1, Log of *Milford*, 19 June 1711; PRO ADM 51/672 pt. 11, Log of *Portsmouth*, 22 June, 1711. The making of spruce beer was standard procedure for early inhabitants of Newfoundland. C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A Geographer's Perspective* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), 41.

<sup>66</sup> See PRO ADM 2/11, Instructions to Captain Crawley, 29 May 1693; PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Man, 3 February 1711.

<sup>67</sup> Rodger, *The Wooden World*, 45.

<sup>68</sup> Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 81-82.

<sup>69</sup> Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland*, 42-44.

a Mr. Brooks.<sup>70</sup> Whether the mysterious Brooks was a local merchant or New England trader or other factor is as yet unknown but the episode illustrates that captains had recourse to supplies beyond their eight months victuals. Rather than risk deprivations, it is plausible that naval captains would utilise New England traders despite their dubious status within the Newfoundland economy. During the same convoy a windfall appeared in the arrival into St. John's of a fully-laden store ship from Boston intended for the ill-fated Walker expedition. The convoy commodore, Captain Crowe, knowing that the expedition had been aborted, commandeered the provisions and distributed them among the ships under his command.<sup>71</sup>

While on duty at Newfoundland in 1711, the *Warwick* and *Milford* travelled to Boston to investigate intelligence that the French had retaken Port Royal. In port, both ships were re-supplied, including bread and beer. *Milford* was cleaned and *Warwick* received new masts.<sup>72</sup> Captain Partington paid out cash for a variety of items for the treatment of sick crew members to the sum of 53 pounds 19 shillings 10 pence. On the same voyage, Partington hired a pilot from Capelin Bay in Newfoundland for 15 pounds to take *Warwick* and *Milford* from Canso to Nantasket Road at Boston. When Partington attempted to obtain reimbursement, the Admiralty requested a detailed report of the items purchased.<sup>73</sup> Captain Goodall of the *Milford* found cleaning in America convenient.

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<sup>70</sup> PRO ADM 51/672 pt. 11, Log of *Portsmouth* 31 October 1711.

<sup>71</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 1 October, 1711.

<sup>72</sup> PRO ADM 51/1072 pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 9-14 September 1711; PRO ADM 51/606 pt.1, Log of *Milford*, 1-14 September 1711.

<sup>73</sup> PRO ADM 1/2281, Partington to Admiralty, 5 May 1712.

When sent back to Newfoundland for the 1712 convoy, Goodall requested that he be allowed to forgo cleaning his ship until he reached Newfoundland as it entailed little expense. Goodall was granted his request.<sup>74</sup>

While the Admiralty could rely on the initiative of its captains to maintain the physical well-being of their ships to a certain degree, they faced a different problem with how to control that individualistic initiative in the absence of local command centres. The orders and instructions delivered to captains often had to be specific in their delineation of control. They were designed not only to describe what a particular assignment entailed, but also establish the parameters within which a captain and his crew could operate. This was especially important as ships distanced themselves from central administration. The further away from a base or squadron, or any centre of authority, the more explicit the orders.

The principal ships going convoy to Newfoundland were given lengthy orders as their captains spent the longest amounts of time away from centres of authority. Ships going to areas with a colonial government in place were given simpler, but potentially more contentious orders to obey the instructions of the governor.<sup>75</sup> In places where there was more than one warship, the junior captains were required to obey the more senior officer, as was the custom of the navy. The navy faced considerable difficulty at the local level with both of these arrangements. Serious issues of subversion of authority existed

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<sup>74</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 19 March 1712.

<sup>75</sup> cf. PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Fairfax, 29 December 1691, 479 (stationed to New England) and PRO ADM 2/11, Orders to Captain Crawley, 29 May 1693, 476-80 (Newfoundland convoy).

in the Caribbean, in the form of junior commanding officers taking liberty with the discrepancies in their orders.<sup>76</sup>

Yet a great deal of freedom was thrust upon convoy and station captains that was necessary for smooth operations. Although authority was vested in the most senior officer, he often commanding a vessel of similar rate as his charges and frequently seniority was a matter of only a few years. Prior to the arrival of the convoy commodore for the 1711 Newfoundland convoy, four captains represented the guard for approximately two months. The senior captain, Henry Partington, received his commission in 1703. Next was Thomas Man who became a captain in 1705. John Goodall was made captain in 1708. The most junior captain, ironically, had the most experience commanding warships. Andrew Douglas had originally received his commission in 1691, lost it in 1704 and was reinstated in 1710 but without his seniority.<sup>77</sup>

Decisions concerning a whole convoy were often made at a captains consultation. Less grandiose than the so-called council-of-war mentioned with larger squadrons and expeditions, the very size and uniformity of rank and purpose suggest a more casual atmosphere. For the better protection of Newfoundland, Captain Crowe, as commodore, was ordered by the Admiralty not to take any serious action without first consulting other captains and the masters of fishing vessels.<sup>78</sup> A frigate serving with one of the European fleets, or even one in the Caribbean, was within a visible chain of command and nearer to

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<sup>76</sup> Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 187.

<sup>77</sup> PRO ADM 7/549, List of Ships and Captains, 1651-1737. This arrangement is explored more fully in Chapter V.

<sup>78</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711, 517.

orders from its squadron commander than from the Admiralty. Although physically closer via packet boat and local bases than ships serving in North America, it can be argued that ships within the fleet were actually further away from the Admiralty than the distant ships on foreign voyages. Single ships serving abroad had their correspondence directly scrutinised for information by the Admiralty and Board of Trade without first passing through the hands of a fleet admiral.<sup>79</sup> Warships on transatlantic runs could be the first to receive information. While at Lisbon, Captain Crowe wrote on 8 January 1712 that he had received intelligence that a French squadron attacked Brazil. When the letter was read at the Navy Board, the pertinent sections were bracketed with a margin note stating the information was to be sent to the Secretary of State.<sup>80</sup>

The Admiralty required ships to maintain as regular a correspondence as communications would allow. All captains were required to report constantly their whereabouts and to provide any information deemed important, including the condition of the ship, position of the enemy, any personal or personnel problems, right down to the wind direction while at rest in any given English port. Captains for their part used their letters to justify their actions in the event of any misfortune as the formal nature of many letters (especially those to other captains) and their seemingly trivial details indicate. To demonstrate the absence of fraud concerning spoiled beer and food outward bound to Newfoundland, the captains and warrant officers of the ships *Milford* and *Arundell*

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<sup>79</sup> Graham, *The Walker Expedition*, xvii. This notion is stated negatively and implicitly by Graham who comments that the correspondence from ships within squadrons went through the squadron commander while ships on detached service had their letters sent to the Admiralty. Such information was of little use to Graham for studying the schematics of the Walker expedition.

<sup>80</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 8 January 1712.

produced a series of detailed documents attesting to the truthfulness of their statements.<sup>81</sup>

The two captains, John Goodall and Andrew Douglas respectively, are useful as representing opposite ends of the correspondence spectrum. Although there are obviously pieces missing from the dossier of each captain, there exists a visible difference in the size and frequency of remaining letters. Goodall wrote far more letters concerning all manner of happenings while Douglas was content to concisely summarise weeks on end within one letter and does not appear to have written the Admiralty unless he felt it totally necessary.

The requirement of naval captains to write directly to the Admiralty, wherever they were located, juxtaposes the structure within which navy ships operated overseas with the individuality and agency demonstrated by each captain and crew. This was important if ships were to operate in areas away from direct control of the naval administration and was crucial if warships were to keep themselves operational long enough to carry out their orders. Requiring a level of communications repeatedly absent from ships sent on squadron or expedition duty, the naval vessel in North America maintained a closer rapport with the central naval body in London.

However, these lines of communications did not extend beyond the Navy Board. Relative information was passed on to the Board of Trade or to the Secretary of State but large sections of information not concerned with colonial government or the international war effort were kept for in-house use. For the most part this information deals with the

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<sup>81</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to master of the *Milford* and master and mate of the *Arundell*, 15 May 1711.



maintenance and performance of ships and crews. Nevertheless, letters to the Admiralty and other surviving information were invariably framed within the local context. They remained hidden within the bulk of Admiralty documents, infrequently employed for naval history and not and all for colonial and imperial study. This oversight helps to explain the relative obscurity of surviving narratives of naval life on the opposite curve of the English Atlantic cycle.

The very nature of seafaring and maritime warfare as outlined above suggests that a warship in North America waters did not exist in a vacuum or in the form of an off shore phantom. But neither did the navy's contact with (at least with the examples employed here) North American societies occur to the degree possible for land-based actors. This is especially the case with Native societies. However, the two following case studies seek to argue that individual ships influenced actions taken in the interest of securing power in North America. The regular contribution of individual naval vessels to the development of the Atlantic World contrasted with the sporadic and disruptive invasions by large squadrons. The convoy and station vessel were routine manifestations of naval (and imperial) power and were familiar, although not always welcome, sights to the inhabitants of North America prior to 1713.

## CHAPTER IV

### **"ATTENDS ON NEW ENGLAND": CONCEPTION PRIZE AND NONSUCH, 1692-95**

Even a small warship represented the epitome of seventeenth and eighteenth century technology and capital expenditure, utilising perhaps the most highly trained labour force available. Once overseas, whether alone or in small groups, a powerful and expensive warship represented the most visible example of metropolitan authority. The potential for conflict was great within an atmosphere habitually void of concerted metropolitan demonstrations of authority and European military infrastructure. One traditional interpretation of the relationship between warships and colonial subjects emphasises the animosity between those on board ship and those they were sent to protect. Captains serving overseas could find themselves empowered with disproportional amounts of influence and importance not to be found for a ship of similar size deployed within the fleet.<sup>1</sup> This first case study examines the fate of two ships sent on station to New England during the Nine Years War. The chapter intends to build on the growing literature that examines naval and colonial topics not as imperial monoliths but within wider contexts of transatlantic interaction. The establishment of structured links does not preclude individual agency nor does it support the notion of inflexible boundaries of empire.

Conclusions judging naval captains and the more impudent members of their

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<sup>1</sup> David Edward Leach, *Roots of Conflict: British Armed Forces and Colonial Americans, 1677-1763* (Chapel Hill: U. of North Carolina Press, 1986), 134-36.

crews as perpetually at odds with colonial citizens are frequently grounded on the abstracts found in the *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, America and West Indies*. The documents represented by these abstracts concern correspondence filed within the Colonial Office papers. The abstracts are peppered with reports of the arrogance, insolence and violence of captains, or officers bemoaning the lack of gentlemanly respect given to them by upstart colonial elites. In the interest of demonstrating the incompatibility of one group to another, the anecdotes within the *Calendar of State Papers* have commonly been identified and dealt with as separate from surviving naval records.<sup>2</sup> In some cases this has led to the conclusions that do not take into account the manner in which power was negotiated, for example, between the naval captain and the colonial governor he was ordered to obey. Neither does this approach examine the context and process of sending a warship overseas. Friction, put forth in the medium of a complaint, represented the breakdown of relations between naval captains, colonial governments and communities. Put another way, most copies of naval correspondence received by the Lords/Board of Trade concerned problems. Details pertaining to naval activity were usually described in this context. Therefore, re-reading colonial documents, augmented with available naval sources, can provide a wider context for examining naval activity overseas.

Sir William Phips' appointment as Governor of New England was finalised in early January 1692. At the time Phips was in London and arrangements were made for

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<sup>2</sup> Examples can be found in Leach, *Roots of Conflict*, Chapter 7; Haffenden, *New England in the English Nation*, passim; Doty, "The British Admiralty as a Factor in Colonial Administration," 66-67.

him and his entourage to travel back to New England on board the fifth rate *Nonsuch*. The subsequent chain of events, from Phips' appointment until his return to England early in 1695 to answer a series of charges made against him, have been well documented and analysed recently by Baker and Reid.<sup>3</sup> The drama surrounding Phips came to involve the navy directly through two of its crews. The strained relationship between Phips and Captain Richard Short of the *Nonsuch* has been described in detail and clearly outlined. Captain Robert Fairfax and the *Conception Prize*, however, remained in the background but contrasted with Short and the *Nonsuch* in almost every way. What happened to Short, Fairfax and their men will be outlined and then compared in order to explore the relationship between the warship captains and the colonial governor. It is important to remember that the incidents outlined here form but one part of the circumstances surrounding the governorship of Sir William Phips. Further, *Conception Prize* and *Nonsuch* are only two of the score of warships deployed to New England, Virginia and New York throughout the 25-year period between 1689 and 1713. As far as possible, this chapter will focus on the naval aspects of the controversy surrounding Phips in order to determine the consequences for the sailors involved.

There is a risk in reducing the naval defence of New England at this time to the interpersonal relationships between the governor and the two captains. However, based on the administrative transfer of power found both in Phips' mandate as governor and in the orders issued to Fairfax and Short, such methodology is necessary and convenient at present. There is a further danger of portraying the crews of the two warships as passive

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<sup>3</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, esp. Chapters 8 and 11.

background participants. Fortunately this case study offers glimpses into the agency of individuals other than the captain and what resulted from their actions. This chapter will not undertake a full-scale dissection of a ship's complement while on overseas station, although such a study is desirable. Important issues, such as impressment in the colonies, suffer from outdated scholarship or are concerned with the period during and after the American Revolution.<sup>4</sup>

For proof that station duty in New England could be contentious, one need not look further than the ship *Conception Prize* and *Nonsuch* eventually replaced at Boston. When news of the Revolution of 1688 reached New England, the ship on station for the last several years had been the fifth rate *Rose* (John George). *Rose* was laid up in need of repairs in April of 1689 when a mob, led by some of the *Rose*'s own crew members, arrested Captain George during uprisings against Governor Edmund Andros. The navy ship soon became the centre of attention as rumours spread by deserting sailors indicated that George was in conspiracy with Andros. It was also believed that the *Rose* would, among other things, soon bombard the city despite its debilitated condition. As a result, the ship's sails were confiscated to ensure inactivity. *Rose* was a small warship that was not even fully operational during the struggle for control of Boston. Furthermore, the ship suffered from an unpopular captain and divided crew. Yet, at least metaphorically, the vessel represented the apex of physical power in the port city and its captain a

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<sup>4</sup> See Dora Mae Clark "The Impressment of Seamen in the American Colonies." in *Essays in Colonial History: Presented to Charles McLean Andrews by his Students* no ed. (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1931), 198-224.

member of the local elite.<sup>5</sup>

For approximately one and a half years following the departure of the *Rose*, New England was without its naval guard. Ostensibly, the colony did not seem at first to suffer from lack of a naval presence as the expeditions against Port Royal and Quebec were launched entirely at colonial initiative. Local sloops were outfitted for coastal patrols, privateering and coastal convoys.<sup>6</sup> However, these were merely temporary solutions. The difficulties encountered by the Port Royal and Quebec expeditions led William Phips to conclude that the French could not be decisively beaten without the support of the Royal Navy. Nevertheless, Phips (himself a sailor) recognised the potential strength of even one warship under his control as he ascended to power. While in England Phips had originally lobbied to have a third rate dispatched as guard. When it was obvious this would not materialise, Phips argued that a fifth rate and a sixth rate would be sufficient to allow the New England government to make a show of force within its own areas of influence.<sup>7</sup>

New England faced the increasingly expensive task of defending itself from the French and, more immediately, the Abenaki peoples along the frontier. Sir William Phips as controller of the New England war effort faced the immediate problem of frontier defence. If successful, Phips would not only fulfill his duty but also continue his quest for upward mobility within Boston government and society. If peace could be achieved,

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<sup>5</sup> Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 90-91.

<sup>6</sup> Haffenden, *New England in the English Nation*, 96-97.

<sup>7</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 129-30.

trade could resume and English settlers could move back into parts of Maine evacuated following Native and French attacks. Such a strategy not only would ease the pressure of war upon New England but it would further enhance Phips' own interests, business and personal, in northern New England and Acadia. Fortunately for Phips, these goals could be accomplished under the auspices of imperial necessity. Although Phips' detractors were sceptical of his motives, their wider aims coincided with his. Ultimately, Phips secured his treaty with the Abenaki but did not have the resources to check the French entirely or control the Acadian population despite the assistance lent to him by the arrival of *Conception Prize* and *Nonsuch*.<sup>8</sup>

Events following Phips' failed attack on Quebec had demonstrated the contempt held by the inhabitants of Acadia for New England's hollow grasp on Port Royal and stressed the need for imperial assistance. For example, an unescorted trade mission to Acadia in June of 1691, sponsored by leading Boston merchant John Nelson, was captured by a French warship visiting Port Royal. Narratives of this episode, which included the capture and imprisonment of Nelson, reached London in the distorted story of Port Royal being recaptured. It was thought that the presence of naval vessels could have prevented such a humiliation.<sup>9</sup>

The two frigates thus became important tools in any attempt to establish authority in the area. They were not only the nucleus of New England's defence, but were demonstrations of strength and diplomacy when dealing with Acadian, Native, and even

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Chapter 8.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 236-38.

New England interests. Whenever possible Phips used *Nonsuch* and *Conception Prize* as his transportation to negotiations with the Abenaki and Port Royal leadership, or at least sent them to do his bidding. During one such junket, Phips went so far as to entrust a reluctant Captain Short with the task of convincing the Acadian population to take up arms against the French. The Acadian leaders would promise only neutrality. Utilising warships for diplomatic purposes, especially by holding negotiations on board, would buttress New England demands even though their utility against land-based actions would be somewhat limited.<sup>10</sup>

Originally, New England was to only receive one guard ship. The Lords of Trade had been informed by the Admiralty in mid-December 1691 that *Conception Prize* was to be appointed guard to New England and *Albrough* to New York.<sup>11</sup> The Lords of Trade made note to bring to council's attention that until the ships could be made ready, the New England coast would remain unguarded.<sup>12</sup> Thanks in part to lobbying by Phips, an order in council dated 17 December instructed the Admiralty to dispatch a fourth rate and a sixth rate, or a single warship of considerable force.<sup>13</sup> As *Conception Prize* had already been slated for New England, the Admiralty did nothing. The point had to be reiterated on 11 January 1692. Letters from New England spoke of the retaking of Port Royal along with rumours of springtime attacks planned for Piscataqua in New Hampshire and then

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<sup>10</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 158, 171.

<sup>11</sup> CO 5/1306, Southern to Blathwayt, 15 December 1691, 357.

<sup>12</sup> CO 391/7, Board of Trade Minutes, 15 December 1691, 39.

<sup>13</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 130.



Boston by a Quebec force supported directly from Europe. Reports also came in concerning privateering off the coast. One lone French ship was said to have made 18 captures within a short time. The Lords of Trade resolved to inform the king of this discrepancy and recommend a fourth rate be immediately dispatched. It was further noted that *Conception Prize* would not be able to reach Boston in time to challenge the expected French advances.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the Admiralty began to prepare a ship to transport Governor Phips and act as second guard ships to New England. That ship, the *Nonsuch*, received a new captain for the occasion in January of 1692. By mid-February Captain Richard Short had already heard he would be escorting the new governor although orders had not yet been finalised.<sup>15</sup> On 5 March, Short was ordered to convoy the ship *Edward & Mary*, employed to take Phips and his entourage to New England.<sup>16</sup> On 18 March sailing orders were written out along with instructions for *Nonsuch* to take up station at New England.

And you are then with their Majesties ship under your command to attend at New England for the guard of that coast & doing service against the French as there shall be occasion & therein to follow such orders as you shall receive from the governor of that colony. You are to continue on the said service until you shall receive further orders & by all opportunities that shall present to send us an account of what particular services you shall from time to time be ordered on & of your proceedings therein.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> CO 391/7, Board of Trade Minutes, 11 January 1692, 40.

<sup>15</sup> PRO ADM 2/382, Southerne to Short, 16 February, 1692.

<sup>16</sup> PRO ADM 2/9, Orders to Captain Short, 5 March 1692.

<sup>17</sup> PRO ADM 2/9, Orders to Captain Short, 18 March 1692.

In terms of naval seniority, Short and Fairfax were relatively junior. Both had recently received commands in the wake of wartime naval expansion. Short was an elderly lieutenant who was likely recalled to service. Promoted and given command of the *Phaeton* fireship on 16 March 1691, by the end of the year Short was transferred to *Nonsuch*. Short's lieutenant on the *Nonsuch* was one Abraham Hoare (or Hore), another older officer. Both Hoare and Short received their lieutenantcies in 1678, when a possible war with France had also led to naval expansion.<sup>18</sup> *Nonsuch* itself was an older vessel commissioned as a fifth rate in 1668, increased to a fourth rate of 42 guns the next year, and reduced back to a fifth rate of 36 guns in 1691.<sup>19</sup>

Robert Fairfax made two voyages on board a merchant ship to the Mediterranean between 1681 and 1685. Later, friends suggested he seek a career in the navy. Fairfax served as a volunteer from January 1688 until several weeks after the Revolution when he secured a lieutenant's commission. The new lieutenant saw action at Bantry Bay and Beachy Head and served until the fall of 1690 when his promotion to captain came through.<sup>20</sup> Fairfax's first command was the fifth rate *Conception Prize* (32 guns), a French ship of unknown age and origin captured earlier in 1690 and refitted.<sup>21</sup> Under more normal circumstances Fairfax might have been given a fireship to command. This

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<sup>18</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 130; David Syrett and R.L. Dinardo, *The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy, 1660-1815* (Aldershot: Scholar Press/Navy Records Society, 1994), entries for "Short, Richard" and "Hoare, Abraham."

<sup>19</sup> Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> "Fairfax, Robert" *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume VI* op.cit., 1002-1003.

<sup>21</sup> Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List*, 185.

was one method of bringing captains up from midshipman and lieutenant; many of the captains who would rise to become admiral started as fireship commanders.<sup>22</sup> That Fairfax was given immediate command of a fifth rate was not altogether unusual, although it should be pointed out that the remnants of the old gentleman-tarpaulin controversy may have lent weight to his becoming an officer and his relatively short tenure as a lieutenant.

The gentleman-tarpaulin issue reached a crescendo during the Restoration. The tendency to appoint the sons of gentlemen to command positions raised questions of competence as the navy strove to reach a balance between the officer as gentleman versus the officer as sailor. In many cases this dispute was as political in nature as it was social and the difference between gentleman and tarpaulin captains was frequently marginal.<sup>23</sup> The need for competent officers eventually tempered the inflow of unsuitable gentlemen by the beginning of the Nine Years War.<sup>24</sup> However, the employment of gentlemen officers continued. Fairfax demonstrates the power of influence in early modern office-holding. Fairfax's commission was petitioned for by Lord Fairfax and may have been granted by Admiral Killigrew.<sup>25</sup> Although someone like Fairfax would not go far if he

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<sup>22</sup> See PRO ADM 7/549, *List of Ships and Captains*, 1651-1737.

<sup>23</sup> Davies, *Gentlemen and Tarpaulins*, Chapter 3.

<sup>24</sup> John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III*, 141-42.

<sup>25</sup> PRO ADM 8/2, 1 March 1691. The final entry for this List Book is a list of officers including information on who recommended them for a commission and who placed them. Fairfax and a number of other officers appear under Admiral Killigrew's name but the blocks for their entries do not directly indicate that Killigrew commissioned them (i.e. no dittos or ditto marks). Lord Fairfax was not Robert Fairfax's father but some other relative.

was incompetent, his connections certainly advanced his career quickly.<sup>26</sup> Although little is known about the circumstances of Short's early life and career, he is clearly representative of the tarpaulin officer. This provides a useful commencement point for contrasting two very different captains.

*Conception Prize's* very first assignment (other than a mission to impress and transport sailors) showed some similarities to its subsequent dispatch to North America. On 23 May 1691, when the vessel was at Spithead, Fairfax was ordered to sail to the Isle of Mull, find the *Pembroke* and put himself under the orders of its captain, John Every. Following *Conception Prize* would be the ketch *Eaglett*. The two ships were to assist *Pembroke* in cruising the area and intercepting any enemy traffic sailing between Ireland and Scotland.<sup>27</sup> *Conception Prize* found the *Pembroke* on 20 June 1691 and cruised until it received orders to repair to Portsmouth for a refit on 7 September, arriving there two days later.<sup>28</sup> Cruising duties primarily involved speaking to passing ships and convoying any trade needing such assistance including at various points troop ships and colliers. At one point *Pembroke* and *Conception Prize* allied themselves with several small vessels under control of the Earl of Argyle for a running skirmish with enemy forces. *Pembroke*, *Conception Prize* and eventually *Eaglett* traversed the Irish sea as far south as Dublin before Fairfax was ordered to return.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Davies, *Gentleman and Tarpaulins*, 232-33.

<sup>27</sup> PRO ADM 2/7, Orders to Captain Fairfax, 23 May 1691, 536.

<sup>28</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt.4, Log of *Conception Prize*, 20 June- 9 September 1691; PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Fairfax, 18 August, 1691.

<sup>29</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt.4, Log of *Conception Prize*, 1-6 July 1691.

While refitting, Fairfax received orders from the Admiralty on 24 October that he would need to store and victual for eight months to go to Virginia.<sup>30</sup> *Conception Prize* and the sixth rate ketch *Albrough* were to provide convoy services for the Virginia fleet with the fourth rate *Assurance* and follow the orders of its captain, Isaac Townsend.<sup>31</sup> On 14 November orders were written up that *Conception Prize* was to transport Sir Thomas Lawrence, Baronet, Secretary for Maryland, one fourteen year-old youth, three servants (two male and one female), and baggage amounting to one ton. The five persons were to be victualled as part of the ship's company.<sup>32</sup> *Conception Prize* received orders to begin reducing to its overseas complement of 115 men on 4 December and the final set of orders instructing *Conception Prize* to act as guard for New England were written out on 29 December. As with Short, Fairfax was instructed to "observe & follow such orders as you shall from time to time receive from the Governor of that colony."<sup>33</sup>

The journey of *Conception Prize* commenced in an ordinary way but was soon beset by a series of problems that, while not a serious threat to the well-being of the ship, made the crossing cumbersome. In typical fashion, the Virginia convoy left the Downs and sailed along the Channel stopping at Plymouth and Torbay to collect awaiting merchant ships. *Albrough* did not sail with the rest of the convoy. The ketch was delayed

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<sup>30</sup> PRO ADM 3/6, Admiralty Board Minutes, 21 October 1691; PRO ADM 51/3796, pt. 4, Log of *Conception Prize*, 24 October, 1691.

<sup>31</sup> PRO ADM 2/8, Instructions to Captain Townsend, 29 December 1691, 480.

<sup>32</sup> PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Fairfax, 14 November 1691, 373.

<sup>33</sup> PRO ADM 3/6, Admiralty Board Minutes, 9 November 1691; PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Fairfax, 29 December 1691, 479; PRO ADM 51/3796, pt. 4, Log of *Conception Prize*, 4 December 1691.

due to an accident and ordered to put in for repairs before departing overseas.<sup>34</sup> The Virginia convoy travelled in company with other convoys, cruisers, and sections of the fleet for better protection along the coast until separating for Virginia on 17 January. For the next two days the convoy chased away privateers before changing course to take on water at the Azores. The convoy resumed its voyage on 7 February and immediately upon reaching the high seas the faced storms that damaged *Conception Prize*'s sails and forced the cutting of anchor cables and the setting adrift of a sunken lifeboat.<sup>35</sup>

On 22 February *Conception Prize* sprung a leak between decks, damaging some powder kegs. After the damage was repaired and assessed, a quantity of wet powder was later set out to dry on the poop deck. Somehow on 5 March the powder ignited. The sentry nearby was not injured by the ensuing explosion but a beam shook loose in the master's cabin, striking the master upon the head and killing him. Separated from most of the convoy and experiencing further mast and sail problems, *Conception Prize* reached Cape Henry off Virginia on 2 April and limped to anchor in the James River near the *Assurance* the next day.<sup>36</sup>

Fairfax wrote the council of Virginia inquiring as to whether any anchors and cables were available and if any persons qualified as a master resided locally. Although no masters were to be found, permission to salvage anchors and cables from the sixth rate

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<sup>34</sup> PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Chant, 8 January, 1692, 516; PRO ADM 2/8, Orders to Captain Townsend, 12 January, 1692, 520.

<sup>35</sup> PRO ADM 51/ 3796, pt. 4, Log of *Conception Prize*, 17 January- 7 February, 1692.

<sup>36</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt. 4, Log of *Conception Prize*, 22 February- 3 April 1692.

*Dunbarton*, written off by survey some years earlier, was granted.<sup>37</sup> Having several men too sick for duty Fairfax requested, and was given permission, to impress stragglers from the Royal Navy, if any could be found, or other suitable mariners.<sup>38</sup> *Conception Prize* was revictualled by a supply ship and spent the next month anchored in the York River repairing damage and taking in stores. *Conception Prize* then sailed back to the James river with provisions for the *Assurance* and, once they had been transferred, Captain Townsend gave Fairfax his orders to proceed to New England on 14 May 1692.<sup>39</sup>

Also on 14 May, as Fairfax prepared to leave Virginia, *Nonsuch* with Phips on board arrived at Boston. By the time *Conception Prize* anchored in Boston on 9 June, Phips had already sent *Nonsuch* to Pemaquid, a small harbour located between Boston and Port Royal. *Conception Prize* spent the next month being cleaned and outfitted with such stores, provisions and other conveniences as could be had in Boston. On 14 July Phips ordered Fairfax to cruise off the coast of New England and he did so until 27 August only stopping in at Nantasket Road for supplies. As the log of *Conception Prize* indicates, the day-to-day experiences of cruising did not differ considerably from the same duty off the coast of the British Isles. Ships were checked for their identity, and to share news of the enemy or other happenings. Ships in trouble were assisted and the man-of-war was on the look out for any prize ships that would supplement the income of

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<sup>37</sup> PRO CO 5/1405 Council Minutes, Virginia, 11 April 1692, 324.

<sup>38</sup> PRO CO 5/1405, Council Minutes, Virginia, 16 April 1692, 325.

<sup>39</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt.4- 5, Log of *Conception Prize*, 16 April-14 May, 1692.

the ship's company.<sup>40</sup>

What was markedly different about service in New England was the command structure. While cruising the Irish Sea Fairfax was ordered to follow the instructions of Captain Every of the *Pembroke* while Captain William Martin of the *Eaglett* ketch was required to follow Fairfax's (and Every's) instructions. Although without the fleet, the little squadron still followed an Admiralty chain of command. A similar situation occurred within the Virginia convoy. However, once in New England, Captains Short and Fairfax were under the orders of a non-naval official, Sir William Phips. This was stated both within Phips' mandate as governor and the captain's own instructions from the Admiralty. Neither captain appears to have assumed total authority over the other. This would not be unusual, as neither captain was under written orders to obey the other. By date of captain's commission Fairfax held seniority over Short; 15 November 1690 against 16 March 1691.<sup>41</sup> Only subtle hints within Fairfax's log suggest that he may have been in command when both ships were together. Furthermore, Fairfax did not interfere with subsequent actions concerning the power struggle that erupted over control of the *Nonsuch*.

Superficially it is easy to associate the subsequent problems between the captains and governor to unyielding and unattractive personality traits. Short was notorious for being a heavy drinker and abusive to his crew.<sup>42</sup> Fairfax may have been prone to

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<sup>40</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt 5, Log of *Conception Prize*, 14 May 1692-27 August, 1692.

<sup>41</sup> PRO ADM 7/549, List of Ships and Captains, 1651-1737.

<sup>42</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Warrant Officers of *Nonsuch* to Admiralty, 20 February, 1693.



peevishness. The Council of Virginia noted in its minutes of Fairfax “complaining” that several crew members were too sick for duty.<sup>43</sup> In a surviving letter to the Admiralty, Fairfax bemoaned his being sent to a place where he considered himself out of contention for promotion and complained that New England abused its naval officers and was no place for a gentleman.<sup>44</sup> Phips, for his part employed boisterous and argumentative behaviour when it suited the situation.<sup>45</sup> However, what came to pass between the three men and those who served with and under them represent a distinct power struggle over the resources a warship provided. It was less a clash over European and nascent American ideology and temperament as such situations have been portrayed.<sup>46</sup>

Short had been co-opted by Phips from the beginning of *Nonsuch*’s voyage. Phips and some of the crew spoke of cordial relations between the two men during the voyage. Others believed tension lay just below the surface. Short, in deference to the royal governor, had given up his great cabin in favour of the gunner’s quarters. Perhaps as a return gesture, Phips openly congratulated Short on the capture of a prize while en route maintaining he would not claim any of the prize rewards. Phips would later renege on his promise and appropriated some goods on board the prize for himself, eventually denying Short the prize altogether. Still, it remains uncertain as to whether any open animosity between Short and Phips existed prior to their reaching Boston. However, one crew

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<sup>43</sup> PRO CO 5/1405, Council Minutes, Virginia, 16 April 1692, 325-26.

<sup>44</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 31 January, 1693, 125.

<sup>45</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Leach, *Roots of Conflict*, 139.

member later testified that the purser Matthew Cary and Phips' secretary Benjamin Jackson, conspired to drive a wedge between their respective superiors. Regardless of whether Phips and Short were ever agreeable to each other on a personal level, their mutual desire for financial gain fostered an economic relationship once in New England.<sup>47</sup>

The relationship proved unequal as Phips garnered the lion's share of rewards. Short entered into what Baker and Reid term "clientlike dependency" upon Phips. An elderly captain without seniority or connections counted for little in the promotional schemes of the post-revolution navy. Therefore, Short's return to the navy was in all likelihood an opportunity to at least gain half-pay benefits and employment so long as there was war. Although the gentleman-tarpaulin controversy was waning, the residual effects on someone such as Short, who received his lieutenant's commission well before 1688, must have remained. Knowing he would be overseas for some years, an alliance with the colonial governor would at least provide Short with extra money and possibly perquisites for the short term.<sup>48</sup>

The public manifestation of Phips' relationship with Short came in the form of Short's providing sailors for a variety of projects. Sailors were in short supply in New England and during the Restoration period it was common practice for naval captains to hire out their men in return for a cut of their wages.<sup>49</sup> This manner of employment was well within the authority invested in Phips as royal governor and corresponded to the

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<sup>47</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, .130-31.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 215-16.

orders given to Short by the Admiralty. Royal governors were given control over the direction of naval vessels and the dismissal of their captains if necessary.<sup>50</sup> Power over Vice Admiralty courts were also at the governor's discretion and Phips successfully lobbied to have one established at Boston in December of 1691, sent with its own seal which he received on 13 March 1692.<sup>51</sup>

Especially as the harsh New England winters necessitated the laying up of the two warships for the winter, utilising seamen for extra duties should not have been a serious problem. The practice of loaning men was acceptable to the Admiralty so long as it did not render the man-of-war incapable of properly sailing or engaging the enemy. This represented a fine line in navy ships abroad with reduced crews due to manning policies, sickness, death, and desertion. One captain, Wickam of the fourth rate *Diamond*, was fine £1000 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment when his ship was captured homeward bound from the West Indies in September of 1693. Influencing the court martial's decision was the captain reducing his crew through loaning them to merchant vessels.<sup>52</sup> Short came to realise, whether on his own account or prompted by Phips' enemies, the potential consequences of weakening his ship. In all likelihood though, Short's decision to refrain from supplying Phips with men was framed within the unsatisfactory returns on his partnership with Phips.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Johnson, *Adjustment to Empire*, 234-35.

<sup>51</sup> PRO ADM 3/6 Admiralty Board Minutes, 4 December 1691; PRO CO 5/857 Phips to Admiralty, 7 March 1693.

<sup>52</sup> Hepper, *British Warship Losses in the Age of Sail*, 16.

<sup>53</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 215-16

Despite Short's own grievances with Phips, certain aspects of Phips' grand design for the deployment of the two warships did not sit well with either Short or Fairfax. Phips ordered *Nonsuch* and *Conception Prize* to ride at Pemaquid whenever possible. At Phips' behest the government had recently initiated the building of a fort, William Henry, at Pemaquid. *Conception Prize* and *Nonsuch* were intended to supply and guard the structure while it was under construction. Unfortunately, once completed, the fort would still be vulnerable by land and was some distance from supply or reinforcements. The construction was reported to have cost as much as £ 20 000, an astronomical sum to a colony already cash-strapped for its defence. The fort was eventually captured by a force of French and Abenaki in 1696.<sup>54</sup>

The frontier strategy of defence centred at Pemaquid did make some sense in that the harbour acted as a mid-way point between Boston and Port Royal. Port Royal, as mentioned, was captured in 1690 by forces led by Phips but Acadia was far from subdued. Native peoples and Acadians still controlled the vast territories beyond Port Royal. French warships and privateers were still roaming with impunity along the coast, as the incident involving John Nelson demonstrated. Pemaquid would provide a convenient point of counter attack where approaching enemies could be scouted and reported to Boston. How this strategy was to work is illustrated by a surviving written order to Fairfax from Phips' secretary Benjamin Jackson, dated 30 October 1692. The Secretary informed the captain that information had been received concerning the presence of French warships at Quebec taking on 200 men to attack Wells or Piscataqua.

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 161-63.

Fairfax was instructed to investigate using several of the local sloops and fight the French squadron if possible or follow them to Boston if not.<sup>55</sup>

Fairfax, while visiting Port Royal earlier in October, had already received intelligence concerning the cruising of three French warships of 30, 40 and 60 guns off Cape Sable. If true, these three ships together would have been more than a match for *Nonsuch* and *Conception Prize*. Fairfax travelled back to Pemaquid to inform Short and sent dispatches to Boston. On 19 October Fairfax's intelligence was corroborated by a sloop travelling from Port Royal that spoke of being attacked by two French longboats off Mount Desert. Fairfax sent a second dispatch to Boston and both warships anchored in Pemaquid harbour in a state of constant readiness. Each day the two frigates sent their boats out to cruise for signs of the enemy until nightfall. Tension was heightened further when Indians were seen "skulking" near the wall of the fort on the nights of 20 and 22 October. This daily routine continued until 27 October when a gale arose. At this point the two Ships prepared to sail for Boston.<sup>56</sup>

Phips had ordered Short and Fairfax to remain at Pemaquid but the two captains disapproved. Pemaquid Harbour did not prove deep enough for the ships to ride safely once the winter ice moved in. More urgently, *Nonsuch* and *Conception Prize* were almost out of victuals. Despite fears of French attacks the two ships were left with only 5 day's rations. A consultation between the Captains, officers and local pilots decided

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<sup>55</sup> Massachusetts Archives, Volume 70, Military, 1680-1703, Jackson to Fairfax, 30 October, 1692.

<sup>56</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt. 5, Log of *Conception Prize*, 9-27 October 1692.

retiring would be a prudent act.<sup>57</sup> Phips, nervous at Pemaquid being left unfinished and defenceless, with three enemy warships in the area, considered the actions of Short and Fairfax as insubordination. Claims of the captains concerning lack of supplies were dismissed by Phips as a pretence for Short and Fairfax to leave Pemaquid. According to Phips, the captains need only have sent their pursers to Phips before embarkation. This seems unlikely, as the dangers of sailing under-victualled would outweigh any other considerations. As a sailor himself, Phips must have understood the ramifications of leaving warships on duty in a precarious state. Eventually, he tempered his orders and allowed the ships to be laid up for the winter.<sup>58</sup>

At this juncture Phips turned to Short as his retainer and began to employ *Nonsuch* crew members on merchant ships during the fall of 1692.<sup>59</sup> On 1 January 1693 Phips ordered Short to supply 4 men to board the government sloop *Mary* to go to Pemaquid and to make ready 36 more for similar duty.<sup>60</sup> Short objected to this order claiming the too many men had already been expropriated. The matter came to a climax near Scarlett's wharf on 4 January when a fight erupted between Short and Phips following a heated exchange. Short, with one arm injured from an earlier accident, came out the worse and was subsequently arrested by the governor and thrown in jail the next day. He remained there for 17 days before being transferred to a castle on an offshore

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<sup>57</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 29 March 1693, 157-58; PRO CO 5/857, Short to Admiralty, 29 March 1693.

<sup>58</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Phips to Admiralty, 15 February 1693, 144-45.

<sup>59</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 212-14.

<sup>60</sup> PRO CO 5/857 Phips to Short, 1 January. 93, 112.

island.<sup>61</sup>

Phips then promoted the ship's gunner, Thomas Dobbins, as the new commander over the lieutenant, Abraham Hoare. This had the effect of dividing an already fragile ships company into pro-Short and pro Phips/Dobbins factions with Dobbins in control of the ship. This immediately set off a bevy of letters from Dobbins, Short, Hoare, Phips, Fairfax, and the warrant officers of the *Nonsuch* testifying to the circumstances surrounding the recent events. As would be expected, the letters represented attempts by the parties to justify their actions in the face of an unusual situation. Lieutenant Hoare's letter meekly states his own outrage at suffering at the hands of those who had disregarded naval procedure.<sup>62</sup> But it appears no-one was willing to listen to the aged officer. Whether or not the *Nonsuch* was controlled by Dobbins or by a committee of the warrant officers, Hoare remained on board and was tolerated but did not factor in events prior to *Nonsuch's* return voyage to England.<sup>63</sup>

The warrant officers as a group stated that they consented to Dobbins' promotion and testified as to the base behaviour of their former captain. The officers made allegations as to Short being a drunken tyrant who went so far as to abuse civilians while at English ports. Short's ill treatment of the crew was the occasion for many desertions while at Boston, and each member of the crew felt the ill will of their captain at some point. To reinforce this argument the warrant officers tacked on an accusation of

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<sup>61</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 215-16.

<sup>62</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Hoare to Admiralty, 4 April, 1693, 168.

<sup>63</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 217

expropriation of naval stores. Dobbins and the warrant officers also claimed Short threatened the men with loss of wages and other disciplinary action and did everything in his power to hinder the operation of *Nonsuch*. That there was unanimity in their condemnation of Short does indicate that the captain did not endear himself to many who served under him.<sup>64</sup>

Further proof of Short's erratic behaviour came by way of testimonies from two members of the Massachusetts assembly who were accosted by Short at the head of a group of his men on the night of 30 June 1692. Although under a press warrant from Phips, Short and his men were on the look-out for deserters from the *Nonsuch*. Short broke into the rooms where each council member resided, swearing, beating, and taking the men into custody for a period before being released.<sup>65</sup> However, it must be stated that Short did have supporters both among the crew and local population. Some of this support came from opponents of Phips but some of the ship's company, including Short's midshipman son Joseph, had demonstrated loyalty to Phips, countering the accusations of the warrant officers.<sup>66</sup>

Phips wrote both to the Admiralty and Secretary of State (the same letter) accusing Short of not obeying his orders or following his advice. Phips claimed he had informed Short of the dangers of not keeping careful account of the ship's company while

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<sup>64</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Warrant Officers of *Nonsuch* to Admiralty, 20 February, 1693, 135; PRO CO 5/857, 135; Matthew Cary to Admiralty, 16 February, 1693, 133; PRO CO 5/857, Dobbins to Admiralty, 13 February 1693, 129.

<sup>65</sup> PRO CO 5/751, Complaint of Peter Woodbury, 4 July 1692, 9; PRO CO 5/751, Complaint of John Tomson, 2 July, 1692, 15.

<sup>66</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Depositions of John Hamm and Joseph Short, 25 March, 1693, 188.



at Boston. As a result *Nonsuch* experienced many desertions. Short set out to replace lost men with a press without first asking permission which Phips maintained would have been readily granted. Also mentioned was Short's abuse of the assembly men, but the governor did not mention that Short was under his warrant at the time. On one occasion, according to Phips, orders to sail *Nonsuch* to Pemaquid were not carried out quickly enough, resulting in a lost opportunity to capture a small force of French and Natives. Phips mentioned the episode over the supplying of men for the government sloop but maintained that Short's reason for refusal was that the captain himself had already hired too many men out to merchant ships for a cut of 20 shillings each of their wages. Phips even admitted to landing the first blow of the fight, at Short's provocation, but downplayed the seriousness of the beating he doled out as well as the depth of the economic relations between himself and Short. The governor lamented the insolent and ungentlemanly behaviour of the navy captains, stating he had offered support and courtesy to his captains in an effort to make their stay comfortable but that they had rejected him in favour of his enemies. Phips was careful to explain why he chose the gunner over the lieutenant, stating Dobbins to be the more responsible man.<sup>67</sup>

In his own letters to the Admiralty, Short stressed the dangerous situations created by Phips' unyielding behaviour concerning Pemaquid. Short attributed the January assault to an adverse reaction by Phips to requests for new anchors and cables. Short maintained that the governor developed an irrational hatred towards the captain. This, according to Short, represented yet another incident in a long line of abuse. Short named

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<sup>67</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Phips to Admiralty, 1 March, 1693, 144-45.

several captains who previously encountered problems with New Englanders, including the aforementioned Captain George of the *Rose*. Interestingly, Short finished his letter by declaring that Captain Fairfax was experiencing similar treatment at the hands of Phips. According to Short, Fairfax was threatened daily at the hands of Phips.<sup>68</sup> Fairfax's own evidence does not support those allegations.

Robert Fairfax was not present for the wharfside brawl, and had to rely on second-hand information in composing that section of his letter to the Admiralty. Fairfax did receive much insider information from discussions with one of Phips' merchant captains. Fairfax did report that in his view Short to that date had done nothing serious to provoke Phips. Conversely, Fairfax had heard tales of the governor threatening his fellow captain. Fairfax also focused on Phips' hasty decision based on some "private pique" to ride the warships at Pemaquid. Fairfax then unknowingly contradicted, Short's testimony citing Phips' order to Short to supply crew members while *Nonsuch* was laid up as the reason behind the quarrel. According to Fairfax, once Phips allowed the ships to stay at Boston, 20 crew members of the *Nonsuch* volunteered to re-supply and guard the fort at Pemaquid. Also mentioned was that Short had been supplying men to merchant vessels but not unless under the governor's orders. However, when Phips requested the 36 men, Short refused. The *Nonsuch* crew members were apparently unwilling to anymore transfers as their comrades had not yet returned.<sup>69</sup>

Captain Fairfax did rise to Short's defence although he did not openly protest the

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<sup>68</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Short to Admiralty, 29 March, 1693, 161.

<sup>69</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 29 March 1693, 157-58.

new command structure on board *Nonsuch*. Curiously, Short counted Fairfax among his best friends, but Fairfax claimed action on Short's behalf "as a brother officer." This may have been a strategy for distancing himself from some of Short's more erratic behaviour. On 7 January, at Captain Short's request, Fairfax accompanied two prominent citizens, a Captain Foxcroft and a Mr. Dyer, to appeal to Phips to allow bail for Short. Phips refused, stating that Short was lucky not to be in the dungeon in irons.<sup>70</sup> Short waited in the castle until 1 March when transport to England was arranged on the ship *Walier & Thomas*. One of the ship's owners, Nathaniel Byfield, and the master, Jeremiah Tay (or Toy) were sympathetic to Short. Several deserters from the *Nonsuch* were permitted on board when the ship sailed to friendly Piscataqua instead of directly to England. Phips sent Dobbins and the *Nonsuch*'s purser, Matthew Cary, after the deserters in a sloop. Cary was detained in Piscataqua and the deserters were protected by the lieutenant governor of New Hampshire, John Usher, another of Phips' detractors. Enraged, Phips travelled to Piscataqua himself, boarded the *Walter & Thomas*, tore up Tay's warrant to transport Short to England, ransacked Short's belongings, went ashore to search for Short and the deserters, and subsequently arrested Tay. Phips, in an attempt to employ the local militia, was turned away from the fort by a detachment of soldiers and reduced to reading his warrant aloud in a local pub before departing. Short eventually made it safely to London where he began petitioning for grievances concerning Phips' expropriation of his

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<sup>70</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 29 March 1693, 157-58; PRO ADM 51/3796, pt. 5, Log of *Conception Prize*, 7 January, 1693.

prize and his beating and imprisonment.<sup>71</sup>

Fairfax's growing frustration at the situation in Boston caused him to write the Admiralty at the end of January and request a transfer. The ambitious captain feared himself out of contention for promotion and felt fleet duty would allow him to serve his country more productively. Fairfax did not report that he was under any physical threat from Phips, although the captain chafed from the uncivil atmosphere he believed hung over Boston. Fairfax deplored the conditions under which the King's officers were required to work. He stated:

Sir I have made it my endeavour to comply with the humours of the persons in authority here so far as becomes a gentleman but find nothing that bears that name shall be so treated.<sup>72</sup>

Phips, frustrated and helpless by Fairfax's refusal to cooperate in a manner similar to Short and desired the captain's removal. It was never clear what Phips expected from Fairfax. Likely, Phips was shouldered with an officer who performed his duty completely above the board, and therefore of little use in local empire building. An honest officer was a potential danger to someone straddling the line between self interest and the public good. Phips wrote the Admiralty stating that he had recently constructed a yacht of 150 tons. Phips wished to employ the yacht for coastal duty, to be paid for by the Admiralty as a sixth rate for half the year and in government service the other half. Phips claimed that this would cut down on the expense of maintaining *Conception Prize* by half and be more

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<sup>71</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 216-17.

<sup>72</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 31 January, 1693, 125.

suitable for New England waters. Consequently, the Admiralty could redeploy *Conception Prize* for the better service of the navy. Phips determined that a smaller, less professional guard ship would be preferable over a state warship despite the obvious reduction in the ability to deter the French. Naturally, a ship of his own would give Phips greater flexibility over its deployment and control.<sup>73</sup>

Phips began to take a different approach when dealing with Fairfax: passive resistance. Phips could not merely dispossess Fairfax of his ship as he had done Short. *Conception Prize* could not be subverted in this manner because Fairfax, despite his animosity, had the annoying habit of performing his duty to the letter. Phips was in possession of a naval captain who would not do his bidding but still obeyed Phips' orders so long as they pertained to the defence of New England and did not endanger the ship. To make matters worse for Phips, Fairfax allied himself with Jahleel Brenton, Surveyor of the Woods, customs collector, and political opponent of the governor. Brenton established lines of credit so Fairfax could procure supplies.<sup>74</sup> In return it appears some of Fairfax's men worked for Brenton while their ship was laid up for the winter of 1693.<sup>75</sup>

A week after his visit to Phips in defence of Short, Fairfax began waiting upon the governor for his own reasons. *Conception Prize* was badly in need of repairs and none could be carried out until Phips authorised the survey. Phips did issue a survey for rigging,

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<sup>73</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Phips to Admiralty, 4 April 1693, 170. The concept of the hired yacht was discussed at an Admiralty Board meeting. The Lords noted to speak to the Navy Board on the idea. PRO ADM 3/8, Admiralty Board Minutes, 14 June, 1693.

<sup>74</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 31 January, 1693, 121.

<sup>75</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 243.

cables, and sails in mid February 1693, but beyond that would not see Fairfax, nor return his letters or issue any orders.<sup>76</sup> Despite the potential consequences, Phips allowed *Conception Prize* to remain at the wharf in a state of disrepair.

In effect the ship remained laid up well into spring. Fairfax regularly called on Phips in order to obtain authorisation for the survey and even drew up the necessary papers himself. Although Fairfax desperately wanted the survey proper, he brought carpenters on board to commence routine repair work and effected most of the repairs without permission. Eventually, instructions came from the Treasury Office to the New England government stating that a survey was necessary. Fairfax then drew on more lines of credit to resupply the ship with victuals and stores.<sup>77</sup> Phips merely changed tactics. Once *Conception Prize* was seaworthy, Phips refused to grant any orders for cruising or other duties. Phips would not even allow Fairfax to apprehend some pirates thought to Boston on 14 April. On 17 May 1693 Fairfax reported that Phips informed him he could sail once ready. As Phips was at Pemaquid, Fairfax reported to the Lieutenant Governor who granted Fairfax a warrant to impress 16 men before sailing, which was accomplished without incident.<sup>78</sup>

On 22 May *Conception Prize* had just finished preparing for sea when fresh orders came from Phips that the ship was not to leave harbour. By 25 May the exasperated Fairfax sent word urging Phips to allow his ship to sail but “the governor sent me an

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<sup>76</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 1 March, 1693, 148; PRO CO 5/857, Survey of *Conception Prize*, 14 February, 1693, 131. The repairs were estimated at £ 400.

<sup>77</sup> PRO CO 5/ 857, Fairfax to Admiralty, 12 April, 1693, 178.

<sup>78</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt. 5, Log of *Conception Prize*, 14 January-17 May 1693.

answer that the ship should ride at anchor until her bottom dropped out.” Fairfax vented his anger on the local sloop *Swan* which came into harbour on 2 June flying a naval pennant and saluted *Conception Prize* with 7 guns. *Conception Prize* replied in kind, thinking *Swan* was a Royal Navy ship. Upon information to the contrary, Fairfax boarded the sloop and took away the colours. He reported the incident to Phips but nothing was done. Finally, on 6 June Phips gave orders for Fairfax to sail to Nantasket and wait for further orders. *Conception Prize* arrived at Nantasket Road on 7 July and Fairfax’s log ends with the arrival of Sir Francis Wheeler’s squadron between 11 and 18 June.<sup>79</sup>

Instrumental in Fairfax’s ability to resist Phips was that *Conception Prize* was kept a tight ship. Although *Nonsuch* was rife with desertions after reaching Boston, the muster of *Conception Prize* did not have one man listed as “run” from the time Fairfax was captain. This would have included sailors impressed at Boston.<sup>80</sup> Other indicators of potential dissention on board *Nonsuch* before leaving for New England appear in the record. Richard Short had replaced *Nonsuch*’s previous captain, Robert Sincock, who was promoted to the *Tyger Prize*. Sincock was first entered into the muster of the *Nonsuch* as boatswain on 13 October 1688. On 12 May 1689, the captain being killed in action and with no lieutenant on board, Sincock took command of the ship and completed the engagement. Sincock was promoted for his skill and remained commander of *Nonsuch*

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<sup>79</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796, pt. 5, Log of *Conception Prize*, 22 May-18 June, 1693.

<sup>80</sup> PRO ADM 36/2203, Muster of *Nonsuch*, 1688 December- 1694 September; PRO ADM 51/3796 pt. 6, Muster of *Conception Prize*. Perhaps due to its brevity, this muster is located in the records class containing captain’s logs rather than within those holding the muster books.

until given the *Tyger Prize*.<sup>81</sup>

Upon hearing of his transfer, Sincock wrote the Admiralty to request he be allowed to take 40 or 50 men of the *Nonsuch*'s company to the *Tyger Prize*. Sincock was told the Lords of the Admiralty "do not think fit to order anything."<sup>82</sup> That Sincock, in all probability a well-liked and respected captain, especially rising from the ship's own warrant officers, would be replaced by the temperamental, hard-drinking Short increased the opportunity for a divided crew. On its own this may not have been enough to undermine completely the operation of *Nonsuch*. But it did set a negative tone for Short's first voyage as captain.

Phips' very presence on board during the important first voyage between new captain and crew may have worsened an already tense situation. Greg Dening, in *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language*, attributed conflict among the crew of the infamous *Bounty* to the disruption of living space on board the ship as it was modified to carry breadfruits in 1788. The commander, Lieutenant William Bligh, was moved out of the great cabin into a smaller one. This forced the displacement of other officers and the creation of make-shift space. Such disruptions were felt as far as the lower deck. The Boatswain's cabin, for example, was moved further away from the people he was to watch over and discipline. In a warship where space was limited the customs and procedures for determining space had

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<sup>81</sup> William Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History from the Earliest Times to the Present*, Vol. II, (London: Sampson Low, Marston and Company, 1898), 462.

<sup>82</sup> PRO ADM 2/382, Southerne to Sincock, 19 January, 1691.



evolved and been worked out to ensure a smooth working and living environment.<sup>83</sup> A similar pattern emerges with Phips taking Short's cabin and Short assuming the cabin of Thomas Dobbins.

In once sense, the elevation of Dobbins to the position of commander returned *Nonsuch* to a relative state of normalcy as the pro-Short sailors deserted. Thomas Dobbins took the place of Richard Short both as commander of the *Nonsuch* and as Phips' naval attendant. It is quite clear from the log entries and actions of the crew that Phips controlled the ship directly.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Dobbins wrote to the Admiralty explaining his sudden rise to command, reiterated his loyalty to the service, and insisted he would continue to operate *Nonsuch* as a naval vessel proper. Dobbins hoped the Lords of Admiralty would be satisfied with this arrangement and continue to favour Dobbins as captain.<sup>85</sup> Needless to say Short's opinion of Dobbins was low. Short referred to the former gunner as an illiterate and someone who "condescends to his [Phips] private interests and tends upon Phips as a boy."<sup>86</sup>

That the gunner Dobbins was promoted over Lieutenant Hoare was, of course, Phips appointing a man he could trust and control. However, Phips justified not following

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<sup>83</sup> Greg Denning, *Mr. Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power, and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1992), 28.

<sup>84</sup> The surviving log of *Nonsuch* is located in PRO ADM 51/3923, pt.9. This log book covers the entire period of Dobbins' command and is the only surviving log for *Nonsuch* during this period. If Short's logs survive they are not located within the Captains' Logs. Dobbins reported to the Admiralty that Short kept all of the ship's papers upon his arrest and would not turn them over. PRO CO 5/857, Dobbins to Admiralty, 27 February, 1693, 139.

<sup>85</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Dobbins to Admiralty, 10 April, 1693, 176.

<sup>86</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Short to Admiralty, 24 April, 1693, 186-87.

naval procedure based on his observations of Hoare on the outward bound voyage. At one point, upon sighting two Dutch warships, Hoare, thinking them French, suggested running the ship on shore to save their lives. Phips' opinion of Hoare was bore out by the total lack of support he received from the crew.<sup>87</sup> There is evidence that Hoare was already unhappy on board *Nonsuch* as he requested to be relieved of his position as *Nonsuch* was readying to sail for Boston. The Secretary of the Navy, James Southerne, in a letter dated 24 March 1692, desired that Hoare explain the circumstances surrounding his request to quit his ship.<sup>88</sup> Whatever the reason, Hoare sailed with the rest of the company.

Dobbins, for his part, operated *Nonsuch* within specified naval parameters and certainly kept within those set by Phips. With the arrival of spring, the crew of *Nonsuch* prepared for sailing after having spent the winter hauled on shore at Scarlett's wharf. Caulkers came on board to seal the hull on 18 March and stores arrived from London two days later. The outfitting of the frigate continued until 13 May when, with a pilot on board as ordered by Phips, *Nonsuch* began cruising. The patrols of *Nonsuch* were without incident until 8-9 July when intelligence spoke of a strange brigantine off Rhode Island. After a day's chase *Nonsuch* followed the ship into Monument Bay near the Elizabeth Islands where its captain offered surrender on 11 July. The ship was a 16 gun privateer with 148 men on board. Dobbins took the prize into Rhode Island before delivering it to Boston by order of Governor Phips.<sup>89</sup> The incident was noted by The General assembly of

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<sup>87</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Phips to Admiralty, 1 March 1693, 144-45.

<sup>88</sup> PRO ADM 2/382, Southerne to Hoare, 24 March, 1691.

<sup>89</sup> PRO 51/3923, pt. 9, Log of *Nonsuch*, 16 March-19 July, 1693.

Rhode Island. The privateer had been plundering near Block Island before the arrival of *Nonsuch*. As soon as the frigate left another privateer appeared that could not be caught by the local patrol boat. The assembly used the incidents to allude to the inadequate sea defences of Rhode Island in a letter to the King.<sup>90</sup>

The conclusion to these events acquired a strange aura of completeness. Sir William Phips was recalled to answer charges concerning his conduct early in 1694. Central to allegations against him were his indiscretions towards Vice Admiralty courts and the customs office. Phips' escapades, including the imprisonment of Short, added a public element to the charges as did his open confrontations with Jahleel Brenton. Of course, the expropriation of Short's prize was just one part of Phips' profiteering schemes and the actions of neither Short nor Fairfax alone brought about the governor's downfall. The matter, at least in regards to Phips, ended upon his death while awaiting his hearing in London on 17 February 1694.<sup>91</sup>

The sources employed at present do not indicate whether Richard Short faced any disciplinary action but given that nothing substantial went wrong from an administrative standpoint, none was warranted. Short continued in the navy, receiving command of the fifth rate *Dover Prize* on January of 1695. Ironically, the commission also came with a warrant to hold courts martial in the harbour where *Dover Prize* had been riding.<sup>92</sup> Short was transferred to the *Scarborough* on 28 November 1695 and was given the *Winchelsea*

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<sup>90</sup> PRO CO 5/857, Address of the General Assembly of Rhode Island to the King, 25 October 1693, 256.

<sup>91</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 223.

<sup>92</sup> PRO ADM 6/3, Commission and Warrant to Captain Richard Short, 15 January 1695, 30.

on 3 April 1701. Both ships were fifth rates.<sup>93</sup> An Order in Council dated 7 December 1693 return Short's prize in the form of an allowance as compensation for his hardship.<sup>94</sup> Short died on 23 May 1702.<sup>95</sup>

Thomas Dobbins continued as commander of the *Nonsuch* until his relief and discharge on 24 November 1694 by Captain Thomas Taylor. In the meantime, Dobbins faced a suit from Jeremiah Tay for the merchant captain's week-long confinement on board *Nonsuch* in March of the same year. Dobbins was imprisoned, released by Phips and then imprisoned again. The results of the trial remain inconclusive but Dobbins' defence was Phips' warrant issued for Tay's arrest. Afterward, Dobbins appears to have taken command of a local vessel for a period before returning to England.<sup>96</sup> Dobbins rejoined the navy and served as gunner on board the second rate *Neptune*. By a warrant dated 31 December 1697 Dobbins was promoted to Master Gunner on board an older second rate, the *St. Michael*. The warrant was reaffirmed on 9 October 1704 and again on 21 December 1706 when the *St. Michael* was rebuilt and renamed *Marlborough*.<sup>97</sup> Dobbins efforts as temporary commander of the *Nonsuch* were also rewarded. Printed in the margin next to Dobbins' entry in the *Nonsuch* muster are the words: "To be paid as

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<sup>93</sup> PRO ADM 6/3, Commission to Captain Richard Short, 28 November 1695, 96; PRO ADM 6/6, Commission to Captain Richard Short, 3 April 1701, 83.

<sup>94</sup> CO 5/857, Order of the King in Council, 7 December 1693, 279.

<sup>95</sup> Syrett and Dinardo, *The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy*, entry for "Short, Richard."

<sup>96</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 217, 245-26.

<sup>97</sup> PRO ADM 6/4 Warrant to Thomas Dobbins, 31 December 1697, 134; PRO ADM 6/8, Warrant to Thomas Dobbins, 9 October 1704, 100; PRO ADM 6/9, Warrant to Thomas Dobbins, 21 December 1706, 35; Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List*, 11, 18.

commander for the time he acted as such by Admiralty Order 30th April 1695.”<sup>98</sup>

Dobbins' comrades on board the *Nonsuch* did not far so well. Twenty four days after the Admiralty ordered Dobbins' back-pay, a court martial was convened, coincidentally, on board the *Neptune*, to enquire into the loss of the *Nonsuch* to a French privateer on 4 January 1695 (two years to the day from Short's fight with Phips). *Nonsuch* was recalled home and convoying mast ships from New England when the privateer struck. A running battle continued for two days. Captain Taylor was killed and the main and mizen masts were shot away. The remaining officers decided to surrender the ship. Captain Taylor was criticised for not properly clearing the ship for action and blamed for the defeat. The warrant officers were found guilty of surrendering too readily. George Ireland, the boatswain, Richard Clements, the master, and William Distance, the man Dobbins replaced himself as gunner, were all demoted and to be prevented from ever holding warrants in the Royal Navy again. The ship's carpenter, Joseph Pittock, was acquitted. Lieutenant Hoare (listed as Howard in the court martial transcript) distinguished himself during the fray by fleeing to the doctor's cabin upon the death of Taylor, feigning injury. For his cowardice Hoare was permanently stripped of his rank and sentenced to six months imprisonment.<sup>99</sup>

*Conception Prize* never left New England, being cast away probably in July 1694. By this time, the ship's company with the exception of a midshipman and a sail maker

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<sup>98</sup> PRO ADM 36/2203, Muster of *Nonsuch*, December 1688- September 1694.

<sup>99</sup> PRO ADM 1/5255, Courts Martial, 24 May 1695. The incident is summarised in Hepper, *British Warship Losses in the Age of Sail*, 17-18.

were listed as discharged.<sup>100</sup> Fairfax had been long gone by this time, replaced by another new captain, John Anderson, around December of 1693.<sup>101</sup> Phips still employed *Conception Prize* to take him to Pemaquid for negotiations with the Abenaki, as in May of 1694, after Fairfax's departure.<sup>102</sup> Sir Francis Wheeler granted Fairfax a commission to take the fifth rate *Pembroke* back to England, most likely due to the death of its captain. Fairfax discharged 37 of his men into the *Pembroke* and other ships under Wheeler's command on 21 June 1693.<sup>103</sup> Although ready to help Fairfax, Wheeler, it appears, was not inclined to enter local politics and interfere on Short's behalf.<sup>104</sup> Phips, finally to be rid of Fairfax, would not have passed up this easy opportunity. The Admiralty confirmed and renewed Fairfax's commission.<sup>105</sup>

Fairfax's labourious sojourn in New England was the beginning of a prosperous career in the Navy. Upon returning to England, Fairfax was given a fourth rate that had been with Wheeler's squadron, the *Ruby*. The captain worked his way up to larger commands and saw a fair degree of action throughout the Nine Years War and War of the Spanish Succession. Upon the death of Admiral Sir Cloudesly Shovell in October of 1707, Fairfax's seniority should have guaranteed him promotion to Vice-admiral of the

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<sup>100</sup> Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List*, 185; PRO ADM 51/3796, pt.6, Muster of *Conception Prize*.

<sup>101</sup> PRO ADM 8/3, 1 December 1693; Syrett and Dinardo, *The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy*, entry for "Anderson, John."

<sup>102</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 171.

<sup>103</sup> PRO ADM 51/3796 pt. 6, Muster of *Conception Prize*.

<sup>104</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, 217.

<sup>105</sup> PRO ADM 3/6, Admiralty Board Minutes, 18 October, 1693.

Blue. Although the arrangements were made, politics dictated that the promotion went to a more junior officer. Fairfax, in anger, prepared to leave the service in when Prince George, then the Lord High Admiral, intervened and obtained for Fairfax a rear admiralship with half-pay benefits according to the position Fairfax should have been given. Additionally after 20 June 1708, Fairfax was to serve on the Lord High Admiral's advisory committee. When Prince George died on 28 October 1708, ending Fairfax's appointment, the Admiral retired from the navy and switched to politics. In January 1694 Fairfax had inherited the family estates in Yorkshire upon the death of his elder brother. Fairfax served successively as member of parliament for the city of York, alderman for York, and Lord Mayor of York while managing the family estate. He died on 17 October 1725.<sup>106</sup>

The Admiralty's response to the power struggle involving two of its ships was administrative and bureaucratic. Until *Nonsuch* was captured and *Conception Prize* written off, the procedure for sending the two ships abroad had been followed. When Short was relieved of his command, a new Captain was posted. Based on the regular correspondence of Dobbins, his appointment did not hinder the ability of *Nonsuch* to perform its duty until a new captain could be sent over. Given the greater distances to and from North America, the contingencies used were acceptable to the Admiralty.

As outlined in Chapter III, what were dire problems to captains such as Fairfax (for example the drawing of credit and the necessity of obeying unsavoury characters such as Phips) were actually convenient methods of fulfilling the navy's obligations in lieu of

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<sup>106</sup> "Fairfax, Robert," *Dictionary of National Biography Volume VI*, 1002-1004.

overseas command centres. The Admiralty dutifully passed on copies of the New England correspondence to the Lords of Trade so that the situation could be properly assessed and information passed on to the Privy Council. Any non-ship problems could be assessed from that bureaucratic end. Thanks to this procedure, more information survives on the Phips affair than would normally be the case as the captains' correspondence does not survive between 1689 and 1698.

That the behaviour of those involved did not seriously disrupt navy business is indicated by following their continued careers. Dobbins never made captain as he had hoped, but was rewarded with a comfortable promotion. Short, in spite his shortcomings and misfortune, did not fare badly. Although never rising above captaincy of a fifth rate, he was in employment until he died. Fairfax meanwhile, had his commission to the *Pembroke* confirmed upon his writing to the Admiralty. Whatever the reason, the Admiralty did not object to Fairfax bringing back the newer *Pembroke* and leaving *Conception Prize* for the time being. Although Fairfax felt sorry for himself being stuck in what he perceived as an impolite backwater, it did not hinder his progress in the navy.

Had there been outright mutiny (even by the more temperate eighteenth-century definition as disobedience to address grievance) on board the *Nonsuch*, or had *Conception Prize's* crew been starving, then the Admiralty might have been forced to undertake more serious and direct action. Such action would be typified by the court martial initiated when *Nonsuch* was captured while under Captain Taylor. Yet even courts martial in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were not exclusively media for determining guilt but boards of inquiry for the collection of information. Some officers welcomed a court



martial as a forum for publicly explaining their actions.<sup>107</sup> Although crew members of the *Nonsuch* were found negligent in their defence against the French warship, the very next court martial concluded differently. Captain Vaughn and the company of the *Dartmouth* were attacked and captured by two French men-of-war off Scilly on 4 February 1695. All officers and men were acquitted of cowardice or negligence.<sup>108</sup>

Although the incidents in New England between 1692 and 1694 clearly fall within the realm of negotiated authorities, there is first the issue of transfer of authority. The Crown, and Admiralty, transferred their right of authority over their ships to the colonial administration. Since New England had recently reverted back to Royal government, this transfer would be relatively straightforward. Robert Fairfax demonstrated that he understood the transfer of authority and followed the orders from Phips as far as he could. All of Fairfax's apparent demonstrations of independence, returning against orders from Pemaquid, standing on Short's behalf, pestering Phips for a survey and even confiscating the banners of the *Swan*, were all within the rights of a captain to ensure the cohesiveness of his command.

Fairfax's interpretation of his orders dictated that he could not arbitrarily choose when to obey and disobey. However, Fairfax had the luxury of a solid crew and his family's estate to fall back upon. Short and Phips were alike in that any chances of upward mobility would be the result of their own actions, with no safety net. Short desired Phips' patronage to gain increased income while Phips needed the labour power of Short's

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<sup>107</sup> Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 187.

<sup>108</sup> PRO ADM 1/5255, Courts Martial, 24 May 1695.

crew as he had spare means of generating his own patronage and influence. Unfortunately for Short, his personality likely rendered his crew unsympathetic to his ambitions and more attuned to their own. That the warrant officers so easily supported Phips and abandoned Lieutenant Hoare is just as much the result of the weak bond between the crew as it is a reflection of personal ambition.

Phips, although not publicly, would have had to recognise the negotiation of authority with his captains. After all, the governor was dealing with two heavily armed vessels. Otherwise, *Conception Prize* would not have posed a problem. The fact that Phips employed two very different strategies in attempts to subvert each captain testified to this. Phips understood his own mandate; he could test the limits of his authority, but could not arbitrarily employ it. Short was easier to deal with because the tarpaulin sea captain and the colonial projector were both cut from the same opportunistic and para-legal cloth. Short's entering into agreement with Phips meant that the navy captain gave up some of his rights, allowing Phips to push his gubernatorial power over *Nonsuch* to the limit.

Questions still remain as to what authority sanctioned the transfer of Fairfax or whether Admiral Wheeler, Phips or Fairfax even broached the subject as the arrangement would have been satisfactory to all. If it was true that Wheeler was apprehensive about acting in defence of Richard Short, then it is possible that only with Phips' consent that could Fairfax had made the clean escape that he did. Also, who represented the higher authority in Fairfax's eyes? Was it the Admiral, who characterised a clear chain of navy authority, or Phips, the authority mentioned in Fairfax's orders? Phips' premature death

hinders a conclusive answer to these questions, as any abuse of his mandate over control of naval vessels would have emerged during his trial.

What can be concluded is that the process of sending a warship to New England, and the interaction with local authority, is a more complicated process than has sometimes been predicted. Douglas Leach, in an effort to demonstrate connections between the dysfunctional behaviour of arrogant British military officers and the emergence of an American identity, diluted the Phips- Short affair into the clash of an arrogant officer and avenging governor. In the end the Royal Navy was humiliated by the beating and imprisonment of one of its captains. While Leach acknowledged that affronts to dignity and honour ran both ways, he argued that officers such as Short represented a type of behaviour that was offensive to colonials.<sup>109</sup> The mechanical response of the Admiralty to Short's actions however, suggest they were far from humiliated, and the complex interrelations between captain and governor far from simple.

By exploring naval officers and their crews within a wider Atlantic realm, the regularity of stationing ships to New England suggests that issues such as duty and behaviour in North America need expansion. As Baker and Reid argue, the issues surrounding Sir William Phips, including those with Short and Fairfax, demonstrated underlying transatlantic imperial overtones despite the localised sequence of events.<sup>110</sup> Although this case study is in itself localised, New England was but one part of a system of naval deployment. In order to determine a broader impact, an overview of all ships

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<sup>109</sup> Leach, *Roots of Conflict*, 140-41

<sup>110</sup> Baker and Reid, *The New England Knight*, xvii.

stationed in North America is desirable. Suffice to say, once *Nonsuch* and *Conception Prize* were finished at Boston, other ships were sent in their place. On 1 September 1694 the Admiralty dispatched the fifth rate *Sorlings* and the sixth rate *Newport* to New England in relief, starting the process over.<sup>111</sup> This serves as a reminder that the deployment of ships to station represented more than a forum for domestic power struggles. These two ships faced a different set of circumstances as they encountered D'Iberville's squadron in the Bay of Fundy in July of 1696. *Newport* was captured.<sup>112</sup> Events such as these require elaboration if a true indication of transatlantic naval deployment are to be adequately analysed. The next chapter, although another case study, suggests how ships within the same naval infrastructure could encounter an entirely different set of circumstances.

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<sup>111</sup> ADM 8/3, 1 September 1694.

<sup>112</sup> Williams, *Father Baudoin's War*, 17-18.

## CHAPTER V

### THE NEWFOUNDLAND CONVOY, 1711

By 1689 the English had been fishing off Newfoundland for over 200 years.<sup>1</sup> The fishery was central to England's economy by the end of the seventeenth century and it is the dominant context for Newfoundland history both as it pertains to the Atlantic World and as a settled colony.<sup>2</sup> Newfoundland during the early modern period is considered unique. Its place within the English Atlantic is often described as an arm of Europe as the length of travel in both time and distance was shorter than to most other places in North America.<sup>3</sup> Merchants and fishing ships were absolved from the regulation of the Navigation Acts stipulating that all colonial goods required transport in English ships redirected through England. Fish could be transported directly to European markets through the Iberian peninsula thereby reducing the chances of spoilage.<sup>4</sup>

Settlement on Newfoundland was also unique. Mercantile and political forces prevented the establishment of Newfoundland as a colony proper in the interest of preserving the English fishing economy and the "nursery for seamen" it was believed to have fostered. By the late seventeenth century it was admitted that settlement to Newfoundland could not be stopped. It was even deemed necessary for maintaining a

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<sup>1</sup> Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland, 1577-1660* (Toronto: U. of Toronto Press, 1969), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland*, 7-11.

<sup>3</sup> Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 82.

<sup>4</sup> Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade*, 27.

presence on the island. However, permanent settlement with colony status was not to be encouraged.<sup>5</sup>

War and the convoy system disrupted the fishery. It compressed the fishing season to coincide with convoy departures and affected prices by forcing ships to sail and sell together.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, poor seasons due to fluctuating codfish migratory patterns helped shrink the industry between 1689 and 1713. But it did not stop. As French privateering flowed across the Atlantic, increased naval coverage was given to all stages of the fishing convoy. The allocation of greater resources was originally met with resistance from the Admiralty. But by the end of the War of the Spanish Succession the convoy for the Newfoundland fishing fleets had roughly doubled since 1689, from an average of three to six warships.<sup>7</sup>

Although Newfoundland convoys were decided in the same fashion as any other, the status of Newfoundland gave them distinct operational parameters. Ships going to Newfoundland would not have close access to either bases, colonial governments, or naval fleets, and therefore required orders more specific than would otherwise be the case. As with all convoys, the ships going to Newfoundland were obliged to provide services to any ships going their way. But the protection of trade was of paramount importance. Specific to Newfoundland were instructions not only to ensure the safety of the fishing fleet but also to defend the inhabitants and facilities on shore against

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<sup>5</sup> Reid, "Imperial Intrusions," 85.

<sup>6</sup> Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 110.

<sup>7</sup> See ADM 8/3, 1 August 1692 and ADM 8/11, 1 August 1711; Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 51; Steele, *Politics of Colonial Policy*, 101-02.

deprivations at the hands of the French.

The typical Newfoundland fishing fleet required fishing ships to travel to the banks, salt ships going to Portugal and Spain (depending on who was aligned with whom) and then to Newfoundland, and sack ships from England to load and transport fish. Finally two separate sets of convoys were required to escort all ships back to Europe. One convoy took the fishing vessels directly back to England. The second ferried the sack ships to Spain and Portugal in order to sell and trade the fish. Warships remained with the sack fleet until it was ready to set sail for England.

This chapter will reconstruct the Newfoundland fishing convoy for the 1711 fishing season from the perspective of the warships sent as convoy, rather than from those of the fishermen, merchants and planters. As aspects of the preparation and voyage across the Atlantic Ocean have been outlined in Chapter III, the discussion will focus more closely on activities in Newfoundland and the return leg of the convoy. While this chapter should reconfirm concepts of special status for Newfoundland, it is intended to highlight the transatlantic context of naval vessels at a place that was close to the North American mainland as well as to Europe.

The documents left by naval officers have been used for anecdotal evidence in broad examinations of the Newfoundland fishery, including political and economic aspects, the plight of those who chose residence in Newfoundland, and wider considerations of fishing convoys. In order to explore the size of the fishery, Patrick Crowhurst draws on the correspondence of Captain (later knight and admiral) Stafford Fairborne during his 1700 convoy to Newfoundland while commanding the fourth rate

*Tilbury*.<sup>8</sup> C. Grant Head employs a naval captain's log from 1693 to demonstrate the hurried activity within a Newfoundland fishing harbour.<sup>9</sup> Yet rarely are the dynamics of a naval convoy broken down for their own importance. Ian K. Steele's essential study, *The English Atlantic*, devotes half of a chapter to Newfoundland between 1675 and 1740 but has little to say concerning the presence of convoying warships. Steele's primary interest is in communications and the transatlantic transfer of news. Warships, therefore, beyond their important role as arbiters of power and representation of central authority, operated under the same sailing parameters as did merchant vessels and required no further elaboration.<sup>10</sup>

The 1711 convoy consisted of the third rate *Warspight* (Josiah Crowe); the fourth rate *Warwick* (Henry Partington); a larger fifth rate, *Portsmouth* (Thomas Man); two fifth rates, *Milford* (John Goodall) and *Arundell* (Andrew Douglas); and a sixth rate, *Seaford* (Thomas Davers). The total number of men on board was 1280.<sup>11</sup> The fishery for that year, based on Captain Crowe's final report, totalled 65 fishing ships, 55 sack ships, and 10 ships from mainland North America, totalling 3137 persons. The resident population of Newfoundland that year consisted of 1925 men, 190 women, and 278 children.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Crowhurst, 112, note 8. The reference cited is PRO ADM 1/1776, Fairborne to Admiralty, 13 September 1700.

<sup>9</sup> Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 8-9, note 26. The log used is that of the *Reserve* (Thomas Crawley).

<sup>10</sup> Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 78-85.

<sup>11</sup> PRO ADM 8/11, 1710-11, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> CO 194/5, Crowe to Board of Trade, 31 Oct. 1711, 25.



The orders to go to Newfoundland were issued well in advance. Although the van of the convoy would not clear English waters until the middle of April 1711, the first orders were issued in February. This was to give the warships as much time to prepare as could be spared. The convoy would be sent across in four waves. *Portsmouth* was to escort the first collection of fishing ships ready for convoy.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, *Warwick* was to escort the salt ships from England to Portugal and then to Newfoundland.<sup>14</sup> *Milford* and *Arundell* were to escort the second batch of fishing ships.<sup>15</sup> *Warspight* and *Seaford* were to escort the sack ships to Newfoundland at the end of the fishing season. When the season's catch was loaded, *Milford*, *Arundell* and *Seaford* were to convoy all ships going directly back to England. Concurrently, *Warspight*, *Warwick* and *Portsmouth* would convoy the trade to Portugal and then back to England.<sup>16</sup>

All ships with the exception of *Arundell* and *Seaford* were given extensive orders. Captain Douglas was merely ordered to obey the senior officer at the scene.<sup>17</sup> Captain Davers received similar orders except that the small ship was required to take on board Jacob Rice, chaplain to the garrison, and his four servants. Davers was instructed not to provide them with any provisions unless payment was given. Additionally, two

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<sup>13</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Man, 3 February 1711, 43-46.

<sup>14</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Partington, 5 March 1711, 160-63.

<sup>15</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Goodall, 21 March 1711, 230-32

<sup>16</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711, 516-21.

<sup>17</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Orders to Captain Douglas, 21 March 1711.

gentlemen from Moscow were to be received on board *Seaford*.<sup>18</sup> The reason for their voyage may have been related to the Russian practise of sending officers in training on board foreign ships.<sup>19</sup> Although all captains knew of their pending voyage to Newfoundland, Captain Man was the first to receive his sailing orders. On 3 February 1711 Man was to make his ship ready and get under way as soon as he was able. *Portsmouth* was to sail to Milford Haven and collect the fishing ships from Milford, Bideford, and Barnstable, sending notice of his arrival ahead of him. *Portsmouth* was also to convoy vessels from any other Channel port desiring an escort. Man's orders are representative of the instructions given to ships going to Newfoundland passed down from the last war, with some notable exceptions.<sup>20</sup>

On 29 May 1693 orders were written out for Captain Thomas Crawley of the fourth rate *Reserve*. Crawley had been on the previous year's Newfoundland convoy and *Reserve* was to be sent directly back following a refit (see Chapter III). The orders written out to both Crawley and, eighteen years later, to Man contain frequently identical passages concerning the operation of their ships while in Newfoundland. Prominent instructions concerned the safe transfer and protection of trade and defence of any harbours in Newfoundland. The ships were not to transport any seaman or other persons unless part of the ship's company or ordered to do so. Warships were not to bring on board any fish "either by way of merchandise, freight or otherwise except what shall be

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<sup>18</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Orders to Captain Davers, 30 June 1711, 606, 612.

<sup>19</sup> Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, 140.

<sup>20</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Man, 3 February 1711, 43-46.

for your own use or spending.” Finally, both Crawley and Man were ordered to “put the ship’s company under your command to short allowance of victuals of six to four men’s allowance, or otherwise as the necessity of the service shall require.” The seamen would have their pay adjusted accordingly.<sup>21</sup>

An important difference between the orders to Crawley and Man reflected the changing nature of convoy duty in Newfoundland between 1689 and 1713. Crawley was granted permission to seek out and destroy any enemy ships and facilities he came across so long as such action did not endanger the fishing fleet or harbours. For most of this period Newfoundland was the scene of constant raiding. D’Iberville’s devastating attack in 1696 and Norris’s stand-off with the Marquis de Nesmond a year later were the most visible demonstrations of how vulnerable Newfoundland could be. But these significant attacks were unusual maritime events within a Newfoundland context. Most raiding came overland in the form of small plundering parties. Wartime deprivations kept French attacks small and forced the British into a defensive strategy. The circumstances surrounding 1711 convoy reflected the impact of such raiding. At the end of December 1708 the French had captured St. John’s and deported the garrison with only 160 men from Plaisance.<sup>22</sup> In 1710 a daring raid by French seamen using stealth and bluff captured the sixth rate *Valuer* while at rest in Carbonear.<sup>23</sup>

Permission to attack the enemy was not present in Man’s orders. It should be

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<sup>21</sup> PRO ADM 2/11, Instructions to Captain Crawley, 29 May 1693, 476-480.

<sup>22</sup> Reid, “Imperial Intrusions, 90.

<sup>23</sup> Hepper, *British Warship Losses in the Age of Sail*, 29.

noted though, that Man was not convoy commodore while Crawley was; both captains were merely the first to be sent across. The 1711 convoy commodore, Captain Crowe, did receive permission to attack the enemy when he arrived, but only within specific parameters. Crowe was given the standard order to protect the fishery and:

...if you shall have intelligence that the enemy have any ships of war in the Ports of Newfoundland, you are not only to consider with the Masters of the ships what measures may be best taken to secure yourself & them but with the Captains of the ships you command how you may best attack the enemy & ships (if you shall be strong enough to proceed accordingly).<sup>24</sup>

Again the language used is of a slightly more cautious tone than similar instructions issued to Crawley. Crawley was ordered to:

...govern your self accordingly in the defence & safeguard of their Maj. subjects & their ships under your care, proceeding according to your direction in opposing or making any attempts against the French whether at sea, or in any of the Harbours of Newfoundland, either by taking burning or destroying any of the ships or forts as it shall lie in your power, so as nevertheless you do not improperly expose their Maj. ships of war nor any of the vessels of their Maj. subjects under your convoy.<sup>25</sup>

Captain Crowe, although last to leave for Newfoundland, was already well-informed of the details surrounding his assignment. Choosing *Warspight* for this duty was unusual, in that it was one of the few instances where a ship larger than a fourth rate was sent to North America other than to the Caribbean or within a specific expedition. Although the sources consulted at present do not specifically state why a larger ship was

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<sup>24</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711, 517-18.

<sup>25</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crawley, 29 May 1693, 477-78.

sent to Newfoundland, some reasons can be surmised. The decision may have been a simple case of availability. Yet other factors existed that suggest *Warspight* was sent for a distinct purpose.

Strengthening the next year's convoy would help prevent a repeat of the *Valeur* incident. Another consideration was the Walker expedition to attack Quebec in 1711. Despite the secrecy surrounding the operation and its distinctive circumstances, Crowe and all other captains travelling to North America were given sealed orders to assist Walker in any way possible.<sup>26</sup> However, it is important to note that the Navy Board qualified these instructions so to prevent the ships from neglecting their original assignments.<sup>27</sup> Similar orders were dispatched to station ships on the mainland.<sup>28</sup> That a third rate was dispatched to provide greater coverage on the homeward leg of the convoy could be another consideration. Crowe's instructions mentioned some political troubles concerning fears that some Portuguese port cities would switch their allegiance over to Spain. If this proved to be the case, the convoys were to use caution and divert the fish to friendly entrepôts.<sup>29</sup> Although plausible, this cannot be judged the sole reason for *Warspight*'s dispatch, as the coast of Portugal was already an area of heavy naval traffic.

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<sup>26</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Orders to Captain Crowe, 12 June 1711, 554. The orders were sent by packet but it was required to return to the Downs. Subsequently the orders were sent express to Plymouth and Portsmouth on 15 and 16 May respectively. The package was sealed and written upon it was: "Not to be opened till you come to Newfoundland."

<sup>27</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Orders to Admiral Walker, 16 June 1711, 553.

<sup>28</sup> See et.al. PRO ADM 2/43, Orders to Captain Smith, 12 June 1711, 555. Duplicate orders were sent abroad on board the sixth rate *Squirrel*, acting as packet.

<sup>29</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711, 519.

An additional argument for why *Warspight* was sent might be the political nature of the 1711 convoy. Crowe's duties were not much different from those of other senior officers going to Newfoundland. The commodore received two sets of instructions, one from the Admiralty for overseeing the warships under his command and another from the Board of Trade. The latter was a series of questions that instructed the commodore to report on the state of the fisheries and inhabitants of Newfoundland and to punish any violations of the law. These extensive reports frequently ended up in the Board of Trade Journals, are easily accessible, and have been used to outline the nature of life and work in early modern Newfoundland.<sup>30</sup>

In 1711 the Crown demonstrated a greater concern than usual over the continued violation of fishing regulations. Inquiries on the state of Newfoundland were expressed through Secretary of State Lord Dartmouth. Based on previous information collected by the Board of Trade, Dartmouth pointed out continued violation of the laws governing conduct at Newfoundland and suggested the commodore of the pending convoy be granted a commission to command on land as well as in the harbours. The commodore would "be fully empowered thereby to redress and punish all such abuses or offences as shall be committed at Newfoundland contrary to the said act."<sup>31</sup> Sending a more senior officer in a larger ship would add weight to the land commission.

This did not alter significantly role the already played by captains in Newfoundland but it did lend an air of importance recognised by Josiah Crowe. Whether

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<sup>30</sup> Reid, "Imperial Intrusions," 93.

<sup>31</sup> PRO ADM 1/4094, Dartmouth to Admiralty, 19 December 1710.

or not Crowe had inside information on the organisation of the 1711 convoy, he used this opportunity to make himself more attractive for promotion and half-pay benefits.

Crowe's career originally flourished thanks to the same need for captains that allowed Richard Short and Robert Fairfax to achieve commands. The consequences of naval expansion created a glut affecting further opportunities for advancement by the War of the Spanish Succession. Officers not able to rely on connections, as Fairfax ultimately had done, were at the mercy of a system requiring highly skilled officers and men to perform duties that history (and indeed the officers and men themselves) deemed mundane and cursory.

Crowe had been promoted from lieutenant and made captain of the *St. Paul* fireship on 5 July 1691.<sup>32</sup> Twenty years and several commands later he was captain of the third rate *Warspight*. The 1711 convoy would not be Captain Crowe's first assignment abroad. As captain of the fourth rate *Norwich*, Crowe was listed as accompanying a Virginia and Maryland convoy in 1695.<sup>33</sup> In 1700, when Crowe was captain of the *Arundell*, he was sent on station to New England.<sup>34</sup> Crowe shared the belief demonstrated earlier by Robert Fairfax that service overseas took officers out of contention for promotion as they were unable to place applications while away from England. In

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<sup>32</sup> PRO ADM 7/549, List of Ships and Captains, 1651-1737; Syrett and Dinardo, *The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy*, entry for "Crowe, Josiah."

<sup>33</sup> PRO ADM 8/3, 1 January 1695.

<sup>34</sup> PRO ADM 7/550a, Station of Ships, 1696-1714, January 1700, The reduction in rate was not a demotion but probably reflected peacetime demobilisation.

Crowe's mind, his considerable service to America and elsewhere kept him back.<sup>35</sup>

Prior to receiving orders for Newfoundland, Crowe had written a memorial to the Admiralty during a stay in London reminding their Lordships of his 22 years service as an officer and of a promise made several years prior for preferment at the hands of the Queen and the Lord High Admiral following introductions initiated by Admiral Sir George Rook. Captain Crowe was promised consideration should any flag posting become available. According to Crowe, the Earl of Pembroke (Lord High Admiral following the death of Prince George), afterward upheld the promise which was reiterated once more two and a half years later following a petition to the Queen. Crowe had heard that several flag positions had been filled while he was on other duties and that at the time of writing there was a position open for Rear Admiral of the White.<sup>36</sup> When orders written on 14 February 1711 for the Warspight to commence outfitting for Newfoundland, Crowe no doubt knew he would not get the promotion.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, it did not deter him from making the best of the situation.

Although Crowe did not receive sailing instructions until 1 June 1711, he was aware that he would be in command of a body of ships totalling six. Crowe appealed to the Admiralty to grant him "a distinct commission as Commander in Chief of the Squadron." The tone of a letter dated 4 April 1711 demonstrates some awareness of naval politics and procedures in contrast to Crowe's clean record as an officer, his

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<sup>35</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 11 April 1712.

<sup>36</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Memorial of Captain Crowe, 9 March 1711.

<sup>37</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Orders to Captain Crowe, 14 February 1711, 89.



“advanced age” and his “misfortune of being postponed in the navy.” Captain Crowe concluded by reminding the Lords Commissioners that precedents existed for such a distinction and closed the letter with the sentence: “I humbly hope they won’t deny me that favour for my encouragement, after all my misfortune.”<sup>38</sup> Not only was Crowe granted the title Commander in Chief of the Forts and Garrisons of Newfoundland, but, corresponding to the heightened Crown interest in the convoy, he was given a royal warrant for this office.<sup>39</sup>

The term Commander in Chief was freely used by the senior officer in Newfoundland regardless of Royal warrant. There was no colonial government in Newfoundland prior to 1729 and the rudimentary admiral system was the closest thing to official, organised administration. The first fishing vessel to arrive in any harbour was declared admiral and retained certain fishing privileges but also the responsibility of dispute arbitration. The captain of the second vessel was made vice admiral and the title of rear admiral was vested upon the shoulders of the third captain. By the end of the seventeenth century it was commonly believed that this format was corrupt and dysfunctional. The fishing admirals themselves were considered to be as delinquent as those they oversaw.<sup>40</sup> Any navy ships in harbour were viewed as senior and expected treatment as such, while the commodore of the convoy presided over a general court that resolved conflicts and dictated policy. In return fishing ships looked to the navy for

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<sup>38</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 4 April 1711.

<sup>39</sup> PRO CO 324/32, Her Majesty’s Instructions for Captain Josiah Crowe, 17 April 1711.

<sup>40</sup> Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland*, 97.

protection against deprivations. The Admiralty ordered its convoy captains to act in conjunction with the various fishing admirals to ensure smooth operations.<sup>41</sup>

Crowe was not the only captain to call himself Commander in Chief on this convoy. Captain John Goodall of the *Milford* employed a similar term while at St. John's prior to the arrival of the *Warspight*.<sup>42</sup> Such usage may have been a symbolic assertion of authority by Goodall over his harbour. It may also have been a ruse, as the humble captain found himself the chief correspondent with the French governor at Plaisance, Phillip de Pastour de Costebelle. Although more senior officers were present, they were away at other harbours. Goodall, like Crowe, was seeking promotion and perhaps thought such grandiose displays of responsibility would aid his efforts. While Crowe was composing his memorial to the Admiralty, Goodall had already written to enquire about advancement. Gaining intelligence that another captain, Hughs of the fourth rate *Winchester*, was soon to receive a third rate, Goodall requested that he be given the vacant ship. He cited that there were "above forty younger Captains then myself & that many of them have obtained commands of fourth rates."<sup>43</sup> Goodall would receive his orders for Newfoundland shortly after his correspondence of 1 March 1711, but it did not prevented him from reminding the Admiralty of its promise of a larger command.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711, 517.

<sup>42</sup> See PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Captains Syms and Osbourne, 22 July 1711. When issuing orders to privateers, Goodall called himself "Commander of Her Maj. Ship *Milford* & Commander in Chief of Her Maj. Fort & Plantations in and Adjacent to St. John's."

<sup>43</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 1 March 1711.

<sup>44</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 24 April 1711

By 17 March Captain Man and the *Portsmouth* had made their way to Milford Haven after sailing along the channel. While there, Man sent dispatches to the necessary ports to inform of his presence at Milford.<sup>45</sup> On 15 April *Portsmouth* sailed with a coastal convoy of 70 ships until dark before separating with 23 ships for Newfoundland. *Portsmouth* sighted and spoke with *Milford* and *Arundell* and 16 sail of merchant ships on 3 June. The convoy reached Ferryland on 7 June where they found a small Bideford ship and a privateer.<sup>46</sup>

Captain Goodall was ordered to take all ships then at Spithead under convoy and send word to the western ports of Poole, Weymouth, Exmouth (Exeter), Dartmouth, Topsham, Plymouth, and Falmouth that *Milford* and *Arundell* would stop in and take any ships desiring convoy. Given favourable weather, Goodall was to proceed as quickly as possible. Once Newfoundland was reached the fishing ships were to be escorted to the harbours of St. John's, Ferryland, Conception Bay, Trinity Bay or any other so desired. Goodall was to send the *Arundell* to Trinity Harbour and then see to the defence of the fishing fleet at St. John's.<sup>47</sup>

Captain Douglas was simply ordered to obey Captain Goodall.<sup>48</sup> The brief instructions would not be unusual were it not for the career of Andrew Douglas. Douglas should have held seniority to everyone on the convoy except Josiah Crowe (and here only

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<sup>45</sup> PRO ADM 1/2094, Man to Admiralty, 17 March 1711.

<sup>46</sup> PRO ADM 51/672, pt.11, Log of *Portsmouth*, 15 April-7 June 1711.

<sup>47</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Goodall, 21 March 1711, 230-31.

<sup>48</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Orders to Captain Douglas, 21 March 1711, 234.

by one month). In 1689 Douglas had been master of a ship laden with stores and provisions destined for the relief of Londonderry, then besieged by the Jacobites. Accompanied by a warship, Douglas and another merchant captain volunteered to crash a boom placed across the river. Under heavy fire, both ships eventually made it through. The other captain was killed in the process but Douglas survived to be celebrated a hero. This led Douglas to an appointment as commander of a navy sloop and subsequently a captaincy on 31 August 1691.<sup>49</sup>

Douglas commanded four smaller rates throughout the Nine Years War until finally rendered unemployed by peace. Persistent letter-writing to the Admiralty secured command of the *Norwich* in February 1701. In July 1702 Douglas was sent convoy to Jamaica and was senior officer until returning with a homeward bound convoy in July 1704. Upon return to England, Douglas began petitioning for promotion. He was instead court martialled in December 1704 for illegal trading, selling of stores, extorting from the men when hiring them out to merchant ships, and general harsh treatment of the ship's crew. Douglas was convicted and cashiered but reinstated and given the *Arundell* on 25 January 1710 after the case was reopened based on new evidence. Douglas was again court martialled on 15 December 1712 for abusive language and the undeserving confinement of officers. Douglas was fined three month's wages but his lieutenant was fined six month's wages for provoking him. Douglas served until October 1715 before

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<sup>49</sup> "Douglas, Andrew," *Dictionary of National Biography, Volume V*, op. cit., 1164-65.

going on half-pay and dying in 1725.<sup>50</sup>

Goodall was briefly diverted to convoy transport ships to Ostend, returning on 8 April to Portsmouth.<sup>51</sup> *Milford* and *Arundell* spent the remainder of April collecting trade from ports along the Channel. For better protection, the Newfoundland ships fell in with the Straits (Mediterranean) and West India convoys until departing from them on 1 May when the collected fleet cleared the Lizard into the open sea. *Milford* and *Arundell* had in their company 26 merchant ships. When the convoy entered Newfoundland waters on 1 June 18 fishing ships remained. On 7 June *Milford* anchored in Bay of Bulls and was in St. John's three days later. *Arundell* departed from Bay of Bulls taking ships to Carbonear and Bonavista before arriving in Trinity Harbour.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, the orders had come through to Captain Partington on 5 March 1711. Henry Partington had gone convoy to Newfoundland once before in 1705 and would be senior officer for most of the time spent in Newfoundland.<sup>53</sup> *Warwick* was to take the salt ships and any merchant vessels desiring convoy to Lisbon where the former would load salt for curing fish. Partington had taken command of the *Warwick* on 9 January and spent until 25 March preparing to go to sea. *Warwick* was a brand-new ship and the process of making ready was similar to a refit. A new crew had to be entered into the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. The *Dictionary of National Biography* does not mention Douglas' voyage to Newfoundland but notes *Arundell*'s service in the North Sea, "and stretching as far as Gottenburg with convoy."

<sup>51</sup> PRO ADM 51/606, pt. 1, Log of *Milford*, 1-8 April 1711.

<sup>52</sup> PRO ADM 51/606, pt. 1, Log of *Milford*, 16 April-11 June 1711; PRO ADM 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 7-10 September 1711;

<sup>53</sup> PRO ADM 7/550a, Lists of Ships and Stations, January 1705. Partington commanded the fourth rate *Anglesea*.

books, then stores, masts, rigging, ballast, guns, powder, provisions, and water.<sup>54</sup> On 15 April *Warwick* sailed from Spithead with 12 merchant ships in convoy, picking up 6 more in Dartmouth. On 20 April, while anchored at Plymouth, 15 men deserted by taking one of *Warwick*'s boats and smashing it in upon escape.<sup>55</sup> It was not unusual for men to desert upon discovering they were bound overseas. Also, the incentive to run was greater on board an untested ship with unfamiliar ship mates and officers.<sup>56</sup> On 27 April, *Warwick* set sail for Lisbon with 6 merchant ships and the next day fell into company with a Dutch convoy. *Warwick* parted from the Dutch on the fifth and reached Lisbon on 23 May. At six in the morning of 28 May, *Warwick* departed from Portugal with 16 ships and sighted Cape St. Francis in Newfoundland with 10 merchant ships on 5 July 1711.<sup>57</sup>

Upon his arrival at St. John's, Goodall was given a packet of letters by the civilian caretaker (called governor) of the fort, John Collins. The letters made up the most recent correspondence from Governor Costebelle at Plaisance. Although not senior officer in Newfoundland, Goodall felt obliged to respond and establish a correspondence as St. John's was clearly the centre of communications. The subject of the initial letters included the cessation of privateering activities and the needless plundering of fishermen, bad debts incurred from ransoms issued at the capture of St. John's in 1708, the alleged murder of an English inhabitant, prisoners, and the ill treatment of a French crew by a

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<sup>54</sup> PRO ADM 51/1072, pt.8, Log of *Warwick*, 9 January-25 March 1711. Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List*, 35. Lyon notes that *Warwick*'s launch date was 9 November 1711. This perhaps should be 1710.

<sup>55</sup> PRO ADM 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 20 March 1711.

<sup>56</sup> Rodger, *The Wooden World*, 196.

<sup>57</sup> PRO ADM 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 27 April- 5- July 1711.

privateer captain. However, what would come to be the principal topic of subsequent discussion between the French governor and the British captain would concern repatriation of prisoners.

Ostensibly, Costebelle dealt with what appeared to be local business as a matter of courtesy. In actuality, the letters, although sent to governor of the fort (Collins) were designed to be presented to the convoy commodore. Costebelle desired to know the course that the year's convoy would take in hopes of easing pressure on the beleaguered French garrison. Costebelle was well informed by spies and deserters as to the lack of a garrison in Newfoundland and the approximate number of ships forming the guard. He was reasonably sure there was to be no offensive against Plaisance despite knowledge of the Canada invasion. In fact, despite being hemmed in by privateers, two Irish deserters testified that the inhabitants of British Newfoundland felt more threatened by Plaisance than vice-versa. Unfortunately, Plaisance could only rely on a force of about four privateers and no navy ships to counter British cruising.<sup>58</sup>

The French governor pleaded to the British that excessive plundering by privateers ran counter to the public good. The governor gave his word that if French fishermen were left to their business then the British along the Renewes and Bay Bulls shore would be left in peace as well. A warning was issued that if the British insisted on continued privateering, then they would be answered in kind. Tied closely to the issue of privateering was that of the prisoners generated by such actions. It was necessary to keep foreign subjects for as little time as possible to ease their consumption of scarce

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<sup>58</sup> Graham, *The Walker Expedition to Quebec*, 244-45, 248.

provisions. Although this was not stated to the British, fishermen stripped of their belongings and repatriated to Plaisance were as much a burden to the outpost's slim cache of provisions as prisoners of war.<sup>59</sup> Costebelle claimed a lack of shallops for local coasting as the reason for the slow repatriation of prisoners lately, but mentioned he had already released approximately 15 who desired transport to Boston rather than back to England or British Newfoundland.<sup>60</sup>

Goodall made the effort to retrieve information on the subjects of which Costebelle wrote, and replied to them. Goodall's tone was diplomatic but firm. Upon consultation with the fishing captains at St. John's, it was confirmed that the repatriation of French prisoners to Plaisance as quickly as possible would be in the common good.<sup>61</sup> Goodall stated that the exchange of prisoners would continue as always. His response itself was sent in a shallop manned by French prisoners. However, the sending of prisoners belonging at Newfoundland ports to Boston ran counter to the expressed wishes of the British government. As far as privateering was concerned, Goodall assured Costebelle that:

What ships in my government that may or do cruise on your coast I shall endeavour to prevent their acting such hostilities for the future as I expect the like on your side but what hostilities may be committed on the sea by ships not under my command I cannot prevent nor be answerable for them.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 241.

<sup>60</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Costebelle to Collins, 8 June 1711.

<sup>61</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Merchant Captains to Goodall, 1 July 1711.

<sup>62</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Costebelle, 24 June 1711.



Goodall's solution to the immediate problem of prisoners was an order to all captains of privateers stating that prisoners would have to be kept on board ship. This transferred the cost of feeding them over to the privateers and prevented any spies from gaining information. Two privateer captains, after taking a prize, politely petitioned Goodall that they could not afford to keep prisoners for long. This facilitated a strategy of quick repatriation and ransoming, of prisoners and prizes respectively, directly to Plaisance or Old France.<sup>63</sup> Such arrangements suited Costebelle. Despite the diplomatic dances, Costebelle felt comfortable enough with the honour of his enemies to plead for the safe return to Plaisance of his mother, a family friend, Madame Sourdenalle (sic), and his six-year-old daughter in the event of their capture.<sup>64</sup> When their ship was captured by a privateer en route to Nantes, Goodall signed a bill of safe passage and left the prize ship with enough provisions to see it to Europe.<sup>65</sup>

Goodall passed on the letters of Costebelle to Captain Man and later Captain Partington upon gaining knowledge of the latter's arrival in July. The British captains were suspicious of Costebelle, despite having captured his correspondence to French minister of the marine the Comte de Pontchartrain. As the summer progressed they could not find evidence of any French warships, and it became known that the French were short of supplies. Nevertheless, the captains were never entirely certain as to what transpired at

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<sup>63</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Syms and Osbourne to Goodall, 24 July 1711.

<sup>64</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Costebelle to Goodall, 24 July, 1711.

<sup>65</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Certificate of Passage issued by Goodall to Captain Pillet of the *Sr. Nicholla*, 2 August 1711.

Plaisance. They did not want the French to determine their strength and they did not let their guard down.<sup>66</sup>

Costebelle's intelligence had been correct in that no plans were formulated for an offensive. The attention to defence paid by British warships put a damper on any offensive activities. When the *Warwick* arrived in Trinity Bay and met the *Arundell*, Captain Partington sent boats from each ship commanded by lieutenants to scout the areas around Bay of Bulls and New Perlican for signs of the enemy.<sup>67</sup> Captain Man in Ferryland felt it necessary to send his marines on shore to act as a guard.<sup>68</sup> Despite the precautions, the reduction of privateering was never an issue, as warships benefited as much from prize-taking as did letter-of-marque ships. Temptation was suppressed by the need to be in or near the harbour of designation but the hope for prize money never diminished. Although Goodall was sincere when he promised to work to prevent undue suffering amongst fishermen and prisoners, he had no intention of curtailing privateering. When Goodall learned that he would not be promoted, but would be sent to Newfoundland, he asked the Admiralty for permission to go cruising once there. The prospect of supplementary income was considered by Goodall as compensation for being passed over.<sup>69</sup> The amount of work that awaited Goodall at St. John's, however, precluded cruising for the time being.

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<sup>66</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Man, 10 August 1711.

<sup>67</sup> PRO ADM 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 13-30 July 1711.

<sup>68</sup> PRO ADM 51/672, pt. 11, Log of *Portsmouth*, 17 June 1711.

<sup>69</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 24 April 1711.

Local merchants and fishing captains were convincing in persuading the naval captains that a threat did exist. A nervous mood faced Captain Goodall in St. John's. Despite the presence of no fewer than seven privateers cruising in and out of St. John's, there was no proper garrison and no defensive measure taken. The merchants, fishing captains and local boat keepers could spare neither time nor bodies to keep a proper watch and maintain the fort. A group of them (totalling 11 merchants and 16 captains including the Vice Admiral) petitioned Goodall on 13 June to send an officer and some men into the fort, which he did.<sup>70</sup> Goodall then initiated a series of subsequent precautions for the better defence of St. John's. Overland communication with Plaisance was prohibited. Any wandering hunters or messengers not arriving by sea were to be treated as spies.<sup>71</sup> On 23 July Goodall issued orders giving permission to the seven privateers operating out of St. John's to wear naval colours during their patrols.<sup>72</sup> The following day, Goodall issued orders to the merchant captains to send one man in five from each ship into the fort at St. John's (Fort William) in the event of an emergency to be determined by a series of signals from the *Milford*.<sup>73</sup>

Andrew Douglas also faced a frightened populace in Trinity Harbour. Douglas completed the task of seeing all merchant ships safely into whatever harbour they desired.

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<sup>70</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Petition of Merchants and Fishing Captains to Goodall, 13 June 1711; PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty 17 June 1711.

<sup>71</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Costebelle, 24 June 1711.

<sup>72</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Captains Summers, Dawson, Symes, Osbourne, Coomes, Wye, and Elton, 23 July, 1711.

<sup>73</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to All Commanders of Merchant ships, 24 July, 1711.

Upon reaching Trinity Harbour, he began to make preparations to go cruising for the protection of the fishery as were the Admiralty's orders given through Captain Goodall. Greatly fearing a French attack, the merchants and fishermen petitioned Douglas to remain in harbour as they would be otherwise "undone." Surprisingly, Douglas agreed.<sup>74</sup> That a hard sailor with an opportunistic bent such as Douglas could be persuaded not to go cruising, and forego potential prize money from the capture of French shipping, is interesting and raises questions as to motivation. The concern thus demonstrated for defending Trinity Harbour conflicts with the common perception that naval captains were usually at odds with their merchant counterparts.<sup>75</sup>

The heart of the problem for Newfoundland defence was the lack of intelligence and difficulty of local communication and support networks. The captains, unable to determine the strength of the enemy, and faced with threats of privateers and small-scale raiding, could not guarantee quick support of each other as they were spread out along the Avalon Peninsula. Although a formidable squadron when together, the convoy was forced to stretch resources to guard both harbours and the fishery. The point of departure from St. John's on the homeward bound leg of the convoy was the only instance when all six warships were in concert.

Communication beyond Newfoundland was less of a concern within the broader context. Despite its relative proximity to Europe, Newfoundland was also close by sea to the mainland of North America. Sloops from Boston routinely sailed to Newfoundland.

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<sup>74</sup> PRO ADM 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 7-10 September 1711.

<sup>75</sup> Pearsall, "The Royal Navy and Trade Protection," 115, 120.

They traded supplies for fish with the local boat keepers and then sold it to the sack ships or transported it back to New England. This trade was essential for the survival of any settlement in Newfoundland and was acknowledged as such by Captain Crowe.<sup>76</sup>

Newfoundland was also a resting place for all manner of ships travelling in the Atlantic, especially those blown off course or suffering damage. The busy environment was conducive to the transfer of news, accurate or not, and those spending the summer were probably more up to date than in other corners of the North Atlantic.<sup>77</sup> Conversely, when the Newfoundland convoy received news of trouble in Port Royal, it was possible to offer immediate assistance.

Late in July 1711, intelligence gathered from a French prize at St. John's indicated that Port Royal, captured in July 1710, had been retaken by a force of French and Natives. Goodall sent messages to the other ships and a captains consultation was held on board the *Warwick* in Caplin Bay on 8 August. It was decided that *Warwick* and *Milford* would leave immediately for New England to offer assistance while *Portsmouth* would remain at Ferryland and *Arundell* would travel back to Trinity Bay.<sup>78</sup> One of Costebelle's officers, a Monsieur St. Michell, who had recently carried messages to St. John's, including Costebelle's plea for his family, was being housed on board the *Milford*. The captains had been suspicious that his arrival had been for the gathering of intelligence. Partington thought it prudent to transfer him to the *Portsmouth* and not release him until

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<sup>76</sup> CO 194/5 Crowe to Board of Trade, 31 October 1711, 22.

<sup>77</sup> Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland*, 42-43; Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 84-85.

<sup>78</sup> PRO ADM 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 7-10 September 1711.

*Milford* and *Warwick* had returned.<sup>79</sup>

A pilot was hired in Caplin Bay and *Milford* and *Warwick* set out on 10 August, sighting Cape Breton on 15 August.<sup>80</sup> Partington and Goodall met with two warships off the Gut of Canso. They spoke with the *Kingston*, part of Admiral Walker's squadron on 16 August. Captain Partington took the opportunity to deliver the correspondence captured from *Costebelle* to Admiral Walker via Captain Winder of the *Kingston*.<sup>81</sup> Another warship, *Chester*, was met and spoken to on 20 August-- it had travelled up the coast in support of the Walker expedition and was returning to its station at Boston. By 28 August *Milford* and *Warwick* reached Cape Cod and the next day were anchored in Nantasket Road.<sup>82</sup>

Once it was discovered that the intelligence was false and Port Royal was safe, the two ships used the opportunity to avail themselves of services offered by the colonial metropolis of Boston. Both ships were resupplied. *Warwick* had its masts replaced and took on bread, beer and water.<sup>83</sup> Partington also purchased a variety of items for sick crew members totalling 53 pounds, 19 shillings, and 10 pence. This list is worth describing in full. It included: 290 lbs. brown sugar, 116 lbs. each of white sugar and currents, 86 lbs. each of rice and barely, 60 lbs. raisins, and 7 lbs. tamarins. Also

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<sup>79</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Man, 10 August 1711.

<sup>80</sup> PRO ADM 1/2281, Receipt of bill from John Green to Partington, 12 September 1711; ADM 51/1072 pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 10-16 August 1711.

<sup>81</sup> Graham, ed., *The Walker Expedition to Quebec*, Partington to Walker, 16 August 1711, 238.

<sup>82</sup> PRO ADM 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 15-29 August 1711.

<sup>83</sup> PRO ADM 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 30 August-14 September 1711.

included were 15 oz. each of nutmeg, mace and cinnamon, 14 sheets, 18 saucepans, and 4 boxes.<sup>84</sup> *Milford* was taken directly into Boston where the ship was careened. This labour-intensive procedure involved stripping the whole ship then hauling it on its side to be scraped and cleaned. The whole process took ten days. *Milford*'s crew spent two more days scraping the masts and sides of the ship, coating them with rosin and tallow.<sup>85</sup>

The two ships set sail to return to Newfoundland on 15 September. On 27 September Goodall received his wish and captured a French banker. *Milford* lost touch with both *Warwick* and its prize in rough weather but managed to reach St. John's by 3 October. *Warwick* arrived two days later and *Milford*'s prize arrived on 7 October. In harbour were *Warspight* and *Seaford*. *Arundell* had just arrived, having just escorted fishing ships into St. John's that had finished up their season. On 23 August *Warspight* had entered the harbour and Commodore Crowe began to carry out his mandate. The next day Crowe sent a lieutenant and 42 men into the fort as a guard, the *Milford* having recalled its men in order to sail to Boston. On 25 August a general court was established and agreements were made to repair the church, fix an allowance for the new minister and close several taverns about St. John's.<sup>86</sup>

The *Seaford* had arrived in a leaky state and required a careening to seal the hull. Once completed, Crowe sent Captain Davers to Carbonear to act as guard and ordered Captain Douglas to send a Lieutenant and ten armed men to Bonavista to establish a

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<sup>84</sup> PRO ADM 1/2281, Receipt of bill from Henry Franklyn to Her Majesty's Ship *Warwick*, 12 September 1711.

<sup>85</sup> PRO ADM 51/606, pt.1, Log of *Milford*, 31 August-14 September 1711.

<sup>86</sup> PRO ADM 51/4387, pt. 6, Log of *Warspight*, 23-25 August 1711.

guard there.<sup>87</sup> Nothing had been heard from *Warwick* or *Milford* until a sloop from Boston informed Crowe of their whereabouts. It also became known on 26 August, via another Boston sloop, that Port Royal had not been recaptured. The so-called attack had been a skirmish and, the sloop reported, three companies of reinforcements were on the way from Boston.<sup>88</sup>

The second sloop from Boston also passed on information that *Milford* and *Warwick* had been ordered, along with the *Chester* and *Weymouth*, to return to Boston to refit and victual. *Chester*, *Warwick* and *Milford* were then to cruise the eastern coast of North America. Two other ships, the *Devonshire* and *Humber*, had been ordered by Walker to travel to Plaisance and cruise there before returning to England. These circumstances do not correspond with the logs of the *Milford* and *Warwick*, which make no mention of being ordered to do anything by representatives of the Walker squadron. This misinformation left Crowe somewhat uncertain, as he did not know where any of these ships were or which ones were returning to escort the fishing ships back to Europe. The commodore could only inform the Admiralty that he would leave for Portugal as originally ordered with whatever ships were available.<sup>89</sup>

Royal Navy ships roamed in and out of Newfoundland but their various duties precluded assistance. *Tryton's Prize* (Richard Girlington), then stationed at Virginia, had been ordered to Newfoundland with a message for the *Sapphire* or to the governor of the

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<sup>87</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 13 September 1711

<sup>88</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 28 August, 1711.

<sup>89</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 17 September 1711.



fort if the ship had not arrived. Girlington did manage to capture a French fishing ship and escorted it into St. John's before returning to Virginia.<sup>90</sup> Previously, on 9 September, the *Adventure*, carrying troops for the Walker expedition, sought shelter in St. John's with a sprung mast, while the *Burlington* arrived from Barbados with an engineer who was making rounds to fortifications within the English Atlantic.<sup>91</sup>

By Crowe's letter dated 28 September he reported to the Admiralty that he had heard of the failure of Walker's squadron and its return to England. The defeat spread fear and apprehension among the inhabitants of Newfoundland, who had already suffered a poor season due to bad weather. The delays in processing the fishery caused by the adverse conditions hindered the departure of the convoy.<sup>92</sup> Crowe used the extra time attempting to make St. John's more safe and hospitable for those having to overwinter. Crowe proposed to house all residents of St. John's, Quidi Vidi, Torbay and Petty Harbour within the fort during the winter. First, a general court was held on 22 September, turning out many of the inhabitants from tenements, storehouses and stages belonging to the fishing ships. Then, persons possessing more houses inside the fort than they inhabited were prohibited from selling or letting them out for hire. The surplus housing was to be given to those "destitute of habitations."<sup>93</sup> Subsequent general courts on 1 and 6 October were held for inhabitants of the aforesaid harbours to sign obligations

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<sup>90</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Girlington to Admiralty, 10 October 1711.

<sup>91</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 13 September 1711.

<sup>92</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 28 September 1711.

<sup>93</sup> PRO ADM 51/4387, pt.6, Log of *Warspight*, 22 September 1711.

for their housing.<sup>94</sup>

Work began on strengthening the defences at St. John's. Parties from the men-of-war were sent to cut palisades and Fort William was stocked with powder and other ordnance. Guards and patrols composed of naval personnel were deployed along the back of St. John's harbour so as "to prevent the mischiefs frequently committed by the spies of the enemy."<sup>95</sup>

The wily Captain Douglas took this opportunity to rid himself of a nuisance that had plagued him at least since leaving England. *Arundell* was in possession of six guns that proved useless as their ports could only be opened during a calm sea. Douglas wrote twice asking the Admiralty to replace them with smaller ordnance as he had spare ports on his upper deck and great cabin. On the bottom of the second letter on receipt was scribbled "To be told the Board do not think fit to give any instructions therein."<sup>96</sup> By whatever means, Douglas negotiated to transfer his surplus weaponry to Fort William for the better defence of the harbour. Douglas simultaneously performed a public service and created more space within his cramped ship. When Douglas was back in home waters he informed the Admiralty of the action, performed at Captain Crowe's orders.<sup>97</sup>

In the meantime, Captain Goodall experienced problems of a different sort upon the return of *Milford* to St. John's on 3 October. Two midshipmen, John Griffin and

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<sup>94</sup> PRO ADM 51/4387, pt. 6, Log of *Warspight*, 1, 6, October 1711.

<sup>95</sup> PRO ADM 51/4387, pt 6, Log of *Warspight*, 9, 16, and 26 October 1711.

<sup>96</sup> PRO ADM 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 11 March 1711 and 16 March 1711.

<sup>97</sup> PRO ADM 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 8 December 1711; PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 5 September 1712.

Thomas Jourden, received permission from the master (Goodall being away from the ship) to go ashore and visit some friends. Griffin and Jourden got into an argument, walked away by themselves and duelled with their swords. Griffin was killed and Jourden severely wounded. Jourden turned himself in to the officer in charge of the fort who transferred the unfortunate midshipman to *Warspight*. Crowe returned Jourden to the *Milford* to be held in custody until his fate could be decided.<sup>98</sup>

The whole incident perplexed Goodall, who had not know of any quarrel between the two and had not received any complaints. Jourden remained a prisoner during the return voyage. Upon entering Portsmouth harbour, Goodall was instructed to bring the midshipman before the mayor of Portsmouth. As there were no witnesses to the event the Admiralty hoped the mayor would secure Jourden's release. Despite two audiences, the mayor stated nothing could be done until he received instructions from the Admiralty.<sup>99</sup> Eventually, Jourden was released and was back on board *Milford* for its next assignment.<sup>100</sup>

The six warships with 73 sail of merchant vessels left St. John's on 8 November 1711 and from the beginning encountered storms and heavy seas. When *Milford*, *Arundell* and *Seaford* separated from the others they were in possession of 34 merchant sail. Although the storms tossed and separated the convoy on several occasions, Goodall was still able to make a list of the ships that remained in company and those that could

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<sup>98</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Crowe to Goodall, 3 October 1711.

<sup>99</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 7 January 1712, and 14 January 1712.

<sup>100</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Dore, 1 June 1712. Jourden's name appears on a list of men in a detail under the command of *Milford's* lieutenant, James Dore.

not. On 25 November *Milford* and *Arundell* arrived at Falmouth with 14 fishing ships. *Seaford* was not far behind. *Milford* was so leaky in its upper sections that Goodall requested an immediate refit at Portsmouth after he saw the remainder of his charges to safety.<sup>101</sup> Douglas also reported that *Arundell* was in a bad way, leaking both above and below the water line.<sup>102</sup> At least the convoy was safely back in England after only 17 days on the high seas. The sack ship convoy was not as fortunate.

Almost immediately after leaving St. John's the crew of the *Warwick* were fighting to save the ship from heavy seas. At half past three on the morning of 9 November the foremast and foretop gallant mast collapsed. An anchor was cut loose and a gun thrown overboard by the weather. Ninety minutes later the main topmast, main topgallant mast with all their yards, sails and rigging were lost. At this point they became separated from the fleet. With most of the masts and rigging gone, preparations were made to rig a jury mast, but not before having to stave in and throw the ship's longboat overboard.<sup>103</sup> *Warwick* limped into Lisbon on 8 December 1711. *Warspight* had also lost contact with *Portsmouth* and 14 sack ships. *Portsmouth* itself was also damaged during the voyage and lost 4 of the accompanying merchant ships along the way. Two were captured, one foundered and another changed course for Ireland.<sup>104</sup>

There were victualling and outfitting facilities in Portugal in addition to a Royal

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<sup>101</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 25 November 1711.

<sup>102</sup> PRO ADM 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 1 December 1711.

<sup>103</sup> PRO 51/1072, pt.8, Log of *Warwick*, 9-16 November 1711.

<sup>104</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Crowe to Admiralty, 23 December 1711.

Navy service vessel (the *Success* hagboat) in Lisbon harbour. Only one of the damaged ships could be repaired at a time and so work was begun on the mastless *Warwick*. *Portsmouth* was nevertheless able to resupply for the time being. In addition to the *Success*, a navy hulk rode in Lisbon. In order to better facilitate repairs, Crowe ordered the hagboat's commander, Captain Ramsey, to place a mast on the hulk so it could be used as a second service vessel.<sup>105</sup> Ramsey refused stating the operation was too dangerous and his ship too valuable. More to the point, Ramsey had received no written orders from the Admiralty to obey Crowe, and told the convoy commodore that the ships he had under his command were suitable for the job.<sup>106</sup>

In addition to the two disabled warships, adverse weather prevented the fishing ships from traversing the bar at Oporto, a major trading port in Portugal. All the while the convoying warships would have to patrol the coast, as privateers cruised regularly. In early February 1712, upon completion of repairs, *Warwick* and *Portsmouth* were sent to Oporto to cover the emerging merchant trade, apparently being more numerous than usual.<sup>107</sup> Fortunately, Crowe was able to secure two more escorts with the arrival of the *Solebay* and *Anglesea* at Lisbon.<sup>108</sup> The weather refused to cooperate so that Crowe in his letters to the Admiralty was forced to push ahead the projected time of departure. Originally, Crowe's instructions stipulated that *Warwick* and *Portsmouth* were to see the

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<sup>105</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 31 December 1711.

<sup>106</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Ramsey to Crowe, 1 January, 1712.

<sup>107</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 4 March 1712.

<sup>108</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 19 April 1712.

sack ships into the various Portuguese trading ports and stay only a month before returning to England.<sup>109</sup> Instead, it was 8 May before the homeward bound ships joined Crowe in Lisbon.<sup>110</sup>

On 6 May the court at Lisbon gained some ominous intelligence that a French fleet, replete with bomb vessels, fireships and transports had sailed out of Cadiz and was heading towards Lisbon. Crowe, along with the senior officer of a Dutch convoy then in port, attended the government with the British and Dutch envoys. When solicited for advise, the naval officers stated they had not heard of any French fleet and surmised that if it indeed had sailed, it was unlikely to attack Lisbon. Nevertheless, they suggested placing the defences of Lisbon in a state of readiness. The Portuguese government requested the warships in harbour do the same. As a precaution, Crowe sent out the *Solebay* to search for signs of the French fleet.<sup>111</sup>

Captain Owen of the *Solebay* reported that he could find no sign of the fleet. Nevertheless, the Portuguese court suspected that the French squadron was sailing to Brazil to attack the fleet there and petitioned for the greater part of the British and Dutch ships to break away and reinforce the Portuguese. Crowe refused. To be on the safe side, the British and Dutch convoys agreed to sail together for their mutual protection.<sup>112</sup> The joint convoy of 190 merchant ships left Lisbon on 20 May, sighting the Lizard on 18 June

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<sup>109</sup> PRO ADM 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711, 520-21.

<sup>110</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 8 May 1712.

<sup>111</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 8 May 1712.

<sup>112</sup> PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 14 May 1712.

1712.

Meanwhile, John Goodall had already refit *Milford* and had returned to Newfoundland with the next convoy.<sup>113</sup> For this voyage, *Milford* was posted to Ferryland. Once more Goodall asked to be allowed to cruise while off the Newfoundland coast but was told he could only do so under the orders of the commodore.<sup>114</sup> Permission must have been granted because *Milford* captured three prizes to add to the one condemned on the previous convoy. The commodore for the 1712 convoy was Sir Nicholas Trevanion of the fourth rate *York*. Trevanion had been to Newfoundland before as part of John Norris' squadron in 1697. Despite his experience, Trevanion seemed to appreciate having another captain familiar with Newfoundland waters. Trevanion himself saw promise and opportunity in Newfoundland. The knight requested that he be considered for a posting after the war should the British gain possession of Plaisance.<sup>115</sup>

The return leg of the 1711 Newfoundland convoy demonstrates that although reaching Portugal was a step closer to England and well within reach of Royal Navy facilities, the task of convoying was not made any easier. In Portugal the convoy faced adverse weather, local politics, intransigent naval personnel, allies, and the very real threat of large French squadrons. Arguably, the isolation of Newfoundland, and the fact that it represented the beginning of an arduous journey, was less of a strain on the ships involved. While not to downplay the dangers existing on overseas stations, the incidents

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<sup>113</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 6 February 1712.

<sup>114</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 19 March 1712.

<sup>115</sup> PRO ADM 1/2574, Trevanion to Admiralty, 11 December 1712.

such as the ease of refitting and victualling *Warwick* and *Milford* in Boston, immediately following the problems encountered by the Walker squadron suggest that sailing on the western half of the Atlantic need not be a difficult undertaking for a small group of warships.

In contrast to the last chapter, where warship captains were required to negotiate authority with local governments, the ships on convoy to Newfoundland were the only authority available. Thus the all-important defence of the fishery was left in the hands of relatively junior captains, who took it upon themselves to make whatever decisions necessary for the carrying out of their instructions. That the Admiralty was satisfied with this arrangement is, in one sense, borne out by their preoccupation with the settling of outstanding accounts rather than the decisions made while overseas. Captains Goodall, Partington and Crowe were all required to send reports of the expenses incurred while in Newfoundland.<sup>116</sup>

The debates and conflicts among the Board of Trade, English fishing merchants, the Admiralty and other branches of government do not in themselves evince the fact that at the local levels there existed a series of smaller considerations that dictated responses by naval captains. As captains had the dual responsibility of maintaining the integrity of ship and crew and carrying out their orders to protect the fishery, it could be in the public good to go against official policy in both deference to local residents and local trade.

Although Goodall was not senior officer he felt it his duty to establish a dialogue

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<sup>116</sup> PRO ADM 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 7 January, 1712; ADM 1/2281, Partington to Admiralty, 5 May 1712; PRO ADM 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 5 September 1712. The Surveyors of the Navy actually refused to release Crowe's pay until he accounted for all expenses.



with Costebelle to come to a local solution to the problem of prisoners. If someone such as Andrew Douglas could be convinced to forego the supplementary income offered by cruising for prizes, then the situation was complex beyond the yearly report of the commodore. While Commodore Crowe correctly stated that New England trade was vital for the survival of the planters, it was also a potential source of stores and provisions for warships. The first four men-of-war to reach Newfoundland in 1711 did not concern themselves with righting the wrongs outlined by the Board of Trade. Their orders stipulated the defence of Newfoundland, not its policing.

The context of these considerations was never uniform as the Newfoundland convoy travelled between England, the high seas, Newfoundland, and Portugal. While the 1711 convoy was created and dispatched as would be any other, the circumstances surrounding the convoy were unique. The squadron of Admiral Walker's increased the amount of naval traffic in Northeastern North America and added a dimension not normally experienced. However, the convoy appeared separated and distant from the expedition's operations. This contrasts with the station ships at New England, New York and Virginia that were required to assist the expedition against Quebec. In part this was due to the nature of convoy versus station duty but may also have reflected the secretive nature of the Walker expedition. The convoy captains did understand the wider ramifications of the defensive parameters of Northeastern North America when they decided to divide their force and offer assistance to Boston following the rumours of Port Royal's recapture. These decisions appear to have been made outside of any consideration for Walker's squadron.

The difficulties faced by the Walker expedition contrast the success of the Newfoundland convoy in performing its duty with minimal death and loss. Service in Newfoundland benefitted from the increase in warships designated convoy during the latter half of the War of the Spanish Succession. By 1711 Newfoundland was not an exotic or foreign place to the men of the convoy, whether they had already been there or not. Unlike ships in the Caribbean who wasted under the sun and unfortunate captains who ran afoul of ambitious local governments both there and on mainland North America, captains and crews going to Newfoundland were close enough to benefit from official and unofficial support networks (as well as plentiful French prizes) but isolated enough to avoid many of the pitfalls of overseas service.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to illuminate the transatlantic role of Royal Navy warships dispatched to the coasts of Northeastern North America before the establishment of major overseas naval bases. Until now, convoys and station duty have not been determined as relevant for the study of colonial government and society because historians have asked questions that frequently look inward towards the change and development of North American societies. At its most negative, this tends to detach relationships between sailors and American societies from any wider contexts or considerations other than those of the specific moment. Naval and colonial administration networks themselves have obscured the exploits of overseas warships as their information dissemination process usually operated only in the event of a serious problem. Much detail concerning the coast of North America did not go beyond the Admiralty's own filing system.

Although modes of analysis such as the transatlantic offer a way of including the navy, the questions of process asked by its historians have not been applied to the navy or have been included by default within the study of shipping and sailors in general. Meanwhile, the most sophisticated of naval scholarship is still unravelling what the English/British navy meant for Europe and British societies. That the ships sent to North America often represented the smallest and most junior of resources within the navy has reinforced perceptions of their unimportance in the eyes of naval historians. As a result, the impression left by existing literature was that naval coverage prior to the Treaty of

Utrecht was sporadic, haphazard, and largely ineffectual. This was not the case.

The most junior of captains and the newest of crews were still among the most highly trained professionals in early modern society. The deployment of even a small sixth rate was not a simple, nor inexpensive, affair. As the experiences of the *Conception Prize* and *Nonsuch* demonstrate, the relationship between the warship and its station could become a complicated process as the transfer of official authority was transferred from a naval to an imperial seat. The battles between Phips and his captains were no mere personality conflicts but struggles for power, and adjustments to a new and different environment. In addition to transfers of authority, duty in North America led to the development of idiosyncrasies that officers recognised and took into consideration. Their ingenuity, and the flexibility of naval administration, has not been given its due account. The importance of naval service to the colonies has been blurred by the tendency to judge the success of the navy on the few squadrons and fleets that did touch upon Northeastern North America. These fleets were aberrations. The 1711 convoy to Newfoundland coincided with the Walker expedition to Quebec but did not have the same problems that plagued its larger relation. Situations that perplexed Admiral Walker were perfunctorily dealt with by captains such as Goodall, Douglas, Partington and Girlington.

A definitive statement on the overall effectiveness of the convoys and station ships within this period is beyond the scope of this thesis. Superficially, it appears these ships were large enough to defend convoys and provide a presence in North America but were small enough to utilise local resources without undue disruption to either the ship and its crew or regional populations. The source material used for this thesis indicates

that, except for the problems of victualling and ship repair, the dispatch of ships and crews was a routine affair that in many ways did not differ from sending a ship to the corners of Europe or to the Mediterranean.

The contrast between *Conception Prize* and *Nonsuch* and the 1711 Newfoundland convoy, despite their differences, suggests that captains and crews became more familiar (although not necessarily more comfortable) with overseas duty. The actions of most of the captains outlined above (especially those in 1711 Newfoundland) demonstrate a balance between duty and self-interest, and in some instances a genuine concern for the safety of the people and territory they were ordered to protect. This points to a decidedly different conclusion than has traditionally been offered regarding ships of this era, and those of later periods. It is believed that further study beyond two case studies will more forcefully demonstrate these conclusions. If the study of colonial and imperial history is shifting towards the dissection of processes of empire then the study of the Royal Navy's role in North America must also be researched and studied in similar terms as opposed to merely described as a by-product of empire.

## APPENDIX

### Rates of Warships 1689-1713

Rate	Length (feet)	Tonnage	Men	Guns
1st	163-174	1486-1883	580-780	90-100
2nd	160-165	1395-1579	500-680	82-90
3rd	147-158	1045-1278	320-520	60-80
4th	118-148	551-987	160-365	42-64
5th	94-118	253-533	100-190	24-42
6th	56-98	125-273	60-115	12-26

Source: Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List*

### Data on Principal Warships Mentioned in Thesis

Rt.	Ship	Service	Captain	Length	Tons	Men	Guns
5	<i>Arrundell</i>	1695-1713	Andrew Douglas	107'7"	378	145	34
5	<i>Conception Prize</i>	1691-1694	Robert Fairfax	98'	375	115	32
5	<i>Milford</i>	1705-1728	John Goodall	108'7"	420	155	36
5	<i>Nonsuch</i>	1669-1695	Richard Short	88'3"	359	150	36
5	<i>Portsmouth</i>	1707-1728	Thomas Man	118'	531	190	42
6	<i>Seaford</i>	1697-1722	Thomas Davers	93'2"	248	115	24
4	<i>Warwick</i>	1710-1726	Henry Partington	130'	704	280	54
3	<i>Warspight</i>	1703-1716	Josiah Crowe	147'7"	952	400	66

Sources: Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List*; ADM 8/2 and ADM 8/11

**Abstract: February 1691**

Rate	No.
1	5
2	10
3	32
4	33
5	27
6	<u>11</u>
	118

**Abstract: October 1712**

Rate	No.
1	0
2	1
3	18
4	62
5	47
6	<u>32</u>
	160

Source: ADM 8/2 and ADM 8/11

The first table is not meant to represent precise parameters, but is designed to offer a point of comparison for the various sizes of Royal Navy warships. The length refers to the length of the main deck. Tonnage refers not to the dead weight of the ship, but to a mathematical calculation of the ship's hold capacity. The lower figures for the guns and men columns frequently represent the peacetime or overseas complement. The second table provides examples from some of the warships figuring prominently throughout the thesis. They offer a sample of the age and size of ships performing duties throughout Northeastern North America. The captain, and the number of men and guns represents the figure listed in the Admiralty List Books at the time of their overseas assignments. The two abstracts represent the number of rated vessels counted by the navy at that time. They do not represent all navy vessels, but those commanded by someone holding the commissioned rank of captain. Although oversimplifying change within the Royal Navy, the abstracts demonstrate how the need for ships to perform multipurpose duties altered the makeup of the navy towards the more versatile smaller rates.

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