Cold Waves

The War of the Austrian Succession

1739-1748

European Waters

Commentary

'Was proclaim'd this Day by the Heralds at Arms, attended by the Guards at the Usual Places,

His Majesty's DECLARATION of WAR against the King of SPAIN.

GEORGE R.'

Excerpt from The Gentleman's Magazine 23 October 1739.

This commentary attempts to cover the naval operations that took place along the length of Atlantic Europe during both the Anglo-Spanish War of Jenkins' Ear and the War of the Austrian Succession which devoured it. The commentary chronicles events year by year, but it will help the reader to mentally divide the conflict(s) into several phases. This could be done in different ways. For example, treat the War of Jenkins' Ear as the first phase, with its own set of priorities. Priorities change for the last phase, the War of the Austrian Succession; from the perspective of naval operations this occurred in 1744, when France and Britain formally went to war. Or, the conflict can be broken into an early, middle, and late period, beginning again with the War of Jenkins' Ear, but commencing the middle phase at the end of 1741 when the Spanish began campaigning against the Habsburgs in Italy and a new Administration in Britain began focusing on Continental affairs. The third phase would begin in 1744, and could be designated the Anglo-French conflict, because Spain clearly yields first place to France in the view of the Royal Navy. Finer distinctions could also be made: 1739-1741 British adventurism against Spain, ending with the Cartagena des Indías disaster and Spain's involvement with Italy; 1742-1743 as a time of preparation for the expected struggle between France and Britain, where the latter engages more closely with Austria and begins concentrating troops in Flanders, while the former yields to Spanish demands for tangible aid; 1744-1746 as a time of experimentation in naval operations (on both sides), with attempted fleet actions and amphibious landings being abandoned in favour of attritional commerce raiding and convoy escort; 1747-1748 as the end phase, where the Spanish back out of the war and Britain finally grinds the French merchant marine down.

This author has discussed *La Guerra de Asiento* in his *Yellow Jack* commentary. Taken in isolation, it was essentially a trade conflict between Britain and Spain, started by the former. Although it encompassed the globe most operations either took place in the Caribbean or were conducted with reference to the Caribbean, making it fairly easy to keep separate from the War of the Austrian Succession. Because both sides began to regard Continental affairs as more important this conflict essentially petered out. Any 'overlap' with the greater struggle falls either into the category of mixed (i.e., confused) war aims or competition within the services for materiel and money.

The War of the Austrian Succession likewise encompassed the globe, but the most significant actions took place in European waters. Activities elsewhere had an attritional effect, and sometimes affected strategy, but were not decisive.

Sources

Despite its relative obscurity, there are a number of comprehensive sources available for the war's naval activities. Some of these are very old, some very new. The sources used most extensively as the basis for this commentary are given below. Sources used to fill out details or as correctives can be found in the bibliography.

Rear Admiral H.W. Richmond's books — a three volume set called *The Navy in the War of 1739-48* — heads the list. The books are available online. Apart from being a noted scholar, Richmond was a veteran of the Great War. His work, published in 1920, is still the most comprehensive available. Unfortunately, it is written solely from the British viewpoint and tends to gloss over (to put it mildly) the failures of some of its 'heroes', although it lambasts the Admiralty and the policy makers. There appear to be minor inaccuracies — mainly order of battle issues — which were probably inherent in his own sources. Nonetheless, this work remains a key source for the general narrative.

There is also *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain, 1727-1783*, by Robert Beatson, in six volumes. This work was published in 1804 and the pertinent volume, no.1, is available as an online document. It lacks the accuracy of Richmond in some places but provides additional material in others, particularly with regard to minor actions. Beatson felt British military achievements should be glorified wherever possible, no matter how small the affair. He also provides statistics.

Richard Harding's *The Emergence of Britain's Global Naval Supremacy* is a modern work with a different perspective. As the title suggests it is a general work and does not go into details, but it helps balance the earlier texts.

To find information about the 'farther shore' is not easy, even in the Spanish or French languages. The raw data is available, but few authors have collated it into a narrative. Some of them also rely extensively on British sources.

The main sources in French (solely because they were the most readily available and best recommended) are *La marine militaire de la France sous la règne de Louis XV* by Lacour-Gayet (1910), and (better) *Histoire maritime de France* (Paris, 1851), vol. IV, by León Guérin. Both are available online. Because of their scope, the French works lack the detail of Richmond, but contain additional information.

The most useful Spanish source, dealing mainly, as the title suggests, with the Caribbean, is *La guerra de la oreja de Jenkins: un conflicto colonial (1739-1748),* by Jorge Cerdá Crespo. It also has useful sections on Spanish naval administration and the challenges faced by the senior ministers in fighting a 'two-front war'. When originally sourced the book was out of print, but it may have come back onto the market. It is based on Crespo's 470-page doctoral thesis, which is still available online at the University of Alicante.

Mention should also be made of the sources for the maps scattered throughout this commentary. Those covering the larger regions were traced from GoogleMaps™ and

additional details (if any) obtained from period maps. The more detailed maps were traced from period ones, usually dating from within a few decades of the war. Of particular use were those drawn by Jacques Nicholas Bellin (circa 1760). His at least were commissioned by the French Ministry of Marine and were part of an atlas liberated by the Royal Navy from the frigate *Nymphe* in an action off Ushant in 1780; the maps include hydrographic data. It is remarkable how much data Bellin obtained about British harbours.

Dates and Times

The modern Gregorian calendar (otherwise known as New Style, or NS) is used throughout this commentary. The Old Style (OS) Julian calendar, still in use by the British during the war, was 11 days behind the Gregorian at that time. Should the reader spot a discrepancy in the timeline it will either be because a) the author has used a source that did not indicate the dating system, or b) because he failed to make the proper adjustment.

Also, the reader should be aware that nautical and civil dates can vary because the day at sea began at noon, when the sun sightings were taken, and not at midnight. This has produced discrepancies in the accounts over which day a battle or sighting took place on. Richmond seems to use OS dates consistently, except when he gives both options. Beatson, writing an hundred years earlier, seems to use NS dates, but in portions of his work, including the account of 1744, he appears to switch to OS. As if that were not enough, 1744 was a leap year. Hopefully, all the dates here, rendered as NS, are correct, but caution is advised.

BACKGROUND

They may ring bells now, but they will soon be wringing their hands!

Robert Walpole

Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

Mark Twain

It all began with an *asiento* — THE *Asiento*. Plus a fair measure of corporate greed and political cockfighting.

Spain, following Mercantilist principles, operated a closed trading system within her empire, at least in theory. Other nations were not allowed to trade within the system, except by permission of the Spanish Crown. In reality the Dutch, French, and British, not to mention one or two minor powers, were all able to establish their own colonies within the geographic bounds of Spain's sphere, and this was tolerated by necessity, because they provided merchandise that the Spanish Crown could not or would not provide.

Spanish mismanagement and the centrifugal force of regionalism meant that by the 1730s the Spanish colonies could not survive without blackmarket trading, particularly with the British. For example, British 'buccaneers' established logwood plantations in Honduras with the connivance of the local government because it was easier and cheaper than arranging for new Spanish plantations, while, thanks to Spain's convoluted mercantile system it was cheaper to buy local French sugar. Crackdowns by the royal authorities, sometimes initiated locally but usually on orders from Madrid, while doing little to remove the parasites from the body, led to such affairs as the seizing of Captain Jenkins' ship by the *guardacostas* and the subsequent (alleged) cropping of his ear. Such affairs bred resentment among the parasites, who had come to believe they had equal rights within the Spanish sphere.

While the French and Spanish Crowns were able to work out their differences amicably, since they shared the same royal family and the same autocratic system of governance, Spanish regulations frequently clashed with British regulations. The former were Crown policy while the latter benefited the rich English planters. Given the difference in systems of government — autocratic versus parliamentary — there was never going to be an equable compromise. Spanish rules were imposed from the top down. Though impeded by the expected tangle of bureaucratic red tape, the Crown could make alterations — to accommodate current foreign policy for example — with relative ease. Britain's system, on the other hand, partly derived from the Crown but most from the lobbying of Big Money, making it a hodgepodge of rules and taxes. The changes required to accommodate new circumstances — such as the appearance of new players in the industry — would come most easily through aggressive penetration of 'untapped' new markets. In other words, making the pie bigger by pushing out the Spanish.

The newest of the new players in Britain's merchant community was the South Sea Company. Ironically, this corporation, which pushed for new markets with all the hyper-aggression of a latecomer to the feast, also played by the rules, taking advantage of Spain's one legal avenue into her closed system: the *Asiento*. An *asiento* was simply a bilateral trade agreement. This particular *Asiento* was a contract to trade slaves to the Spanish colonies. Spain employed many, many slaves, but no longer collected them herself. Her slave population was almost large enough to be self-sustaining, but periodic infusions were still needed. A small amount of commodity trading was also permitted under the contract — to wit, one (1) ship per annum.

Thanks to its political connections (both the British P.M. and the King of Spain were on the board of directors) the South Sea Company was awarded this coveted contract, but unfortunately the SSC was challenged by a number of systemic problems (more so than most large corporations). First, it was not really a trading company, it was a financial institution, set up in competition with the Bank of England to help finance the War of the Spanish Succession, and after, to handle the massive debt accrued by said war. It thus had unhealthy ties to the Government. Also, it was a vehicle for wild speculation, which led to the famous South Sea Bubble of 1720 — that is why it is called the 'South Sea' bubble. By the 1730s, the reconstituted Company, which would have gone under if not for its connections, was badly in need of an income stream and would do anything to obtain one, including fomenting a war.

When the *Asiento* failed to become the bonanza the Company hoped for and instead led to a series of contract

disputes, the idea of creating a war grew on the SSC. But the company was not the only voice calling for ‘direct action’. By the late 1730s a long list of grievances had been chalked up against Spain by both legitimate British traders and buccaneers, grouped under the headings of ‘Spanish Depredations Upon the British Subjects’, and ‘Visitation Rights’ (stop-and-search). To these was added a high level dispute over the payment of reparations from the War of the Quadruple Alliance, fought in 1718, and the return of Minorca and Gibraltar to Spain. In all these issues both sides were legitimately at fault in some way or other, but Britain bears a much greater share of the blame for the war that followed.

The Spanish proved intractable thanks to the inherent pridefulness of the inhabitants of the Escorial, but also to an empty purse which made it hard for them to take a

of the other plaintiff's (Britain's) obligations. To be specific, the South Sea Company owed the Spanish Crown arrears on the *Asiento*, while Spain owed the British Crown reparations from the War of the Quadruple Alliance. (The link between the issues was tenuous at best, but serves to show how commerce and high politics were inseparably tangled.)

Unfortunately the Spanish had no money to prime the pump; the British could not believe this — everyone in the whole world knew even Spanish peasants slept on piles of silver and gold — and insisted they cough up. To make matters far worse, the Spanish ambassador to London played a double game, on the one hand manipulating things so that each side's distrust increased, and on the other encouraging both the Patriots and the Spanish Crown to believe that taking a hard line would bring down the Walpole Ministry.

This is not to blame one man unduly; there was plenty of intransigence all round. But, Spain's ambassador to Britain was an Irishman, Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, generally known as Don Geraldino or the Irish Don Diego. (The latter name may derive from a satirical ballad called The Negotiators, published in 1738, that mocked both him and Walpole.) The Fitzgeralds had personal reasons for spoiling the plans of Walpole's Ministry. Despite their best efforts, however, by October of 1738 Don Geraldino and the Patriots were facing failure. Their opponents, in both countries, were confident war had been averted.

This is where the Spanish must now accept some blame. No matter how much they wanted this deal, the Escorial refused to omit a single point of court protocol. And every time one of the courtiers missed a step in the elaborate dance, they were made to start over. Time slipped away. Parliament was sitting again by the time the Convention was ready to sign. The forces of Opposition rallied and coordinated a renewed offensive. The Convention was officially presented to Parliament in February of 1739 and immediately caused a storm.

Now, the way these things were done was similar to the present day, though not identical. Each time Parliament opened the King made a speech in the House of Lords. Policies laid out in that speech were then debated in the House of Commons and the results, along with any other business brought up, were passed back to the Lords for the final verdict. In this case, the Lords applauded the speech as a whole, glossing over any issues they may have had with the bit about the Convention, but the Commons engaged in a fierce debate, indeed, one of the great parliamentary debates of the age, debuting the career of Pitt the Elder (then a young man). The vote was split on party lines with the Patriots and their supporters doing everything they could to discredit the Convention in order to shake Walpole's position. (While, behind the scenes, preparations were made to cash in on the expected war with Spain.)

The subsequent debate in the Lords also resulted in a split, once again because Walpole's opponents thought their time had come. In this case opposition was raised by Lord Carteret, the man who would go on to form the next Ministry. Unfortunately for him, that would be in 1742, not 1739. Ultimately, the Royal Address was passed, but the split remained, and Walpole was forced to make concessions to the Patriots. The South Sea Company refused to pay the arrears it owed to Spain unless Spain first paid the full value of the Company's losses — dated from 1718 to tie it to the war reparations issue. In response, on 17 May Spain annulled the *Asiento*. As Sir Benjamin Keene, the British ambassador to Spain, himself a former officer of the SSC, wrote at the time:

'Other Countries and Companies would have given as large a sum as what is askt for the goodwill of a Court to let them carry on a winkt-at Commerce, but our Directors would not so much as bribe the Court of Spain with its own Money, as They might have done some time ago. Tho' now all is over, and Spain is now so disgusted at the crambe repetita They [the SSC] sent me, when Geraldino [the Spanish Ambassador] told them I had full Powers, that she will never lend an ear to any further Representations till she hears the money chink.'

Temperley, p. 224.

Laying aside various machinations by people 'in the know' — who are usually less 'in the know' than they think — it is probably fair to say the British were led to believe Spain's refusal to reimburse the South Sea Company had killed the treaty, while the Spanish were led to believe the British had broken faith and were preparing for a first strike while Spain's guard was down. In particular, they demanded Haddock's squadron be withdrawn as a precondition to their signing of the Convention. As it happens, Haddock had actually been recalled but had then had the recall rescinded on 10 March. The Spanish were told that news of this change in orders was an unfounded rumour. That statement was an outright lie (though the lie's target was mainly the British Administration's domestic opponents).

When Ambassador Keene was summoned before his hosts, his embarrassed mumbling convinced them there was no further reason to negotiate. Keene became so alarmed that he sent warnings to the various Spanish ports where British merchants were quartered, suggesting they clear out as quickly as possible. Just in time. As May turned into June, both sides began making preparations for war in earnest.

On 7 June, Spain signified she would not pay the £95,000 the Convention had determined she owed. She needed the money to arm her fleet.

On 11 June, orders were dispatched to South Carolina — where James Oglethorpe, now General Oglethorpe, had based himself — for local forces to begin attacking Spanish assets in the region. By now, Walpole was trying to regain his position by asserting that he would not yield Georgia to the Spanish and would willingly support Oglethorpe with more men and money.

On 14 June, Keene was instructed to suspend negotiations and begin spying. (He was soon recalled to England, though.)

On 14 July, King George issued a proclamation for the return of all British seamen in foreign service. It offered hefty enlistment bounties.

On 19 July, the King made another proclamation, listing the Spanish Depredations and their failure to comply with the Convention of the Pardo, but only calling for reprisals and issuing letters of marque for that purpose — that is, authorisation for privateers to harass Spanish shipping. Madrid was informed that this did not constitute a breach of the peace, and the measures would cease as soon as the £95,000 was paid. Surprisingly, the King of Spain chose to interpret the issuing of letters of marque as an act of war.

(The letters of marque began to be issued around 21 July. By then, Admiral Haddock had taken two Spanish merchant ships, the *San José* and a ship of the Caracas Company. That may have had something to do with the disbelieving Spanish attitude.)

Two 'disinterested' powers might yet have leashed the disputants. The United Provinces were allies of Britain — indeed, the two countries were known as the Maritime Powers — but were making too much money selling to the Bourbons. It was easy for the French to persuade them to remain neutral, and the hope was that this would giveth British pause for thought. No such luck.

And, the French themselves twice tried to reconcile the parties, first by offering a full alliance with Britain, and next by offering to assume Spain's debt. This only made matters worse. The French could hardly portray themselves as a disinterested party, what with their blood ties to the Spanish dynasty and all. In February — about the time Parliament was raging — a royal wedding had taken place between the Infanta Felipe and Maria Isabel of France. A new French Ambassador appeared at Madrid, equipped with all the courtier's arts necessary to captivate the Queen of Spain. The offer of alliance with Britain came in August. Clearly, it was a ploy to put the British off their guard. No sale.

[As early as March, many in the British Government were convinced the appointment of this new ambassador meant war, probably including France, was inevitable.]

Madrid's response to the letters of marque was to order the seizing of British ships in Spanish ports. France declared herself committed to sending an army and a squadron of ships to assist the Spanish should they be attacked. (As she was bound to do by the terms of the First Family Compact, signed in 1733.) The French began military talks with their Spanish counterparts — which in the event came to nothing, but disquieted the Royal Navy for over a year.

Spain put her squadrons at Ferrol, Cádiz, and Cartagena on alert, and her Army mobilised against the Portuguese border and against Gibraltar. (There was no guarantee that the Portuguese would remain neutral, especially since their Brazilian colony was violently anti-Spanish.) The Dons also began concentrating troops in Catalonia as an implied threat to Minorca, and in Galicia to suggest they might try a descent on Ireland or Scotland, Don Geraldino providing the necessary rumours in London.

In July, a squadron of six ships commanded by Vice Admiral of the Blue Edward Vernon left England, bound for the Caribbean. Authorisation for the deployment of troops to the West Indies in a defensive role had already been given. Vernon had barely begun his campaign of reprisals, in October, before he learned there was a full-scale war on.

Sir Benjamin Keene (1697-1757)

Consul General to Spain from 1724 and Ambassador from 1729-39. At the end of the war he returned to Spain, serving as Ambassador until his death in 1757. It was due to his efforts that Spain remained on the sidelines during the Seven Years War, until 1762. During the 1739-1748 war he became an MP, was on the Board of Trade, and served as Paymaster of Pensions. In 1745 he had himself appointed Ambassador to Portugal; by reactivating his old connections this made him a valuable intelligence asset. (It would be interesting to learn whether his presence was of material assistance to the Royal Navy's destruction of the French convoy system over the following two years.)

STRATEGIES AND PLAYERS

Regardless of protagonist, naval operations on the Atlantic coast fall roughly into two categories: fleet-on-fleet action and the protection/interdiction of maritime trade. Britain had the most to worry about, then Spain, then France. Britain was an island, Spain had a vast overseas empire, and France did not really care about either her long coastline or her colonies in comparison to her eastern frontier. Escort and interdiction will be discussed in a section on Trade. Such activities made up the bulk of all naval activity during

the war. Glorious fleet actions amounted to exactly one and a half — the Battle of Toulon and the muffed 'Battle of the Downs'. (One could also count the Battle of Havana and a couple of actions in the Indian Ocean, but they fall outside the narrative.)

Battle fleets were essentially prestige items, designed to impress. It was thus important to ensure they came to no harm. They were also expensive to maintain, which meant only a fraction of the ships could be used for anything. Classifying the navies purely as vanity projects, the French navy, *La Royale,* can be considered the most unnecessary, while the *Armada* and Royal Navy had much justification for their existence; the Royal Navy most of all, since Britain's Army was small, and considered second rate.

Of course, the proponents of *La Royale* argued that she was indeed a vital arm of the French State, and from their perspective they were right to do so. Not having a navy would put France at a severe disadvantage, guaranteeing the destruction of her merchant marine. But as a defense against invasion it was a waste of resources. France was large enough and populous enough that a seaborne invasion could never inflict more than a flea bite. There was no need for her to gad about provoking fleet actions, either, unless dominance of the sea lanes was required for a specific purpose. This could only mean an invasion on her own account, but such a thing would be a political act, not a military one, and thus rare. Only in 1744 did the Brest Squadron sortie in full strength to gain control of the Channel, so that a corps could be landed in Britain. And, that operation only took place because the time seemed ripe for a coup d'état. Otherwise, control of the Channel was not a necessity for France.

It was also argued by *La Royale's* proponents that merely retaining a group of capital ships on the Atlantic coast would force the British to divert resources. A valid point. However, the net effect seems to have been to spur the British to put more effort into enhancing their own navy. Unless the French were willing to compete there would come a time — in 1746 to be precise — when France's 'fleet in being' would be recognised as a paper tiger. From that point capital ships were merely a drain on the royal purse. Actually, inadequate funding from the start ensured such a strategy was never going to work, although it did help the Spanish cause a little during the early war years. Of more value were the frigates and lighter vessels that could act as escorts. The most effective strategy of all was the privatization of the war through the issuing of letters of marque. Privateers did real damage to Britain's merchant marine, which she could ill afford.

The Spanish seem to have been more pragmatic than the French. The number of their capital ships was fixed by edict, and though it was not large, indeed barely adequate, it was still well tailored, on the one hand, to protecting the merchant marine through convoy escort, and on the other, to act as a 'fleet in being' that would dissuade most enemies from going after their convoys in the first place. The Spanish also deployed three completely separate and locally funded fleets, in the Caribbean, the Pacific, and around Iberia. They never seriously considered engaging the Royal Navy in a fleet action, recognizing that despite the stoutness of their ships they would be outmatched, but though their 'fleet in being' strategy, which was deliberate policy, ultimately fell into the same trap as the French, sometimes it succeeded in diverting British resources that could have been better employed chasing Spanish privateers, who were even more numerous than the French. Of course the British brought trouble on themselves by misusing their own forces.

At the outset of the war the Royal Navy was not well situated to engage both Bourbon powers at once. There were barely enough ships fit to engage the Spanish, and certainly not enough to cover the Caribbean, Mediterranean, and 'home waters'. This problem, exacerbated by faulty strategic thinking and mixed war aims, would persist for some years. Nevertheless, the British realised the need to build themselves up to a point where they could defend their island, project their power, and protect their merchant marine. One thing that aided them was the hyper-aggressive attitude of their captains, spurred on by a policy of awarding prize money to individual crews instead of appropriating it for the State's use. It was not all greed; fear of invasion was also a great motivator. The British were thus always willing to start a fight; any captain or admiral who played it cautious usually wound up before a military court.

Of the three navies, the British came closest, by war's end, to developing a methodology that appears similar to that of the modern era. But, it must be remembered that such developments came as a result of the pressure exerted by the Bourbon navies and by the urge to 'check all the boxes' of the Admiralty's diverse agenda.

The Politics of Spain

Spain was being forced into a war she did not want. Her ministers estimated a year of war would burn up three years' worth of peacetime tax revenues. And 1739 was a particularly bad year to start a war because the harvest had been very poor. She was commencing the struggle with an empty purse. How should she react?

Even before Spain's unification at the end of the 15th Century the Spanish suffered from two divergent geopolitical foci. Aragon looked east, into the Western Mediterranean, to the islands, North Africa, and Italy. Castile looked west, across the Atlantic and eventually around the globe. The split personality remained throughout the entirety of the Habsburg dynasty's rule and carried over into that of the current Bourbon reign. Which zone received attention depended very much on who ruled Spain.

Spain was an Absolute Monarchy. The King was the reason for the State, and all were in his service. However, the State was a curiously federal body, a collection of provinces not all of which were connected by the infrastructure one might assume was needed to unify a state, and each region had its own proclivities. Unity derived from the person of the Monarch and from the Church.

The current ruler of Spain was Felipe V, grandson of King Louis XIV of France. The current king of France, Louis XV, was not his uncle or brother, however; thanks to outbreaks

of smallpox and measles among the royal family, Louis XV was the great-grandson of the Sun King, and thus very much 'my young nephew' as far as Felipe was concerned. This is important. Though France was the center of the universe, within the House of Bourbon its ruler was a junior member.

A manic hypochondriac (medically speaking) and all-round Weak King, Felipe was under the thumb of his second wife, Elisabeth Farnese, a noblewoman from the Italian family of the same name. It was she who drove Spanish policy, more especially since at the outbreak of war the King was going through one of his periodic bouts of insanity. 'The Farnese' (diplomats also called her the Spanish Bitch) was obsessed with obtaining territories for her sons in her homeland — specifically Parma and Tuscany — so she would have a place to retire to when the King died and her step-son came to the throne. This is the main reason Spain followed the Aragón-esque strategy of an Italian war against the Habsburgs. The Habsburgs currently occupied the Farnese lands. However, Spain's global 'Castillan' empire was absolutely necessary to fund the Italian project.

Spain's war in Europe, which began at the end of 1741 — though preparations started in earnest as soon as it was learned the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles VI, was dead — was separate from the war in the Caribbean, and yet could not be separated. Strategy for the former was driven by the Queen. Strategy for the latter was subject to what resources could be spared, which meant that Spain's Empire was essentially cut loose for the duration of the struggle.

King Felipe V (below); Queen Elisabeth Farnese (opposite)

When the Bourbon *régime* was instituted at the start of the 18th Century elements of the State took on a progressive look, but it was a look only. The ingrained Medieval mindset remained. Still, after the end of the War of the Spanish Succession colonial trading practices and matters of naval defence did begin to change, thanks to the offices of the *Secretario de las Colonias* (Secretary of the Colonies) and the *Secretario de Marina* (Secretary of the Navy).

In the 1730s these offices were dealing almost exclusively with 'westward' problems: British encroachment in Florida, illegal logwood harvesting operations in the Honduras and the increasing presence of British traders in general, as well as developing ways of beating the latter at their own game, curbing the depredations of pirates, and the core need to expand and modernise the *Armada* — the Navy — not to mention the chronic lack of funds to pay the same or buy necessities for the colonial population in general. It was a lot for one man to handle — and by the way, the portfolios were always held by a single minister!

During the war three men held the dual posts: José de la Quintana up until October 1741, José del Campillo y Cossio from October 1741 to April 1743, and Cenón de Somodevilla, *marquis* de la Ensenada from then on. Campillo was honest and hardworking, which may explain why he did not last long. Ensenada was a formidable personality. But it was said of Quintana, the man at the helm in the run up to war, that 'a more difficult, tenacious, disputable antagonist never was met with'.

In fact, in the opinion of contemporary 'Spain watchers':

'This country [Spain] is at present governed by three or four mean stubborn people of little minds and limited understandings but full of the Romantick Ideas they have found in old Memorials and Speculative authors who have treated of the immense Grandeur of the Spanish Monarchy, People who have vanity enough to think themselves reserved by Providence to rectify and reform the mistakes and abuses of past ministers and ages'

Temperley, p.199

That would be the King (in his sane moments), the Queen, Quintana, and Sebastían de la Cuadra (Quadra), *marquis* de Villarías, a man described as a dullard and a 'mere clerk'. He was *secrétaire d'État d'Espagne*, or chief minister for the Crown, and had been the man chiefly responsible for the negotiations over the Convention of the Pardo and the delays in its ratification.

The Infante Don Felipe, third son of the Queen, was titular General-Admiral of the Armada. (He was also the reason his mother wanted war with Austria; the Duchy of Parma had once belong to the Farnese family and in 1748 he would become its duke.) Don Felipe was not militarily inclined, and had even less interest in politics. Art was his chief passion.

The one bright light was Cristóbal Gregorio Portocarrero y Funes de Villalpando, *conde* de Montijo, the *Presidente del Consejo de Indias* (President of the Council of the Indies). A former Ambassador to London, Montijo came to the post in 1737, when relations with Britain began to worsen. Unfortunately, he would be sidelined during the most critical period of negotiations that year by the bellicose Don Casimiro de Ustariz, *Ministro de Guerra* (Secretary for War).

1737 was Ustariz's last year in office. His successor was the agéd José Carrillo de Albornoz, *Duque* de Montemar, *Ministro de* Guerra. Appointed (essentially) by the Queen, he advocated a Europe-first strategy. In naval terms this meant beefing up the small squadron at Cartagena with elements from the main squadron at Cádiz. The El Ferrol Squadron, would be reduced to almost nothing — *although*, in the war's early stages, and periodically throughout the struggle, many ships would base at this port from time to time. The overland lines of communication to El Ferrol were poor, and the place lacked the facilities to permanently base a large squadron, but it was the most useful place from which to rendezvous with incoming convoys or to catch the trade winds for the New World. It was also the place to use if making a strategic feint against the British Isles.

Montemar believed war with Britain was inevitable, but unlike Ustariz he thought the Convention of the Pardo had some merit. It could be used as a delaying tactic. This would allow one last *flota* to make it home, and to allow a pair of *azogues* traveling in the opposite direction to reach Veracruz. Once war was declared, the bullion shipments would probably have to cease until sufficient strength could be mustered to protect them — which in turn would probably require active French assistance.

[It is difficult to tell just when the Spanish stopped looking for a real settlement and started using diplomacy as a tactic for delay. But certainly once the Crown's caveat regarding the SSC's debts became public knowledge. By that point it was clear neither side would budge.]

France was committed to aiding Spain militarily by the First Family Compact, but she was decidedly cool at present. Cardinal Fleury agreed with Robert Walpole that war was not desirable. All that Spain could squeeze from his representatives were some military talks that gave the impression France was preparing to aid Spain. But, Montemar hoped the new royal marriage would swing attitudes in Spain's favour before too long. He would be sadly disappointed.

José Carrillo de Albornoz, 1st *Duque* de Montemar (1671-1747)

Born in Seville, Montemar joined the Army as a cavalry officer. He owed his rise to siding with the *duc* d'Anjou — that is, King Felipe V — during the War of the Spanish Succession. He served with the Army on campaign and was a marshal de campo at the Battle of Villaviciosa (1710). It is also notable that he served in the Mediterranean during the War of the Quadruple Alliance, and in 1731 led an expedition to occupy the Duchy of Parma, then led the army that defeated the Austrians during the War of the Polish Succession. This indicates he was a creature of the Queen's. (In 1732 he and the admiral Blas de Leso led a campaign to retake the North African ports of Oran and Mazalquivir from the Turks.) From 1734 to 1737 he was the Viceroy of Sicily (recently reconquered), then Minister of war from 1737 to 1741. During the War of the Austrian

Succession he again commanded the Italian Campaign, but failed to achieve success and was replaced.

As regards strategy, Montemar was concerned that if Spain split her naval forces, or sent the bulk of them to the New World, she would not only be weakened in Europe, but simply be unable to maintain them at a distance. In this, he was quite correct. By maintaining a European fleet in being, the Spanish would force the British to do all the work. While Britain wasted her resources in temporary overseas conquests, a League could be formed against her. At the peace, Spain would get her colonies back. As for the vital silver traffic, it could be rerouted to Lima and transported overland to Argentina, or run when French support was available (in fact, no proper *flota* did sail until 1744). This might bring about some financial hardship, but it was better than shovelling money into Britain's purse. Similarly, the treasure ports were to be stripped of anything valuable.

The flaw in Montemar's strategy was that the British were not playing primarily for conquest, but for new markets, and for loot. The enemy's lust for the great galleons was a harking back to olden times, a benchmark of success that was no longer relevant — that was the flaw in *Britain's* strategy. The idea that opening the Caribbean to British trade the war would… well… not pay for itself exactly, but pay off in the long run, however, was correct. The best illustration of the Spanish Crown's misinterpretation of British strategy, is the fact that when they restricted the bullion traffic they naturally reduced the amount of victuals and military stores that could be purchased in Europe and sent to the New World. And who stepped into the gap to feed the 'starving population'? The British. Yes, even while the war was on. Business is business.

Montemar's domestic opposition could be called the Colonial Faction, represented by the *Conde* de Montijo and José de la Quintana. They naturally advocated the deployment of Spain's fleet in a similar manner to their enemy's. They had to read the pleas from the various governors and merchants, begging for protection. The defence of the New World should be the lynchpin of Spain's maritime strategy. If necessary, a fleet action should be brought on to make the British reconsider their options.

The *azogues* — small warships in this case, sent in pairs for added security — should maintain a regular run. A small troop convoy was currently enroute to the Caribbean; more troops should be sent to bolster the garrisons of the key ports. Let six or seven ships of the line be sent out, if need be stripping crews and equipment from the rest of the fleet, and let them transport additional troops and supplies, then remain as a local strike force. Perhaps a descent on Jamaica could be made. There were two 70-gun vessels already nearing completion in the La Habana shipyard, which would bring such a squadron's strength to a respectable level.

Of the two options, Montemar's strategy — inevitably the dominant one thanks to The Farnese — was perhaps the wisest, because it was fitted to Spain's military-complex as it then stood. Spain's strength was failing; what strength she had was in her Army, and that Army was going to be deployed in Europe. It might be outdated strategy, but they could not simply flip a switch and become a colonial superpower overnight. As a sop to the Colonialists, however, the squadron and some additional troops would eventually be dispatched, rather in haste and inadequately provisioned. Tellingly, the argument over which was the best strategy was overshadowed by the argument over who should pay for the Colonial Relief operation. Montemar wanted the Colonials to pay out of their own ministry's funds; the Colonials wanted the Crown to pay.

Long term, of course, the British could defeat even the combined Bourbon fleets through simple attrition. So, both schools of thought agreed the cost of war must be increased for the British at a greater rate than Spain's cost. This naturally suggested the solution of commerce raiding, and for that, the *Armada* was not required. The job could be farmed out to privateers. The British were not the only ones to issue letters of marque. On both sides privateering was regarded as a reprisal measure; Britain issued them in reprisal for Spain not paying what was owed her and the Spanish issued them in reprisal for Britain's expected reprisals. But, hiring privateers carried its own dangers. Sailors preferred working for privateers. Corsair skippers paid well, unlike the Crown. By embracing a privateering strategy the Spanish were, in the long term, virtually guaranteeing the death of their battle fleet.

Scarcity of money has already been alluded to, but one other factor affected any strategy: logistics. Spain's federated provincial system meant she had a poor internal logistics net. This not only made supplies slow to accumulate, it also made them more expensive, since it was often quicker to obtain them from other countries. When some crisis came along and a squadron needed to sortie immediately, there was no option but to buy the necessary stores abroad.

On the question of an enemy amphibious assault, the Spanish were not particularly concerned. Proactive in Italy, reactive in the Caribbean, the Spanish spared little for their own coastline, but they hardly needed to. Their logistic problems would be redoubled for any invader, as the British discovered to their cost during the War of the Spanish Succession — when they had had local allies. The greatest threat would be a 'descent' on one of their naval bases. But there were only two: Cádiz and the complex of A Coruña and El Ferrol at the northwest tip of the country. The Galician and Basque regions, where most of the privateers operated from, were inhospitable. Most of the Atlantic coastline belonged to neutral Portugal (not predisposed to aid the British this time), while the south, about Cádiz, was difficult to blockade thanks to the prevailing winds and currents. The naval bases themselves were heavily defended and hard to access even without opposition.

Interestingly, there seems to have been no thought of using Britain's more 'democratic' form of government against her — war weariness and so forth. Well, for one thing Britain was an oligarchy, not a democracy. However, the idea of a Jacobite coup remained popular; perhaps the best method of destabilizing an oligarchy is to play the factions. The Jacobites were in theory leagued with the Opposition, and

the Opposition was the War Party, which made for some interesting dynamics.

Perhaps that is why the Spanish Ambassador behaved in such a highhanded manner; knowing war was inevitable, Madrid perhaps tried to rush the British — if Walpole's Ministry fell the dynasty might fall with it, and peace talks could begin with a friendly régime. That, by the way, is a gross misreading of how Britain functioned as a nation, but it was what was believed in many quarters on the Continent. Alternatively, the Spanish may simply have been as blind as most governments engaged in brinkmanship are.

In the event, the Jacobite card would prove quite useful, mainly to the French later on. For now, an army was assembled in Galicia, the traditional staging area for a descent on Ireland or Scotland. This did tie down a significant number of British ships in north European waters. Then, if Spain decided not to execute a 'long shot' it would be easy enough to transfer the soldiers to Catalonia for transshipment to Italy. Additional feints were arranged. An army was formed facing Gibraltar, and another in Catalonia, supposedly threatening the capture of Minorca.

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The Armada Española (by David Hughes)

The Spanish Navy mirrored many of the features of the French Navy, a tendency accentuated when the Bourbons of France became Kings of Spain in 1702. But the differences were very significant, starting at the very top. While the office of Admiral of France was held by an ineffectual and irrelevant aristocrat, the matching office in Spain, that of *Capitan General de la Armada* was held by the Infante of Spain, the heir to the throne. This signified the much greater importance of the fleet in Spain, especially its role in guarding the vital convoys that brought the wealth of Central and South America across the Atlantic to Cadiz. Next came the *Almirante*, the title of the professional head of the Navy (the Spanish were the first to use the rank of Admiral – taken from the Arabic *amir-al-bahar* meaning 'prince commanding on the sea'). However operational authority rested in *La Junta Almirantazgo*, established just two years before the war by the Infante in emulation of the Admiralty in London. This meant that the navy was run by picked *Teniente-Generale*, including Rodrigo di Torres, the senior officer afloat in the early years of the war, rather than by a civilian minister and his cronies, as was the case with the French Navy. Most of the active flag-officers held the rank of *Jefe de Escuadra*, while a few others were Brigadiers. The latter were equal in status to commodores in other navies, but unlike them did not command small squadrons. Rather this was treated as the title given to both flag-captains and later to many captains of three-decker ships of the line. In practise they were considered 'jefe in waiting' and could exercise separate command when required.

One further distinction was that all admirals were collectively known as Generals de Armada, with the actual rank only used when being assigned to a specific task. For example, Blas de Lezo, famous for the successful defence of Cartagena de Indias, previously held the titles of *Jefe de la Escuadra del Mar del Sur* (that is of the Pacific and the seas around what is now Argentina) and *Jefe de la Escuadra del Mediterráneo*. Compared with the British and French navies, Spanish leaders were often 'under-ranked', a classic example being Don Jose de Navarro at the battle of Toulon. While the Royal Navy was led by an Admiral and *La Royale* by a *Lieutenant-Général* (Vice-Admiral) the Armada had to make do with a lowly *Jefe de Escuadra* or Rear-Admiral. Which of course is why the French held the formal command of the Bourbon forces. It is noticeable that while both French and British commanders were supported by junior flag-officers, Navarro was the only Spanish admiral in a fleet of twelve ships of the line.

The active element of the Spanish Navy was also distinguished by the amount of sea-service it saw, if only because of the supreme importance of guarding in peace and war the treasure fleets that passed from Spain to the Indies and back every year. A famous example is *Jefe de Escuadra* Jose de Pizarro. When it was discovered that Commodore Anson was heading for the Pacific he was ordered to pursue and attack him. Although the desired encounter never took place it is clear that the seamanship of the Spanish was much superior to that of the British. Pizarro overtook Anson and, despite twice passing around Cape Horn 'only' lost two ships ('only' in contrast to Anson who lost all but one). Pizarro indeed had some of the qualities of a fictional captain. During his return from the River Plate on the *navio Asia* many of her crew, being pressed natives from the pampas of Argentina, mutinied. It only ended when Pizarro killed the ringleader in a sword fight! Even junior officers were given major responsibilities. In 1737, *Capitán de Navio* Daniel Hunoni was appointed *Éscorta de Azogues*, the duty of taking the incomparably essential mercury fleet from Spain to the Indies where it would be used to extract silver from the mines of Mexico and Peru. Such a fleet normally consisted of anywhere from two to six fast ships (often naval or private company frigates) escorted by two ships of force, in this case the *Léon* and *Lanfrancesco* (a ship of the Caracas Company). As always, one was the *Capitana,* in this case of the *Léon*, and the other the *Almiranta*. This indicates a highly successful Spanish custom by which the flag-ship was always the *Capitana* and that of the second-in-command the *Almiranta*, (the seeming reversal of ranks is because 'capitana' relates to a captain-general, a rank senior to that of many admirals). At the Battle of Toulon for example, the giant *Real Felipe* of 114 guns served as the *Capitana*, while the other great ship, the *Santa Isabel* of 80 guns, was stationed at the rear and acted as the *Almiranta* – even though there was no flag-officer aboard.

The other common rank in Spanish service was that of *Capitán General* – normally given to the commander of one of the major naval ports. However, this was a flexible service and, as an example when war broke out in 1739 the defences of Cádiz were organised by *Jefe de Escuadra* Francisco Liano, who on his own authority ordered the *Santa Isabel* (80) and *San Fernando* (62) moored as stationary batteries, supported by the 'frigates' *San Francisco Javier, Fama Volante, Paloma Indiana* and

Nuestra Senora de Atocha. Although the last was indeed of just 30 guns, the others all mounted 52 or more, evidence of one more difference in approach. While all other navies ranked ships with 50 or more guns as ships-of-the-line the Spanish had a different system. They called ships of 60 or more guns *navios*, those with less *fregata* — in other words classifying ships by size rather than function, hence some confusion in comparing naval strength. In reality many Spanish 'frigates' were larger than Royal Navy 60-gun ships of the line, since a primary function was to carry part of the goods of the treasure-fleets they escorted across the Atlantic, trading cargo-space for gun ports.

It was this emphasis on protection of essential institutions that gave the leaders of the Spanish Navy their character — professional but with a tendency towards defensive tactics and strategy. This was also in part affected by the existence of the other Spanish 'navy'. The sea-captains of the Basque provinces of northern Spain were the scourge of the British trade-routes, balancing the more measured and conservative approach of the admirals of Spain. There was one other hidden factor. While the peacetime sailors of Spain were second to none, when war came many of these fled the service to the more profitable decks of the privateers (mainly ship-types such as bergantin and patache) based in the small ports on the Bay of Biscay. As a result, in the later years of the war the fleet was much more cautious in its movements at sea, though with one major exception. In the West Indies the fleet based at Havana was active in the latter years of the war, at least partly because the Royal Navy had managed to make life there as a privateer very uncomfortable!

Although one can make a decent argument that the Spanish Navy was the most capable of the sailing-ship fleets (measured not merely in terms of ships taken or lost but in success in performing its primary task), there is no doubt that it was affected more than most by the political travails of its nation. The most dramatic shift came when the royal family shifted from the Hapsburg to the Bourbon line at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. Notwithstanding the earlier comments about professionalism, prior to this date the navy had been run by a cabal of influential noblemen, sufficiently powerful to ignore the Hapsburg rulers as they decayed into madness and incapacity. With the arrival of Phillip V and, more important, the overweening demand for personal authority of his grandfather Louis XIV, all this changed — but not, initially, for the better.

To be fair no navy could be expected to maintain its efficiency as foreign armies (the British and the Imperials) roamed across its homeland [*during the War of the Spanish Succession*] and occupied its greatest port (Barcelona), but the impact of French 'modern efficiency' on a traditional service did not help. French notables, first the bureaucrat Jean Orry who replaced the traditional advisors with intendents on the French model and then Marie Anne de La Trémoile, a confidant of the young queen and her husband, insisted on removing what they considered to be the outdated Spanish system replacing it with good, modern French bureaucracy. Both were removed with the arrival, after the death of the first queen, of her far more powerful successor, Elizabeth Farnese and by Cardinal Guilio Alberoni from Parma, both of course also 'modernizers' and also much devoted to Italy and determined to extend Spanish authority within it. And that was the problem, because together they diverted the Spanish Navy from its primary and traditional cross-Atlantic focus, for which its ships and commanders were eminently suited, to the Mediterranean instead. To make matters worse, *navios* were ordered not from Spanish yards, but from Genoa and Venice. All this led the Spanish Fleet to the worst defeat in its history, the Battle of Cape Passaro, in 1718, against the Royal Navy, when all but one of its 15 *navios* and 6 frigates were captured or burnt. Perhaps not surprising when one realises that Spanish diplomacy had led the nation to war against the Quadruple Alliance of Britain, Austria, Holland and — unbelievably — France, although war had not yet been declared when the Royal Navy attacked! A quick analysis of the ships present shows the impossible situation the Spanish fleet had been placed in: the British flagship was the 90-gun *Barfleur*, the Spanish the 74-gun *Real San Felipe*, the only other Spanish ship of more than 60 guns the *Principe de Asturias* of 70 guns (she was in fact the *Cumberland*, captured from the British ten years earlier), while the British had two 80-gun and nine 70 guns. Counting vessels with 60 guns or more, the British had 19, the Spanish just 10.

Disastrous as this battle had been it did have the effect of silencing royal ambitions in the Mediterranean, while the incapacity shown by the recently Bourbon appointed leaders allowed for both a re-alignment of priorities towards the Atlantic and space for new naval leadership to assert itself. In effect a highly effective combination of Bourbon *intendents* and secretaries of state and the old Hapsburg intervention of able grandees and capable shipowners transformed the Spanish Navy. The next twenty were the golden years of the transatlantic trade, with the largest fleets seen for many generations, averaging 13-15 galleons and newly built *navios*.

Much of this improvement was down to the actions of two men, one administrator and one admiral. The administrator was Jose Patino, creator of the Caracas Company, Intendent-General of the Navy and president of the *Casa de la Contratacion de las Indias.* It also helped that he was simultaneously Minister of War, of the Treasury and of Foreign Affairs! The sailor was Manuel Lopez Pintado who, in the customary Spanish manner, combined service in the navy with a flourishing private trading house and ship-building interests. An active mariner, he commanded the *Galeones a Tierra Firme y Peru* in 1730 and the *Flota a Nueva Espana* in 1735, but his greatest service lay in organising both warship construction and the command system of the navy. Of course, all this led to the customary rewards, notably the position of *Teniente general de la Real Armada Espanola*¸ a marquisate and a gorgeous palace-home in Seville.

Building on these foundations the Spanish Navy would go from strength to strength under capable Bourbon kings, reaching its apogee during the War of American Independence when in 1779 the largest fleet of the sailing era, the 68 ships of the joint Bourbon squadrons, swept

through the English Channel while the Royal Navy hunkered down in its ports. The Spanish commander was Luis de Cordova y Cordova in the *Santissima Trinidad* — yet in a few short years the malignant influence of Godoy would reduce the fleet to a shambolic replica of its former glory. So that when a certain Commodore Nelson met another Spanish admiral, also called Cordova, in the same great ship off Cape Vincent he was able to treat the Spanish with a contempt which would have caused him great grief had it happened earlier in the century.

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Returning to the 1740s; Spain's order of battle for the war is not well documented, perhaps because of all the changes being implemented in the previous decades, which included new construction as well as new doctrine, new ordinances, and officer training to match. The process was far from complete when war broke out. Especially, the officer corps was a real mix of good and bad. Practical seamanship was below par, mainly because, as Mr. Hughes has explained, sailors preferred to work for money. Most of the ships were inoperative most of the time, due to lack of money, material, and The Farnese's renewed focus on the Mediterranean. Switching the merchant emporium from Seville to Cádiz, however, which was done by the Bourbons, made it easier to requisition merchant vessels in time of war.

The Spanish source Crespo, who is probably the most accurate, lists as *royal* ships 27 of 50 guns and up, and 7 frigates of 36 guns or more. With Spanish orders of battle there is often a question of whether a ship is owned by the state or not. Lighter vessels are often *guardacostas*, that is, craft at the disposal of local viceroys and captain-generals, or privateers hired for additional protection. There is also the danger of confusing *frigatas* with frigates. *Frigatas* were vessels of a certain size and armament, not necessarily frigates, though they could be.

The highest estimate is 58 warships in all, but this includes vessels of the Caracas Company — Spain's charter company for Venezuela — and galleons converted for military use. By another measure there may have been 45 military ships of 24 guns or more available. Some Spanish sources list only 25 ships of 60 guns or more, of which 22 were in commission by December of 1739, and 8 'frigates' of 50-58 guns. However, the reader may assume armed merchantmen of 50-60 guns were added to the list, since the Spanish Crown assumed so. Richmond says the Spanish had 21 'great ships' at Cádiz (though actually they were distributed between the three Iberian naval bases), 8 attached to the *Flota*, 5 on the Argentine station at Buenos Aires, plus the *Barlevento*. The latter was the original escort service for the treasure galleons — the *Flota* — but was sadly decayed. Its area of operation now lay only between Veracruz and La Habana. The latter was the chief port in the Caribbean. Veracruz, Portobelo, Chagres, and Cartagena des Indías were the chief ports where treasure was loaded; Veracruz for the Mexican mines and the Orient (off loaded at Acapulco), Portobelo and Chagres for the Peruvian mines, and Cartagena for Colombia.

[Civilian 60-gunners would be far weaker than naval ones, simply because the calibre of the cannon would be smaller. The guns were only for defence against pirates and might not even be mounted.]

The Spanish dominions in the Pacific had their own navy, amounting to 3 royal vessels. There were 4 more operating out of Perú or the Argentine (which seems to count both the modern Argentinian and the Chilean coasts). Technically, the Caribbean did too, but the numbers — 15 at the outbreak of war — seem always to be included in the counts above. The Pacific fleet, which is worthy of some graduate student's research, seems to have been built and manned from resources entirely within that theatre. Another 9 vessels in royal service, ranging from a couple of small frigates down to some sloops, cannot be located with certainty.

Cartagena's squadron, in the Mediterranean, was tied into a cleverly wrought web of local defences that included a complementary force based at Naples — southern Italy being a possession of the Bourbons. Individually, these forces were weak, but like the strands of a spider's web, they were resilient, up to a point. The system, sufficient to deal with Barbary pirates and the small Italian navies, broke down under the weight of the ever increasing British presence in the Western Med. This is one of the chief reasons the Spanish pressured the French to enter the war on their side — to gain the services of the powerful Toulon Squadron.

The increase in the Spanish corsair arm was deliberate policy. Perhaps it was forced on them because of the manpower drain into that 'branch of service', but privateers were also cheaper and often more effective. In previous conflicts, the *Armada* had done most of the work. Now, to save money and to keep the Navy concentrated in European waters, the jobs of cruising for prizes and hunting for enemy pirates were farmed out to contractors. Some of the work went to the *guardacostas*, and some to new concerns like the Havana and Caracas Companies, in addition to the traditional corsair captains. The downside, as always with 'privatization', was the temptation to stretch a point on what constituted a 'legitimate target', and the use of unsavoury methods. For example, corsairs saw no reason why they should not smuggle contraband bought from the enemy. or sell captured cargoes on the black market.

Only four privateers have been identified by name operating in the Bay of Biscay, with another four possibles, and two operating either out of Cádiz or in the Med. These are a mere drop in the bucket. The only names that can be found in the histories are those that were captured or sunk. The real effects of the privateer war can be read in Beatson's lists of prizes taken each year. They number in the hundreds.

The three European naval bases of Ferrol, Cádiz, and Cartagena each had a squadron, but these were variable in composition, and at the outset of war, El Ferrol, the one with the fewest dockyard facilities, had the most ships. Most were not ready for sea.

At war start the dispositions were as follows:

At Cartagena, *Capitan General* de la Bena (or Bene) Maserano commanding):

América (64)
Constante (64)
3 ships in ordinary

Richmond says Bena had four ships fit for sea. No sources seem to include the galley network or the affiliated ships of Bourbon Naples.

El Ferrol was the base for a 'flying squadron' — that is, a 'fire brigade' — tasked with raising the alarm if the British came down in strength, and with escorting trading ships from the New World, that, as all too often happened, were diverted from making landfall at Cádiz. Just prior to the outbreak of war it was augmented by ships from Cádiz, partly to make the phoney 'descent on Ireland' appear more real, and partly because it was easier there to pick up the Trades that would carry them to the Caribbean. Fitting out and bound for the Caribbean were:

Galiçía (70)
San Carlos (66)

Another 6 ships were in ordinary and 3 were laid up. The first were:

Galiçia (70)
Princesa (70)
Principe (70)
Réiña (70)
Santa Ana (70)
Fuerte #1 (62)
San Isidoro (62)

Laid up were:

León (70) (newly arrived from the Caribbean and in bad shape)
Griega (30)
San Francisco-Xavier (30) — this last actually rated as a fireship.

At Santander on the Bay of Biscay, newly arrived from the other side of the Atlantic, were:

Castilla (60)
Guipuzcoa (60)
Esperanza (50) — a 'heavy frigate'

Cádiz boasted the main naval yards and (in peacetime) the largest squadron. The squadron protected the entrance to the Med, watched the British at Gibraltar, put out to escort the treasure ships safely to harbour, and was severely drained by the need to reinforce the Queen's Italian projects and the inadequate Caribbean defences.

At war start there were the following, under the able Don Rodrigo di Torres:

Fuerte (62) — technically sold to Naples but based at Cádiz
Galgo (56)
The brigs *Iupitero* and *Marte*, newly transferred from El Ferrol.

Another 8 ships were in ordinary:

Andaluçia (62)
Asia (64)
Fuerte #2 (60)
América (64)
Constante (64)
Nueva España (60)
Réal Familia (60)
San Antonio (60)

Richmond says thirteen more were laid up but the real count appears to be eight. Either he was counting some of the ships that had rebased to El Ferrol, or his sources also counted a number of merchant galleons. The two 'ready' ships were preparing to assist the *flota*.

In the run up to war there was an argument between the Colonial and War Ministries over the proper use of the home fleet. Eventually, under the threat of the British amphibious 'descent', a compromise was worked out and several warships were dispatched to the Caribbean, but even after that, many ships remained where they were throughout the war. In 1741 for example, there were nine ships of 60 guns or better in service at Cádiz, and one at El Ferrol. Mid-war, when the fighting in the Caribbean had died down and French were trying to field large combined forces against the Royal Navy at home, the distribution changed.

The Politics of Britain

Since starting War of Jenkins' Ear and later expanding its scope to include the War of the Austrian Succession was not a matter of Royal Will one must look to the factions of Parliament instead. British kings were figureheads. Nonetheless, the so-called Hanoverian dynasty retained more soft power than their modern counterparts. In the Electorate of Hanover George II enjoyed despotic power but in Britain he was legally constrained — and what is more, if he had tried testing the bounds of his constraint every cog of the machinery that kept him on the throne, including the Army, would have conspired to kill him. But, being a figurehead and remaining a figurehead granted him a sort of inviolability; he was an Institution. Ultimately, he was the source of legitimacy for all the laws that were passed, and, if he were careful, he could still exercise a veto. More importantly, all appointments and promotions within the Government and the Military were subject to his review, and here he was in no danger when exercising his veto. Similarly, if the King was happy with a public servant that man was in little danger of losing his job without a concerted effort by his opponents. However, Parliament had the power to adjust the King's salary, and had tried and tested ways of 'loyally obstructing' his wishes, including forming an Opposition party around the Heir Apparent. The first George had found this galling; his son was used to it.

[It is interesting to speculate just how 'absolute' a so-called absolute monarchy like Spain's or France's was. Pure forms of government never last outside a community larger than a city state — they are hard enough to establish within the family unit. The Persian king of kings could say what he liked, he still had to deal with refractory satraps and other forms of imperial entropy.]

Parliaments on the Continent were generally legal bodies, France's *Parlement* being the prime example. They did not legislate, they adjudicated. They had power, and were a vehicle through which 'the people who mattered' could find a voice, but without the power to legislate they could not challenge the Monarch. In contrast, the British (essentially English) Parliament was a legislative body, while also functioning as a vehicle through which 'the people who mattered' could find a voice. This gave it enormous power.

By the middle of the 18th Century Parliament superficially looks similar to its modern version, if a little rough around the edges — after all, there are only so many variations one can come up with when groups of men come together to govern a country. The key difference between then and now was the way power was exercised at the personal level: through Patronage. This dynamic still exists, of course, but in the 18th Century the patronage system not only guaranteed political survival, it guaranteed a man's survival, period. Continental-style patronage in contrast, while it naturally worked the same way, was used for a different purpose: prestige for the patron and survival for the client, yes, but without glaringly overt political effects.

In Parliament, the factions created through the patronage system were used overtly in the political arena. There were no parties, there was no machine politics. There were just clans — 'families' in the Mafia sense — whose heads came to understandings or had fallings out, and whose 'tails' voted as directed in order to visibly demonstrate the power of their patron. The reward, for patron as well as client, might be as tangible as a job at the Admiralty or as intangible as the Abolition of Slavery.

[Agreed, nothing has really changed — behold the Human. Probably the real difference between then and now is the scale of the Bureaucracy, which has forced even human relations to be written in permanent ink so that they can be properly classified and filed. The French Encyclopedists and their Enlightenment can be thanked for that.]

For convenience, historians label the two main agglomerations of Parliamentarians with opposing views Whigs and Tories. This is a gross simplification, but to be fair, one the groups used themselves. The ruling government, colloquially known as the Ministry, was composed of men whom King George approved of — remember, that was the one thing he could dictate. The Whigs had been continuously in power (ignoring the presence of the odd 'token Tory' minister) since the end of the War of the Spanish Succession and the botched Jacobite Rising of 1715. They had been led since the 1720s by Robert Walpole, currently First Lord of the Treasury, which is what the office of Prime Minister evolved from; Walpole is usually called Britain's first Prime Minister. By calling Walpole the leader of the Whigs one must also infer his inner circle of family members, such as his brother Horace, close friends, members of his community, and members of his own department. Then there were his chief allies, a triumvirate who will appear below, and with whom his role was that of an 'enabler'. Beyond this was the vast host of men working in allied ministries, sharing the same outlook, and owing him favours. The last was indeed a host. They did not call him 'Bob's Your Uncle' Walpole, the King of Patronage, for nothing. Control of the purse strings allowed him access to the King and the means of rewarding supporters.

Robert Walpole

['Tell them Bob's your uncle' is what a young man headed to London would be instructed to say when he looked for a job.]

Though the King's Favour was essential to the enduring rule of the Whigs, corruption was the glue that cemented it. Walpole distributed political favours wholesale, gerrymandered elections, and packed parliaments. This was not entirely for his own benefit. He served the King, whose favour he never lost, and he served his Country, which proved more fickle; controlling votes simply made it easier for him to govern 'in the best interests of the State'. In any case, clan loyalty trumped; he would not have remained leader long if he had not rewarded his followers. The consensus of historical opinion seems to favour Walpole on state policies, but with a caveat that his systematizing of corruption very nearly ruined his legacy — and the Government. Walpole used corruption as a tool. His successors practiced it without a larger aim in view.

By the 1730s, there was a glaring irony to the Whig ideology. Traditionally, they represented the mercantile, urban, 'progressive' interests — in short, The Moneybags. But, after several decades entrenched in power they had

come to represent the Establishment. Stability was now their mantra, and scrambling for cabinet posts their main hobby. The subset known as ‘conservative' Whigs embraced ‘Country Principles’ — in oversimplified terms, they opposed Industrialization. Now, Country Principles was predominantly a Tory slogan, so it is no surprise that these Whigs leagued with likeminded Tories. At the other end of the spectrum were that group of radical Whigs who called themselves the Patriots. It has already been recounted how the Patriots were the men pushing for war. If one says ‘purely for sordid financial gain’, there was another angle. They wanted to bring down Walpole because they believed he had abandoned the party’s roots. Naturally enough, the Patriots proceeded to ally themselves with the new rising class of *Tory* monied interests. Because of course both groups were excluded from the Old Whig crew’s power bases and saw the Colonies as the place to create their own. Walpole could not act decisively against this bloc of Tory-Whig radicals, because he needed their votes on certain key issues, particularly that perennial bane of British prime ministers, the Irish Question.

These dynamics pertain to the war with Spain in the following way. Whig merchants tended to be those who had developed trade ties with Old Spain (because when their families became merchant dynasties there was no means of trading with the New World directly). A war, closing Spanish ports, would cripple their businesses. The new Tory merchants, unable to break in to the Whigs’ Old Spain monopoly, had turned to the New World, investing in colonies and various quasi-legal shipping concerns — smugglers to the Spanish, and Interlopers to the Whigs. A war would bring opportunities and cripple their rivals. A similar political progression had been going on in North America. Initially, it was the Whigs, fleeing Tory oppression under the Stuarts, who dominated the colonial scene. Now, the Tories were growing in influence as they searched for opportunities for advancement denied them in England.

The Patriots would not succeed in toppling Walpole immediately with their war. Such was the strength of his position. It would take an old-school cabal led by Lord Carteret, Walpole’s chief rival since 1730 and a man who enjoyed an equal measure of King George’s favour (had had been Secretary of State at one point), plus certain disaffected members of the Minister’s inner circle. The coup would take place in a very modern, almost commonplace way. No riots, no poison, no swordplay. During the 1741-42 session of Parliament Walpole simply gained passage of a minor bill by such a small margin that it amounted to vote of no confidence, and he resigned. And, King George made him a peer. Carteret lasted barely two years before he was accused of pandering to Hanoverian interests. But since he was already a Peer he could only be dismissed from his post.

As will be seen, Carteret favoured a Continent-first policy, which meant he was not exactly a poster boy for the Patriots. He was simply able to take advantage of the utter failure of their own candidate, who only lasted a few hours in the job. Carteret would probably have preferred not to fight a war, but since there was one, Britain should shoulder her share of the burden and not go treasure hunting on the other side of the globe.

In contrast to both the Patriots and Carteret, Walpole’s foreign policy can be summed up by the phrase ‘peaceful coexistence’. After the War of the Spanish Succession, Britain needed a period of recovery. There was rapprochement with France and Spain. This grated on many, including the King. The War of the Polish Succession (1733-1735) brought isolation when a policy of strict neutrality backfired. Britain prevented France from sending sufficient aid to her Polish proxy and refrained from assisting the other side, alienating everyone involved. The French in consequence turned to their natural ally, Spain, engaging in what was known as the First Family Compact. By the late 1730s, however, relations with France were slowly warming again. And then the war came.

Planning for war was the responsibility of the Privy Council. To be pedantic, the Privy Council of the United Kingdom was itself of little importance. For one thing the body was too large to be effective as either an executive or advisory body. Since the Restoration the Monarch had relied on a very small group of advisors, which were formed as a standing committee of the Privy Council, known, with typical British obfuscation, as the Committee of Council. This is the body which has evolved into the modern Cabinet. As early as George I’s day the Committee of Council had begun to make executive decisions on its own, submitting them to the King for approval after the fact.

At the start of the war the Committee (for short) was headed by Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1st Duke of Newcastle. He was an ally of Walpole’s, though no longer a close ally, and shared his distaste for war and colonial adventures. Newcastle was Britain's *de facto* colonial secretary, a role which he enjoyed. He also controlled Church appointments. Officially he was Secretary of State for the Southern Department. His brother, Henry Pelham, was Paymaster General. His best friend, Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke, was Chancellor. These three men formed a ruling triumvirate, with Walpole as ‘facilitator’; his eventual fall was partly due to their gradually easing him out.

Newcastle oversaw the Committee, but he did not run it directly. That job fell to the First Commissioner of the Committee. Since 1733 this had been Sir Charles Wager, who just happened also to be First Lord of the Admiralty. It was common for men to hold overlapping positions like this, and in fact a number of members of the Admiralty served on the Committee from time to time. Senior field commanders also sometimes attended, either holding a seat or being summoned to provide input. The Committee thus had oversight over all naval operations (as it did over land operations, and diplomacy). Despite having the head of the Navy at its helm the Committee suffered for most of the war in having a dearth of experienced naval officers on tap.

Grand strategy was muddled, but that is Britain for you. It was ever thus. (Victory comes easier if your enemies cannot gauge what your plan is.) Newcastle hoped to the last minute to avert the outbreak of a proper war. As already mentioned, this manifested itself in granting permission for

a series of ‘reprisals’ to satisfy the bloodhounds and bring

Spain back to the negotiating table.

Duke of Newcastle

Once war broke out Spanish trade remained the focus in the first years, especially the bullion traffic. Mostly, this was pandering to the Patriots and their planter allies in the Caribbean, but obviously, if the Spanish Crown had empty coffers they would soon sue for peace (how this would guarantee the *causus belli* — reparations — was not explained). It was a strategy that tempted everyone with dreams of repeating exploits like those of Drake and Bloody Morgan. Circumstances were somewhat altered, but that did not matter. In the public consciousness war with Spain meant galleons and quaysides awash with loot.

Other strategic possibilities were spun off from this basic premise. There was the chance of picking up new colonies. The MP Sir John Oglethorpe, Governor of Georgia and pals with the Deputy Director of the South Sea Company pushed for an invasion of Spanish Florida. Oglethorpe is an example of one of the new-money Tories, eager to open markets in the New World because the Whigs had locked him out of Old Spain. Newcastle was not a fan (and had strongly opposed the creation of Georgia in 1733).

[Oglethorpe is a rather unusual example. He seems to have had a genuine social conscience and planned to make Georgia into a model colony for the marginalized to receive a fresh start in life. He was also suspected of being a closet Jacobite.]

Sir Charles Wager put forward a scheme for a descent on Cuba, which was taken as far as offering land grants to men in the American colonies as an enlistment incentive. But those on the spot, especially Vice Admiral Vernon, who was even now preparing to sail to the Caribbean, foresaw tremendous difficulties. And, the established merchants foresaw competition.

[Canada, for example, became a British possession after the Seven Years War simply because the powerful Sugar Lobby wanted to swap all the captured French sugar plantations before the price of sugar crashed. (Hence Voltaire’s pun about ‘a few acres of snow*’).]*

What else could be done to make Spain pay what she owed? Blockades — that is what navies do, they blockade things. But blockading in the classic sense of the word was exceedingly difficult. Many ships are required for a tight blockade. Any change in the wind, or the coming of a storm, and the blockade would be broken. Blockades require a lot of resources: not just victuals and gunpowder, but dockyards for maintenance, spare ships, and on and on. The Caribbean is a larger body of water than one expects from looking at a map, and there were few facilities in the theatre. Forget attacking the Pacific ports. Anson’s voyage around the world was to be an epic of endurance, nothing more. A general blockade of Spain itself would not suffer from the problems of distance, and in fact, when the British felt compelled to pull their resources back to Europe in the face of war with France, it became an attractive option. But, the Atlantic coast of Europe is a dangerous place to try and maintain a station.

Of course, a port can also be neutralised by occupying it. Occupied ports can be traded back for other concessions. There is always the possibility of loot. If the port is small, occupation might not be too expensive; the population might not be able to retake it. Again, the Pacific was too far away, but there were several Spanish ports worth considering in the Caribbean. In the event, some would be raided, but the only real attempt to occupy an enemy port, at Cartagena des Indías in 1741, demonstrated the unwisdom of the concept. Occupying a port in Spain, on the other hand, would only be a temporary measure, and an even tougher proposition. The British had tried it in the past, as they had also tried taking on French ports. It never ended well.

Well, what about raiding? A raid does not continually drain resources. It may even pay for itself. Raiding is What The Royal Navy Does Best. The Spaniard can fight, but he is powerless against the Sudden Raid. Yes, raids were definitely on the table.

There was also a hybrid strategy which could be applied to the Caribbean. Descend on a port, destroy the fortifications and customs house, and leave. Sounds, odd, but it had a logic to it. The object was to open the port to British merchants in the region. Only the Spanish Crown objected to trading with the British, not the locals. Destroy their symbols of authority and there would be no problems. This strategy fulfilled the requirement for reprisals and benefited the Traders, and all at a relatively low cost. Why conquer a colony or occupy a port and then pay maintenance on it, when you can simply trade with it?

Something like this strategy was soon adopted, though the idea of a dramatic capture remained, if only as a means of finishing the war quickly. But, as the war widened and

dragged on, as Walpole's Ministry fell and was replaced by men with different agendas, Europe consumed most of the Government's interest. The war in the Caribbean devolved into the common round of convoy escort and cruising for prizes; in the end, perhaps the most effective strategy of all.

As for the potential enmity of France, the British intended a dual strategy of intimidation and caution. The French were not to be molested (unless a captain thought he could get away with it), but they were also to be warded off by the retention of a powerful Channel fleet. If only one could be created…

First Lord of the Admiralty Sir Charles Wager

The Royal Navy

On the outbreak of war, Britain had (according to the most reliable sources) 124 ships of the line, including 'hybrid' 40- and 50-gunners (popular in the last century, but too heavy for escort and scouting duties, and too light for the line of battle), and 26,000 men to man them. Of the 124, some 44 ships were completely unfit for sea. Of the rest, 35 were in 'sea pay' — ready to sail or actually at sea. 10 of these were in the Med and 6 in the West Indies, leaving 20 in home waters, of which 10 were light guard ships with half crews. Though manpower was not enough to equip the entire fleet, still, in comparison with any opponent, it was a huge number. Britain would be sure to win in any protracted contest.

[On paper there were six 100-gun 1st Rates, three of which were 'sort of' in commission as floating HQs, and thirty 80- and 90- gun 2nd Rates (70-gunners were two-deckers and thus 3rd Rates). The difference in totals comes from the fact that a number of these ships were virtually hulks. Two of them are in fact confirmed as hulks in the official records. One was undergoing a rebuild and two more may have been already cut down to 74s. The 80-gun Second Rates of this period were a poor design choice.]

Initial war plans were cobbled together by 73-year-old Wager and the 79-year-old Sir John Norris, Admiral of the Fleet since 1734. Both men had long and distinguished naval careers behind them, but neither was schooled in the handling of large fleets, either administratively or operationally. Norris, the commander-in-chief, was also given direct operational command over all forces in home waters.

Rear Admiral Nicholas Haddock, previously tasked with observing the Barbary Coast and the Spanish from the central position of Minorca and now ordered to chase the elusive *flota*, was made commander of the Mediterranean Squadron on the outbreak of war. Haddock's command included a watch on Cádiz and he was also required to loan ships to patrol the Atlantic coast of Spain. As of October 1739) he commanded 31 ships:

At Gibraltar:

Lancaster (80)
Somerset (80)
Berwick (70) — rotten planking
Edinburgh (70)
Ipswich (70)
Augusta (60)
Pembroke (60) — sprung bowsprit
Plymouth (60)
Chester (50)
Eltham (44) — bound for England
Grampus sloop
Salamander bomb
Mercury fireship
Anne galley fireship

(About half of these were refitting after failing to locate the *flota* off Cádiz.)

Cruising the Italian coast:

Tiger (32)

On general cruise (usually means watching Cádiz):

Canterbury (60)
Dragon (60)
Jersey (60)
Gloucester (50) — returning to England to take part in Anson's expedition
Garland (32)
Aldborough (20)
Gibraltar (20)
Alderney bomb — dispatched to the West Indies
Duke fireship

Convoy Duty:

Falkland (50) — to Alexandria
Solebay (20) — arriving Minorca
Kennington (24) — to Italy
Dolphin (20) — hospital ship

Contemporary with Haddock's dispositions (i.e., October) there were 12 ships on the Jamaica Station (Commodore Charles Brown), 12 more on the North American coast (this counts sloops, revenue cutters, and the like) not counting 2 ships protecting the Newfoundland fisheries (these were always under orders from home waters), and Vice Admiral Vernon enroute to Jamaica with 6 ships (2x 70s, 2x 60s, 1x 50, and 1x 20). Off the African coast were *Salisbury (54)* and (possibly) *St Albans (50*) — the latter is not confirmed but this duty was usually done in pairs; the ships' next station would automatically be the West Indies, because the duty was done on a rotational basis.

Like Haddock, Vernon was given last minute instructions to hunt for the *flota*; being delayed in his departure, he left part of his squadron off the northwest Spanish coast instead of cruising there himself.

(As an example of the difficulties inherent in merely leaving England, Vernon sailed from Portsmouth on 24 July, had to shelter in the Portland roads until 1 August, then wasted a day at Plymouth before sailing for Cape Ortegal on 3 August. Some sorties from the Channel took much longer. An article from that comprehensive contemporary source, the Gentleman's Magazine, reported '9 men-o-war and a sloop' being sent out. It is rarely possible to be absolutely sure of the composition of any formation.)

In European waters, under the command of Norris, were the following:

At Spithead (off Portsmouth):

Boyne (80)
Princess Caroline (80)
Russell (80)
Buckingham (70)
Elizabeth (70)
Kent (70)
Lennox (70)
Orford (70)

Off the Lizard (SW tip of England):

Deptford (60)

Off the Start (the headland roughly halfway between the Isle of Wight and the tip of Cornwall, east of Plymouth)

Dunkirk (60)

The Downs (off the east coast of Kent):

Colchester (50)

Dispatched to the Med:

Prince of Orange (70) — from Spithead
Lion (60) — from Plymouth
Sunderland (60) — from Portsmouth
Superb (60) — from Spithead
Warwick (60) — from Plymouth
Advice (50) — from Plymouth
Argyle (50) — from the Downs
Assistance (50) — from Ireland
Lichfield (50) — from Plymouth
Panther (50) — from Portsmouth

Cruising Home Waters:

Weymouth (60)
Lively (20)

Cruising the Bay of Biscay & El Ferrol

St Albans (50)

Off Cape St Vincent:

Oxford (50) — one of Haddock's ships

At or off Lisbon:

Greyhound (24) — one of Haddock's ships
Dursley galley (20) — one of Haddock's ships

Enroute to West Indies:

Greenwich (50)
Ruby (50)
Success fireship

Arriving from the New World:

Adventure (40)
Kinsale (32) — possibly already arrived
Seahorse (20)

In addition there were a number of very small vessels, rated as sloops or yachts, cruising the various river estuaries: half a dozen or so on the Thames either in the river itself, at Sheerness, or off the Nore, two in the Bristol Channel, two at Dublin and possibly one or two more around the Irish coast, one off the Isle of Wight, and two protecting the herring fishing in the North Sea. One had been sent to Holland (possibly with dispatches) and one was based in Scotland. All the available bomb ketches (3 plus Haddock's from the Med) were being sent to the West Indies.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Norris

The Politics of France

France, the most populous and most centralized kingdom in Europe, was a juggernaut in every sphere of endeavour, though less so by the mid-Eighteenth Century than during the days of the Sun King. The current monarch, Louis XV, came to the throne at age five, just like his predecessor. He was a great-grandson of Louis XIV, but also his immediate heir, all the others having died. Acting as Regent was the Duc d'Orléans.

Because the duke loved power rather than war, and because Louis was a sickly child whose potential replacements were all contentious choices, throughout the period of the 1720s and 1730s France embarked on a policy of diplomacy with her neighbours. The policy of naked force indulged in by the Sun King had proven crippling in the long run — though the threat of using such force again was naturally an effective diplomatic ploy.

[Orléans had many, many faults, but he was faithful to the dynasty and never seriously thought, or so it seems, of seizing the throne. He considered himself a steward, and a rather lazy one at that.]

The spider at the center of the web was Cardinal Fleury. He was Louis XV's 'first' Minister, and had been his tutor; the King never disregarded his advice. André-Hercule de Fleury had been born in 1653, when the Sun King was a teenager. He would live to be 90. His family were 'nobles who worked for a living', not by the sword, but by collecting taxes. Sent to the Jesuits primarily to obtain a good education, he entered the priesthood. Through good connections he obtained the post of Almoner to the Queen — that is, he handled her charity work. When she died, Louis XIV took him on in the same role. During the brief period of peace between Louis' second and third great wars, Fleury was rewarded with the bishopric of Fréjus, in southern France. Often, such things meant only that a man would collect the income, but it seems Fleury found himself on-site; this would have felt like an exile. And perhaps it was. He remained there for 17 years.

Just before the King died Fleury was summoned to Court and made tutor to the future Louis XV; Orléans retained his services after the old king's death. When Orléans died in 1723 the new King was of an age to assume the throne. By then also, Fleury had established an unbreakable ascendancy over his pupil — a benign one, fortunately for France. That said, the 70-year-old Fleury was clearly ambitious, in a quiet way. Thus: when Louis wanted to declare him first minister the Bishop declined, putting forward the *duc* de Bourbon, but this was a bit of subtle, not to say masterful, manoeuvring. First, although Bourbon took on the job, he found the Bishop always a third party at his interviews with the King. So, Bourbon, or rather his mistress, concocted a scheme to force Fleury to retire from Court. Fleury went, apparently voluntarily, to 'make it easier for the King'. But, as the Bishop anticipated, the King soon ordered Bourbon to recall him, and by 1726 Bourbon and his mistress were exiled from Versailles. Fleury still refused to be first minister, but accepted an elevation to Cardinal that same year, which put him in the same role as the more famous Mazarin and Richelieu.

[A word about Bourbon and his mistress. Louis Henri, duc de Bourbon, was head of the cadet branch Bourbon-Condé, and was also styled prince *de Condé, though he preferred to be called* Monsieur le Duc*. He was great-grandson to the famous Grande Condé. Unlike his ancestor, whose chief vice may have been Pride, Bourbon 'has a very limited mind, knows nothing, and only likes pleasures'; he was reputed to be greedy and unmannerly. He would not have made a good chief minister. His mistress was Madame du Prie, a woman in her late twenties and the daughter of a financier. Her two years riding Bourbon's coattails made her the most powerful woman in France. But, if the reader has heard of her at all it is probably because she is the one who introduced Voltaire to the world. It was also she who made Louis XV marry into the Polish royal family that same year (1725), which was not exactly a good geopolitical move. Possibly she did it to spite Fleury. (Or, possibly the King wanted to marry the Polish princess and was happy to see Fleury out of the way at the time, but could not stand the separation for long.) Exiled to a different town than her lover, Madame du Prie killed herself only a year after her downfall.]*

Cardinal Fleury

The Cardinal's good sense manifested itself in domestic policy. France's economy was restored after the financial collapse of the 1720s, though at a heavy price — a burden on the common people that was not lifted until the Revolution. A Good Economy does not always means a Happy Nation, it can mean only happy financiers and bureaucrats. Fleury's slipperiness extended into foreign policy. His opinion was that France was still not ready for war, but if there had to be a war, let it be in Germany. In any case the Empire was the traditional theatre for French diplomacy.

This led to a rather odd circumstance: for much of the 1720s and 1730s Britain and France were allies, formally for a very brief time, otherwise *de facto*. Britain was the one

power capable of seriously upsetting the applecart and had to be conciliated. Fortunately, Robert Walpole held similar opinions about the French.

[Fleury was often called the 'French Walpole'; Walpole was often called the 'French Poodle', or alternatively, the 'Spanish Spaniel'.]

The French were most inclined to partner with the British in colonial matters. They too were trying to expand their operations at Spain's expense. There was some rivalry with the Anglos in the Caribbean, but there were greater points of tension in India and in the Levant, where it was a question of acquiring quite limited trading rights from powerful foreign states like the Ottomans and Mughals; in the Caribbean, no one bothered to consult the Spanish. Moreover, British and French traders had struck a fine balance in the lucrative sugar, slave, and tobacco markets. The troubles between them in North America stemmed mainly, now as later, from the English colonists' desire for expansion colliding with the French desire for as wide a trading network as possible among the native peoples, who fetched them all those lovely furs.

Nonetheless, policy at Versailles was still greatly influenced by the wishes of the Spanish monarchy, because her King was the uncle of Louis XV. Felipe was grandson to the Sun King; Louis was only great-grandson. On the other hand, France was the dominant power in Europe. It made things socially awkward. To help the situation, Fleury arranged two Family Compacts (*no, they were not Peugeots*), or *Pacte de Famille*. Both are germane to the discussions. Thus, before their entry into the war the French were officially friendly to Britain, but in practical terms, friendly to Spain, supplying her with war materiel and renting merchant vessels (and even a few warships) to run supplies under a neutral flag.

The first *Pacte* was signed in 1733 on the eve of the crisis that would be the War of the Polish Succession. Briefly, and remembering King Louis had a Polish wife, France wished to weaken Austria by backing the father-in-law's bid. Additional pressure could be engineered if the Spanish went after Italy, so, although diplomatic, and if necessary open, aggression in Italy was Spain's price, France did not mind. France was pledged to aid Spain if her maritime trade were attacked by Britain, who was shaping up to be Austria's new ally. In return, the French received trading rights of their own. There were two other notable clauses, not implemented at the time: a French promise to help Spain take Gibraltar back, and a transfer of the *Asiento* to France. Both because of this treaty and the results of the War of the Polish Succession, the First Family Compact became a keystone to the War of Jenkins' Ear.

The second *Pacte* was signed ten years later, during the war. It was the main reason France declared war on Britain in 1744; put bluntly, Spain severely twisted France's arm. Spanish aims in Italy were couched in terms of assisting France's war with Austria — though in reality it was France who was assisting Spain. Much of the treaty had to do with the war in Italy and guaranteeing Spain's postwar position there, but there was also a commitment to jointly attack the British. From a naval perspective, apart from the declaration of war France agreed to abrogate her adherence to various international restrictions that Spain had been suffering under since the War of the Spanish Succession, and in return received a greater share (in theory) of the transatlantic trade. This annoyed the British.

Despite the Second Family Compact, France might have weaselled out of the war, but for the fact that Cardinal Fleury died in 1743 and his English counterpart, Robert Walpole, was driven from office in 1742. In both countries, the Hawks took full control. Fleury's replacement was Cardinal Pierre Guérin Tencin, who favoured direct action against England — he was an advocate of the dispossessed House of Stuart, with whom he developed a close relationship during his stint as Ambassador to Rome (until 1742).

Cardinal Tencin

Tencin at least had some interest in a maritime strategy, if only to aid in the restoration of the Stuarts, but he lacked the stature of Fleury, and had to compete for the King's ear with the Marquis d'Argenson and the Belle-Isle brothers, whose *bête noire* was the Habsburg dynasty. They were more open to Spanish entries for aid in Italy. Since the King was, at least momentarily, keen to win his spurs, Germany, and also the Low Countries, where the British and Dutch challenged the French on land on behalf of the Habsburgs, remained central to French war aims. French interest in the Habsburg Low Countries (now the countries of Belgium and Luxembourg) was the *other* reason Britain became alarmed enough to accept war with France.

France's strategic options were quite similar to those of Spain's, and she would ultimately adopt the same method — *guerre de course*, or commerce raiding. In 1739 however, there was nothing but talk. France spoke with Spain about mobilizing Canada and setting up shipyards at

New Orleans, but these were pipe-dreams. The best practical help they could give was a promise to 'run interference' if their ships ever happened to be in the same location as the Spanish.

After the initial outbreak of war there would be the odd clash between firebrand captains trying to escalate matters, but the only serious naval confrontation between Britain and France before they officially went to war took place in 1741, when a powerful squadron under *Vice-Amiral le Marquis* d'Antin appeared in the Caribbean in an attempt to deter the British from capturing Spanish ports — running interference, as promised. War might have broken out then, but instead the action only serves the historian as an illustration of France's difficulties. The squadron was battered by a severe hurricane on the passage over, picked up Yellow Fever at Martinique, and had to limp home with skeleton crews almost as soon as it arrived.

French Vice-Admirals did not normally take to the sea. The post — there were two of them — was a political one, and this operation had a political purpose, not a military one. The last time d'Antin got his feet wet was in 1739, on a diplomatic mission to the Baltic.

[Ironically, Tencin, a protégé of Fleury, began to lose influence almost as soon as he replaced his patron.]

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La Royale (by David Hughes)

On the surface the French system appears similar to the British – the same rigid progression of rank and a limited number of admirals. And the navy also had a flag system to distinguish squadrons, White for the centre, White and Blue for the van and Blue for the rear. But the admirals were designated by regional title, not colour, while two factors of immense significance had profound effects on their service. The nation was governed by hereditary aristocrats operating under their particular priorities, which were — reducing a very complex system to the very simplest — that all actions were judged purely in terms of 'service' and 'honour'. Of course wealth and material goods mattered, but organisations, including the French Navy, rewarded according to degree of service, so that the annual salary of flag officers increased in perfect symmetry with their rank and therefore service. Just to make matters more complex a third feature was also often in play — 'privilege' — implying that either rank of nobility or previous precedence had major claims on posts of service and honour. Hence in the War of the Austrian Succession every single French admiral had a territorial title, while there were no noble British admirals, and the vast majority were not even dignified with the lower title of knight.

The Navy was however handicapped by its lack of '*gloire*' compared with the Army, victorious under Maurice De Saxe and lesser commanders. In contrast the Navy could point to but a few ship-to-ship victories. To make matters worse power flowed from proximity to the King, his mistresses and his Court at Versailles. As a result those who sought power tended to stay with the Court, those who sought honour preferred to be with the Army — especially as Louis XV sometimes served with it, whereas as far as is known he never honoured a French warship with his presence at sea.

At the very top stood the *Amiral de France* (in rank equating to a Royal Navy Admiral of the Fleet). This was very much an office of prestige, of great antiquity and for much of its history of limited connection with the sea, let alone the Navy. Indeed an Admiral of France had once charged English archers on the battlefield, alongside the Constable and the Marshal! In 1651 the title was awarded to César de Bourbon, the illegitimate (but legalised) son of Henri IV — the king 'who thought Paris was worth a Mass' — and from then on it remained within that offshoot of the Bourbon family. In 1737 the title of *Amiral de France* was assumed by Louis Jean Marie de Bourbon, Duc de Penthièvre, on the death of his father. He showed no interest in the Navy (other than collecting his salary of 24,000 livres and many other benefits), his primary concern being to expand his famous collection of watches. His inheritance does illustrate one other principal that bedevilled the Navy, that of 'survivance' — that on the death of a father one assumes his property but is also entitled to inherit his positions of state or rank.

The most senior 'serious' naval rank was that of *Vice-Amiral de France* (comparable to a Royal Navy Admiral). There were two of these positions — 'of the Levant' (meaning the Mediterranean) and 'of Ponant' (Biscay and the Channel). In later years two more would be added — 'of America' and 'of Asia', the latter a lifetime reward only for the great Suffren, for his actions in the Indian Ocean. These posts were held for life and appointed as rewards or as inheritance, normally resulting in agéd and ineffective holders. For example Sainte-Maire, Vice-Admiral of the Levant, died in 1744 aged 89 and Luzern-Bricqueville, *Vice-Amiral du Ponant*, two years later aged 85. Saint-Maire's successor died at a mere 81, and managed to hold office for six days! There was one exception to this pattern. The Marquis d'Antin had previously acquired the Ponant at the age of 28. This was one rare case where *survivance* produced good results, as d'Antin inherited it on the death of his uncle d'Estrées, whose family had occupied the rank of *Vice-Amiral du Ponant* since its creation in 1669. His nephew turned out to be a gifted sailor, leading the combined Brest and Toulon squadrons to the West Indies in 1740. His death from disease the following year was a disaster.

With *Vice-Amirals* absent it became the job of the *Lieutenant-Généralsde la Marine* (matching a Royal Navy Vice-Admiral — most confusing!) to be the active leaders of the fleets. There should have been eight in service, as usual adorned with territorial titles such as *Normandie* and *Picardie* (these were essential for status in an age when wealth and power were associated with land) but most were in their somnolent 70's and some had not been to sea for forty years. In reality, only two served afloat at any one time, one in each of the major fleets. For much of the war Toulon was commanded by Court de la Bruyére, born in 1660 and a *Lieutenant-Général* since 1728. At Brest was the *comte* de Rocquefeuil, born in 1665 and given his rank in 1741. Both vanished in 1744, the former dismissed and the latter dying at sea, leaving no senior flag-officers in the entire navy!

The junior flag rank was that of *Chef d'Escadre* (Rear-Admiral), appointed at the King's pleasure from senior and deserving captains to the twelve positions available (as usual these were named — the earliest created being 'of Bretagne' and 'of Guyenne'). As many as five were still capable of service and commanded in *Vice-Amiral* d'Antin's great fleet, sent to the West Indies in 1740, but their number dwindled drastically as age crippled their sea-going capacity. Those who remained were often careful to ensure that they also served as their own flag-captain, purely of course for financial gain. While a *Lieutenant-Général* made 12,000 livres, a *Chef* made 6,000 but as a *Capitain de Vaisseau* (post-captain) another 3,000 plus 300 for sea-duty! By 1745 the entire situation reached crisis point — all too many flag-officers were utterly incapable of service — some having never served (a classic example being Salaberry de Benneville born in 1663, made *Chef d'Escadre* in 1728 (aged 65), *Lieutenant-Général* in 1736 and *Vice-Amiral* in 1750). And then the last two *chef d'escadre* died, Rochambeau at Brest and Gaberet at Toulon, which meant that there no admirals whatsoever active in the fleet!

Two promotions, both made in 1745-46 when it was realised that the Navy was in this state, illustrate both the good and weak points of the French approach. Note that the key distinction was that a Royal Navy officer, once made post-captain, would, if he stayed alive long enough, become an admiral and then be employed purely at the discretion of the Admiralty. However in France that appointment to admiral was at the whim of the King and his minister. The first example is the *duc* d'Anville, appointed *Lieutenant-Général* by his close kinsman Maurepas, Minister of the Marine, even though he had never previously served in a vessel of *La Royale*. The excuse used was that he was already a *Lieutenant-Général*, though of the Galleys of France (a job which he had just happened to inherit from his father). As far as can be determined his sole 'sea' service was a few trips in his galley around Toulon and Marseilles. Appointed to lead the expedition to reclaim Louisbourg after it was taken by Americans he perished in his flagship on the coast of Nova Scotia. It is believed that he died of apoplexy brought on by sustained and severe sea-sickness.

In sharp contrast is La Jonquière, born of middle-class parents, who joined the navy in 1708 and by consummate service was promoted to *Capitain de Vaisseau* in 1731, at the age of 46. There he became part of the group regarded as the core of the Navy, professional ship-captains often used to nurse less qualified aristocratic seniors. La Jonquière was particularly respected and chosen by admirals to captain their flagships — such as the *Saint Esprit* carrying Vice-Admiral D'Antin to the West Indies in 1740 and *Le Terrible* with Court de la Bruyère at the Battle of Toulon. In the Royal Navy his age would have prohibited him from ever serving as an admiral at sea, but the one saving grace of the French system was that nothing could prohibit a King or his ministers from promoting whoever they chose. Fortunately for La Jonquière, *Le Terrible* had captured a wealthy prize so poverty was no longer an automatic disqualification. Promoted *Chef d'Escadre* in 1746 he immediately made his mark, taking over from the incapable d'Anville on his death, protecting a huge convoy from the British by fighting to the utter end and ending his days in Quebec as a respected Governor-General of New France, with a marquisate to pass on to his descendants.

There are well-known figures who reached their rank through meritorious office, yet in a service where connection and quarterings of nobility were dominant reasons for promotion they were exceptions. One was the Marquis de Caylus, born into a 'service aristocracy' with a general for a father and a father-in-law as an admiral. Caylus himself served intermittently in the army until suddenly in 1727 at the age of 29 he was appointed as *capitaine de vaisseau* in the navy. This would have been unheard of in the Royal Navy — or for that matter in the Spanish — someone being made a post-captain with zero years of experience, but Caylus clearly had friends in court with sufficient influence to over-ride such trivialities as qualifications and experience.

[All this comes from a detailed account by James Pritchard — 'the Naval Career of a Colonial Governor', accessible through JSTOR and giving some fascinating details of this influence — largely generated by multiple female 'associates' of successive French kings.]

Despite the highly irregular nature of his entry Caylus would turn out to be an interested, active and capable senior naval officer, initially serving at Toulon, but sailing the 50-gun *Heros* to New France. By 1740 he commanded the 64-gun ship of the line *Le Boree* and the following year she led a squadron to the West Indies and on return ran into a British detachment which, despite being at peace, he fought to a draw. By any reasonable means this would have entitled him to promotion but, as Pritchard shows in detail, he was blocked by the machinations of Versailles. In effect his prime protector, Maurepas, although supreme in decision-making over materiel (such as the order to build 80-gun ships) ran up against the ambitions of rivals when it came to making appointments. Recollect that the primary political power in this period lay in one's ability to reward with wealth and rank — and while Maurapas could reward with the former using his authority to grant Caylus additional Naval pensions, he could not grant him rank, as that required the approval of the King and other senior nobility. Caylus fought with distinction at the Battle of Toulon as the commander of the 64-gun *Le Trident*, and then with all French admirals now disabled by age or incapability served as one of the three squadron commanders into which the Toulon fleet was divided. Even Versailles finally realized the issue and issued a grand promotion — but Caylus was too young for this and the only way in which Maurapas was able to create younger and capable flag officers was by dissimulation. One of the ancient but newly created admirals had been the governor-general of the French Windward Islands and Maurepas persuaded the King to replace him with Caylus (note no promotion yet to admiral!). This was enough for him to be given command of a small squadron of ships of the line and upon arrival in Martinque was granted the rank of *Chef d'Escadre.* The clear intention was to use him as an admiral, but as the role of the navy dwindled in the final years of the war he was instead retained as Governor,

dying in 1750 before he could exercise his long-sought rank.

Apart from the machinations of nobility and influence (in which it was not that dissimilar to the Royal Navy of the Georgian dynasty) the French Navy was also excessively influenced by geography. This is evident in the titles of its largely ineffectual senior officers, the Vice-Admirals of the *Levant* and the *Ponant* — which in turn reflected a division established at the order of Louis XIV almost a century before. For a fleet of any navy was and is a creature of its naval bases and in France the base and its staff, leaders and operators were parallel to, not part of the command structure of its ships and squadrons. Even more telling was that the two fleets were under two separate civilian authorities, the *Ponant* under the Secretary of State for War and the *Levant* under that of Foreign Affairs. In reality, though, all decisions came from the throne; Louis XIV cared only for efficiency.

When he assumed personal rule the French were building and repairing ships in the same manner as England, partly in ancient and variably efficient national dockyards, the majority owned and defined by Cardinal Richelieu, and in a horde of private docks of various sizes. To a centralizer of power like Louis this was intolerable. Everything was consolidated into a system of a few, carefully supervised and centrally controlled dockyards. Note that 'dockyard' is the English term — the French term was *arsenal,* meaning a port that not only built warships but was capable of arming and equipping them. However, as was almost the norm in France, ancestry and position had intertwined when it came to running these dockyards. Each had a *premier contructeur* supported by a *maître-sculpteur* (this last an essential position as many of the larger ships were judged by the aristocracy in terms of their decoration and not their sailing qualities). Families of constructors tended to control these positions, none more than the Ollivier family at Brest and Rochefort and the Coulomb family at Toulon, where they dominated shipbuilding from 1689 to 1783.

Of the *arsenal* Toulon was the longest established, both for the sailing fleet and for the prestigious if largely ineffectual *corps des galeres,* but it was not until 1670 that the natural moorings were boosted by newly excavated basins, all protected by new fortifications designed by the great Vauban. As no other French naval base existed in the Mediterranean and the city was far distant from Versailles, at Toulon the often-antagonistic civilians, constructors and officers were for once often working side by side, with (it was claimed by many) more efficiency than in other parts of France. As an example, it was at Toulon where under the dominance of Francois Coulomb the navy began building a long overdue series of larger ships of the line, starting with the 74 gun *Terrible* and culminating with a series of 80 gun flagships, the first being the *Tonnant*.

In contrast Brest was within much easier reach of the center of power, Versailles, evidenced when Cardinal Richelieu 'obtained' the governorship of the province of Brittany. Louis XIV ordered that it become the primary base of the *Ponant* and Vauban fortified its superb natural harbour. As the Royal Navy would find to its cost Brest was perfectly suited as the base for a fleet inferior in size, its location placing all those performing a close blockade in peril from storms and its three separate exits allowing for an uncontested sortie when a distant blockade was in place. Although Toulon was the site of innovation it was at Brest that the largest warships were built — though in our period with questionable results; the only first rates being the 110-gun *Foudroyant* which seems to have never left the dock and the 124-gun *Royal Louis* burnt in her stocks just before completion. Alas, fires seem to have been an issue in the *arsenal* with that which destroyed the *Royal Louis* in 1742 followed by an even greater conflagration in 1744. The most prominent naval constructor of the period — Blaise Ollivier — spent much of his last years rebuilding the facilities at Brest, but new construction was inevitably delayed, the first 80-gunners, *Soleil Royale* and *Formidable* not being laid down until 1748, far later than in Toulon.

There was a third 'principal' *arsenal* with an accompanying permanent squadron — Rochefort — initially founded as a counter to the Protestant fortress of La Rochelle and therefore some distance inland on the banks of the River Charante on the Biscay coast. Here, therefore, newly built or commissioned warships had to moor near the coast (at the heavily protected Isle d'Aix) with guns and other needs shipped down by barge from Rochefort itself. All this complexity (which many centuries later would see Rochefort abandoned by the navy in favour of the coastal city of Saint-Nazaire) did not constrain the ambitions of the dockyard, the largest product of the period being the *Duc de Bourgogne* of 80 guns, laid down in 1749.

Other locations were considered naval ports but not *arsenal,* notably Dunkirk and Lorient. Both did engage in construction, especially Lorient which became the exclusive shipyard of the *Compagnie des Indes.* Their ships should not be under-estimated, one being the 80-gun *Orient,* predictably purchased by the Navy on completion. It should be noted that it was not at all unusual for a warship to flip between company and state ownership, a notable example being the 60-gun *Content.* Built at Lorient in 1719 for the Company it was bought by the navy in 1737, achieving some fame by assisting in the capture of the British 70-gun *Northumberland* in 1744. Despite such fame it was then resold back to the company in 1747.

Often forgotten (especially in English accounts) is the success of the French Company in India, especially against the British East India Company: The *comte* de La Bourdonnais, a senior officer of the company navy hastily transferred to the Navy, defeated the British at the Battle of Negapatam in 1746, his fleet having just one warship (the 72-gun *Achille)* but a number of 40 and 44 gunned company frigates. Alas after taking Madras, he was provoked into a 'conflict of honour' (an all-too-common event in a military packed with nobility) with General Dupleix. This resulted in his removal from command and his travel to Europe to plead his case, during which he was captured by the British, prevented from arranging an exchange by King Louis (one suspects the general had more influence in Versailles!) and only pardoned when the war ended, just before his death. Inevitably French naval

control had dwindled to insignificance in Indian waters while all this was going on.

[Dupleix may have had more pull than Bourdonnais, but he could not plead his own cause with any success.]

Not to be overlooked is the third component of the French Navy, the *intendents*. As seems always to be the case this institution also dates back to the early years of Louis XIV when he and his formidable minister, Colbert, asserted once again the second rule of his reign (the first of course being 'I am France'), being to always 'divide and conquer'. The target in this case was the French Navy and most especially its proud, powerful and, for the moment, successful and popular noble admirals and captains. The solution was to expand the role of the *Intendents* — officials posted by Versailles to supervise French provinces — by adding to their remit a new branch, the *Commissariat de la Marine*, charged with the control and supervision of the ports and dockyards in all the provinces and colonies of France. To our eyes this would appear to be a version of a modern civil service, but in reality, most obtained their position through family and influence at Court. This meant a separate line of influence and power, very much aimed at the minor provincial nobility and clearly at odds with the officers of the fleet; the classic clash between the 'nobles of the pen' (the *intendents*) and the 'nobles of the sword'. Following the death of Louis XIV, the senior *Intendents,* collectively known as the *premiers-commis* increased in number and power, spinning off additional bureaus running ever more elements of the fleet. Naturally the better connected of these nobles of the pen acquired the customary habit of obtaining an office, appointing a substitute and never leaving Paris.

However, it should be noted that the *Intendents* that really did the work, those appointed to run the major dockyards, appear to have been capable men, crippled by the utter lack of functionality of their position — best illustrated by the baffling fact that though in theory in command of a massive industrial site like Brest they had no authority over the shipbuilders and constructors and of course none over any of the often-ancient flag officers and nobility of the fleet. It should also be remembered that these men were not merely dockyard supervisors, the best being frequently moved to other positions. For example, Sébastien-François-Ange, the gifted *Intendent* and commissioner-general of Rochefort had previously held those positions in the colonies of L'ile Royale (Cape Breton) and Saint-Domingue and would then be promoted to the rank of *Intendent-General la Marine* — the senior civilian in the Navy. A more typical example is Gilles Hocquartil, whose father held the titles of *chevalier* and *seigneur* and who was therefore a classic example of minor provincial nobility rewarded for loyalty by the appointing of a son to the *Commissariat de la Marine.* Making his way up through the ranks at Toulon (positions such as *petit commissaire* and *commissaire ordinaire*) he was sent first to New France and then Martinique, acting as both dockyard supervisor and financial administrator of the colonies. In 1748 he was ordered back to France and appointed first as *commissaire* and then as *Intendant* of the docks and *arsenal* of Brest and of the Marine works and employees of the province of Brittany. He appears to have performed well, despite his notorious perpetual anger at the claimed independence of Blaise Ollivier the chief constructor, and at the endless absence and prevarications of the senior officers of the navy. One cannot tell who was right, but this three-way division of authority cannot have helped the French Navy — which managed to survive with some honour in the War of the Austrian Succession but collapsed in ignominy in the following Seven Years War.

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As Mr. Hughes has alluded to, like most of the European navies, *La Royale* got its start in the first half of the 17th Century. Before then navies tended to be ad hoc affairs, due to the expense of maintaining them. Indeed, even after becoming an institution, the fortunes of *La Royale* waxed and waned, again, like every other navy, for the same reason.

One must remember that, unlike Britain and Spain, France did not require a large navy for her survival; *La Royale* shone in those decades when the kings of France desired a prestige fleet to impress their neighbours, not when there was a military necessity. Where the British would institute a building program out of fear of being left behind and unprepared for some immanent war, the French tended to be the ones providing the trigger by building a fleet they did not really need. And, more so than other countries, bureaucratic infighting was the spark for a new naval program. The Navy Department would get the ear of the King and make the most of the opportunity, for its own prestige and not some strategic imperative.

The classic version of *La Royale* was formed through the policies of Richelieu and Louis XIII, and was the gold standard to which future generations looked. The project collapsed thanks to the civil wars known as the Fronde (and possibly thanks to Mazarin's cheeseparing). The Sun King succeeded in reviving the navy with the help of his minister, Colbert (who held the posts of first minister, minister of finances, *and* secretary of the navy), but again, the minority of Louis XV led to neglect. The next revival did not occur until after the disasters of the Seven Years War. Thus, during the current crisis *La Royale* was not at her best. But, she did exist, and did remain a substantial threat.

[The origin of the name La Royale *is not clear. One suggestion is the location of the HQ, on the rue Royale.]*

Richelieu's navy consisted of two discrete elements, a blue water navy armed with heavy cannon, and a Mediterranean galley fleet. Colbert's navy retained the galleys, but more as a billet for aristocrats whom the King wished to reward. The blue water navy underwent significant technological and tactical development. The Regency of the 1720s saw massive cutbacks, particularly a limitation of no more than 50 ships of the line to remain in service and a moratorium on new builds. In this, they followed the Spanish model already described — though in reality Spain was following the French lead. When the *comte* de Maurepas became *Secrétaire d'État La Marine*, efforts were made to improve and modernise. Sufficient work was done to maintain *La Royale* as a viable threat, but with no margin for disasters.

Mr. Hughes, in a piece taken from this author's *Mistral* Commentary, has this to add:

'Le Comte de Maurepas, *Secrétaire d'État La Marine* (a position that combined into one individual the authority of the Board of Admiralty and Navy Board) decided that any new builds must be larger and more powerful. This because as the colonies in the West Indies, India and the Americas became more valuable, ships needed to be designed for ocean waters, not just the Channel and Mediterranean as had previously been the practise. Long voyages meant more storage space and that in turn added displacement. Of course the value of greater power when ship numbers were limited was also taken into account. Whatever the operational inadequacies of Maurepas, he was an innovator. Knowing that elderly French ship designers were as conservative as those in Britain, he encouraged the professional growth of new men, going so far as to send them to visit the yards of the old enemies, Holland and Britain. Despite the financial problems of France (not least the diversion of funds to maintain the court and courtiers of Versailles) Maurepas was able to keep the French fleet close to its official strength.

Numbers alone must be qualified by the steady improvement in the quality of these ships. The first new design to appear was the 64-gun *Éole* launched at Toulon in 1733. In her case there was no change in armament, just in displacement, but the two that followed were truly innovative. Both the 74-gun *Terrible* and the 80-gun *Tonnant* were massive improvements on previous French ships of their rate. In both cases this was achieved by increasing the size and taking advantage of this to increase the number of "ship-killing" guns, while improving the stability of the ship and the strength of the upper-works through reducing the number of light guns carried high up. Unlike earlier and Royal Navy ships they therefore carried no guns on the poop (mind you should a captain or admiral wish to increase status by adding some light 4-pounder guns there Coulomb had no problem — hence the *Terrible* sometimes "growing" to a 78 or even an 82 by the placement of small guns in previously empty ports!).

The degree of improvement is best seen in the following table, which lists the older and then the newer versions of each rate (note that the French system differed to that of the British – with a 74 considered a Second Rate). The change is most clearly seen in the First Rates, the two deck 80-gun *Tonnant* having a comparable 'ship-killing' capacity to the earlier three-deck 100-gun *Foudroyant*. She was also cheaper to build and maintain, explaining why France would use 80-gun vessels as flagships for the next 20 years. Note however that the fleet-flagship should have been the 118-gun *Royal Louis* – burnt on the stocks in one of the fires that plagued the dockyard of Brest. In all, one 80-gun, three 74-gun and seven 64-gun ships of the new design were completed during the War of Austrian Succession.

Smaller French ships were notably different from those of the Royal Navy, if only because they were developed for two very different sea conditions. On the Mediterranean a small galley squadron was still around and despite very limited finances two *demi-galères*, the *Chasse* and *Decouverte,* just 75 tons and with only two 3-pounder guns each, were built in 1742. This was to presumably retain in office and income the irrelevant and outdated officer corps of the Galleys of France. Far more effective were two other ships that were built to catch the dreaded *zebec*, these latter being fast and weatherly craft, notable for being able to convert from lateen (a form of fore and aft sail) to square rig, which made them difficult to catch and therefore a favourite of the Barbary pirates. The zebec's only handicaps were the large crew needed and a hull design that prevented heavy guns from being mounted. The French solution was the *barque-latins*, essentially a super-zebec but adding oars that allowed the crew to take her to windward; the ships also mounted fourteen 6-pounder guns. The *Sibelle* and *Legere* had been the scourge of pirates since built in 1728 and were equally deadly against British merchantmen. They were backed up by smaller tartanes: two masted ships with a lateen rig. One such was the *Diligent* built at Toulon (like the others) in 1738.

Strangely the small craft serving at Brest and La Rochelle were far less effective, probably the weakest sea-going element of the French navy. All but the newest were two deckers of from 30 to 40 guns, but even inferior in design to the Royal Navy versions, since they had an inadequate freeboard – one with a height of just four feet at best between sea level and the lower gun ports. Therefore just like the Royal Navy 80-gun three-deckers they were handicapped in all but smooth seas. The French solution was to class these ships (11 in all) as *flutes* and operate them most of the time 'en flute'. The expression referred to the open row of keys on a flute which matched in appearance the empty lower gun-ports of the flutes. As an example the *Seine* (most were named after rivers) of 1719 was rated at 30 guns in peace and 54 in war — in practise for most of the time she just mounted her upper-deck battery of 8-pounder guns, with the heavier and of course often unusable 12-pounders seldom mounted below. On several occasions they were used as troop transports, packing soldiers onto the empty gun-deck. As a partial replacement for these the navy adopted the lug rig (best described as a 'square-shaped fore and aft sail'), very suited to the varying sea and wind conditions of northern Europe, using it on fast sailing ships called *chasse-marées*. But these were only suitable against small craft, being limited to a few swivel guns.

However just as Coulomb improved large ship design at Toulon, so Ollivier began to replace outdated designs at Brest. There were already several *frégates légères* in service, single-decked ships of 20 guns, mainly built at Le Havre but for service not speed. Ollivier favoured a sleeker ship with taller sails and with the *Medeé* launched at Brest in 1741 created the first of the genuine frigates, carrying 26 8-pounder guns. A year later La Rochelle completed the very similar *Volange*, also capable of out-sailing any Royal Navy Sixth Rate or sloop.

While French ship-construction improved compared with the British, the rest of the French dockyard system remained mired in corruption and strangled by patronage. On several occasions this had profound effects as when the expeditions to the West Indies in 1740 and to North America

in 1746 were delayed, with provisions eaten in port, leading to massive loss of life from disease and scurvy. Similarly the delay in getting the Brest Fleet to sea in 1744 contributed to the failure of the attempt to invade England that year. There were hopes that this problem could be circumvented by expanding the shipyard at Quebec in New France, but progress was slow and as late as 1743 the only ship in service built there was the *Canada* of 28 guns.'

[Excursus by David Hughes, Mistral *Commentary by Ian Weir, pp. 13-16 .]*

Before she entered the war France had 47 ships of the line (those bearing 42 guns or more), of which perhaps 20 were fit for service. Even less were prepared for sea duty. The French are traditionally respected for the quality of their ships, though their crews are usually labelled 'mediocre' due to lack of practice. This was more or less true during the period under discussion. Besides the corruption and bad practices described by Mr. Hughes, the dockyards were severely hampered by a shortage of materiel, much of which had to be purchased from the Dutch and the Baltic nations. Naturally, shortages increased once war broke out, though the Dutch had no compunction about selling naval stores even then. Crew quality varied. Individual ships often fought extremely well, even against hopeless odds. But there were only two grand fleet actions during the war — actually, only one that resulted in a real battle. The real problem was a lack of skilled officers, especially among the higher ranks, where seniority and nepotism counted for everything. For many nobles an admiral's uniform was simply another source of income.

La Royale's ships were concentrated at the main naval bases of Brest and Toulon, with a strong detachment halfway down the Biscay coast, divided between Rochefort and La Rochelle. The muster point for this squadron was usually the roadstead of Aix. This was to protect the large quantity of trade that came out of Nantes, Bordeaux, and Lorient. Dispositions for 1739, as best as can be determined, are given on the following page.

Jean-Frédéric Phélypeaux, *comte* de Maurepas (1701-1781)

Born at Versailles, into what was known as a Robe family — the bureaucratic nobility as opposed to the military nobility — he was trained from childhood to serve as Secretary of State to the King. From 1718 to 1749 he was *Secrétaire d'État à la Maison du Roi*, 1723 to 1749 Secretary of State for the Navy, and from 1776 to his death First Minister of State. (His story is thus significant for the War of American Independence.)

As secretary of the royal household he was responsible for the royal servants, the royal properties, and the administration of both the Capital and provinces. He also oversaw Religious Affairs, which included mundane matters such as clerical appointments and weighty issues, such as what to do with the Huguenots. These roles became attached to the Department of the Navy during his tenure. Colbert had done something similar by combining the Navy with the Finances. The reason is simply that in those days men purchased these offices, which were heritable; it was only natural that a man combine his assets.

However, it is as *Secrétaire d'État de la Marine* that Maurepas is best remembered, and *La Royale's* story through the War of the Austrian Succession and the preparations that preceded it is very much his own story. When France and Britain finally went to war Maurepas was already in decline; La Royale's failure to execute his plans put him in disfavour and he was manoeuvred out of office by his rival the duc de Richielieu in 1749. Exiled to the provinces for writing an epigram against Madame de Pompadour, he regained favour under Louis XVI. Which is perhaps unfortunate, because his policies hastened the Revolution.

In 1739 *La Royale* was distributed as follows.

Brest Squadron, under *Amiral de Ponente* the *marquis* d'Antin:

Foudroyant (110)
Dauphin Royal (76)
Juste (76)
Lys (72)
Neptune (74)
Sceptre (74)
Superbe (76)
Achille (64)
Ardent (64)
Eclatant (62)
Elizabeth (64)
Fleuron (64)
Mars (64)
Sainte Louis (64)
Hercule (60)
Triton (60)
Brillant (56)
Diamante (54)
Mercure (56)
Rubis (54)
Argonaut (46)
Gloire (46)
Parfaite (46)

Plus two frigates, *Astrée (30)* and *Vénus (26)*, and the *Fee* brigantine. In addition, about six privateers are known to have been based in the Channel ports or at Brest. They may not have been given official *letters of marque* at this early date, but could have been hired as escorts by the Spanish. There were undoubtably more whose names are lost to history.

Over the summer of 1739 d'Antin led a diplomatic mission to the Baltic; it returned in October. The ships involved were:

Bourbon (76)
Ferme (74)
Retribution (74)
Toulouse (62)
Amazon (46)
Bellatrix sloop
Insulaire, a 'light' vessel carrying 30 guns.

Toulon Squadron under 'acting' *Amiral du Levant (actually Chef d'Escadre)* de Roche-Allard (or Laroch-Alart, or La Rochelert)

Conquérant (68)
Duc d'Orléans (74)
Espérance (74)
Sainte Ésprit (74)
Solide (66)
Terrible (74)
Borée (64)
Éole (64)
Sérieux (64)
Heureux (60)
Léopard (62)
Alcion (54)
Flore (54)
Tigre (56)
Aquillon (46)

Rochefort/La Rochelle station:

Sainte Philippe (74)
Content (60) — at L'Orient
Appollon (56)
Néreïde (44)
And the frigate *Victoire (22)*

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRADE

Spanish $$$$

The Spanish silver dollar was the primary currency of the New World. In a way, it still is — the American dollar is a lineal descendant. The dollar sign ($) symbolises the Strait of Gibraltar; pieces-of-eight *are* dollars: 25¢ is two-bits of a piece of eight. Spanish silver was the medium of exchange of merchant houses throughout Europe. And, of course, it was used by the Spanish Crown to fund the Government and the Military.

Although the bullion trade was important enough to warrant State overwatch, most of what was being shipped was private, not public monies. So much money was involved that during the war the Fifth, skimmed from only two convoys plus a handful of single-ship bullion runs, was sufficient to fund the Spanish Navy for most of that same period.

[Over the course of the war about 60 million pesos were shipped. About 11 million were taken by the British.]

In theory, the bullion trade ran as follows. Treasure from Perú was shipped north to Panama by sea, and packed by mule across the Darien Isthmus to Portobelo — or, when the Chagres River was high, floated to Chagres. Once on the Atlantic coast, the cargo would be loaded onto galleons bound for La Habana. These would be joined by galleons bearing Mexican silver from Veracruz and Colombian gold from Cartagena de Indías. In the opposite direction, silver from the Americas went to China by way of Manila, to buy tea, silk, and spices, which came back on the return trip and were unloaded at Acapulco before being transhipped to the Caribbean.

[Why not do like everyone else and sail round the Cape of Good Hope? Well, for one thing, the boogie men of Sumatra. More importantly, remember that the Pope had divided the world in to Spanish and Portuguese spheres of influence? There had to be a matching dividing line on the other side of the globe. Otherwise, how could each have been give a half? Actually, the Pacific line was more of a squiggle.]

Leaving La Habana in convoy, the galleons bearing this vast hoard of goodies, known as the *flota,* or *flota de Indias*, would head for Cádiz, traveling northeast through the Florida Strait to the latitude of San Agustín or even Bermuda before catching the Trades home. At a safe distance from land their escorts would usually return to La Habana, unless the cargo were critical or the escorts due for relief. Normally, the Azores were the *flota's* first landfall, and from there the ships would sail to Cádiz. In wartime,

however, they often made detours and used other ports, as circumstances dictated.

The return journey to the Caribbean with finished goods and commodities was made by dropping down to the Cape Verde Islands to pick up the Trades, sailing west until striking the Brazilian coast, and heading northwest through the gap between Grenada and Tobago. This route was favoured by the Trade Winds and relatively free of inclement weather. A more dangerous route, used by naval squadrons and troop convoys, was to make landfall in the Leewards and head along the island chain to Puerto Rico, Hispaniola, and Cuba.

The *flota* was not a smoothly running operation. There might be months of delay before cargos were loaded; galleons were often lost because the ships were unable to depart the Caribbean before the hurricane season began. During the period under discussion, convoys from Portobelo and Cartagena were suspended, and there were only two *flotas*: one in 1739, travelling before war broke out, but still fair game in British eyes, and one in 1744. An attempted shipment in 1745 failed. Ships regularly made the run from Veracruz to La Habana; the difficulty was in getting to Spain.

To protect the galleons, there was the *Barlavento*, the Windward Fleet. At one time this had been a substantial element of the *Armada*. By the 1730s it had been reduced to two ships: the *Europa (60)* and the *Bizarra (50)*. At the end of the current war the formation was dissolved. Still, the *Barlavento* had its uses. As escorts, the ships, though carrying lighter guns than equivalent ships of the line, could drive off privateers. The *Barlavento* operated in the Gulf of México and Florida Strait, though sometimes they participated in the run to Spain; encounters with British ships of the line were rare, and in the Gulf of México nonexistent. The ships of the *Barlavento* frequently carried cargo as well.

[Archaically, the entire Spanish treasure fleet was sometimes known as the Barlavento*. The name was also applied to the Havana Squadron. The Havana Company was partly instituted as a replacement. During the war, the* Barlavento's *commander was* Jefe d'Escuadra *Benito Antonio Espinola. Espinola was frequently called upon to perform combat duties as well. In a word, he was ubiquitous.]*

A vital element in the bullion trade were the *azogues*. These were special ships, usually fast, heavily-armed merchantmen, or even warships, that periodically made a dash across the Atlantic to Veracruz. They travelled singly or in pairs, and they frequently set out with a powerful escort. They carried quicksilver — mercury — which is used when mining silver and gold. '*Azogue*' literally means 'quicksilver' and the name was soon given to the ships carrying it (perhaps a sailors' pun referring to their speed and elusiveness?)

[When extracting gold and silver, mercury is used to form an amalgam with the precious metal. In the case of gold, which was mainly in the form of flakes panned from river beds, a sluice lined with mercury was used. The gold would bond with the mercury as it passed down the sluice and the unwanted dross would run off. The amalgam was then refined, the mercury turning to vapour and leaving behind the purified precious metal. In the case of silver, mercury replaced the usual smelting process. Since ancient times silver was extracted from lead ore by smelting. But by the mid 16th Century the Spanish had already mined out the known deposits of high grade ore in the Americas; to extract the metal from poorer grades, a mercury process was developed. Instead of a sluice, the crushed ore was mixed with mercury and either heated or spread out and allowed to 'ferment' in the sun until the mercury had bonded with the silver, after which the amalgam would be refined. Apparently the process is still employed. Spain, still blessed with mercury deposits of unusually high purity, claimed a monopoly on all mercury production and distribution.]

Like the other great maritime powers, Spain had monopolistic merchant concerns, of which two have some importance in the Atlantic trade. The *Real Compañía Guipuzcoana*, or Caracas Company, was a Basque trading concern. Founded in 1728, its corporate mission statement was to break into and dominate the cocoa trade, hitherto a monopoly of the Dutch, who traded 'illegally' with the smallholders of Venezuela and the Guianas. Uniquely, the Company was the only firm allowed to import and export goods directly to and from Venezuela. Great profits were made because the Basque Country did not fall under Madrid's customs regime. They controlled the local government as well. The other company of note was the Havana Company. Only established in 1740, it was important because it owned the La Habana shipyards.

Like the other big trading companies, the Spanish ones had a paramilitary component. The Caracas Company typically had three to five commissioned 50-gunners at sea in any given year, plus several frigates, and a few supporting sloops. The frigates and sloops were used for fast runs and the 50s sailed in convoy. Both companies also ran their own coast guards.

At the outbreak of war, the Caracas Company had two ships enroute to San Sebastian from the company base at La Guaira, Venezuela: *El Santiaguillo (16)* and *San José (52)*.

(Sometimes French ships appear on the Caracas Company books. These were employed in blockade running when France was still a neutral, or hired for extra muscle. None were royal vessels, and would have had lighter 'broadsides' in combat. Nevertheless, they were well-crewed and considered formidable opponents.)

Buy British

Although this Commentary intends to describe naval affairs along Europe's Atlantic coast, the origins of the War of Jenkins' Ear cannot be explained without a detailed look at what the British were doing elsewhere, most especially in the Caribbean. It will also help to discuss the situation in India when it comes to the fighting at sea between Britain and France.

After the ruin of her trade during the Eighty-Years War (1568-1648), Britain began and long continued a policy embodied in the Navigation Acts, designed to restrict or prohibit imports from other countries. In a familiar pattern, the colonies were to supply raw materials and receive finished goods in return. Holland was the primary target of

these acts, since the Dutch who became a nation thorough that war, established a cinch on international shipping.

The Navigation Acts are famously cited as one of the causes of the American Revolution, but in fact the earlier editions gave favourable terms to British colonists, who were allowed to trade freely within the system, and who could also trade non-restricted commodities externally without penalty. Finished goods, however, had to be bought from England.

Then, too, the Colonists were in the enviable position of enjoying the protection of the Royal Navy while they conducted their smuggling operations among the Caribbean islands. The Spanish Crown protested and frequently set the dogs on them, but Spain's local representatives were only too happy, for a cut of the proceeds, to obtain necessities of life that the mother country failed to supply.

The Act of 1663 was somewhat onerous, as it forced all European goods bound for the British colonies to be rerouted to England for inspection and customs before being sent on to their destinations. (This was similar to the Spanish practice.)

The most irritating act to date, however, was the Molasses Act of 1733. This one really was irksome. French sugar had, through overtaxing, at one time become more expensive than British sugar. By the 1730s, however, this was no longer the case. Seeing their profits slump, the Sugar Lobby tried to maintain the level of consumption of their sugar by the device of imposing heavy duties on French sugar. Naturally, smuggling increased, and naturally, this led to an increase in 'incidents' that might one day trigger a war.

Still, those who complained the loudest about violations to the Navigation Acts were not foreigners, or even colonists. The noisiest whiners were also the most dangerous — Big Money. Of the various trading cliques, the Sugar Lobby was the most influential, but it only squalled when the Americans tried to horn in on the trade by secretly purchasing French sugar and selling it at home. Most incensed was the South Sea Company, which claimed a monopoly, by Royal Charter, over *all* trade in the Spanish sphere.

The Triangular Trade

The Triangular Trade was not an exclusively British preserve, but they were the ones who employed it to the fullest extent and it is best explained here. Their trade with the Americas is often defined as the Triangular Trade. It involved slaves, sugar, and rum. These days, naturally, the issue of slavery is the aspect that receives the most attention, but in the 18th Century that institution was accepted as a matter of course. Being a 'dirty' industry, like tanneries or soap making, it was not discussed in polite society, but, like tanneries or soap making, it was a necessary part of the economy.

There were actually many triangle routes. The one implied here saw clothing, guns, and rum shipped to Africa, followed by the shipment of slaves from Africa to the West Indies, followed by the shipment of sugar and other Caribbean goods to Britain. A full cycle took about a year to complete.

Another route started from New England, with goods sent to Africa, slaves to the West Indies, and sugar to New England. Unlike the more familiar triangle, this one did not run in a continuous cycle; each leg worked independently.

A third triangle reversed the flow. It involved the shipment of basic commodities, especially fish and wood, from North America to the West Indies, followed by sugar and rum to Britain, followed by finished goods to North America. (On a map, this route would look more like an 'L' with its corner in New England, since sailing against the Trades was not possible.)

Ships from both Europe and North America arrived first in the Windwards, usually at Barbados or Antigua (or Martinique for the French). Trading zones were the Antilles, and Jamaica (or western Hispaniola for the French). In wartime, the route home around Cuba's Cape Antonio was abandoned in favour of the trickier Windward Passage at the eastern end of the island. Apart from the contrary winds, the Spanish privateer base at Santiago de Cuba and the French ones in Saint-Domingue made this route dangerous as well, but it was not necessary to use a full squadron of ships of the line as escort, as would be the case when using the Florida Strait.

Merchant ships are notorious for resenting convoy rules, but at least the nature of the sugar crop made forming convoys easy, since it was harvested more or less at the same time across the region. Sugar convoys left the Caribbean in June, and again in September, after the peak of the hurricane season. Like the French and Spanish, the British escorted these valuable convoys all the way home, using ships that were due for relief.

Other, local, convoys applied the more usual practice of keeping their escorts only until they were out of the danger zone, about 100 nautical miles from port, or as far north as the Soundings (Cape Cod). Inter-island trade did not use the convoy system until very late in the war (and naturally the traders blamed the Royal Navy for their shrinking bottom lines). Heavy losses were incurred because both the Spanish and French used privateers as their weapon of choice; they swarmed everywhere and could be found as far north as the boundary between North Carolina and Virginia (latitude 34°).

There were the 'runners', too. Lone ships who hoped they were fast enough to outrun both the privateers and the convoys. High profits could be made by being the first into port (which was why the merchants hated convoys). But the insurance premiums were higher, too.

India

Britain's trade with the Subcontinent was in some ways similar to Spain's relationship with Nueva España. That is, by far the greatest volume and value of the trade was conducted within the confines of the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia — few people in those parts were enamoured of British woolies. The trade was also supposed to be something of a monopoly of the East India Company

but was plagued by ‘Interlopers’ who continually stole market share regardless of the stiff penalties. Unlike the New World, though, these adventurers usually sailed under British colours. Interlopers were a headache for the Royal Navy as well as the Company, because they liked to race ahead to sell their goods at maximum profit, and therefore were unwilling to sail in convoy. Not that the Company would have let them, anyway.

The British Crown also had less control over its traders than Spain, or even France. The Company’s fortunes waxed and waned over the decades and were frequently more dependent on the reception they were given by local Indian potentates than the dictates of the Directors in London. At this point in time, however, while the Company was enjoying a boom in the East, and almost 15% of British imports were coming from there, Parliament was locked in a bitter oversight battle with the Directors (who were of course MPs or Peers). Parliament periodically bailed the Company out, which justified tighter control and allowed the Government to milk a greater share of the profits, which the Directors naturally objected to. It might be asked, if the Company was as rich as legend makes it, why did it need bailing out? Well, sometimes it did, and sometimes it did not.

Starting with the first voyage in 1601, the emphasis was on finding new markets for British goods. This proved harder than expected, so the captains, being resourceful and adventurous, went with the flow and wound up participating in and sometimes running the already established local networks, often going so far as to forge ties by marriage to the local elites. Many of these were Indo-Portuguese — because the Portuguese had naturally done the exact same thing in the previous century, marrying into the local merchant communities. Commerce, in most parts of the world, is still a family affair. If the State ever took its support away from corporate Commerce it would collapse — it has no wives or grandmothers to keep it running.

This situation meant that the Company officers on the ground made fortunes while the Directors burned capital trying to keep things afloat. But by the 1740s things were changing. There was a new focus on cornering the long-haul market and leaving the locals (Indian, Indo-Portuguese, Anglo-Portuguese, or Anglo-Indian) to run their own local networks. The EIC’s reputation as an independent Government only came later, when the fighting between Britain and France, and the speedy decline of the Mogul Empire, drew the Company into new roles, for which it was ill suited and which ultimately led to its replacement by the British Crown.

The middle of the 18th Century, therefore, was a time when a goodly portion of the trade was making it back to Britain and the Directors were in funds. In 1742, when the Carteret Administration began to support the Habsburgs more openly and it looked like war with France would be inevitable, Parliament agreed to push the Company’s monopoly renewal, which was due, back to 1783. For which Parliament received a loan of £1,000,000 to help with the war effort.

Speaking of war, the French and British also fought in India from 1744 through 1748, but though in the short term the French did well, Versailles’ utter lack of interest essentially guaranteed the disappearance of French trade from India after the Seven Years War. It was at that time that the EIC’s fortunes really took off.

With respect to naval operations, those ships of the Company that did sail between Britain and India took the following route. Typically sailing from Britain in later summer to catch the Trades, off Cape Verde, they made for Brazil. This was the same route taken by the West Indies trade, and indeed, the EIC from time to time had interests in the Caribbean, too, particularly slaves. Sailing to India, however, involved crossing the Atlantic again after reaching Brazil, and heading south to the Cape of Good Hope. Cape Town was still a Dutch possession, run by the VOC competition, but Britain and Holland were at least technical allies. By the time the ships rounded the Cape it was usually the monsoon season, but rather than riding those dangerous winds north, they would cut across to Indonesia. This was a tricky bit of sailing, since no one had chronometers and it was hard to tell how far east one had sailed. Many ships ‘discovered’ Australia without being able to return and report.

Usually, some trading would be conducted in the East Indies — though the EIC was technically banned from operating there by the Dutch — before the ships made their way to Calcutta. The EIC had two other bases of significance, at Madras and Bombay. These there bases had separate administrations with their own regional interests. Whenever ships were dispatched home, however, they would all follow the same route, sailing southwest past Madagascar in the season opposite the monsoon, when the winds reversed, past the Cape, and back to Brazil. From there they might tour the Caribbean and visit New England, or head straight for the Azores and thence back to Europe. If the same ship made a round trip — and this was not always the case — it would probably take two years.

The EIC ships were ‘heavily’ armed, but like other such vessels (e.g., those of the *Barlavento*) only with respect to the ships they might expect to encounter during peacetime, such as pirates or the fleets of small craft owned by native rulers. Perhaps because the Company enjoyed a high degree of independence from the Crown, its ships were not normally requisitioned to serve as escorts or as a reserve to the line of battle, which was something both the French and Spanish often did.

The Levant

The ‘Turkey Trade’ was another thing the Royal Navy had to be concerned with. The French dominated trade with the Levant, but the British had their own *Company of Merchants of England trading to the Seas of the Levant*, chartered in 1661. Although governed by the usual company officers this concern was more fluid in its membership. The number of 300 individual merchants is often quoted, and at least one wartime convoy numbered over 100 sail.

This trade had the advantages that the Turks were happy to buy English goods, and that things at the Muslim end of the

Mediterranean were supervised by proper consuls who received pensions (and were thus not tempted to take a cut of the duties). The ships traded mainly with Smyrna, Istanbul, and Iskenderun, plus those ports belonging to Venice, Syria, and Egypt. In peacetime they even bought silver at Cádiz.

The Levantines were used to sailing in convoy due to the ever present threat from the Barbary Coast. Indeed, the Royal Navy kept a squadron of 10 ships of the line based at Minorca primarily as a deterrent to pirates. After war broke out, however, this force became significantly overstretched (even after augmentation) because of the need to provide escorts whilst-and-at-the-same-time trying to blockade the Bourbon fleets.

The Company survived in one form or another until 1825.

Other Shipping Concerns

Britain's other shipping interests were in northern waters, relatively safe from enemy attack, but not from privateers, nor from 'friendly' competition. Perhaps the three most important were the Baltic trade, vital for ships' stores — particularly timber — the herring and cod fisheries, and the coal trade.

The Baltic trade might also be considered to include the trade with Muscovy (Russia) by way of the White Sea. It also had a political angle, because of Hanover's interest in the port of Bremen. At this time there was little danger of enemy interference. Denmark was favourably disposed to Britain thanks to a popular marriage alliance, while Sweden, nominally France's puppet, was distracted by a <very> badly executed war with Russia and in any case was not inimical to Britain. This meant Britain had little difficulty obtaining materiel for ship building and repair, in contrast to France and Spain — even Spain got here naval stores from the Baltic, by way of Holland, but only slowly.

Fishing is not a subject that crops up in discussions of dynastic war, but there has always been competition and if this does not start wars, it certainly makes them more likely. The main fishing grounds were where they have always been: the Grand Banks off Newfoundland, Iceland and the Norwegian coast, and the North Sea. Fishing fleets tend to behave like their prey when confronted by an enemy line of battle and are not worth pursuing, but they could be harassed by privateers who had failed to find better pickings. Only the Grand Banks were a bone of contention between the Bourbon powers and Britain; elsewhere the competition was between the British, Danes (including Norwegians) and Dutch, all more or less on the same side.

In case the reader is not convinced commercial fishing is worth discussing, the wars of the 18th Century caused the collapse of the French industry after the British achieved dominance on the Grand Banks, which in turn led to an irreparable loss of skilled seamen and the ruin of the French Navy during the French Revolution.

Coal is, if anything, less glamorous than fish (even if Captain Cook did sail around the world in a converted collier), but it was a critical part of the British economy. Apart from its use in the various machine industries that were beginning to appear, coal from Newcastle was used to heat London's homes. When, in 1745, Bonnie Prince Charlie led a substantial force of rebels into England, there were grave fears he would capture Newcastle and hold London to ransom.

French Trade

The nature of French maritime trade lay somewhere between the British 'free trade' and Spanish 'closed system' models. Trade could be conducted by independent entrepreneurs, established merchant houses, or the great *Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales* (*CIO*). However, in every case, trade was strictly regulated by the *Ministère de la Marine*, which not only set regulations, but handed out contracts. It also developed policies which did not always accord with the wishes of the planters and traders. Canada, for example, was seen as a place to dump excess population, similar to the Thirteen Colonies — though the project, imposed from the top down, never really went anywhere.

Sometimes there were advantages, as when the Second Family Compact adjusted the share of trade in Spanish America in France's favour; all the merchants had to do was fill the vacuum. Usually, however, the French found it hard to compete with the British 'free trade' model, rudimentary though it was in those days. Sometimes this was directly the fault of the Crown. For instance, in 1747 — yes, *during* the war — Versailles granted a tobacco monopoly to the City of Glasgow! True, the Glaswegians formed a powerful Tobacco Lobby and already had great market penetration in the Caribbean, but after all, they were the enemy.

While the planters, mostly in the sugar industry, may have formed a powerful interest group they lacked the clout of their British cousins. Many were simply the representatives, or 'factors' of rich aristocrats who were socially prohibited from dirtying their hands with Trade; the Aristocracy had its own dynamic, asynchronous with that of the Bourgeoise. From Versailles' perspective, overseas trade was merely a vehicle to generate import-export duties and various other taxes.

In the Americas and Africa the *Ministère de la Marine* might be considered the 'parent company', whose subsidiaries dealt in furs, fish, sugar, tobacco, and slaves. A royal West India Company, which also dealt in Canadian furs, had been created in the 17th Century, but it did not last. The established locals did not want the competition and froze them out. Rivalry with the British was probably most intense over the Grand Banks fishery. An equilibrium had been established in sugar and slaves, while the British dominated tobacco and the French dominated furs. Growth in these industries was at Spain's expense. But the Grand Banks were a free-for-all. This enterprise involved huge numbers of vessels — as early as the 16th Century over 500 took part. The French had by now lost their base on Newfoundland, but retained the islands of Saint Pierre and Miquelon (the whole had been known as the royal colony of Plaisance). They also controlled Cape Breton island and its formidable fortification, Louisbourg. As mundane as it was, this industry provided *La Royale* with a well of experienced sailors; when the British destroyed the fishery during the

Seven Years War they also destroyed the French Navy's cadres.

In the East, the classic model prevailed — the *CIO*. Never very solvent, it was a Crown monopoly that went through a number of iterations from its initial founding in 1604 to its eventual dissolution during the Revolution. Like the British East India Company it held a monopoly on trade in the Indian Ocean (and the South Pacific); but its rivalry with the British in India was the product of one man's ambitions — Joseph François Dupleix, the French Governor General in India. By the 1730s the Mughal régime, which long preferred the French to the English, was in steep decline, forcing the French to seek new contacts, mainly in South India. This gave the British freedom to work their magic in North India, and naturally the Europeans came to blows as they expanded. From 1741 to 1754 Dupleix struggled to oust Britain from the Subcontinent and other parts of Southeast Asia, using the general state of war to his advantage. But in the end he failed, thanks to the jealousy of his peers and general apathy at the French Court. The Crown was never really interested in grabbing market share on the Subcontinent, only in obtaining those luxury items the locals were willing to sell to their coastal factories.

Militarily, the *CIO* could be useful. Being subject to royal control, its ships could be commandeered for naval service. In several actions during the war, ships of the *CIO* were present in an escort role. The 64-gun *Content* is noted for participating in a heavy action against the British late in the war, but usually their ships were used to shepherd convoys to safety while a naval squadron covered them.

Trade with the Levant — that is, the ports of the Ottoman Empire at the eastern end of the Mediterranean — was especially coveted, even though the Silk Road had long been bypassed. It had long been a French preserve, with a number of Marseilles-based trading families well established in the Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt, backed by an equally long diplomatic cordiality with the Ottoman Sultan at Istanbul. The Ottomans handled trade with the Christians through a series of bilateral Capitulations, documents which laid out each sides rights and privileges. Venice and Genoa had the oldest extant ties; France's capitulations dated from 1500. They achieved their best deal in 1740, granting them a near monopoly — though in reality the Ottomans swiftly granted or renewed capitulations to other nations to prevent this. The French scored big because they had helped broker the recent peace between the Ottomans, Austria, and Russia in a manner that was most unfavourable to Austria.

The Levant trade only needed light escort, but the Atlantic and India trade was another matter. In time of war, ships outbound from France's Atlantic coast would collect at La Rochelle or Ile d'Aix. A naval squadron had the job of escorting the convoy out of the danger zone. In wartime the merchants did not sail unprotected from then on. Typically, six ships were assigned as escorts (this was one reason the battle fleets were not very active; the escorts were fully manned, leaving other ships with scratch crews). Also, the escorts usually remained on station until it was time for the merchants to go home.

The French Crown charged their traders 8% for this escort service, and since the money was necessary for the maintenance of the war, the escort captains were given strict instructions not to go chasing after prizes but to ward their charges closely at all times. There were heavy penalties for infringing any of the rules laid down for convoys, plus the insurance premiums for ships traveling unescorted were 30%-35%. Paying the 8% was cheaper, even though it was seen as legalized extortion.

[The word 'convoy', derives, as one might expect, from the idea of conveying things, but from at least the 14th Century it held its common military meaning of providing protection by escort. However, the convoy *was also a tax on wine, which was shipped in vast quantities out of the Atlantic ports.]*

The French placed less emphasis on their colonies *per se*, despite their richness, instead regarding convoy protection, whether of traders or troop transports, as the most important objective. This was very much because of that 8% tax. They had no means of supporting a fleet in being at any distance from Europe. Their affairs in the Caribbean and India were limited to spasmodic patrolling and 'showing the flag'. When it became necessary to go on the offensive, the *guerre de course* strategy prevailed. In this, their methodology was again very much like that of the Spanish.

MINOR ALLIES?

Within the North Atlantic theatre there were three other powers possessing navies who needed to be taken into consideration. In order of importance they are: Holland, Portugal, and Denmark.

Lists of ships for each of these nations can be found at the back of this book.

Holland

The Dutch possessed both a significant navy and a largish army. Together, the Dutch and British formed what Europe called the Maritime Powers. The relationship was a rocky one, but as a pair of Protestant nations in close proximity to the Catholic juggernaut France, they needed each other.

Holland's active role in the War of the Austrian Succession will be discussed in more detail later. Until 1743, she steered clear of war. Partly this was due to the rapid decline of their Navy after the end of the Anglo-Dutch wars. Quite naturally, after a period of intense effort and forced national unity a reaction set in. The Dutch still had plenty of ships, but they were owned by the individual provinces now plunged into deep rivalry, and subjected to cheese-paring oversight by administrations that were more concerned with provincial profits than national defence.

This disunity was fostered by the French. Traditionally, Dutch political life divided into two main factions: those that preferred to trade with France, and those that did not. This split corresponded loosely with another split between the so-called Republicans and the Orangists, the latter favouring enhanced powers for the princes of Orange who acted as their commanders-in-chief, and the former a more, well, *republican* form of rule. Because the House of Orange traditionally opposed the House of Bourbon, this meant,

somewhat ironically, that it was the Republicans who favoured trade with a régime that despised them.

It was standard policy for the French, who were pleased to buy all sorts of commodities from the Dutch, including naval stores, to keep them in check with the same sort of vigorous diplomacy they used with the lesser German princes — a bit of trade concession, a bit of bluster, and a lot of cultural penetration. This worked until 1743, when a contingent of 20,000 Dutch joined a similar body of British troops in Germany and defeated a French army at Dettingen, on the Main River. The Maritime Powers were not at war with French. They were merely acting, as frequently happened in those days, as 'auxiliaries' under contract to the Austrians. But, a more bellicose Administration was driving the bus in France by then, and they took umbrage. This in turn heightened fears of French invasion, so that by the spring of 1744 there was a general build up of forces on both sides in the Low Countries and war with France came to the Dutch as well as the British.

Nevertheless, the Dutch did not become full antagonists against France until 1747. Technically they remained neutral — and indeed continued to sell vital military stores to France, and to provide them with intelligence — until Louis XIV's exasperation with them led him to declare war and invade their country. Their armies did fight, but reluctantly, as autonomous 'auxiliaries' of the Habsburgs. They also lent troops and ships to the British, but only to fulfil prewar treaty obligations. The reader may begin to see why the Sun King grew progressively tired of the Dutch. Invaded, the Dutch mobilized quite a large fleet of small craft useful for operations in the Rhine delta, but their deep social and regional divisions prevented them from putting up a coordinated defence. Fortunately, they only had to endure one campaigning season before the war ended.

Portugal

Portugal had been independent of Spain since 1640. The reader is probably aware of Portugal's 'special relationship' with the British, who purchased their port wine in such large quantities (along with other items). There was a lot of pro-British sentiment. Indeed, in Brazil, the largest and most populous Portuguese colony, a low-intensity war would soon break out with the neighbouring Spanish colonies.

But in Europe, the Portuguese king, Dom Juan V, and his Court, were more circumspect. They cultivated cordial relations with the Bourbon House. Portugal had made the mistake of joining the British invasion of Spain during the War of the Spanish Succession. On the other hand, when urged to join the First Family Compact in 1726 — Dom Juan was entitled to by right of marriage — they refused and retained the alliance with Britain they had formed in 1704, trying to persuade the Spanish, not very successfully, that such an alliance did not give the British a beachhead on the Iberian Peninsula.

Dom Juan had a long and successful reign (1706-1750); a young man of about 17 when he came to the throne, he was styled the Portuguese Sun King. Under his rule Portugal rose for a second time to heights of prosperity. Also, like the Sun King, he adopted an Absolutist style of rule, partly because, having been stuck with the War of the Spanish Succession when his predecessor died, one of the first things he learned was that councils do not win wars. But, those offices of state that he retained, he staffed with exceedingly able men, from the Ambassadors to France and Britain, to his adventurous brother, the Infante Manuel, who acted as an unsanctioned goodwill ambassador and became a Man of Distinction in Europe. Dom Juan also (usually) maintained good relations with the Papacy, offsetting his country's special relationship with the heretical English.

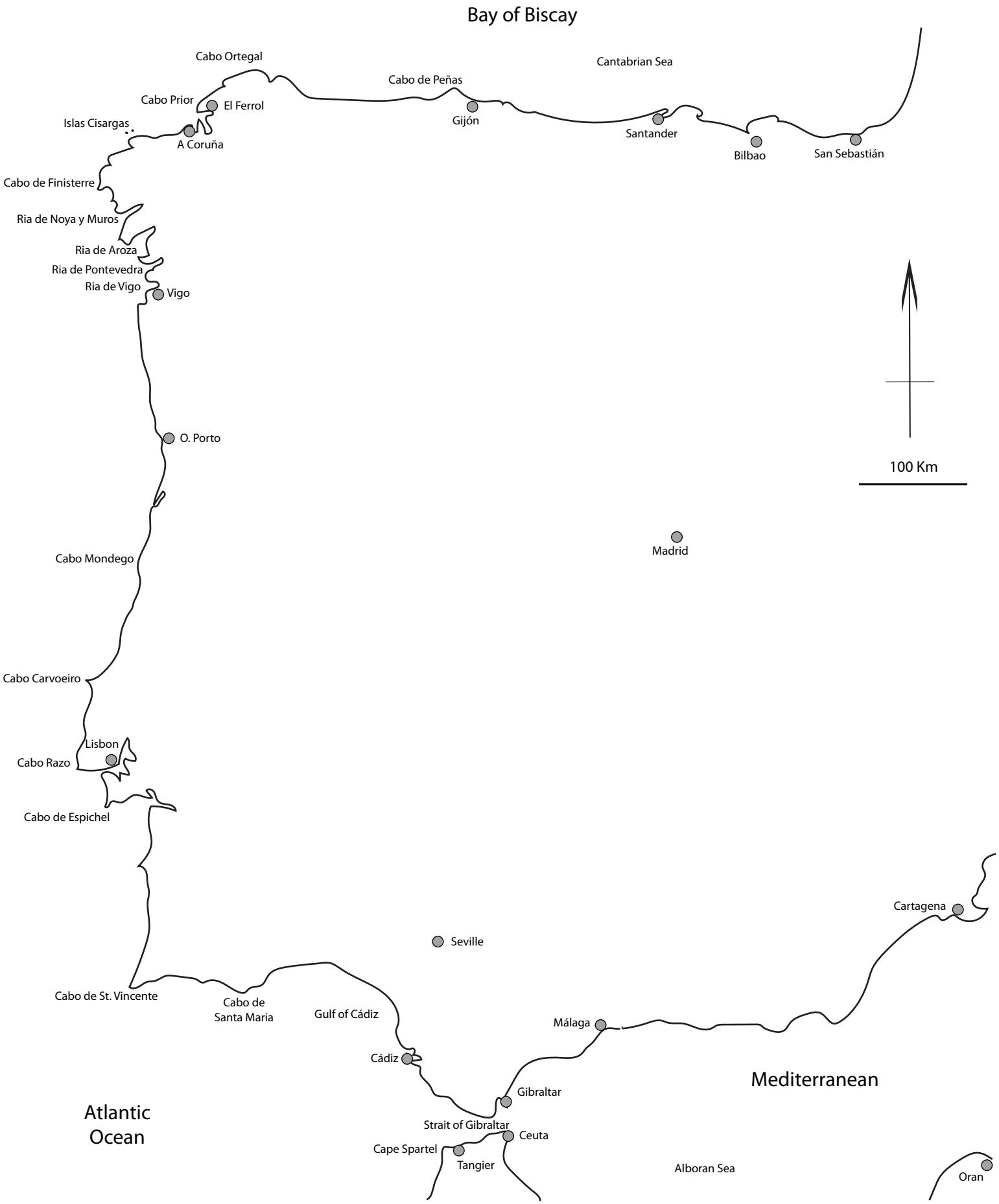
The Portuguese king was far too savvy to get himself entangled in another war. But, assuming he did so, he would have had to concern himself first with protecting his land border, which would in turn probably have necessitated the presence of a strong British corps in his country, and then with protecting his overseas possessions. Brazil's small navy would probably have held its own, since it had rough parity with the Spanish in the region and would likely have been aided by a British squadron. This is all highly speculative, of course.

Denmark

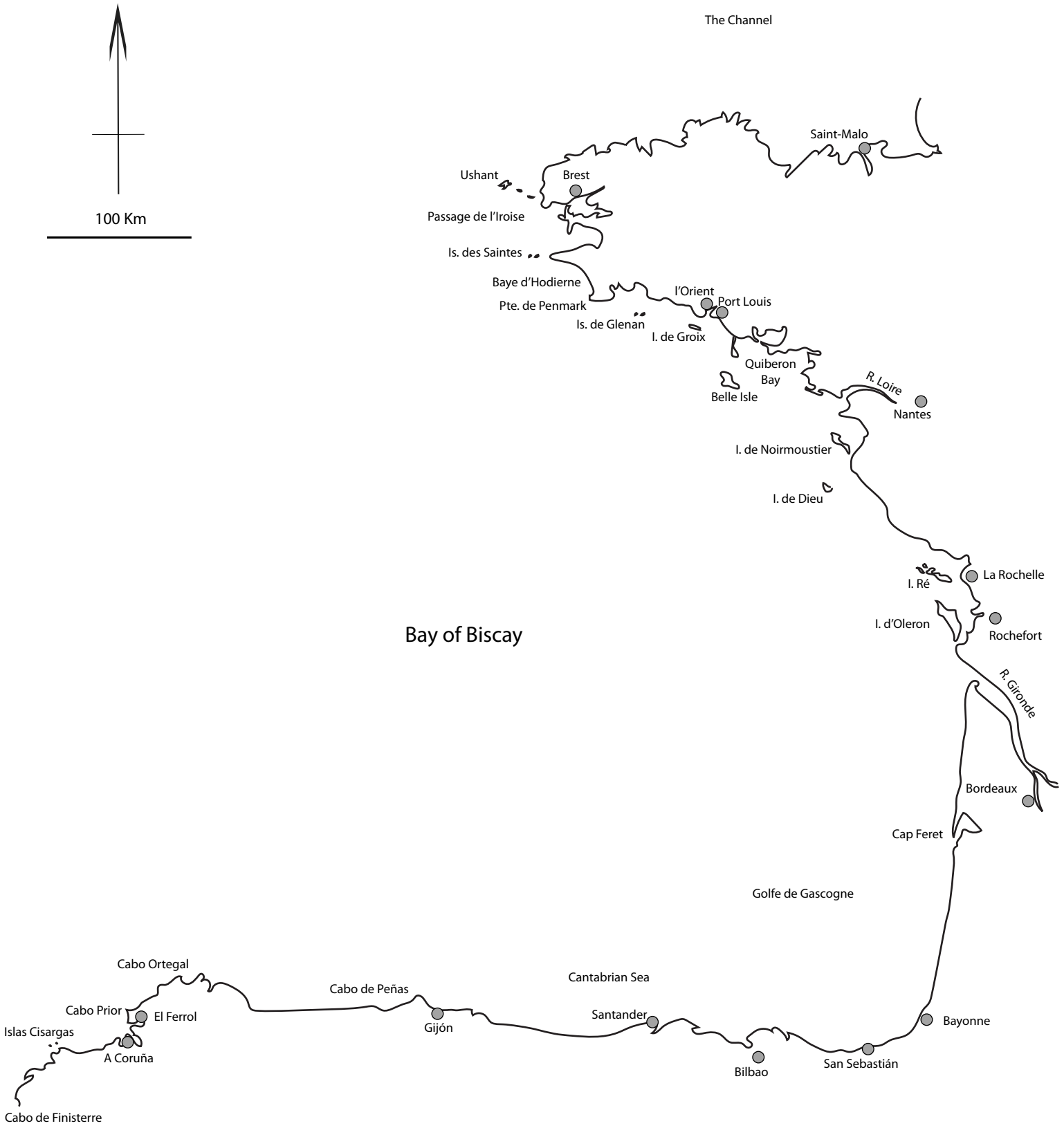
Until 1746 the kingdom of Denmark-Norway was ruled by the authoritarian Christian VI, a reclusive follower of Pietism. Although he involved himself at the last minute in the War of the Hats (1741-1743) he otherwise steered clear of war, and although history has scourged him for his oppression of his peasantry, in general his regime is noted for its advancements in commerce and industry. His successor, Frederick V, continued this policy, also patronizing the arts (although Art did not interest him personally); the Danish monarchs followed the current trends of 'enlightened' but firm control over their kingdom.

Assuming the Danes could have been interested in participating in the general war, they would probably have favoured Britain. Given that both Britain and Denmark were Protestant, and that in 1743 Frederik, then Crown Prince, married Princess Louise, who was daughter of the King of England and beloved by the Danish people, a French alliance was not really on the cards. French sponsorship of Sweden made it even less likely. Furthermore, most of the German questions at issue in the war — the only things that might have interested the Danes — concerned lands well outside France's orbit. The French could probably have bribed them to stay out of war, but no more than that.

Map of the Iberian Coastline



Map of the Bay of Biscay



Map of the British Isles

1739 — THE PRICE OF AN EAR

"War was at last begun, and it cannot be said that it began under the most favourable auspices. The fleet was not ready, the army was not ready, and the offensive operations had not yet been determined, nor were they fully decided upon two months later… war had actually broken out before the British Administration began to consider in what manner it should be conducted."

Richmond, vol 1, p.38.

[Richmond may be indulging in hyperbole here. The evidence suggests the Administration had things lined up, but was unwilling to shell out until it had to.]

Britain is guilty of her share of wars of aggression, but in mitigation, she has never had a clue how to wage them properly. Thus the start of the war with Spain began in a muddle, which lasted several years. As has been seen, the original intention was to obtain reparations and better trading privileges through bullying; this intention was hijacked by a more hawkish group who wanted to a) get their hands on more Spanish property, and b) destabilize Walpole's Administration. Confusion, circumstances, and the Spanish response, which was equally arrogant and muddled, led to the war going 'hot' very quickly.

Histories of the naval war in 1739 — and it was a purely naval war — focus almost exclusively on actions taking place in the Caribbean. Rightly so, because, activities occurring elsewhere were linked to the Caribbean in one way or another. Either the British were trying to intercept treasure galleons returning to Europe, or the Spanish were trying to send reinforcements or dispatches bearing warning notes. Toward the end of the year the Spanish began to act as if they were planning something big, like an attack on Gibraltar or Minorca, or an invasion of Ireland. These were bluffs, elements in a coalescing Spanish strategy, but they forced the British to react more strongly.

It will be remembered that the link between operational naval matters and the British Government was the Committee of Council, headed by Sir Charles Wager, First Lord of the Admiralty, answering to the Duke of Newcastle. The Council's first concrete act was agreed upon at a meeting on 14 June 1739. This was a decision to begin hostilities short of a declaration of war, with a series of reprisals against Spanish trade in the West Indies and in the waters near Cádiz. Using modern terminology, this would be a 'grey zone' conflict, intended to force Spain to bend to British negotiations. It appears the Admiralty anticipated this decision, because Rear Admiral Haddock in the Med and Commodore Brown on the Jamaica Station received matching orders, dated 6 June, that were in line with the overall plan (such as it was). Admiral Sir John Norris was made commander of the Home Fleet at the same time.

Very soon after, however, it was decided to expand operations, and newly promoted Admiral of the Blue Edward Vernon, a 55-year-old veteran, was ordered to assemble a squadron at Spithead and sail to the West Indies. Vernon, though the fourth-most junior flag officer, was a strident opponent of Walpole's Ministry and an 'expert' on the Caribbean. It has also been said that he was the only admiral willing to take on the job. This was a war that most senior men in the Navy were not keen on.

Vernon's first task was to be the interception of the outbound *azogue* run, now preparing at Cádiz. It was supposed to have sailed in 1738 but had been successively delayed until 24 March 1739, at which point it suddenly mushroomed in size with the addition of other merchantmen wishing to sail under some form of protection. As the convoy grew logistical 'friction' naturally imposed further delay, until one day Haddock's squadron was sighted off the coast and no one was willing to risk putting to sea.

The British were not aware of this timidity, however, seeing only the prize. There was also evidence suggesting laden galleons would be sailing from Vera Cruz sometime in October. If so, it would give the British a second chance to inflict some real damage. (In fact, they were already inflicting real damage on the economy of New Spain, because the delay in the mercury shipment meant silver could not be processed.)

[The cargo of quicksilver alone amounted to 6,500 quintals, a Spanish quintal being equivalent to 100 pounds (46 kg).]

As it became clear the Spanish would not leave Cádiz unless some advantage presented itself, the task of intercepting them shifted solely to Haddock, while Vernon was allowed to exercise his judgement and take advantage of any opportunities he might be presented with enroute to his final destination.

It was about this time that word was received at Gibraltar of a different pair of *azogues* returning from the Caribbean, and also a pair of merchantmen from Buenos Aires, perhaps accompanying the *azogues*, perhaps not. The tipoff for the latter may have come from Portuguese contacts in Brazil. But these were small potatoes. As the day of departure drew closer Vernon and his cronies in the Loyal Opposition came to desire some dramatic stroke in the manner of Drake and Hawkins — that is, a Descent on the Spanish ports in the Caribbean. The most valuable prize, it was believed, was Portobelo in Panama, a key node on the Spanish treasure route. This then became the focus of Vernon's final preparations.

To augment the watch on Cádiz, meanwhile, on 18 June Captain Sir Chaloner Ogle was ordered to sail to Gibraltar with a small squadron consisting of the *Augusta (60), Pembroke (60),* and *Jersey (50).* He was to engage the incoming treasure ships if he met them, reinforce Haddock if he did not, and carry new instructions ordering Haddock to sweep against the incoming treasure ships, if they were still out in the Atlantic. An encounter enroute became more likely when Ogle was delayed by gales, and less likely when he was forced to return for repairs; he sailed again on 10 July and rendezvoused with three of Haddock's ships (*Ipswich (70), Edinburgh (60), and Dragon (60)*) off Cape St. Vincent, rather later than hoped for. Haddock had anticipated his instructions, however, and his ships were already on watch.

For some reason, only now did the British consider that the inbound Spanish ships, commanded by a wily sea dog, *Jefe d'Escuadra* José Pizarro, might decide to sail for the other

end of Spain instead. In case this happened, Vernon was ordered to halt his journey to the Caribbean off Cape Finisterre and cruise for a couple of weeks to see if Pizarro turned up. Having only 9 ships — he had rather rashly undertaken to do the job with just 6 and his enemies in the service were trying their best to hold him to his word — Vernon was allowed the services of Captain Colville Mayne with four more ships (*Lenox (70), Elizabeth (70), Kent (70),* and *Pearl (40)*).

[Confusingly, there are two Cape Finisterres. The name simply means 'land's end'. The one meant here and throughout the text is the farthest-west headland on the northwest coast of Spain, which hooks south, pointing toward Portugal about halfway between La Coruña and Vigo. The French Finisterre — correctly spelt Finistere — is a colloquial name for the end of the Breton Peninsula.

During July, preparations normally associated with a 'proper' war were begun. On 14 July British seamen were ordered to return from foreign service, and recruitment bounties were announced, while on 21 July the first letters of marque were issued. Merchantmen in foreign ports were also warned to skedaddle. Both sides withdrew their ambassadors on 31 August.

[Richmond notes that with the cession of trade between the two powers, some 900 British merchant ships were denied access to the port of Cádiz alone — representing three quarters of all the trade passing through that port.]

Vernon was not ready to sail until 3 August. He encountered Ogle's gale and could not even leave St. Helens until 30 July, clearing the west end of the Channel on 13 August, and making landfall at Cape Ortegal on 20 August.

(Exit from Portsmouth — Southampton did not become a major port until the 19th Century — was done around the east end of the Isle of Wight, since the winds at the west end — which was called the Needles for good reason — were treacherous. St. Helens was a safe anchorage at the east end of the island, created by a strait between the main island and an islet. This anchorage had been used since the Stone Age, but once ships no longer needed wind to move it was blocked up with a causeway and the land has now been reclaimed. The choices for a squadron headed for Spain were either to hug the coast and risk being trapped in the Bay of Biscay, to stand well out to sea and swing south in an arc, or head southwest in a straight line; the route taken depended on the weather.)

[The author once visited a well known Roman villa excavated at Brading, near St. Helens. It seems to have been associated with industrial/commercial operations at the anchorage.]

Vernon cruised for a week without success, detached Mayne with his ships to continue for another month, and himself carried on to the Caribbean. He reached Madeira on 3 September and Jamaica by October, where he assumed command and went on to have all sorts of adventures, including the sacking of Portobelo. But he never did catch the *flota*, either coming or going. Mayne had no better luck with the *azogues*. Pizarro had gone one better. Making landfall at Cape Clear, on Ireland's southern tip, he had met an 'advice boat' — that is, a vessel carrying dispatches and orders — which warned him that the British were preparing an ambush. Taking a chance, Pizarro cut straight across the enemy's projected path to reach Santander in the Bay of Biscay, arriving there the day Vernon passed the Lizard. Mayne found this out on 12 September and returned to England in disgust.

Pizarro's ships were the following: *Castilla (60), Guipuzcoa (60), Esperanza (50)*. Another ship, the *León (70)*, arrived at El Ferrol at an earlier date, but she had to be temporarily mothballed. The incoming merchantmen, who also made the Biscay coast, put in at San Sebastian. They were not from Buenos Aires at all, but from La Guaira in Venezuela, and belonged to the Caracas Company: *San José (52)* and *El Santiaguillo (16)*.

Haddock remained on station through August, basing at Cape St. Mary's (which lay within neutral Portuguese waters) and sending his ships out in rotation to keep watch. In the middle of that month (24 August) the Council had a sudden spasm and dispatched orders for him to preemptively attack the Spanish in the harbours of Cádiz and Ferrol! Haddock was also told to investigate the possibility of preventing an attack on Minorca by sacking Cartagena and Barcelona. This sort of hasty spinning around at every gust of news was something that would continue throughout the early years of the war.

These orders were eminently impractical. Critically, Haddock was unable to blockade two ports simultaneously — the idea of actually attacking a port was idiocy. The best he could do was take two prizes from the Caracas Company in September — ironically worth more than the whole of the Compensation demanded from Spain. If the British Government had wanted, they could have called things off right there. But they did not, and King George officially declared war on 23 October 1739.

The Spanish Response

Spain responded in kind on 28 November. Reprisals had already begun, starting on 27 August, when a large number of letters of marque were made available, mostly to the captains of the Basque coast. Using privateers was not just a tit-for-tat measure — privateer vessels had crews, crews that were reluctant to serve under the royal colours. To make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, if the Spanish could run their war with private contractors while the British were forced to use their navy, the balance sheet would be in Spain's favour. By the time war was declared, the British had only succeeded in taking twelve prizes, while the Spanish had taken almost that number in a single enterprise (for which there are unfortunately no details).

Meanwhile the ships of the *Armada* shuffled about to help with the simulated offensives against Ireland (?), Gibraltar (??), or Minorca (???). They were inviting the British to establish a costly blockade so that their privateers could wreak havoc elsewhere. It was projected that at least twenty-four enemy warships, or virtually all of Haddock's current strength, could be tied down. The Spanish seem to have wildly overestimated the number of ships Britain could put into service, but nonetheless, twenty-four was a significant number.

Given the indefensible length of the Spanish coastline in the Americas, this seemed the only way to prevent or hinder the

British from transferring the war entirely to the New World and gradually capturing Spain's ports there, one by one. There was also a more subtle effect. By keeping the British in Europe, it would keep the existence of the war in the minds of Europeans, which might assist Spain in obtaining allies, or at least assistance in recovering any lost possessions.

If France, especially, could be prevailed upon to join Spain and adopt the same strategy, many more ships would be relegated to watching the English Channel. Alas, this hope was vain. The ambassador to Versailles, the *marqués* de la Mina, used up all his political capital to obtain an audience with King Louis himself — which was not necessary to the purpose and made him appear a self-aggrandizing fop. When the King told him not to expect any help he was forced to leave France, saving face by grandly announcing he was 'joining his regiment in the war'.

There was still the question of the outbound *azogues* and their friends at Cádiz. José de la Quintana, Secretary of the Office of the Navy, wanted the Admiralty to risk the voyage. The Colonial Secretary concurred, pointing out that while the British were watching Cádiz they were not as yet watching the ports in the Caribbean. Rather than send an entire convoy, though, only the *azogues* themselves would sortie. They would slip through the blockade, which was being maintained at a distance, and race for La Habana. The rest of the ships in the convoy would be placed under the orders of the Cádiz Maritime District and used to project the image of some sort of invasion plot. The *azogues*, *La Almirante* and *Capitana*, would be hidden among the jumble of activity this would generate until it was time for them to leave. As for a regular convoy run, it was decided (7 December) that no such convoys would operate for the duration of the war (though there would be exceptions).

What about forming a Caribbean squadron? The Spanish Admiralty Board fixed on the number six: two being built at La Habana, two from Cádiz, and two from El Ferrol. The ships could also carry additional loads of mercury. Money was so tight that the governors in the colonies were ordered to support the cost of operations. The names of the ships assigned to these various duties fluctuated, as one would expect, given that a chosen vessel might be discovered to lack crew or be under repair. It appears that the following ships sailed for the West Indies before the end of the year or immediately in the New Year, either as pairs or singly, with orders to transship the quicksilver (if any was carried) to local *tartanes* at La Habana, then form a small squadron to counter the British. Ironically, all sailed from El Ferrol, despite the *duque* de Montemar insisting that port lacked the stores and facilities to fit them out: *Galiçia (70), Santa Ana (70), and San Carlos (66).* The *San Francisco (62)* also sailed from there, but well before the outbreak of war; she was wrecked on a reef before the year was out.

[Tartanes are single-masted ships with a lanteen mainsail and a foresail, used for coastal trade and fishing.]

Montemar was as bad as the Duke of Newcastle when it came to influencing naval operations. In his case there were two considerations, the general lack of money and the knowledge that his pay-mistress, The Farnese, was only interested in some Continental enterprise which would consume what money there was. Hence the insistence that the Colonies pay for their own defence, and the insistence that the dispatch of every ship be approved by the Spanish Council.

As a case in point, only two ships other than the *azogues* were dispatched from Cádiz before the end of the yea — after consent had been obtained, naturally. One was the frigate *San Francisco-Xavier (52)*, intended to carry the new Governor of the Plate to his post. (She was supposed to remain in South American waters but returned to El Ferrol early in 1740.) The other was the *América (64)*, rebased to Cartagena in the Mediterranean in hopes of augmenting the threat to Minorca.

The British Response to the Spanish Response

It was always possible for the Spanish to send out individual ships with a good chance of escaping detection. Also, those mentioned above were warships, and Haddock, having shifted his base to Gibraltar in a vain attempt to cover Cádiz and Cartagena at the same time, did not receive the notice that war had been declared until December 1739, so was not permitted to engage them. Even then, pending more aggressive orders, he merely maintained his defensive watch on Cádiz and tried to harass the rapidly vanishing Spanish trade. The Admiral was supposed to winter at Port Mahon in Minorca, but this would have prevented the carrying out of his other instructions, so he remained at Gibraltar, which at that date was a poor location, lacking basic repair facilities and adequate stores — a base hospital was not established until the outbreak of war.

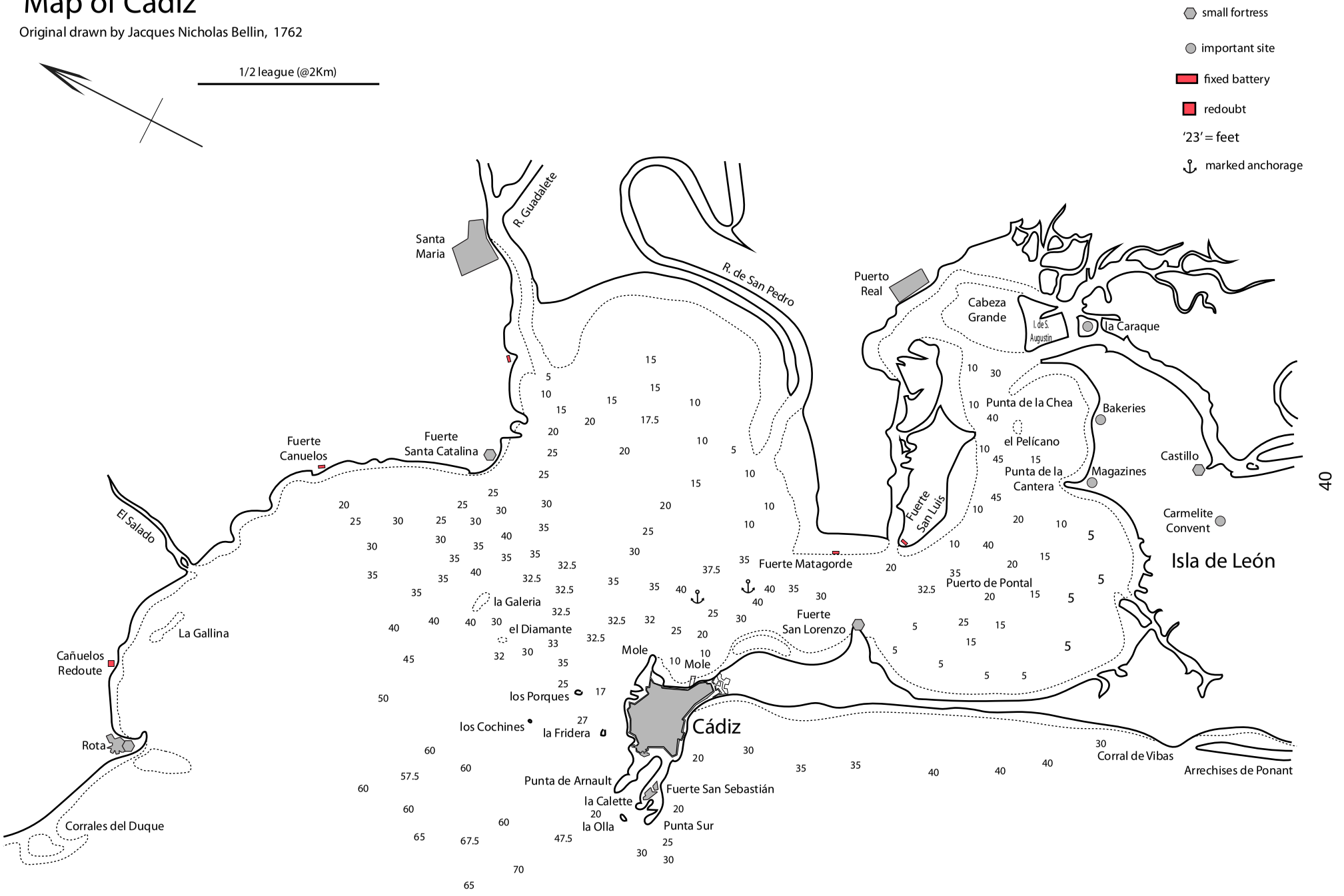
New orders arrived for Haddock a week after the war notice, reflecting Spain's diversionary preparations. Dutch sources had reported a massive troop buildup in both Catalonia and Galicia. Haddock, then engaged in a refit at Minorca, was instructed to desist and divide his strength between Barcelona and Cádiz. The Admiral was to be 'particularly careful' to watch Cádiz, but Minorca was his to be 'first consideration'. Stretched too thin, and hampered by a lack of small vessels suitable for patrolling, the admiral was unable to fulfil any part of his instructions satisfactorily.

The Council in England was also mulling over a number of zany schemes for occupying Panama and Manila, as well as an attack on Chile. News of these plans reached Spanish ears, where their own Council began to fear an attack on Montevideo. This location was the most suitable place for such an attack to be made (though the British seem never to have considered it), and the Spanish felt sure the other targets were mentioned deliberately to confuse them. The more outlandish elements of these ideas were discarded by the British, gradually being refined into what became Captain Anson's famous circumnavigation of the globe. Further operations in the Caribbean were also planned, including an attempt to take San Agustin in Florida by the troops stationed in Georgia, and an attempt to take Cartagena des Indías, which would bear bitter fruit.

Two points seem to stand out here. First, despite Spanish 'maskirovka' and its real effect on British planning, the latter were still fixated on the Colonies. Even the Mediterranean

Map of Cádiz

Original drawn by Jacques Nicholas Bellin, 1762



received only secondary consideration. More would be done to mobilize in home waters only as the perception of a French threat grew stronger.

Second, their Council was wasting time. This was typical of the Duke of Newcastle. He was a skilful politician but not exactly decisive when it came to Matters of State. The most important operation in the war, so far as the Council was concerned, a decisive stroke in the Caribbean, was not approved until 16 December and would not sail until the middle of 1741. As Richmond puts it (vol 1, p. 35), '*The Council at last, six months after they began to take steps which must infallibly lead to war, had succeeded in deciding that an expedition should be sent to the West Indies, its objective to be decided when it got there…*'

The Council and the Admiralty also refused to address the threat of the El Ferrol Squadron. Not only were the Spanish able to come and go as they pleased here, for all the British knew they were planning a major operation against Ireland or the western coast of England which would be sure to depart from that port. Admiral Norris had already asked for ships to establish a permanent watch off Finisterre. He was ignored. Worse, Sir Charles Wager consistently showed his opposition to anything Norris said, mainly on personal grounds, it seems.

The problem was not entirely one of indecision or a clash of personalities. It was proving very hard to enlist crews for more vessels. Able seamen were being offered the enormous bounty of two guineas and turning it down. There was serious discussion about impressing men from the coastal trade and fisheries. Other options were the using of soldiers or of recreating a real marine corps — true marine soldiers were trained to act as ships' crews but the 'marines' currently in service were mostly unskilled landsmen.

It may have been the fact that the French were not ready which turned the original 'grey zone' confrontation into a proper war. As of late October the British were aware France would not be honouring the Family Compact, if only because it would take until sometime in 1740 for them to be ready to do so. This gave the Council an excuse to put their feet up. Orders were even sent to Haddock for the return of six ships; a mild panic a little later caused the orders to be modified, then rescinded.

Ironically, Norris himself opposed any increase in the tempo of operations, at least until the fleet as it currently existed could be fully manned. Also, winter was coming and it would be foolish to declare war and then pack the fleet away until spring. Again, he was ignored.

The French in the Baltic

Lieutenant-Général Antoine-François de Pardaillan, *Marquis* de Gondrin et d'Antin, was made *vice-amiral du Ponant* in 1739, replacing the *comte* d'Estrées. One of his first duties was to lead a small 'gunboat expedition' to the Baltic, where he had last served during the War of the Polish Succession. Although that war had been over for several years, this mission was still connected to it in some fashion, partly because the last of the diplomatic negotiations were only now being tidied up, and partly because it again targeted Austria and Russia. France's candidate for the Polish Throne had lost, and the Austro-Russian candidate — Augustus the Strong of Saxony — had been installed as King. To get back at them, France had supported the Ottomans during their own war with the Austrians and Russians, a war which began immediately after the Polish one ended. When things seemed to be going badly for the Turks in 1739, the French decided to push Sweden into a war with Russia; d'Antin was to do his best to facilitate this push. Events overtook the French, and the Swedes themselves dallied, only launching their war in 1741; French brokering of the peace talks turned out to be far more valuable to the Ottomans. Indeed, the rotten outcome of the war, from Austria's point of view, led directly to the War of the Austrian Succession, now only two years away.

D'Antin's expedition, consisting of four ships of the line and a frigate, plus tenders, departed Brest in late spring, arriving at Copenhagen at 7am on 26 June 1739. This was a state visit — the French fired a 50-gun salute and went ashore to meet the King and Queen — but it was mainly a goodwill gesture. The Danes had ties to the Russian monarchy and it would not do to sponsor their enemy Sweden against Russia without making sure they would not raise a fuss. Stockholm was the final destination, where the French remained until September, while d'Antin and the French Ambassador tried to persuade the Swedes France was ready with money and materiel to aid them against the Russians. They were also waiting for the report of a Swedish officer named Major Sinclair, who was bringing news from the Ottoman Porte that would bolster their arguments; Sinclair was assassinated by the Russians (in their usual ham-handed manner) which led to a Diplomatic Incident. It also weighed the odds against the Swedes acting immediately, though it provided fuel for the eventual war.

As far as the war with Spain is concerned, the only impact this expedition had was to render five of *La Royale's* ships unserviceable for some months. But, it also serves to show just where France's attention was focused at the time. Definitely not on the Spanish Main.

The ships involved were:

Bourbon (76)
Ferme (74)
Retribution (74)
Toulouse (62)
Amazone (46) — a 'heavy' frigate equivalent to a British 4th Rate
Plus the sloops Bellatrix (12) and Insulaire (30)

Edward Vernon (1684-1757)

Vernon was 55 when he was given command of the West Indies station. A Londoner by birth, and a son of William III's Secretary of State, he joined the Royal Navy in 1700. Though he enlisted young, as did most of his peers, he also attended secondary school, which made him unusually well educated.

His service in the War of the Spanish succession took him first to the Channel Squadron, and then to the Med. He was present at the taking of Gibraltar (1704), the Battle of Málaga (1704), and the Siege of Barcelona (1705). In 1702

he was promoted to Lieutenant, and in 1706 was made Captain. His first ship was the *Rye (24)*. In 1707 he was involved in a major disaster off the Scilly Isles, but escaped. In 1708 he was sent to the West Indies, returning to Europe in 1710, where he dispersed a Spanish squadron. After the war he served with the Baltic Squadron (1715-1719) and then as commodore of Port Royal, Jamaica, in 1720. However, he was placed on half-pay in 1721.

Vernon entered Parliament while unemployed and retained his seat, though returning to active duty in 1726 aboard the *Grafton*, where he served first in the Baltic, and then in Spanish waters, during the Anglo-Spanish War. In 1728 Vernon was back in Parliament, championing his favourite cause, the Senior Service, and in 1731 championing one Captain Robert Jenkins, 'falsely' accused of smuggling by Spain.

Vernon was promoted Vice Admiral of the Blue on July 9th, 1739, as part of his appointment to command the West Indies Squadron. In 1742, after the success of Porto Bello (1740) and the failures of Cartagena (1741) and Santiago (1742), he was recalled to England.

His career did not suffer. *In absentia* he had been elected MP for Ipswich, and he continued to be an advocate for the Navy, including publishing anonymous pamphlets lambasting the Government for its ineptness. In 1745 he was made full Admiral (of the White) and given command of the North Sea Squadron during the '45, when the Jacobites raised a rebellion in Scotland.

Depending on one's source, he was either retired at his own request after being refused the top command of First Sea Lord, or, he was dismissed for refusing to comply with the Admiralty's Patronage regulations. He remained active in Parliament until his death.

Nicholas Haddock (1686 – 26th September 1746)

Was destined for the sea from childhood, being the second son of Admiral Richard Haddock.

Distinguished at Battle of Vigo (1702) as a 16-year-old midshipman.

Lieutenant at Barcelona (1706).

Captain of the *Grafton* (70) at the Battle of Cape Passaro (1718), leading the attack.

Commandant of The Nore, 1732.

C-in-C Med 1738-1742, after promotion to Rear Admiral of the Red. Promoted Vice-Admiral of the Blue in 1741 and full Admiral 1744.

Relieved due to sickness, he retired from the sea, though not from public life – MP for Rochester (1734-1746).

Sir Chaloner Ogle (1681 — 11 April 1750)

There are at least two Sir Chaloner Ogles, and one must be careful to distinguish them. The younger was both cousin and brother-in-law to this man, and also had a highly successful naval career, participating in all the wars of the latter half of the 18th Century and dying about age 90 immediately after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. The elder Ogle, however, ultimately became Admiral of the Fleet.

A Northumberland man, he fought at the very end of the Nine Years War as a volunteer, being promoted to Lieutenant at the start of the War of the Spanish

Succession. His first command, as Commander, came in 1703. His ship was a prize taken from the pirate Kidd. In 1708 he was made Captain. By the end of the war he was commanding Fourth Rates. Unlike many officers he remained in seas service throughout the 1720s and 1730s, earning a Knight Companion of the Order of the Bath for an action against the notorious pirate Bartholomew Roberts. (The action is traditionally used to mark the end of the Golden Age of Piracy.) By the 1730s he had seen service from the Baltic to the Med, and in 1732 was promoted to Commodore and given the Jamaica Station.

Ogle was promoted to Rear Admiral on 11 July 1739. After being sent to rendezvous with Haddock he was briefly third-in-command of the Channel Squadron before being sent at the end of 1741 to assist Admiral Vernon in the Caribbean. He remained in that theatre, as commander of the Jamaica Station, until 1744, when he was recalled to preside over the trials that followed the Battle of Toulon. (This despite being brought up on charges of assault against the Governor of Jamaica in 1742.) By this point he was a Vice Admiral (1743), becoming full admiral on 23 June 1744 and assuming command of the Channel Squadron in September of 1745 — during the Jacobite emergency. This allowed him also to begin a political career, being elected MP for Rochester in 1746 — Haddock's old seat. In 1749 he was made Admiral of the Fleet.

Sir Chaloner Ogle

1740 — THINGS HEAT UP

Notwithstanding all the encouragement held out by Government, for seamen to enter into the Royal Navy, yet there is always at the commencement of every war, a great difficulty in manning the fleet, and Government is obliged to have recourse to violent measures, repugnant to freedom, and disgraceful to the country; which the most urgent state necessity alone can justify. That — in a country whose existence as a state depends upon her navy, some measures have not been devised to man her fleet, without depriving men of the constitutional liberty, which as subjects they ought to inherit; is not more to be wondered at, than it is to be lamented.

[Beatson, p.54]

Europe's Response

Europe's response to this new war was one of studious neutrality. This included Britain's supposed 'natural ally' the Dutch, and Spain's supposed 'natural ally' the Portuguese. Neutrality, of course, was a stance that varied with one's perception. Holland confirmed their commercial treaties with Spain, and Portugal with Britain. The biggest disappointment was reserved for Spain. Cousin France refused to help.

King Louis XV was less active in politics than his predecessor and delegated much of the decision making to his senior ministers. Typically for France, her chief minister was a clergyman, Cardinal André-Hercule de Fleury. He was pushing 90 (and would die in 1743, age 89) and no longer a firebrand; quite the reverse. But he was not witless. Germany concerned him more than colonial dustups. He had founded his career on keeping the Germans in a state of instability and was not going to experiment with bold new directions at his time of life. Aware that Robert Walpole was, like himself, opposed to expanding the war, Fleury continued to occupy his and his monarch's time with diplomatic affairs in Central and Eastern Europe.

King Louis, though, began to be disturbed in his mind. Philippe V of Spain was family, after all. Also, certain elements of French society, and not just the military, saw their current unofficial alignment with Britain as unnatural. They muttered about it in the Versailles halls. The most hawkish claimed war with Britain was just a matter of time. So, after some tough negotiation between the various ministries, and with Spain, a compromise was reached. France would assist Spain in her colonies by sending out a squadron to 'show the flag'. It might also be possible, on a case by case basis, to interpose a squadron in situations where a naval action might prove unfavourable to Spain's interests. The Royal Navy would be unlikely to risk a battle if French ships were present — though the individual French captains might!

Actually, even many of the Doves believed the British intended to ruin their colonial trade over the long haul. But, it was also believed nothing would happen just yet, provided they did not allow the British *or* the Spanish to provoke them into a war. Thus, the most they would do for Spain was bang the drum.

British Plans

For the British, their activities in European waters continued to revolve almost entirely around what was taking place in the Caribbean. Portobelo had been taken at the beginning of December 1739. The news was brought to England by the *Triumph* sloop, arriving on 12 March. The news led to new proposals on the same scale, while it gave a boost to the Great Expedition that would eventually be sent against Cartagena des Indías. The fleet being assembled for this enterprise was expected to arrive in the Caribbean toward the end of 1740, which in those latitudes was the best time for major action, since the rainy season began in April and was followed by the hurricane season from late June to late September.

[Captain Rentone of the Triumph *was given a reward of 200 guineas (valued at 21 shillings or £1.05 each) and made a post-captain. This was typical royal largesse for bearers of good news. A post-captain was a 'real' or 'commissioned' naval captain, placed on the seniority list and eligible to command rated vessels.]*

The elderly Sir John Norris retained command in the Channel along with his more political role as Admiral of the Fleet, but he found neither job easy. At the start of the year he had no ships in reserve and his superiors continued to ignore his advice. The fact that his requests were shown to be necessary when the El Ferrol Squadron sortied without interference, not once but twice, made no difference. Norris continued to ready as many ships as possible, even asking for soldiers to flesh out the crews. He wanted to get a permanent watch on the northern Spanish ports as soon as possible, and then establish another force to guard against an invasion of the homeland.

The English Council met several times before the news of Portobelo arrived. Discussion ranged from shortages of manpower to what could be expected once the Great Expedition succeeded in its aims, to what to do if France intervened. Norris laid out what the fleet was currently capable of and what it ought to be capable of if they bothered to listen to him. In the excitement following the news of the sack of Portobelo Parliament voted the enormous sum of £5,017,651 5s, plus supplies, plus new recruits (and 28,000 soldiers for the Army). In Norris' view this was barely sufficient.

By February, it was known that the Spanish were concentrating troops in Galicia, but at that date it was believed they were bound for Cuba. Only as the size of the preparations were revealed did an invasion of the British Isles seem more likely. (Some of the Galician troops had indeed been earmarked for the New World, so the British analysis was partly right. The rest would be sent to Italy in 1741, which was not anticipated.)

Walpole and Newcastle began fear French involvement after the news of King Louis' change of heart began to be relayed by spies and informers. As yet they had no clear indications, but believed the worst. It was also learned that a number of ships belonging to the *CIO* (*Compagnie française pour le commerce des Indes orientales*) were being made ready at the commercial port of Lorient, just south of Brest. The French quite often commandeered such vessels for military use. Also, the privateer port of Dunkirk was being renovated, a project expressly forbidden in the current treaty between England and France. As a result of these concerns Admiral Vernon was sent secret orders allowing him to attack French ships if they got in his way. Modified instructions were also sent to Haddock in the Med.

As fears of French intervention grew, the idea of abandoning the Med was floated. Norris opposed the idea, and in fact argued that they ought to strengthen Haddock so he could face the combined Toulon and Cartagena squadrons, estimated at 16 ships of the line. He continued to insist more efforts be made to ready the ships currently in English ports, saying 30% of the fleet was not fit to sail. Especially, they were short of the faster, lighter vessels that would be needed for patrolling and escort. The Council did agree to order the building or purchase of five 5th Rate frigates and twelve 6th Rates; amazingly, these targets were reached, for some of the ships' names appear in the records, some indeed before the year was out.

But, Newcastle dithered, as he would dither after he became Prime Minister. To be fair, he knew Cardinal Fleury would prevent war if he could, but all the same, his inaction, at least according to Richmond, kept the Royal Navy criminally unprepared at a most dangerous time. Moreover, there was no reason for inaction where Spain was concerned — unless one considers that both Newcastle and Walpole were interested in keeping the war as low-key as possible, in which case it would be a matter of allowing the warmongers to go ahead with all sorts of grandiose plans and then shortchanging them. Perhaps this was what they had in mind all along.

Operations in the Caribbean and Med

Meanwhile, Vernon's Jamaican Squadron made its own preparations and reconnaissances, conducted some small operations, and hunted for the elusive grand *flota* (which, as already noted, the Spanish had decided to suspend). Governor Oglethorpe of Georgia, pursuing his own agenda, began an invasion of Florida in February, which would prove a flop by the end of the summer.

In response to these activities, the Spanish decided to send out a large flotilla of their own under *Teniente-General* Don Rodrigo de Torres y Morales and pressured the French to join them. To their surprise and delight the French agreed. Sort of. In accordance with the consensus they had reached, the French committed the *marquis* d'Antin to prepare a squadron of twelve major sail, but the expedition took some months to prepare and the ships of the partners travelled separately, at different times — and ultimately with different objectives.

Although their spies at the Spanish ports and Madrid, not to mention the Consulate in Lisbon, would give plenty of advance warning, there were no British ships in home waters capable of intercepting either French or the Spanish. Many ships were indeed being fitted out, but nearly all were earmarked for the Great Expedition. Thus, the job of stopping the Spanish fell entirely on Rear Admiral Haddock's shoulders.

At the start of the year Haddock had ten ships of the line under his direct command, with another five detached under

Sir Chaloner Ogle. Apart from being stretched beyond his limits, Haddock was still hampered by contradictory orders. It will be remembered he was to watch all the Spanish ports, plus Toulon, plus chase any ships that broke out, whilst and at the same time protecting British shipping. Considering that by his estimate there were fifteen Spanish ships either ready or almost ready at Cádiz alone, another four or five at Cartagena, and up to fifteen French at Toulon, this would be rather difficult. Of course he fell between the two stools.

Given that additional weight had been placed on the portion of his orders that warned against losing Port Mahon to a Spanish invasion, Haddock decided he could and ought to risk concentrating there rather than at The Rock. This was sound thinking but proved a mistake in the short term. The next 'mistake' was not his, but Ogle's. He had been left behind to watch Cádiz, and was thus the first to receive London's latest set of orders. Now, these were the orders which notified Haddock that a formal state of war now existed with Spain. But there was a problem. The orders came in two bundles, and they contradicted one another. Ogle was faced with a dilemma.

The first bundle had been drafted after it became known that the Spanish were putting serious pressure on the French. They spelled out Haddock's various courses of action should the Toulon Squadron sail and either head for the West Indies or north to rendezvous with the Brest Squadron. For example, if the Toulon Fleet passed the Straits and combined with the Spanish, and Haddock felt the enemy was too strong, he was to send five ships to Admiral Vernon in the West Indies (the most likely enemy destination) with a warning. Alternatively, if the French sallied from Toulon and headed north, he was to leave ten ships in the Med and follow them. This shows the degree of control London wished to exercise, without having a clear understanding of the situation. (It should also be noted that such micromanagement was quite typical for the period.) What the orders clearly showed was that fear of a French strike at home was outweighing the known facts — even outweighing Haddock's standing orders not to attack the French.

The second set of orders owed much to the Spanish deception plans, particularly their establishment of army camps in Galicia. At the time these orders were drafted London was convinced the enemy were preparing for a major invasion in support of a large uprising by Jacobite sympathizers. As late as 23 April 1740, this belief was still current and even strengthened by what was known of Spanish naval preparations. These observed preparations were another deliberate feint by the Spanish, used as a cover for other, more useful intentions which were kept hidden from the British.

[It appears that, although the Spanish deception operations were 'discovered' by the British before the negotiations with France were reported, the orders in response to them were actually issued after the orders that responded to the news from France, which is a little odd.]

This is not the place for a lengthy discussion of the so-called Jacobite Movement. The Jacobites were those segments of society who supported the idea of restoring the Stuart dynasty to the British throne. Their heyday was past, and the Continental Powers significantly overestimated their influence, but then, so did the British Government. The current Stuart claimant, or Pretender, was Charles Edward Stuart, better known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. Currently resident in Rome, he would be called upon when the French entered the war. For now, as this invasion was only a feint, it was to be 'led' by one of the surviving old guard, the Duke of Ormonde, who had been a member of the ruling clique when the accession of King George I, the current king's father, came about. Ormonde, for whom secret plotting was now an unconscious habit, was unsure whether the Spanish were serious or not, and wisely declined the offer on account of his advanced age.

Ogle and the decision he had to make now reenters the picture. One set of orders indicated the French were likely to join the war soon. The other indicated the Spanish were likely to invade Britain soon. Which would happen first? Obviously, a French sortie, probably to assist with the invasion. Meanwhile, Haddock, desperately trying to refit while covering the various Spanish ports, had already made a command decision to ignore France. He had scouted Toulon and seen no preparations for war. But Ogle did not know this. Believing the French threat was genuine, and perhaps intended to assist a mass breakout by the entire Spanish fleet, it appeared that his boss was about to face more than he could handle. He sailed for Port Mahon, uncovering Cádiz and allowing the Spanish there to redeploy.

Ogle got to Port Mahon at the end of the month, only to find Haddock had no need of him. He also found his ships needed a major overhaul. It was the middle of April before he could be sent to back to his station, reinforced to a strength of ten ships. Haddock retained only five ships of the line; in all he had thirteen vessels (if one counts a bomb ketch and a fireship). Though clearly inadequate it was enough of a force for the operations he would be engaging in over the summer, which were mainly reconnaissance and escort.

Through Spanish Eyes

Cádiz was thus uncovered for a time. El Ferrol always had been. This was a perfect opportunity to sow more confusion. The three squadrons of Cádiz, Cartagena, and El Ferrol were ordered to sortie. For the British the news was a 'perfect storm'. Fortunately, the Spanish still only intended to send a few vessels and some troops to the West Indies, and still could not agree on the proportion to employ. What the release of pressure mainly allowed them to do was concentrate. El Ferrol was chosen as the rendezvous because, despite its poor facilities, it was far from Haddock's squadron, was a secure anchorage, and was in a spot where it was easier to catch a good wind either for the Americas or Britain — or to sortie in support of incoming convoys.

Thus, on 30 March the Cádiz Squadron set sail, under *Teniente-General* Manuel López Pintado. Learning of this some time later, the British assumed they were escorting the chimerical outbound *flota* to the West Indies. Estimated

as high as 16 ships, the squadron actually numbered 6, plus a late addition from the Cartagena Squadron (the 62-gun *Andalucia*). After escorting some merchantmen safely out of range of British patrols (100 leagues from land was the usual limit), Pintado turned north for El Ferrol. The commander of that port's squadron, *Teniente-General* Andrés Reggio, had sent out some of his vessels (*Galiçia (70), Santa Ana (70), San Carlos (66))*, the previous day, but only to similarly escort some merchantmen into the Atlantic. *Capitan General* de la Bena Maserano's Cartagena Squadron sortied about the same time. An exact date is not easily found. His ships passed the Straits, but turned around and went home, except for the *Andalucia*.

[According to Richmond, Pintado's ships consisted of: San Ysidoro (70), Asia (60), San Antonio (60), Andalucia (62), Real Familia (60), Nueva España (60), San Luis (62), Fuerte (60), Galga (54), *and the frigates* La Greiga (24), Iupiter (22), *and* Marte (22). *But this is not entirely accurate. To begin with, the frigates — the last two appear to have been brigs of 16 guns, not frigates, though the sources consistently call them that — never went anywhere. There is some evidence they conducted a supply run to the West Indies late in the year.* La Greiga *was based at El Ferrol, as was* San Ysidoro*. They are supposed to have remained there and transferred to Cádiz much later in the year.* La Greiga *was disarmed in 1741.]*

Reports of these movements reached London on 21 April, and two days later there was 'confirmation from a reliable source' of the Spanish invasion plans, a source which must not have been that reliable after all. Spanish plans had not been altered, but they were still being argued. They could write as many names on a piece of paper as they wanted but it meant nothing if the money could not be found to outfit the ships. Even the short hop from Cádiz had revealed serious deficiencies. The ships from Cartagena returned to base because of the damage they received in a gale. Lack of money and squabbles over lack of money (as well as departmental overlap) meant delay compounding delay.

While the rebased Spanish refitted for further operations it became clear from their own intelligence sources (probably the London financial newspapers and certainly the Dutch *Gazette*) that the British were getting closer to launching the Great Expedition. Admiral Norris was to command, it was said. Two English foot regiments (the 34th and 36th) had already been earmarked for the expedition. As yet, though histories often call it the Cartagena des Indías Expedition, the destination had not been fixed. That port does not seem to have been on the Spanish list of 'best guesses'.

Montevideo actually headed their list. An attack here was quite likely, because it was the center of the blackmarket slave trade. The likelihood of such a raid, perhaps suggested by market rumours, was fading, but if not there, then where? A secondary operation by someone called Commodore Anson seemed to complement the main operation; he was supposedly preparing to head for Chile. There was also word of a descent on El Ferrol, which would be far more serious. Some high-level personage must have talked, because El Ferrol was indeed discussed in London; Norris did not take the idea seriously, but some of his superiors did.

Later, Spanish Intelligence accurately crystallized the threat into an attack against one of the Caribbean ports. But, they plumped for La Habana. It was the obvious choice, and the New Englanders were recruiting men for an American Regiment by offering land in Cuba. But it was also understood that Vice Admiral Vernon, who knew the region well, had the final say. So, the Spanish decided to a) send reinforcements to the principal garrisons in the Caribbean as they had originally planned, b) either augment the existing ships at Cartagena des Indías or at La Habana as the situation warranted, and c) attack Vernon if at all possible.

The last objective would require French support, which the Spanish though they had obtained. Unfortunately, the French offer of assistance, as has been seen, was nowhere near as fulsome. The Spanish deceived themselves and were to be bitterly disappointed when d'Antin sailed gaily through the Caribbean, flags flying and cannon blazing, in one end and out the other.

British Efforts in the Atlantic

The Royal Navy was hard at work. Other than the activities of Ogle and Haddock, the first action to take place in European waters came on 20 April. Fifteen days before, the British received news of Spanish traffic on the Atlantic. As in the previous year, this amounted to a report of two homebound merchantmen from Buenos Aires, and a pair of returning *azogues*. Once again, a small squadron was hastily put together at Portsmouth to hunt for them.

The interceptors had to be fairly powerful, since the *azogues* were suspected to have an escort. The ships chosen were *Lenox*, *Kent*, and *Orford*, each of 70 guns, augmented by the *Rippon* and *St. Albans* of 60 guns. The commodore was Captain Covill Mayne. Notified on 5 April he sailed the next day, with instructions to cruise off the Portuguese coast. He was also to convey yet more new orders for Ogle, and if possible cooperate with him.

With favourable winds, Mayne cleared the Channel in record time, though the *Rippon* and *St Albans* lagged behind and on 16 April disappeared from sight. By 20 April Mayne had arrived near Cape Finisterre, the likely landfall for any inbound Spanish merchantmen. He began cruising at a distance of 40 leagues west of the cape.

[The date for the following action is Richmond's, converted from OS to NS, i.e., '9 April' +11 days. Beatson says 18 April. He also says Mayne sailed on 9 April, and from Plymouth, not Portsmouth. Because Richmond routinely emphasizes that the British based their ships too far to the east during the early part of the war, and thus Mayne would most likely be at Spithead, his dates seem more plausible, though he may have made a false assumption based on the point he was trying to make.]

That day a sail was sighted. Mayne guessed it did not belong to his targets, for it was to the north and headed the wrong way, but he gave chase anyway. The ship turned out to be the *Princesa*, a '74' but carrying only 64 guns, captained by Don Parlo Augustino de Gera. Based out of El Ferrol, she had perhaps been dispatched to escort the merchantmen. Richmond (vol. 1 p.78) has the text of the Lenox's log:

"At 10[am] 'Orford' handed her topgallant sails, hauled up her mainsail and settled her topsails. We continued our sail

till we came within 2 miles of the chase: at 1/2 past 11 she hauled down her French jack and hoisted a Spanish ensign, upon which we fired a shot from one of our chase guns, as soon after did the 'Orford' who was astern. About 1/4 before 12 we gave her our larboard broadside on her starboard bow, which he returned with his starboard broadside, and shooting ahead of her more and brought our larboard broadside on his lee bow and gave him a second broadside, then wearing under his lee brought our starboard broadside to bear upon him and carried away his foretopmast. Then wearing again passed under his lee and gave him our larboard broadside, then passing astern tacked and came up to him and seeing him lie disabled, raked him fore and aft with a starboard broadside repeating it five times more and on coming up to fire the 7th broadside she struck her colours."

Beatson adds the action lasted until 5:15pm; *Princesa* struck because she had lost mainmast, mizzen, and foretop mast. Casualties for the British were not severe, 17 killed and 40 wounded.

Spanish ships tended to be stoutly built. The *Princesa* 'only' had 64 guns, but Beatson says she was larger than a British First Rate — her sides towered over the British 70s — and her guns matched her size; most were made of sturdy brass. Also, she had been able to use her lower gun deck, which was well above the waterline, while the British could only use theirs at their peril in rough seas.

Ogle's new orders were to work in tandem with Mayne. He was to cover Cádiz while the latter covered the western coast of Iberia with his five (actually three) ships. But, Mayne returned to England with his prize, reaching Spithead on 7 May. Again there was a gap in the screen.

The constant flurry of orders is interesting because it shows not only how much confusion there was at the top, but how much independence the various captains were allowed, set against very strict written instructions. Despite these it was expected that Mayne, having obtained a valuable prize, would essentially cancel his orders and return to port. He was not punished for doing so but reimbursed for the prize. Then too, it has been seen how Ogle made an independent decision to assist Haddock which put him under the senior man's orders, but then Haddock decided Ogle must return to his station and even augmented his force. Ogle was both under Haddock's orders, carrying out part of the admiral's own instructions, and under direct orders from London. At lest in this instance the orders from London matched those of Haddock.

Meanwhile, Admiral Norris had at last prevailed against his opponents and a further squadron, of seven (actually six) ships under Sir John Balchen were made ready, with the object of observing Spain's northern ports. In concept, this would seal up the Iberian coast, but of course Mayne was on his way home, and Ogle was actually at Port Mahon. Not being aware of this, Balchen, receiving his orders at Spithead on 14 April, duly sailed. A watch needed to be put on El Ferrol in any case.

[The orders directed Balchen to sail 'without a moment's loss of time', but they were drafted on 5 April, not issued until 13 April, and received on 14 April.]

Balchen was to sail down the Channel, collecting his squadron as he went, rendezvous with Mayne off Finisterre, and begin patrolling. He was to intercept and turn back, or pursue, the Spanish if they sortied from El Ferrol. His squadron consisted of the following:

Russell (80)
Boyne (80)
Grafton (70)
Norfolk (80) — at Plymouth
Dunkirk (60) — off the Start
Deptford (60) — 'off the Lizard', actually near Ushant

Like Mayne, Balchen had good sailing to El Ferrol and began cruising. He missed Mayne on the way out so he had very little information to work with. Balchen believed there were five Spanish sail at El Ferrol, but was not sure — the smaller nearby port of La Coruña was easy to observe, but that of El Ferrol was partially concealed. There were indeed five ships, but they were the ones that had been left behind by Reggio, who at this moment was executing his escort duties. Ironically, Balchen only learned Reggio was at large when he received new orders from London.

This was the time when London was entering upon its first 'flap' over potential French involvement and the news that the Spanish had made a mass sortie. Apart from diplomatic sources hinting at some sort of deal among the Bourbons, it was also reported, the day after Balchen left port, that the Brest Squadron had sortied with 12 ships; immediately after came the news that the Cádiz Squadron was at sea. Surprisingly, even this did not trigger the panic. Panic ensued when it was learned the El Ferrol Squadron had also escaped, and when they heard the Duke of Ormonde's name being associated with the troops in Galicia. From this it was surmised that the Spanish were concentrating their ships, probably to guide an invasion flotilla. There was some relief when (9 May) it was learned Spanish were all back at El Ferrol — they had not rendezvoused at sea. But, now Balchen was outnumbered two-to-one.

It was soon demonstrated that the French had not sortied, but there was news of preparations at both Toulon and Brest, plus word of the Cartagena Squadron passing the Straits. A letter received in London on 30 May stated there were twenty sail in El Ferrol. Other estimates put the number at seventeen, which was pretty close to the truth, though for some reason Haddock was warned there were eleven.

Balchen was (orders dated 12 May) recalled to Plymouth, though instructed to leave a couple of ships on watch. The dispatch boat tried to locate Ogle (Mayne had by now reached England), to recall him to Portsmouth, provided he had not gone chasing the Spanish to the Caribbean per his earlier instructions.

In fact, by the time he received these orders, Balchen had already pulled back, to about 46° latitude. The weather had prohibited him from keeping a close watch on El Ferrol anyway, so that the Reggio was able to return undetected;

Balchen became aware of his presence on 13 May, came to the same conclusion as London, and prudently retreated. Shortly after, he ran out of provisions and sent word he was returning home. When London learned of this his new orders were amended to making a resupply at Plymouth, then take station off the Scilly Isles to watch for the supposed invasion fleet. Balchen dropped off two more of his ships which still had stores aboard to patrol around those islands while the rest of his squadron victualled.

As for Ogle, finding the birds flown at Cádiz, he made a reconnaissance up to El Ferrol, where he was able to receive his new orders on 27 May, and returned to England by 19 July. The Admiralty was relieved; they had heard Ogle had been crushed by the Spanish invasion fleet.

The panic in London had one good effect. It empowered Norris with the authority to ready more ships. The manpower problem remained. According to the Admiralty Board, 2,465 men were missing from what was needed to meet the combined enemy fleet. Throughout the war, Parliament would by rote vote funds for 40,000 men every year, so it were not the source of the problem. The real issue was simply the general unpopularity of naval service and of the current 'German' (i.e., Continentally-focused) regime.

By stripping crews from some less-ready ships the Navy could get enough men to fully crew seventeen ships. These did not include eight ships of the line and a frigate which the Admiralty did not want to interfere with and which were also short 2,200 men. By this point the Board had run out of ideas. Walpole floated the concept of removing exemptions for fishermen and colliers; Norris said recruitment would be too slow and asked for two battalions of infantry and 1,800 marines.

(This was the germ of the idea to raise six regiments of marines who were actually line infantry in the pay of the Navy. Old-time marines had been trained to act as sailors, as would those of the following period, but these men were strictly untrained labour. They would be encouraged in the belief they would not have to serve in some Continental campaign, be paid less wages, or be shipped off to die on the coast of Colombia. Which is, of course, exactly what happened to them. In the interim, two regiments of line infantry were detailed to serve aboard ship — Bland's and Cavendish's, which were the regiments the Spanish believed England planned to use as a spearhead for her own invasion.)

While all these preparations were underway and the watch was fumbling around the Spanish coast, individual vessels, or pairs of ships, were conducting routine patrols around the British Isles, or being dispatched as escorts for victualing convoys sent to the Minorca and Jamaica stations. In April and May, for example two such convoys were sent to Vernon, each with two escorts, at a ten-day interval. Such activities would continue throughout the war, but at this early date things had not been systematized, so that there were often gaps in the patrolling coverage, or even more unpleasant gaps in the receipt of supplies and new intelligence. The Spanish, relying on their 'point defence' strategy, did very little patrolling, except in the Caribbean. They relied on their corsairs.

Richmond is scathing of London's lack of energy. The Government remained more or less in the dark throughout the first half of the year, making knee-jerk responses to every bit of information that came in, but in slow motion. For example, two weeks passed before news of the Spanish preparations, much of which was a strategic feint, caused a change in Haddock's prewar orders. A further three weeks passed before the new orders were actually issued.

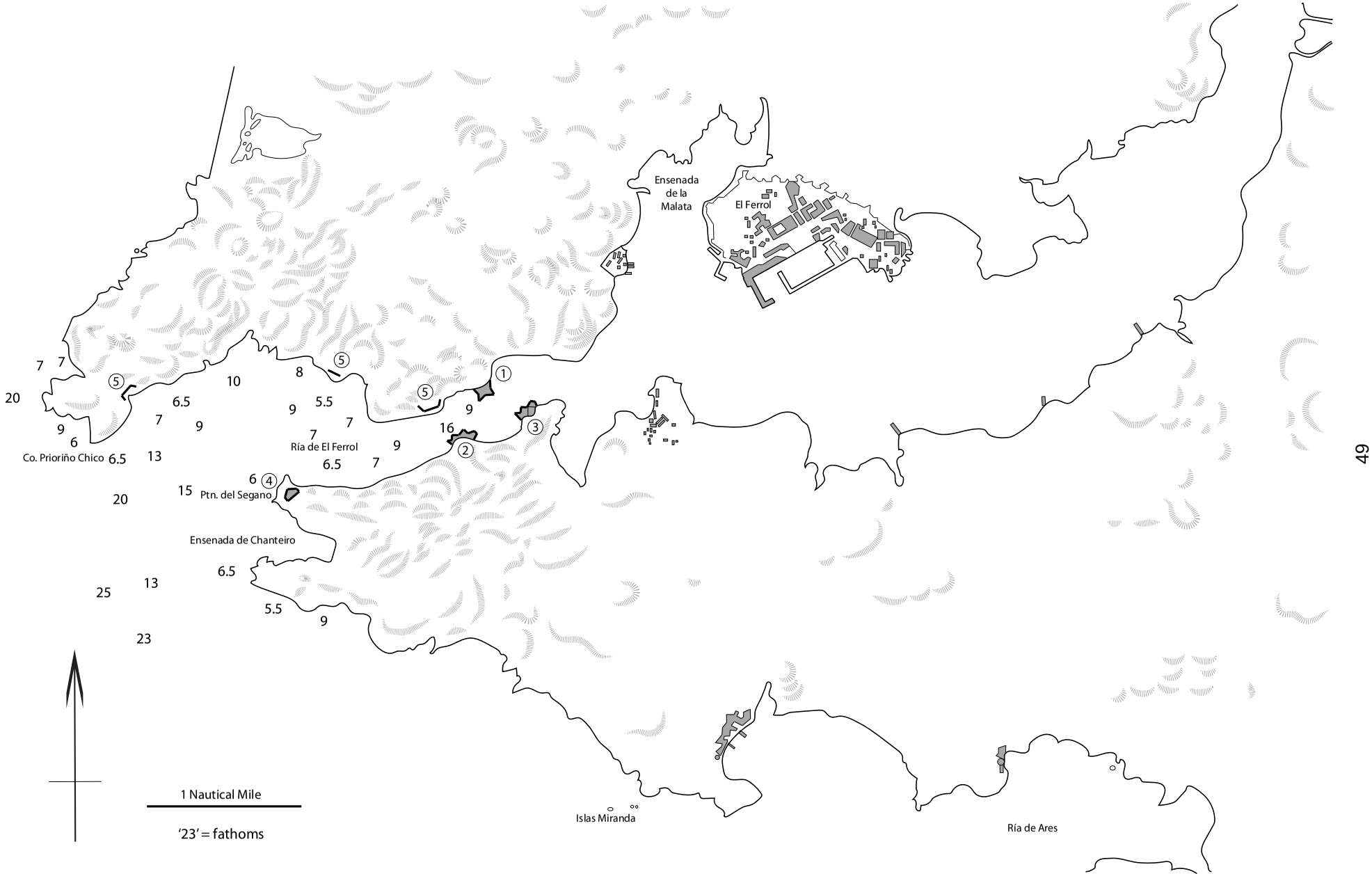
Richmond's report of the storm that was raised when Parliament met in November is amusing — and shows that nothing has changed in the past 300 years. Haddock and Ogle were not blamed, but the Admiralty was. It was the "worst conducted part of the worst conducted war that was ever carried on by this nation or any other". Lord Carteret, an Opposition member, motioned that Haddock's instructions for the last two years be publicly read. Lord Newcastle, who was responsible for those orders, refused, saying it would be "of great benefit to the Spaniards" if they were made public. The Opposition jeered that the only secret that would be revealed was how to issue orders to admirals that could not possibly be obeyed. The Opposition further charged that the orders had been deliberately worded to allow for misinterpretation (most likely so that the Administration could say "we told him to do that, aren't we brilliant", or, "well, we told him not to do that", regardless of what befell).

The Spanish Perspective

The Spanish had sortied enmasse and was in the process of concentrating. But, instead of a coordinated plan to invade England or Ireland, or to defeat Vernon in the Caribbean, in reality they had no clear conception of what to do next. There were even some in the Government who thought the feint against Ireland was the real thing. Sending a force to the Caribbean had been established as a goal, but when, and how large a force, was not yet decided by the time spring turned into summer.

Sometime during May *Teniente-General* Pintado was ordered to sortie directly against Balchen. The reason for this is not easy to confirm, but it was probably a mix of testing British resolve and trying to push the enemy farther away from the port. It was judged that Pintado's effort was so feeble as to demand chastisement. Historians do not even bother to list the ships involved. Pintado was replaced by Don Rodrigo.

Spanish plans continued to mature. In mid May de Torres and Quintana were trying to persuade their boss, the *marqués* de Villarías — he combined the roles of First Secretary of State (prime minister) and Chief Justice) — to authorize the dispatch of a pair of ships from El Ferrol (*Hermiona* and *San Esteban*) to South America, followed by another pair from the same port and two more from Santander (these being *Castilla (60)* and *Guipuzcoa (60)*). This was probably with the idea of protecting Montevideo. At the same time, the *marqués* de Ensenada was telling Villarías there was no money or stores to outfit more ships, and many of the officers were owed three years backpay.



Map of El Ferrol

Based on plan drawn by Captain J.S. Speer 1733

1. Castillo San Felipe
2. Castillo San Morain
3. Castillo Palina
4. Fuerte Segano
5. other forts

The *Constante*, to take just one example, needed a new mainmast but none could be found nearer than Barcelona.

(As mentioned earlier in this commentary, Zenón de Somodevilla, 1. *marqués* of Ensenada, would become head of the Spanish Admiralty and Colonial Department in 1743. Already involved in the affairs of those departments, at the start of the war he had been directed to oversee the revamping of El Ferrol, hence his litany of complaints.)

Then in June came detailed intelligence regarding the Great Expedition. Its sheer size made the Spanish fearful for El Ferrol, particularly since one of their primary agents in England, M. Amelot, the French Ambassador, had picked up gossip about such an attack. Calls to employ the West Indies expedition in an attack on Cádiz were rightly buried as an idiotic idea, but the orders for an attack on El Ferrol came close to being issued. To the Spanish, meanwhile, the Expedition seemed far too large for a mere descent on one of their American bases.

However, by July opinion had shifted. An attack on Iberia was assessed to be a British pipe dream. Also, Montevideo faded as a potential target. M. Amelot had done some investigation. Moreover, it was feared that an overdue letter from the Governor of Panama, listing the weaknesses of the Spanish in the New World, had been intercepted. It seemed clear the British planned to make a major move in the Caribbean — La Habana or Cartagena des Indías. English merchants still residing at Cádiz (yes, there were some) were of the same opinion. But, no matter where the British went, they would be sure to overwhelm the defenders. There was also Commodore Anson's special operation. Despite British attempts to hide his preparations the Spanish were well aware that a small squadron was being outfitted to visit the Pacific. Regardless of logistical problems, action needed to be taken.

Plans were altered. *Hermiona* and *San Esteban* would be joined by *Guipuzcoa* and two other ships (13 June). A month went by as stores and supplies slowly made their way to El Ferrol. A grand council meeting was called on 27 July, at which it was decided to make a greater effort. The Spanish would outfit two forces: *chef d'escuadra* Pizarro to take five or six ships and intercept Anson, and de Torres to take twelve more and hasten to the West Indies.

[The duque *de Montemar might have opposed this measure (remember, he favoured a Europe-first strategy) but he chose to have a diplomatic illness, allowing the colonialist Montijo to dominate the council.]*

Somehow the authorities scraped together the three years worth of backpay for the naval officers. Some of the money was obtained through the sale of prizes, for the corsairs were having a field day. Basic ships stores, unobtainable locally, were purchased from overage stocks in France and Holland. Ultimately, both de Torres and Pizarro would sail only half-prepared. To address this problem, a stream of ships was sent out after them, bearing additional supplies and troops.

Pizarro sailed first, on 2 August. His squadron, which acquired and lost ships here and there during its mission, consisted of the following:

Asia (64) — late of Cádiz, now based at El Ferrol
Guipuzcoa (60) — at Santander
Esperanza (50) —at Santander
Hermiona (40) — based out of La Plata in South America
San Esteban (40) — based out of La Plata
Patache (20) — based in South America

Plus 6 months provisions and 500 men of the *Portugal* regiment.

At first, he only went as far as Santander (6 August), to pick up the *Guipuzcoa* and *Esperanza*. Here he was stuck for a month, waiting for merchandise, which he had to sell in America to defray the cost of his expedition. He then apparently sailed back to El Ferrol, where he waited another month for favourable winds, and for those ships of his squadron that had been left behind in Santander. The squadron did not begin its primary mission, pursuit of Anson's squadron, until 7 October, reaching Santofia on 11 October and Tenerife on 22 October. By that point Pizarro already had 307 sick and 31 dead men on his hands, all from disease. The cost of his expedition to date (May through August) was nearly 2.5 million *reales*.

Don Rodrigo, mustering a larger number of both warships and merchantmen, took even longer to make ready. Eventually, his force consisted of the following:

- *San Felipe (84) — flag*
- *Reina, Santa Ana, Principe* – 70s
- *San Luis* (62 or 66), *Andalucia (62)*
- *Real Familia, San Antonio, Nueva España, Castilla, Fuerte, Santiago* – all 60s
- Sloops *Pingüe, Isabela, Hermoso, Santa Marta*

The flotilla carried about 2,000 soldiers and three months provisions:

- 4 companies of *Regimientos de Toledo, Lisbao,* and *Navarra*.
- 6 companies of *Regimiento de Vitoria*.
- The rest of the second battalions of *Aragón, España,* and *Grenada.* (This is not certain, but likely.)

*[*San Felipe *is not given in every source — a seventh 60-gunner sometimes replaces her. Some sources state* Fuerte *was sold in 1739, which raises more questions.* Regimiento Vitoria *was dropped at Caracas, the rest went to Cartagena des Indías, temporarily.*

The composition of the followup ships is not clear. Crespo gives the most comprehensive list. Ships had to be hired from the French and from the Caracas Company and other merchant concerns. Crespo's sailing schedule for those vessels sent to the Caribbean is as follows:

- *24 October* – Iupitero *sloop (this is probably the Cádiz brig)*
- *9 November* – El Rosario *sloop*
- *18 November* – Marte *sloop (this is probably the Cádiz brig)*
- *21 November* – Nuestra Señora del Carmen *(Caracas Company)*
- *25 November* – Santa Barbara *sloop (Caracas Company)*
- *28 November* – San Nicholas *sloop (Caracas Company)*
- *January 1741* – San José *(French)*

- *22 January* San Lorenzo *(French),* San Andreas *sloop,* Carmen *patache.]*

De Torres sailed from El Ferrol on 31 August, though his orders bade him leave no later than 30 July. His ultimate destination was Cartagena des Indías, but he was required to proceed first to Puerto Rico in hopes of joining a small squadron last heard of in those waters.

The crossing was uneventful, and although the British could not be prevented from discovering details of the expedition, tactical surprise was maintained simply by snapping up prizes in their way so they could not spread the alarm. Unfortunately, at 10pm on 11 September the convoy ran into a hurricane near St. Barts. Two ships were severely damaged and the rest battered. Don Rodrigo had 60 dead and 700 sick by the time he made landfall. Over the next few days the squadron reassembled in the bay of San Francisco, at the west end of Puerto Rico (the first ships arriving on 15 September). Two vessels were missing: *Fuerte* and *Andalucia (62)*. Badly off course, both tried to make La Habana. The former did so, but *Andalucia* struck in the Bahamas Channel.

With the caveat that the list of ships issuing from El Ferrol is not completely trustworthy, it would appear that the ships remaining in Spain consisted of:

At Cádiz

Real Felipe (112) — laid up for most of the year
Santa Isabel (80)— laid up; sent to El Ferrol in late fall
Sobiero (66) — purchased from Venice in the spring
San Fernando (62)
Santa Teresa (60) — laid up
El Retiro (50) — laid up until the summer
Fama Volante (52) — laid up
Paloma Indiana (52) — hulked
Bombarde (8) — bomb, probably laid up
Plus 2 unnamed fireships and 8 ships potentially earmarked for the outbound *flota*.

At El Ferrol

Léon (70) — laid up until the summer
San Francisco-Xavier (52) — sent to Cádiz after refit

Princesa (70) — technically part of the squadron, but already captured

At Cartagena in the Mediterranean

América (64)
Hércules (60)
Águila (23)
Aurora (30)
Liga (28)

French Travails

What of the French? Well, as it turns out, they did have an active role to play. Eventually. But, the activity at Brest that so spooked the British during the spring was probably only the annual refit, made a little more intensive by the need to repair d'Antin's Baltic squadron. Preparations to help the Spanish, primarily through a demonstration of force and a Stern Warning for the British not to capture any more Spanish towns, were only completed toward the end of August (the intended sailing date was June). The two squadrons of Brest and Toulon, which the British feared were going to combine with the Spanish, instead sailed individually to the West Indies under the overall command of d'Antin.

Chef d'Escadre Gaspard de Goussé, *comte* de la Roche-Allart sailed from Toulon on 25 August. It took until 24 September to reach Malaga in the Balearic Isles; the Straits were passed two days later. Only now could Roche-Allart open his sealed orders. They instructed him to send half his ships back to Toulon. These were earmarked to assist the Spanish with their pending Italian war. Roche-Allart continued on to Martinique with the rest, arriving on 25 December.

The Brest Squadron, including some ships from Rochefort, under d'Antin himself, sailed on 1 (or 2) September. Six ships under *Lieutenant-Général* (or *Chef d'Escadre*) Jacques-Aymar, *le Chevalier* de Roquefeuil, were detached to cruise the northern Spanish coast before heading to the West Indies. This seems have been a feeble attempt to assist the Spanish at El Ferrol. D'Antin reached Martinique on 21 October, Roquefeuil on 8 January 1741.

The composition of these squadrons and detachments varies from source to source. Battered by storms, the French arrived at Martinique in dribs and drabs, their squadrons jumbled. Upon arrival the crews immediately caught Yellow Fever. Their flotilla decimated, the French quickly sailed for home (7 February 1741) — to do so they had to travel west to Florida, then north to catch the returning trade winds. D'Antin himself died on 24 April 1741, after reaching Brest on 18 April. He was only 32. This brief French presence in the Caribbean — a few ships did remain — may have helped the Spanish indirectly, by delaying Vernon's descent on Cartagena des Indías until London was sure of d'Antin's destination. The attack would now take place at the worst possible time of the year.

Roche-Allart is usually given the following ships:

Ferme (74)
Conquérant (68)
Eole (64)
Léopard (62)
Toulouse (62)
Tigre (56)
Alcion (54)
Diamante (54)
An unnamed *tartane*.

Some sources assign *Diamante* to Brest. *Ferme* and *Toulouse* were apparently assigned to the Baltic mission (see above), although this does not preclude their basing at Toulon. As *Diamante* later served exclusively in the Med, assigning her to Brest is probably incorrect. By a process of elimination, the ships returned to Toulon were probably *Eole, Toulouse, Tigre,* and *Alcion.*

D'Antin's squadron, less Roquefeuil's detachment, appears to have included the following:

Dauphin Royal (76)

Juste (74)
Bourbon (76)
Lys (74)
Achille (64)
Ardent (64)
Elizabeth (64)
Fleuron (64)
Content (60)
Mercure (54)
Argonaute (44)
Gloire (46)
Parfaite (46)
Astrée (30)
Fée brigantine
Gaillarde sloop (civilian?).

Roquefeuil's detachment seems to have consisted of only 4 capital ships:

Superbe (74)
Sainte Louis (64)
Triton (56)
Amazone (46)

It is possible he took with him the brigantine and the sloop listed under d'Antin's force.

Prior to d'Antin's departure the Chevalier de Nesmond sortied on 28 July, with four ships. This has been interpreted as either a convoy escort or an advance guard, or both. Nesmond's ships are not named. If he was purely commanding an advance guard, his ships are probably among those listed for d'Antin. If not, then his ships will be found in the list below. It is tempting to assign him those at Rochefort, particularly because Rochefort and not Brest was a common mustering station for convoys. He may have originally sortied from Brest but rebased at Rochefort.

Up to four ships of the expedition were so damaged they had to return home before reaching their destination (about 2 October). The most likely count is three returned and possibly one sunk, the returnees being *Argonaute* and *Astrée* and *Gloire*; all were broken up or hulked at Brest early in 1741. It is possible the sunk vessel was a support ship.

Assuming the above is correct, the following should be the significant ships remaining in French ports (there were also quite a number of light vessels, most of which cannot be confirmed):

Brest

Foudroyant (110)
Neptune (74)
Sceptre (74)
Retribution (74)
Intrépide (74) — likely but not confirmed
Eclatant (62)
Mars (64)
Hercule (60)
Carillon (60) — possible
Brillant (56)
Rubis (54)
Griffon (46) — possible
Vénus (26)
Castor (26) — possible
Embuscade (38) — possible
Rénomée (26) — possible

Toulon

Duc d'Orléans (74)
Espérance (74)
Sainte Ésprit (74)
Solide (66)
Terrible (74)
Phenix (74)
Borée (64)
Sérieux (64)
Heureux (60)
Furiéux (60) — likely but not confirmed
Flore (54)
Aquillon (46)

Rochefort

Sainte Philippe (74)
Appollon (54)
Néreide (44)
Victoire (22)
Jason (32) — possible

Admiral Norris and the Great Expedition

It will be remembered that Admiral Norris also held an operational command over all ships in home waters. On 22 June (during the height of the Government's traditional Silly Season) the Council directed him to sail to El Ferrol with a significant force and capture it — throwing the Spanish into a panic, as has been seen. He was free to take ships from the Great Expedition, which was just about ready to sail, though he could not keep them. Norris told them the idea was stupid. He backed up his statement with various historical examples and persuaded them to abandon the idea.

But ironically, just one week later a spy provided details showing that a landing farther along the coast, followed by an overland attack, might just succeed. It was believed the Spanish would not expect such a move, though this is exactly what they *did* expect. This time Newcastle decided against the plan. Not for operational reasons. He had set his heart on the capture of Cartagena des Indías and had no intention of delaying any longer. It would be enough if Norris loosely blockaded El Ferrol. The Admiral received his final orders to sail for that place on 1 July.

These orders were the usual 'boiler plate'. Find out if the Spanish were still in port. Blockade them if they were. If not, find out where they had gone and chase them, unless they were bound for the West Indies, in which case he was to reinforce Vernon with some ships and continue cruising with the rest. The protection of merchantmen was his default instruction. Ogle was still at sea at this point, though his whereabouts were unknown; if he could be located he was to augment Norris' force. Philip Cavendish, an Admiral of the Blue, was Norris' other subordinate.

The following ships composed Norris' flotilla. All were more or less ready to sail, and the numbers were sufficient to

blockade El Ferrol, though inadequate to cover every possible contingency:

Victory (100)
Princess Amelia (80)
Princess Carolina (80)
Boyne (80)
Shrewsbury (80)
Cumberland (80)
Chichester (80)
Torbay (80)
Cambridge (80)
Russell (80)
Norfolk (80)
Grafton (70)
Lenox (70)
Kent (70)
Orford (70)
Suffolk (70)
Prince Frederick (70)
Dunkirk (60)
Deptford (60)
Weymouth (60)
Winchelsea (20)
Fox (20)
Phaeton (20)
Plus the fireships (used for stores) *Etna* and *Blaze*, and the hospital ship *Princess Royal*.

Ten lumbering 2nd Rates and only three frigates did not make for a 'handy' cruising squadron, but it was all that was available. The big ships would have been more effective in a so-called 'close blockade', but Norris' limited resources (and common practice) called for a distant blockade that would engage an enemy after it had left port.

[Richmond notes that for a close blockade Norris would require ships to match the enemy at El Ferrol and possibly Brest — 26 — plus reserves of 25% in summer and more in winter, or no less than 32 ships. Since the primary object was to screen the Caribbean expedition, summer numbers ought to be enough, unless, as might easily happen, the vast fleet was delayed for weeks in the Channel.]

Norris boarded the *Victory* on 5 July but his fleet was still taking on crew as of 20 July (one of whom was the King's son, the Duke of Cumberland). This meant that Ogle had time to return (19 July) and be added to the mission. His own ships were in good shape, but his crews were not: *Augusta (60); Elizabeth (70); Lyon (60); Prince of Orange (70); Superbe (60); Litchfield (50); Jersey (60); Assistance (50); Falkland (50)*.

The added delay of course meant the Government had the chance to fiddle with Norris' orders. He was now supposed to put a watch on Brest and somehow interfere with that squadron if it sortied to help the Spanish, though without doing anything that could be considered an act of war. In practice this did not amount to much of a change, because Norris could only act aggressively against the French if they tried to enter El Ferrol, which he was going to blockade anyway. If the French went anywhere else, legally he could do nothing to stop them.

Norris was able to make some detachments. The *Winchelsea* was sent to watch Brest by cruising off Ushant. (The French had been complaining of the aggressive tactics of such patrols, so she was ostensibly hunting for Spanish privateers.)

Also, he was required to provide an additional escort under a Captain Gascoigne for the Great Expedition's transports. These ships would not, as was normal practice, return after seeing the convoy beyond the standard 100 leagues from shore, but carry on across the Atlantic: *Buckingham (70); Rippon (60); York (60); Experiment (24); Seahorse (20)*. On 10 July Balchen's ships finished their refit and joined Norris, giving him a total of twenty-six ships ready for sea (13 of his own, 7 of Ogle's and 6 of Balchen's). This allowed him to add Balchen and four ships to the convoy escort: *Russell (80); Norfolk (80); Cumberland (80); Prince Frederick (70)*. Balchen's force, however, was intended to return.

On 13 July (Beatson says 10 July) a vast armada put to sea: 160 ships of the Expedition plus Norris' twenty-six battlewagons, plus a host of independent merchantmen who wanted protection. Things did not go well. After a day's sailing they reached Torbay, and there they stalled in the face of a gale-force sou'wester. A lull about 16 July allowed them to proceed, but it was a very short move; *Victory* fouled the *Lyon* and Norris had to transfer his flag to the *Boyne*. *Lyon* lost her foretop mast, *Victory* her head and bowsprit. 28 men were drowned. Both ships were put out of action. The next attempt took the fleet as far as the Start (22 July) before they were blown back to Torbay.

[There are some dating problems here. Richmond for once seems to have shifted from OS to NS. Beatson's timeline is somewhat different again. He says the British sailed on 29 July, almost reached the mouth of the Channel, and were blown back to Spithead. This may refer to the attempt of 22 July. From Richmond, regardless of specific dates, it seems clear Norris remained at Torbay until September, making various attempts to get out.]

Beatson recounts a small affair which took place during the time the fleet was at Torbay. A Spanish privateer disguised as a French fishing boat arrived and counted sails while selling off her cargo of brandy. After she departed she revealed her true identity by capturing a local vessel in full view of the fleet and escaping with it.

On 29 July Norris learned the Brest Squadron, penned in by the same bad weather, was at one hour's notice to sail. Given that Brest would be free of the storm system long before Torbay, d'Antin would likely be at sea when the Expedition reached the end of the Channel. This news caused the Admiralty to augment Gascoigne's escort to five ships and four light vessels, and to order Commodore Anson, whose expedition was sailing at the same time, to assist — he was already using the convoy as cover. Balchen was given another two ships; the non-permanent escorts would accompany the convoy for 150 leagues. The new breakdown was as follows.

Balchen: *Russell (80), Cumberland (80), Prince Frederick (70), Princess Amelia (80), Lyon (60), Grafton (70), Augusta (60)*.

Anson: *Centurion (60), Gloucester (50), Severne (50), Pearl (42), Wager (28), Trial* sloop.

Gascoigne: *Buckingham (70), York (60), Montague (60), Assistance (50), Litchfield (50), Seahorse (20), Strombolo* bomb, *Vulcan* fireship (or sloop), *Princess Royal* storeship (*there was a 90-gunner of the same name, but it would not be listed among the auxiliary vessels*).

Beatson notes the presence of the *Sea Horse (20)* on the Portuguese coast. There were always one or two vessels here, protecting the trade with Portugal. During this time *Sea Horse* took two prizes, sank one privateer, and forced another aground.

The gales abated, but were followed by calms and fogs, and then more contrary winds. Norris could do nothing with the fleet as a whole, but he did dispatch some of his lighter vessels on various tasks. Two ships cruising off El Ferrol reported about 5 August that the Spanish had thirteen ships ready to sail. This was frustrating. It was also learned some 56 friendly merchantmen were impounded at San Sebastian. Norris decided to send three ships to cruise the Galician coast (*Newcastle (50), Dolphin (20), Fox (20)*).

The news of the impounded merchantmen naturally inflamed Parliament, leading to demands for their immediate liberation and the assigning of two more regiments to the fleet (Whetham's and Handasyde's) under the command of a Colonel Bland. El Ferrol, in Richmond's words, 'was forgotten'. Instead, Bland was to be accompanied by the bulk of the fleet and make a landing to destroy the arsenals and stores about San Sebastian. The orders for the attack were dated 23 August but it would be September at the earliest before the British could carry out the landing. Norris did not fancy a September spent on the Galician coast.

By 25 August the folly of ignoring El Ferrol in favour of San Sebastian no longer mattered. Nor for that matter did the folly of making a descent at El Ferrol. That day the British learned the Spanish had been seen 30 miles off the Berlengas islands (the Burlings, as the British called them) on 11 August. At least they were not setting up to intercept the Expedition — the Berlengas are off the coast of Portugal, a little to the north of Lisbon — and the Spanish were sailing 'west by south'. On 11 September the *Winchelsea* reported the Brest Squadron had been seen heading west on 27 August (it actually sailed on 1 September). Norris did not get a favourable wind until 15 September.

(This intelligence was received in a roundabout way. The news of the Spanish was from a merchantman docking at Oostende and that of the French was from a Dutch ship the *Winchelsea* had encountered.)

The favourable wind did not last long. By 17 September Norris was back at Torbay and another gale was raging. It hardly mattered now. When news was received that Roche-Allart's Toulon Squadron had sailed on 25 August the Admiralty instructed Norris (15 September) to remain at Torbay pending further orders.

These came quickly. On 18 September Norris was ordered to resume the San Sebastian operation (naturally, he had just disembarked the troops) and to strengthen the Great Expedition's escort to thirty-three ships and eight smaller vessels. The Expedition was to leave immediately and, amazingly, managed to do so. Anson went with it, parting company well beyond the mouth of the Channel. The independent merchantmen who had nothing to do with the Expedition were given an escort of three ships and told to stop encumbering the fleet. This left Norris with twelve ships and some additional transports and light vessels (twenty-five sail in all).

[The ships added to the escort were: Russell, Cumberland, Prince Frederic, Princess Amelia, Lyon, *and* Grafton*.]*

On 19 September the San Sebastian operation was permanently cancelled. Norris was ordered to return to Portsmouth, victual, and dispatch most of his force to the West Indies in pursuit of the Spanish (and possibly French). He left Torbay on 23 September, reached Spithead on 24 September, and handed his command over to Ogle, now a Rear Admiral of the Blue. (The Duke of Cumberland, disgusted by the whole affair, and probably feeling rather queasy, likewise disembarked; his next campaigns would be on good solid earth.)

[Ogle's appointment came about because he was the only one of the three flag officers junior to Vernon who was still available. Rear Admiral Haddock already had an independent command in the Med, whereas Ogle's last posting had been a subordinate one. The Earl of Grannard was the third option, but he opposed the King's policies in Parliament and found the practice of doing so to be a career-stopper.]

Ogle, acting on Norris' orders to pursue the Spanish to the West Indies ('pursue' in the loosest sense of the word) did not get away until 6 November, after another failed attempt on 29 October. He arrived in the West Indies, scattered and battered, about 3 January. Fortunately the passage was swift, encountering bad weather but no hurricanes. A storm on 22 November sent the *Buckingham* home and the *Superb* and *Prince of Wales* to Lisbon, in company with the *Cumberland*. The latter made her own way to the Caribbean while the other pair returned to England.

Ogle ultimately took twenty-eight men of war and five smaller ships with him. Though all were scattered and some turned back, the rest assembled in Prince Rupert's Bay, Dominica, within a few days of each other. Thanks to all the reshuffling that took place in response to events the list of participating ships is somewhat confused. The following seems pretty certain:

- *Princess Caroline (80) — to be Vernon's flag*
- *Russell (80)* Ogle's flag
- *Boyne, Cumberland, Chichester, Norfolk, Princess Amelia, Shrewsbury, Torbay* — 80s
- *Orford, Buckingham, Prince Frederick, Suffolk* — 70s
- *Augusta, Deptford, Jersey, Dunkirk, Lyon, Rippon, York, Weymouth* — 60s
- *Litchfield (50)*
- Frigate *Ludlow Castle (40)*

- Plus *Firebrand (8) fireship, Vulcan (8) fireship, Phæton (8) fireship, Etna (8) bomb, Strombolo (8) bomb, Princess Royal (18) hospital ship.*

Defiance (60) and *Tilbury (60)* also appeared in the West Indies around the same time, as a separate command under a Captain Trevor, probably arriving with a 'normal' convoy.

[Some sources add the following: Prince of Orange (70), Tiger (32), Experiment (20). *These ships do appear in accounts of the Caribbean actions of 1741, and were included in some of the earlier Admiralty instructions, but it would seem they were not part of the Great Expedition — again, probably commercial convoy escorts dropped from the original order of battle.]*

On 18 January 1741, the combined British fleet, less stragglers, left their assembly point at Dominica, bound for Jamaica. They brought with them the body of the general commanding the Expedition, Lord Cathcart, who had died of 'the bloody flux' on 11 January. Many believe his untimely death led to the ultimate failure of the expedition. Command of the army devolved on Brigadier General Wentworth, a desk jockey.

[From at least one firsthand account, the fleet put in at Barbados first, which would have meant Cathcart died there and not at Dominica. Most of the major historians do not recount this landfall. Also, the French were disturbed by reports of 'Admiral Norris' landing at Santo Domingo with a vast host, but this may have been Cathcart's funeral procession (he was a Peer, remember). A 'sedan chair' had been observed, which was thought contain the agéd Admiral Norris, but it could have been a makeshift bier. Perhaps he actually died at sea and was taken ashore after.]

The attack on Cartagena des Indías forms no part of this narrative, but, as has been seen, its preparation consumed the energies of much of the Royal Navy. Interestingly, Vice Admiral Vernon, whose success at Portobelo inspired the attempt, went on record opposing it, though he did favour conducting several smaller operations. His views seem to have been ignored. Richmond suggests that as he corresponded directly with the Duke of Newcastle, and as no mention is actually made in the records of the Committee of Council, the Duke suppressed Vernon's opinions. Newcastle did so want that entrepôt.

Overall Army command was given to Lord Cathcart, a general of high reputation. Vernon would command the fleet once it reached the West Indies; Ogle was only deputed to see the Expedition safely there, after which he would obtain command of the Jamaica Station. Excluding the 3,500 of Gooch's new American Regiment, which was mustering in New England, the number of soldiers involved may have topped 8,000:

- Cavendish's 34th Regiment of Foot
- Bland's 36th Regiment of Foot
- Churchill's 1st Marines or 44th Regiment of Foot
- Fraser's 2nd Marines or 45th Regiment of Foot
- Holme's 3rd Marines or 46th Regiment of Foot
- Byng's 4th Marines or 47th Regiment of Foot
- Cochrane's 5th Marines or 48th Regiment of Foot
- Coterall's 6th Marines or 49th Regiment of Foot
- Gooch's American Marines or 43rd of Foot

[A lower estimate from Harding gives 3,100 for Gooch's and 6,000 for the troops from England. Note that the regiments allotted to the San Sebastian plan belonged to the Expedition.It is recorded that the troops loaded up in July. It is not recorded whether they were ever disembarked for a rest before they left port.]

Anson's Voyage

The circumnavigation of the globe by Commodore Anson requires a chapter of its own, but since the escapade took place far from European waters it will not be discussed. In brief, he caused the Spanish authorities no end of heartburn but relatively little diversion of resources. The most significant effect was to put Anson in a very senior position upon his return, from which he influenced naval strategy in a manner extremely favourable to Britain. Anson's was not the only such voyage to take place during the war. In the North Pacific, after years spent crossing Siberia the Russian admiral Bering was seeking Alaska, and toward the end of the war two expeditions to find the Northwest Passage departed England.

The O'Leary Project

One affair that does not receive much mention in the histories, perhaps because it never left the drawing table, is the 'O'Leary Project'. Daniel O'Leary, as his name clearly indicates, was a Frenchman. In the summer of 1740 he came to the Spanish Crown with a prospectus. The Guinea Coast in West Africa was a highly lucrative market for the British, with around 400 vessels trading there annually. Some came for the ivory and gold, some for the aromatic gums and red wood, and some for the slaves that could be sold to the Spanish Americas on the blackmarket (no pun intended). The Spanish very much wanted to stamp out the last.

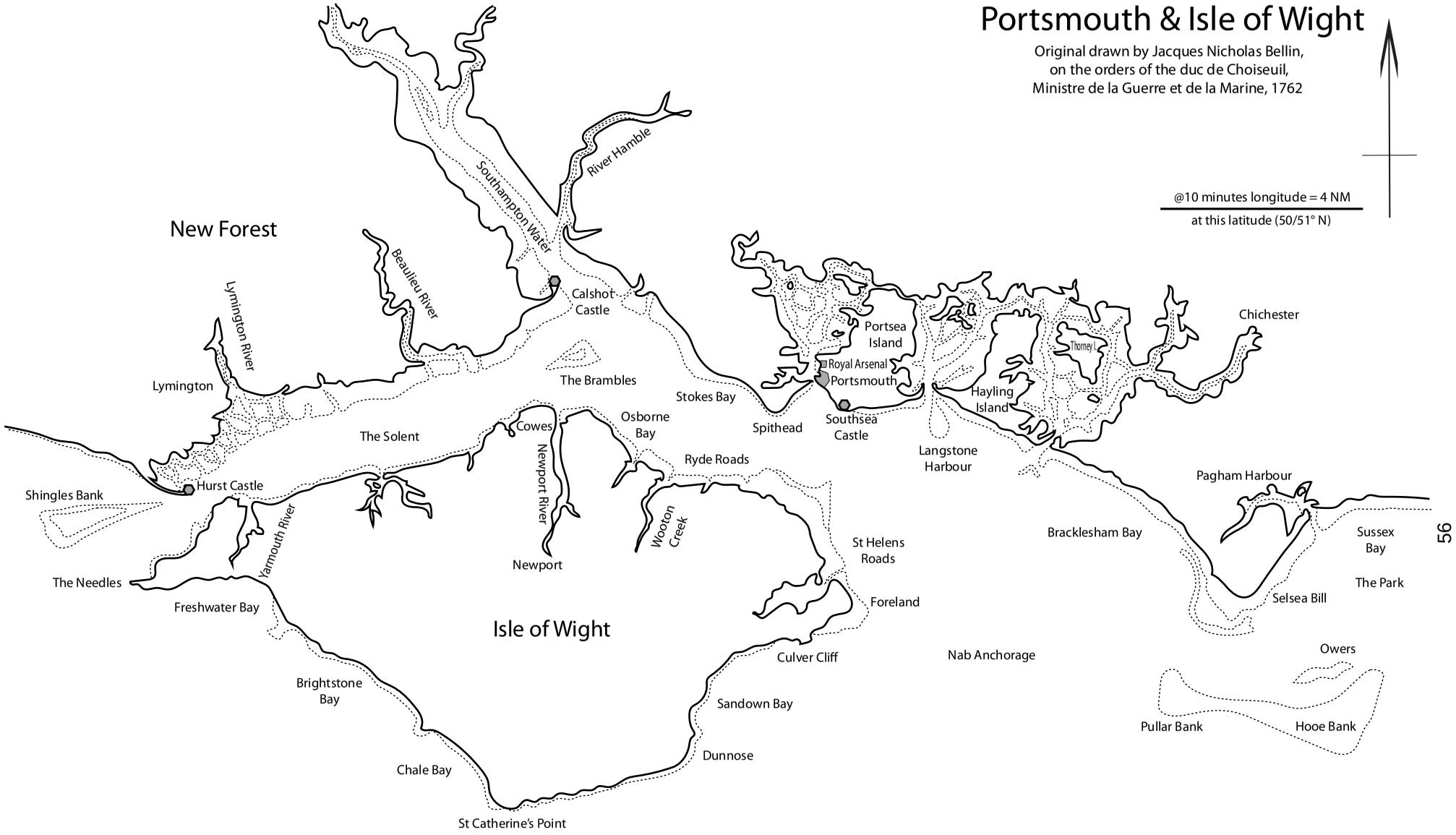
If the Spanish would loan him a royal frigate, O'Leary proposed to arm three of his own vessels and interdict this trade. To protect their merchants, the British never used more than one or two ships (currently there was one, the *Salisbury (54)*). The royal frigate ought to be a 40-gunner. O'Leary would supply a 16-gun galley, an 8-gun vessel, and a 4-gun vessel. He wanted supplies for a six-month campaign and letters of marque for himself and his captains. The frigate would load up and return to Spain with any goods captured, while O'Leary transported any 'liberated' slaves to America, or perhaps the Canaries, and sell them. Profits on the cargoes would be split between him and the Crown. Any prize money for captured vessels would be a matter for verbal negotiation between his party and the frigate captain.

The *Junta del Almirantzago* were keen on the idea. They agreed to give O'Leary the title of Captain to put him on a par with the frigate captain, who would actually command the expedition. Furthermore, the squadron would be made immune from the commandeering designs of other squadron commanders. The project was worked out in great detail, covering all eventualities. The ships were to be ready to sail in three months, either from San Sebastian or Pasajes (the next harbour to the east). To avoid the tropic heat the expedition should arrive on the Guinea Coast in January or February of 1741.

Portsmouth & Isle of Wight

Original drawn by Jacques Nicholas Bellin,
on the orders of the duc de Choiseuil,
Ministre de la Guerre et de la Marine, 1762

@10 minutes longitude = 4 NM
at this latitude (50/51° N)



The main sticking point seems to have been José de la Quintana, the *Secretario de Despacho de Marina e Indias*. He objected to the sale of slaves in the Americas, or rather, to the manner in which they were to be transported, which was technically illegal, despite the fact that they were to be 'liberated' from the enemy, and raised concerns about his captains' lack of knowledge of the Guinea Coast, in comparison with the British. He would also have preferred the operation to have involved only naval vessels, subject to royal oversight; this, of course, would have made the operation much more expensive, in which case he would probably have objected to it on the grounds of cost. The reader can see where this is going. Just like the larger operation involving de Torres, planning and preparation became mired in interdepartmental rivalry.

Nevertheless, the project was approved by the Admiralty on 13 September 1740 and the governors of the ports of El Ferrol and San Sebastian were ordered to assist O'Leary. The royal ship chosen was the *Galga (56)*, then at El Ferrol and captained by the *conde* de Vegaflorida. He and O'Leary seem to have got on well, and most of the details were arranged, such as the course to be taken, signals, and so forth. Secrecy was paramount and they would only touch land, perhaps, in the Canaries; on the return they would of course have to stop in various places to sell their cargo, but they would ultimately return to El Ferrol.

And, this is as far as the project got. O'Leary and Vegaflorida were subject to the same constraints as the rest of the Spanish fleet — lack of pay, supplies, and ships' stores. As late as May 1741 they were still making preparations; O'Leary took delivery of one of the shipments from France that were making up for shortfalls in the Spanish inventory, receiving some timber and guns. But *Galga*, the only available ship that was capable of crossing the Atlantic, was needed for a supply run and departed for La Habana in the spring of 1740.

O'Leary abandoned his project, but remained in Spanish employ, devising new ones. In October of 1742 a ship named the *Diligente* (which is not on the naval list and must either have been an armed merchantman or a French loan), appeared on the Guinea Coast and sank one British vessel and took three prizes, before sailing to the West Indies in June of 1743 with a cargo of 240 slaves. This may or may not have been O'Leary's doing.

High Politics

On 20 October, Charles VI, the Holy Roman Emperor, died. The War of the Austrian Succession was about to begin.

Reed Browning's book (see the bibliography) is probably the most accessible account. As one would expect, with so many actors there were many motives and motivations. The crux was the Pragmatic Sanction. A pragmatic sanction was a bilateral agreement between governments. This was a method favoured by the Habsburgs, who used it, along with marriage alliances, to cement their widely separated holdings.

This particular pragmatic sanction, THE Pragmatic Sanction, concerned the inheritance of Emperor Charles VI and was European-wide. Charles lacked a direct male heir. The best he could do was arrange for his daughter, Maria Theresa, to inherit. The other option was to work it through his nieces, but that would have meant giving the throne to Bavaria, which was unthinkable; might as well give it to Louis XV outright.

But within the Empire rule by a woman was forbidden. It was a case of getting everyone to agree that, just this once, Maria's husband, Francis Stephen of Lorraine, was entitled to inherit the throne through her. Most of the European powers agreed, but then Austria got involved in that debilitating war with the Turks. By 1739 the Habsburgs appeared weaker than they had ever been and some, notably Frederick II [the Great] of Prussia-Brandenburg and Charles Albert of Bavaria, saw their chance. Frederick wanted to carve out territory, Charles wanted to supplant the Habsburgs.

The French would be dragged in as 'auxiliaries' of Bavaria. Willingly, of course. Although Cardinal Fleury was opposed to violence if he could avoid it, he was not opposed to taking the Habsburgs down several pegs, and assistance to Bavaria was only one limb of the French diplomatic octopus. Fighting in support of Bavaria would also placate the hawks in the French aristocracy. (For the record, Fleury understood quite well that the Wittelsbach claim was at least as tenuous as Maria Theresa's.)

As has already been mentioned several times, Spanish interest in the looming war stemmed from Elizabeth Farnese's search for Italian property. Spain could not really afford more war, but The Farnese resented being 'gypped' when Francis Stephen was awarded Tuscany after the War of the Polish Succession. Tuscany had 'always' been a possession of the House of Parma. The revelation of Habsburg weakness prompted her to push for war in Italy. The French would become involved here, too, though against Fleury's better judgement, thanks to the Family Compact.

Britain would remain embroiled in the *Asiento* war for several more years. At first, King George, fearful for Hanover, kept a low profile on the Continent, and Walpole's policy of noninvolvement had royal backing (despite the fact that by treaty England was supposed to supply 12,000 auxiliaries to Austria). The British did not want to facilitate a combination against them. In the fall of 1740 they finally gained clarity on French policy, both from their agents in the French Government and thanks to a royal circular sent to all the European courts. France would not go to war with Britain but they would support Spain, and the circular strongly warned the British not to attack any more of Spain's possessions. (King Louis was being a little duplicitous. He was less concerned with losses to Spain than to prevent the British from overwhelming French trade in the Caribbean.)

The British Parliament met on 18 November 1740, sitting until 25 April 1741. After the King's Speech extolling all of the accomplishments of Walpole's Administration during the year, the Duke of Argyle launched a blistering attack on the Government's mismanagement of the war, assigning blame for the various delays on the Administration, including those that ought by rights to have been blamed on the weather.

As a rider to the traditional Motion of Thanks to His Majesty he attempted to have the Privy Council made into a sort of supreme war council, on the grounds of 'rationalising' the war effort, but the motion was defeated 56 to 38 and a counter-motion approving all the measures of the Administration was carried. Of course, this was all power politics, but it did ensure Britain would continue her traditional blundering approach to the war at least for another year. Parliament also voted the recruitment of 40,000 seamen, £90,000 for a new body of marines, £184,000 for the Navy, and various other paper figures. These numbers would be repeated at every Parliament, with few variations.

With regard to the Emperor, the British were kicking around the idea of a defensive league against France when the news of his death reached them. The tangible component of the league was to be the repositioning of troops to prevent a war — 80,000 men in Flanders, mostly British and Hanoverian, with perhaps some Dutch, and a similar Austrian force in Italy, which would threaten Bourbon Naples. Even without the Emperor's sudden demise the Austrians, their army temporarily wrecked by the war in the Balkans and also undergoing a major reform, could not have accomplished much. However, though Britain's involvement turned out to be four years away, this proposal would be roughly the plan adopted then. (Prussia was to be included in the league along with the other German princes, but of course, since she declared war on Austria in December 1740 some changes had to be made.)

For now the wider war impacted the naval situation in only two ways. In the Med the Italian war would bring a series of small Anglo-Spanish clashes, while everywhere the dangers of an Anglo-French clash were greatly heightened, though particularly in the Mediterranean.

1741 — MISSION CREEP

'The great and unhappy event of the death of the late Emperor opens a new scene in the affairs of Europe, in which all the principal Powers may be immediately or consequentially concerned. It is impossible to determine what turn the policy, interest or ambition of the several courts may lead them to take in this critical conjuncture. It shall be my care strictly to observe and attend to their motions, and to adhere to the engagements I am under to the maintaining of the balance of power and the liberties of Europe: and in concert with such Powers as are under the same obligations or equally concerned to preserve the public safety and tranquillity, to act such a part as may best contribute to avert the imminent dangers that may threaten them.'

King's Speech at the opening of Parliament, 18 November 1740. Quoted in Richmond, vol. 1 p. 138.

Taking advantage of the Emperor's death and the indecision of the Powers over whether to recognise Maria Theresa as his legitimate heir, the Elector of Brandenburg (a.k.a. Frederick the Great) invaded the territory of Silesia in December 1740. The War of the Austrian Succession was on. Soon, French troops would be marching east in support of Bavarian claims to the Imperial Throne and Spanish troops would be ferrying across to Italy to wrest more territory from the Habsburgs.

Despite, or because of, the sudden conflagration in Europe, London decided Admiral Vernon did not need any more help, and no additional ships were going to be sent to him. Haddock might need reinforcing. Things were looking dicey at home. At first the French seemed to be only blustering, but they placed ten or twelve ships of the *CIO* under Royal colours. The Spanish, too, seemed to retain a significant presence on their Atlantic coast, not counting privateers and the armed galleons of the Caracas Company, with perhaps ten royal ships present.

Facing these the British started the year with very little. They had plenty of hulls, but Ogle had carried off most of the available manpower to the West Indies. There were an estimated nine ships of the line fit to sail, but, notwithstanding Parliament's bills, these were utterly devoid of crews. Apparently, the Admiralty lacked the authority to recruit more men and was having difficulty persuading the politicians there was any need to be given that authority.

So, on 12 February the British Government laid an embargo on all domestic shipping. Until the fleet was properly manned no merchant ships were going to be allowed to sail. The Admiralty also drafted a Registration Bill to allow for the conscription of merchant sailors; this was hotly debated in Parliament and killed by a strong majority, putting the British in the painful position of having neither fleet nor commerce — the embargo was something the Admiralty could enforce without recourse to Parliament, and they refused to lift it just because the MPs were worried about 'infringement of liberties', whatever that meant. Ironically, Parliament itself rejected a petition by the merchant community to have the embargo lifted.

A number of Opposition MPs admitted they would not object to marines being recruited and used as sailors, a program which Admiral Norris still pushed for. In fact, there were some newly raised units available which had not been sent out to the West Indies. But, the Admiralty Board perversely refused to consider using them.

Eventually, a compromise was worked out, allowing the embargo to be lifted on 25 April. The merchant community agreed to loan a quarter of their crews to the Navy and replace those numbers on their own ships with one-third landsmen — that is, unskilled or semi-skilled labour. This was a significant concession, since merchant ships did not require large crews as a general rule, provided the men knew what they were doing, and it would trim their profits.

Meanwhile, the greater part of d'Antin's flotilla was returning to France, some to Brest and some to Toulon. Most ships and returned by mid April. Besides his own life d'Antin had lost over 2,000 men and his ships were crippled. The British, not being at war with France, did not take advantage of the situation. The French admiral, who personally arrived at Brest on 7 February, received great censure from his own people for abandoning the West Indies to the British. But, France was shifting her focus to Germany; Cardinal Fleury publicly stated France was not bound by the Pragmatic Sanction, which was as much as to say France was soon going to be at war with Austria. A few months later he gave notice they were supporting Bavaria's claim to the Imperial throne with 30,000 'auxiliaries'.

Meanwhile, despite French hints that they intended to sortie again with up to 50 sail, and the news, in mid May, that they and the Spanish had at last reached a working arrangement, the European waters of the Atlantic remained quiescent for some time. The deal France and Spain struck primarily concerned the Mediterranean. The British focus remained the Caribbean.

In May, it was learned that Vernon had achieved an initial success at Cartagena des Indías, successfully landing men and taking some of the outlying forts. Norris tried to use this success to recall some of the ships and personnel involved, but was overruled.

In June there was a 'flap' at the Admiralty. Once again, the British watch on Cádiz had fallen short, this time due to a gale, and the Spanish, having sortied from there on 7 June, were proceeding to El Ferrol. Learning of this, on 13 June, the Admiralty ordered Norris to Spithead, where the scanty forces remaining in home waters were to concentrate. Richmond lists the following at Norris' disposal:

At Spithead

Victory (100), St. George (90), Cambridge (80), Bedford (70), Buckingham (70), Kingston (60), Assistance (50)

At Portsmouth

Nassau (70)

At the Nore

Royal George (90), Royal Sovereign (90), Duke (90), Marlborough (90), Essex (70)

At Plymouth

Elizabeth (64), Ruby (50)

Off the Downs

Lenox (70)

Admiral Norris Goes to Sea

As Norris was preparing to leave London he was informed that the Havana Squadron had sailed. This was vital news. The Havana Squadron would certainly be escorting the inbound *flota* from Vera Cruz. The *flota* itself, held back since the start of the war, would be larger than usual. It was believed that without this treasure fleet the Spanish would be unable to pay for the war. (The assessment was correct, though Spain managed to limp along anyway despite the fact that the *flota* failed to sail, as will be explained.) Thus, on 29 June Norris' orders were changed to an interception (quoted in Richmond, vol. 1 pp.145-146):

'1. Whereas we have received advice that a squadron of Spanish ships has passed from Cádiz to Ferrol and since put to sea again from Ferrol; and whereas there is reason to suppose that ten or twelve Spanish ships of war lately gone from Cartagena to the Havana may be soon expected in some of the ports of Old Spain; and whereas we have also accounts that ten French men-of-war are now at Brest ready to put to sea, and that they may be strengthened by more ships now in the port of Brest. We have thought it for his Majesty's service to order you with the ships named in the margin [see below] or with such of them as shall be ready and such others as may join you, to proceed forthwith to Cape Finisterre and to continue cruising between that Cape and the mouth of the Channel. And you are during your said cruise to commit all manner of hostilities against the Spaniards, and to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy all Spanish ships and vessels that you shall meet. And particularly you are carefully to look out for the Spanish squadrons which is supposed to be coming from the Havana to Old Spain, and may probably be intended to put into Ferrol, and to use your utmost endeavour to intercept and take or to sink, burn or otherwise destroy the ships belonging to the said squadron.

2. And you are to distress and annoy the Spaniards in the best manner you are able either in their ports or on their coasts. And whereas it would be of great importance to his Majesty's service that the Spanish ships of war or privateers which may be in the port or harbour of San Sebastian, or in any other of their ports in the Bay of Biscay, or in Gallicia [sic], should be destroyed, you are (in case you shall find it practicable) to attempt it, either by going thither yourself with your squadron, or by detaching such a number of ships as you shall think proper for that purpose. And you are to detach cruising ships to intercept and take the Spanish privateers (and especially those from San Sebastian) or any other Spanish ships: and to procure what intelligence you can of the motions of the enemy. And you are in the best manner you are able to protect the trade and commerce of these kingdoms, and particularly the homeward and outward bound merchant ships.

3. If you shall have an account that the French squadron now at Brest (of which you will constantly get the best intelligence you can as well with regard to their number as their motions) should be gone into the Mediterranean, you are, in that case, to detach from the squadron under your command such a reinforcement to Admiral Haddock as you shall judge proper, and at the same time to send him the best accounts you can procure as well with respect to the motions of the French as of the Spanish squadron. But if you should find that the squadron from Brest should be come towards the Channel, or shall have reason from your intelligence to believe that the said squadron is preparing so to do, you are in that case, so to dispose the squadron under your command as to be able to follow them immediately, and carefully to watch and observe their motions. And if they shall commit any hostility against any of his Majesty's ships, or on the coast, you are to oppose them with your squadron and to use your utmost endeavours to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy them.

4. You are to keep a constant correspondence, as opportunity shall offer, with Rear Admiral Haddock and to send him from time to time the best intelligence you shall be able to procure of the motions of the Spaniards, in order the better to enable him to perform the services on which he is employed : and there will be herewith put into your hands, for your information, copies of the orders that have been lately sent to Mr Haddock, as also a list of the ships which are at present under his command.

5. You are to continue cruising two months from the time of your sailing unless you shall find it necessary in consequence of these instructions to return sooner into the Channel, or shall receive directions for that purpose. And you are to transmit constant accounts of your proceedings, with such intelligence as you shall be able to procure of the motions and designs of the Spaniards, and of the French ships at Brest, and of everything that may relate to his Majesty's service to one of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, with whom you shall constantly correspond; or to the Secretary to the Lords Justices. And you are to follow such farther orders and directions as shall be sent to you by one of his Majesty's said principal Secretaries of State, or by the Secretary to the Lords Justices.'

Norris arrived at Portsmouth about 22 June, to find preparations had started but not advanced very far. In addition to the ships already named, he was authorised to take command of the following: *Rupert (60), Argyle (50), Gosport (40), Bridgewater (20), Success (8)*, the bombs *Thunder, Blast, Carcass*, and *Lightning*, and the fireships *Scipio* and *Blaze*. There was also a hospital ship, *Sutherland*. Shortages in personnel were to be made up by some marines from the Thames garrisons and a couple of line regiments, Jeffrey's and Powlett's.

There are dating issues surrounding Norris' cruise. At some point the British intercepted a French brig, late from Cádiz, which informed them eighteen Spanish sail had been detailed to escort the *flota* to safety and were probably bound for El Ferrol. The true count seems to have been eight ships, not eighteen, but there may have been some armed merchantmen involved as well.

It is not clear if Norris was already at sea when this news was received, but he did dispatch a pair of frigates down to Oporto to investigate. The patrol had not yet reported by the time he was on station, off the Ilas Sisargas, a group of three small islands lying very close to the Spanish coast about 50 Km WSW of El Ferrol. His ships cruised in a dispersed pattern; in this way they could cover both El Ferrol and La Coruña, which lies on the opposite side of the same bay, and intercept local trade.

The dating question now raises its head. Norris supposedly departed St. Helens on 8 July. Enroute, *Ruby* was detached to scout Brest. Short one other ship (*Marlborough*) the flotilla got out into the Channel, but was held back by contrary winds for some time. Richmond does not state exactly when they were able to exit the Channel. Beatson says about the end of July, with the squadron reaching the Galician coast in early August, but this cannot be right, because the frigates reported to him while he was on station, and though they did so independently of each other, the second one supposedly reported as early as 9 July. It is probably a matter of confusing OS and NS dates.

The first frigate to make its report merely claimed the Spanish had left Cádiz. The other captain got his information from the Consul at Oporto and according to him, the *flota* had not sailed from Cuba. It was too decrepit to make the voyage. Instead of being somewhere to the west of Norris's squadron the local Spanish ships, except for a one or two, had all gone back to Cádiz and Haddock had loosely bottled them up. From Spanish accounts it appears the Cádiz Squadron got to El Ferrol unhindered, learned that the *flota* was not coming, left El Ferrol, and returned south, all before Norris arrived on station.

Norris' orders did not permit him to join forces with Haddock's Mediterranean squadron; he lacked the supplies anyway. Instead, he decided to hunt for privateers and possibly attack their bases on the Galician and Basque coasts. Already the *Argyle* had been operating in that area and had had some success against local enemy trading vessels. Now, *Nassau, Kingston, Assistance*, and *Rupert* were detached for the next month under Captain Medley to cruise between Santander and the Islas Sisargas, with orders to chase privateers. There was also the possibility of bombarding San Sebastian, provided his bomb ketches arrived. In the event they did not appear. According to Richmond, Norris arrived back in England on 3 September.

[Richmond notes that Norris came under attack for his 'futile' two-month's blockade. This was despite the fact that the Spanish had come and gone before the Government decided to do anything. It was also said, in hyperbolic fashion, that he had no clue what his orders were. The risks of commanding a flotilla in the Age of Sail. At least he was not shot.]

Medley returned a month after Norris, with some credit to his name. One two occasions during his cruise the *Rupert* took Spanish privateers, one being the *San Antonia de Padua (16)*, out of San Sebastian, the other being the *Biscaia (10)*. The latter, a notorious vessel with twenty-three prizes to her credit, was fooled by a ruse into thinking *Rupert* was a helpless merchantman. Captain Ambrose, commander of the *Rupert*, took privateers on two other occasions. It is not clear if these captures happened around the same time or in a different season or even a different year. The latter captures were taken out of San Sebastian, the one being the *Duc de Vendôme (26)*, with a French captain, and the other *N.S. del Carmen (24)*. Both required long chases to capture them.

On her own cruise the *Argyle* took a brig and four barks with cargos of lime. Later, she joined with the *Grampus* sloop and the *Gibraltar* to burn a Spanish ship in Caramiñal Bay and cut out five British prizes from Redondela harbour. *Grampus* had previously taken a 10-gun privateer off the Portuguese coast, forcing its surrender with a single broadside. This prize had for some reason been lost and its crew captured when forced to land on the Spanish coast near Vigo, but in reprisal the *Grampus* sailed into Pontevedra Bay, destroyed three privateers at anchor, and liberated one of the Spanish prizes.

[The Atlantic coast of Spain, north of Portugal, features four large bays or 'fjords'. The southernmost is Vigo Bay. The Redondela exploit was extremely daring, because that harbour is far up the inlet, well east of the port of Vigo, and beyond a narrow channel. Caramiñal is a bay on the north side of the third fjord. Pontevedra lies at the far end of the fjord between these two.]

Beatson recounts some other actions like these. One, the taking of the Caracas Company ship *Constante* by the *Superb*, occurred enroute to the West Indies, while another, the taking of *Le Grand Justice,* a richly laden French

merchantman out of La Habana, by the *Success*, also falls outside of this commentary's purview; the ship was taken to New England for sale. But, Beatson mentions two other ships without giving locations: the *Squirrel*, which took 'several prizes' (she was probably operating on the American coast), and the *Tartar*, which captured the Spanish privateer *Virgen del Rosario*.

Sir John Norris (1670/71-1749)

Admiral 'Foul-weather Jack' Norris spent 54 years in the Senior Service. His career began during the Nine Years War (1689-97), where he obtained a post captain rank (1693). At the peace, being a junior officer, he was given a squadron and sent to patrol the waters of Hudson Bay. His career took a dive when he ran afoul of colonial interests; despite the protection of the First Lord of the Admiralty he was suspended in 1699. The War of the Spanish Succession restarted he career (1702).

During the war he fought under Rooke at the Battle of Cádiz, led the Van at the Battle of Malaga, and fought under Peterborough in the Battle of Barcelona. This took him only until 1705, the year he was knighted. For the second half of the war he primarily served in the Mediterranean (making Full Admiral in 1709), but as he had also become a Whig MP, he found it difficult to juggle two careers at once. The Tories solved the problem by relieving him of command of the Squadron; when the Whigs returned to power in 1715 he returned to active service.

After that war he served in the Baltic (1716-17), where a coalition of Russian, Danish, and Hanoverian forces were engaged in the Great Northern War against Sweden. The Czar (Peter the Great) commanded this fleet personally; Norris was his deputy. However, in 1718, when Charles XII of Sweden died, the British allied with that nations and Norris was recalled to defend the British merchant marine from the Russians. Norris was also sent as a commissioner to the peace talks. At this time (1718) he joined the Board of Admiralty, becoming Senior Naval Lord (First Sea Lord in modern parlance) in 1727.

Norris' career stalled when the Ministry fell in 1730. The Ministry was headed by Walpole and Lord Townsend; Walpole regained power but Townsend did not, and Norris, a long time supporter of the latter, quit. He was replaced by Sir Charles Wager. In 1734, the Opposition and the Government achieved a reconciliation and Norris was appointed Admiral of the Fleet. During the War of the Polish Succession he took the fleet to cruise off Spain, to protect Britain's ally, Portugal, from Spanish attack. In 1739 he had just been made Vice-Admiral of Great Britain. This is an honorary post but apart from the financial perquisites it also gave the holder additional power on the Board of Admiralty, because the holder would take charge should the Board become incapacitated. Despite reaching such rarefied heights, on the outbreak of war he was appointed to command the Channel Fleet. He would take his last active command in 1744, when the French threatened to invade. Notorious for his squabbling, he quit the service for good after this, dying in 1749.

Norris did not remain in port long. He received new orders on 15 September, but was delayed in London until 27 September because Lord Newcastle wanted him to attend a meeting which was to address a vague report that France was preparing to invade Ireland or Scotland. The report was subsequently shown to be false, but it was the sort of thing that regularly troubled the Administration, until Bonnie Prince Charlie eventually did land in 1745.

Sir John Norris c1735

Norris' latest mission was to take nineteen ships back to El Ferrol because of a new report that the *flota* had sailed after all. He could expect to encounter some seventeen sail out of Cádiz. These orders were modified to deal with the potential French threat of invasion: nine of his ships were to watch Brest; there were still nine French ships in that port. The other ten had orders to intercept the *flota*. Beatson says this late-season sortie was really just a publicity stunt to appease the public, who were becoming annoyed with the Administration's inaction. Certainly the *flota* was not expected by the Spanish. Once again there were a number of routine delays and Norris did not actually sail until 12 October. He spent a month cruising off Finisterre without any encounter and, turning for home on 7 November, arrived at Spithead on 18 November.

[According to Richmond, the French ships at Brest were: Superbe (76), Neptune (74), St Philippe (74), Mars (66), St. Michel (66), Eclatant (66), Auguste (54), Griffon (54), Appollon (54)*, and* Neréide (26)*.]*

[Norris' squadron which he took out the first time consisted of: Victory, Royal George, Royal Sovereign, St. George, Duke, Cambridge, Elizabeth, Essex, Nassau, Buckingham, Bedford, Lenox, Argyle, Assistance, Kingston, Ruby, Gosport, Blaze, *and* Scipio*. The ships of the second sortie are not listed; Norris was*

given 3 extra ships, but there were detachments as well, mostly sent to assist the Mediterranean Squadron.]

Holding the Straits

In these early years, the watch on southwest Spain was maintained by the Mediterranean Squadron, though it was headquartered at Minorca, not Gibraltar. Admiral Haddock suffered both from London's neglect, as the Admiralty focused on the Caribbean, and from their micromanagement. The Spanish also gave him a lot of trouble despite their diminished numbers. Fortunately, Norris would manage to persuade his peers that they needed to bolster Britain's position in the Mediterranean; this became easier once it became obvious the Spanish were going to invade Italy.

Haddock began the year with about ten ships (eight of the line) concentrated at Port Mahon, and, apart from lesser vessels cruising the coasts, as they did year-round, he placed two ships of the line and a fireship off Cádiz. The latter were under Captain John Byng, a man already demonstrating his ability to see the worst in every situation.

As described earlier, about the turn of the year the Spanish, under *Jefe d'Escuadrilla* Don Juan José Navarro, appeared ready to put out from Cádiz, but whether their destination would be the West Indies or elsewhere was uncertain at the time. London ordered Haddock to reinforce Byng, so the former split his forces in half, retaining five ships of the line at Port Mahon.

At Cádiz were an estimated seven large ships ready for sea, plus seven merchant ships being converted for combat duties. Haddock also had to deal with an estimated four large French ships at Toulon, under the energetic Chevalier du Caylus. Roche-Allart, the *Amiral de Levant*, would return from the West Indies with more vessels in mid April, but they would not be fit for additional duties.

Haddock knew some Spanish ships had come back from the West Indies before then, but he was unaware they were fitting out to return as part of the 'shuttle run' being set up to support the colonies. He, and the British Government, feared they would link up with the four or five ships at Cartagena (still under de la Bena) to act as an escort for the large troop concentration massing at Barcelona. These soldiers were of course bound for Italy at the end of the year, but during the late winter months the British were sure they planned to reconquer Minorca. It was possible du Caylus would assist them.

French plans would soon become clear. On 12 February, du Caylus' four ships — all that could be made ready at Toulon given that the bulk of the Squadron was still returning from the Caribbean — fell in with a small British reinforcement under Captain Martin, sent from England to augment Byng's watch on Cádiz. Martin took them for Spanish (or said he did), and there was a brief scuffle. Damage was minimal, and the opposing commodores downplayed the incident. The French continued on their way. They were off to the West Indies (where they made no attempt to help the Spanish).

On his arrival off Cádiz, Captain Martin superseded Byng, to the latter's great annoyance. After some reorganisation, the squadron consisted of the following (according to Richmond):

Ipswich (70)
Pembroke, Plymouth, & Sunderland (60)
Oxford (50)
Kennington (20)
Duke fireship

Opposing him in Cádiz were:

Real Felipe (114)
Santa Isabel (80)
Santa Teresa & San Fernando (62)
Paloma (52)
Fama & Xavier (46)
7 armed merchants with 51-62 guns each

Farther east, Haddock's depleted forces comprised:

Somerset & Lancaster (80)
Warwick & Dragon (60)
Advice (40)
Dursley Galley, Garland, & Aldborough (20)
Salamander, Mercury, Anne Galley (8) (Salamander was a bomb ketch, the others were fireships)

There were also five small vessels cruising.

These weakened forces, half in dry-dock, and with crews taken from the army garrison of Port Mahon, were unable to prevent serious depredations by privateers or to prevent the 5,000-strong Spanish garrison of Majorca from being withdrawn; the camps at Barcelona now contained some 10-12,000 men. 'British Intelligence' duly informed Haddock that the latter *could* be destined for Italy instead of Minorca, which the withdrawal from Majorca made quite plain to everyone. The Bourbon prince of Naples, Don Carlos, was mobilising, and it was becoming clear Spain intended to attack Lombardy as Austria was forced to withdraw troops to deal with the Prussians.

The bad news piled up. At the beginning of May the Cartagena Squadron was astir. Since the forces at Barcelona were not yet ready, this could only mean a raid on Minorca or a sally upon British commerce. Haddock made plans to intercept. Then, word came via a <much needed> victualing convoy that the Cádiz Squadron — at least eight sail — had vanished. Martin had been caught by a westerly Levanter and sent rocketing through the Straits into the Med, leaving the enemy port clear. The Spanish were observed making for the West Indies, but Haddock was not so sure. They might be planning to swing east with the winds and enter the Straits, or, more likely, planning to intercept a second victualing convoy outbound from Britain.

[Richmond praises the captain of the Pembroke*, who, when separated from Martin, sent off the his accompanying frigate,* Kennington, *to warn Admiral Vernon in the West Indies. Haddock approved the decision.]*

Just as Haddock was preparing to challenge what might be the combined force of the Cádiz and Cartagena Squadrons, a convoy of nine friendly 'Turkey' merchantmen turned up

from the Levant. These absolutely had to be convoyed through the Straits. If Haddock valued his career, there was no option. He set out for Gibraltar on 5 May, battling contrary winds the whole way (it took 10 days just to reach Cape Palos, north of Cartagena, and another 10 to get to Gibraltar).

Before he finished the job news came (from a Gibraltar ship sent to Port Mahon that had chased the admiral for days) that the Cádiz Squadron was back in port. Shortly after, it was reported at sea again, now augmented to nine ships. Apparently, the Spanish *were* after British shipping. This notion was confirmed when Haddock reached Gibraltar. Some 80 merchantmen had crowded into the harbour for protection.

Haddock, joined by Martin's ships, undertook to escort the merchants through the Straits by night. He accompanied the convoy far out into the Atlantic before turning back to hunt the Spanish. His elation at getting the convoy safely away was dampened by the news that the Cádiz Squadron had linked up with the El Ferrol Squadron and had, doubtless by now, sunk or taken his second victualing convoy of the year. Fortunately, the opposing groups missed each other and the British victualers reached Lisbon unscathed. From there they proceeded to Gibraltar. The Cádiz Squadron, thwarted, returned south, where it was soon under observation by a couple of British frigates.

This from the British perspective. As a matter of fact, Haddock's assumptions, though prudent, were wrong. The Spanish ships had in reality been sent to protect the inbound *flota*. Any threat British shipping was purely opportunistic. The Spanish Treasury was empty and this convoy of bullion was their only hope of funding the expedition now assembling at Barcelona. As has been recounted, it failed to sail due to the decrepitude of its ships, which was a great blow to the Spanish, though it did not halt the impending campaign. Haddock was right to worry, though. In the process of securing their own convoy, the Spanish might easily have bumped into the British victualers and done serious damage.

These motions were resolved while Haddock was on his way back to the coast from his own escort duty. It was now early June. The enemy was back in port where he belonged, but apparently numbered seventeen sail — a serious threat. (The British may not have been aware of the fact, but that was just about the entire Spanish fleet left in western Iberia.) Once again, the question arose, when — not if — they came out, would they be bound for the relief of Cartagena des Indías, or for Barcelona?

Haddock based temporarily at the Portuguese port of Lagos, just east of Cape St. Vincent, until the situation became clearer. There was not much he could do without reinforcement.

Stern Chase

Things remained quiet throughout July. On 5 August du Caylus and the British had a second encounter when he returned from the Caribbean. This was one of those incidents where both sides tell different stories, yet similar enough to show that things could have been conducted in a more diplomatic manner if both parties had not been itching to fight.

Captain Barnett (the historian Lacour-Gayet calls him Captain Barclay) had been sent out from England to augment Martin. He was not specifically required to aid Haddock, though his presence would do so indirectly. Martin, Barnett, and Byng, though they helped fulfil Haddock's orders to cover Cádiz, were really under Norris' command and in fact semi-independent.

Barnett commanded the *Dragon* (*60)*, two frigates (*Feversham* & *Folkestone (40)*), and the *Mary galley (20)*. He encountered three strange sail off Cape Spartel (the headland west of Tangier). Lacour-Gayet says, presumably citing du Caylus, that the British had four ships of the line and a frigate, and that they were flying Dutch colours. The last may be true; it was a common ruse. But, it is possible the French were the ones under a false flag.

The ships (*Boreé (64)*, *Aquillon (46)*, and *Flore (26)*) 'fled' and the British gave chase. Or perhaps not. Why would they flee from Dutch ships? Or from English ones for that matter. Either way, the British closed the range. A boat was sent over to hail the nearest vessel, which turned out to be the *Aquillon*. Barnett said he had them hailed to find out their identity. He was told they were French, and, as they were going about their lawful business, he should do the same.

[As David Hughes has pointed out in his excursus on 'ships and guns', those 40s were not 'real' frigates. Later in the war many of the class would be upgraded to 44s. This entailed more than just adding 4 guns. The ships were rebuilt.]

Barnett, according to his side of the story, insisted on his right to board the vessels to confirm their identity, which the French thought a great insolence. (That in itself ought to have confirmed their identity.) All the while the ships remained underway, the French refusing to slow down and be boarded. The British fired warning shots, which the French took as a challenge and replied (after a verbal warning of their own) with a broadside.

The French say the British fired no warning shots but a full broadside, in which the *comte* de Pardaillan, captain of the *Aquilon*, was killed. And this after the French revealed their identity. A night action commenced, lasting about three hours, at the end of which the British, being the worse for the exchange, withdrew with apologies, saying they had thought the French were Spanish. At which du Caylus replied his crews were glad of the experience.

According to Barnett's log the engagement was in two parts, an hour's fight before dark, in which the British did come off worse and had to move out of range to repair their rigging, and a renewed contest the next morning after an all-night pursuit. Probably, this part of the fight only involved chase guns. *Feversham* was the first to catch up, early in the morning, at which time a parley was arranged before more damage was done. The deceased captain of the *Aquillon* was blamed for provoking matters, but in his own dispatches, du Caylus played up the fact he had successfully engaged a superior British force. Casualties for

the French were 1 captain and 25 others KIA and 75 WIA; 11 KIA and 22 WIA for the British.

[Richmond points out that the British were also having trouble with the Dutch — supposedly a friendly power — and others, and frequently threw their weight around. He instances a recalcitrant Venetian ship taken at gunpoint in a Portuguese anchorage. Beatson says the incident was glossed over like the one with du Caylus, with apologies all round.]

Though they abused Haddock for his inability to do all he had been commanded, London grew more and more concerned about his situation as the months passed. Having already sent out Martin and Barnett, the Admiralty now dispatched Captain Cornewall. He was to join Barnett with four more ships. Ordered out from Portsmouth on 4 September, they left port on 11 October, because, as so often happened, he was given the additional duty of escorting a large merchant convoy. Norris, refitting at the same time, was also ordered to detach five of his own 'heavy' ships (two 90-gunners, one 80-gunner, one 70, and one 60).

The target of the troops at Barcelona had now been confirmed: Italy. Everything was in readiness. All the Spanish needed was a window of opportunity and that had been wide open since the Haddock rebased west of the Straits. In September, Haddock was forced to return to Gibraltar, where 300 of his men were sent to a hastily erected hospital. Hundreds more sick stayed on board ship as they could not be accommodated. His reinforcements were welcome, but came very late. Less welcome were accompanying orders to watch both Barcelona and Cádiz simultaneously. These ports were 600 miles apart. Haddock could only watch one, so he plumped for Cádiz.

The admiral's decision seemed the right one, given that the Cartagena Squadron was always very small. At the end of September, the Cádiz Squadron counted fourteen sail and was making ready for sea again. Rumour had it that the Toulon Fleet was also intending to sally, this time in concert with the Brest Fleet. But it was not until 1 November that Haddock learned thirteen French ships had sailed from Toulon on 11 October. They appeared to be making for the Straits. That could mean the admiral would be faced with a combined Franco-Spanish force of thirty sail. The attitude of the French earlier in the year suggested this move *might* be intended to announce the end of French neutrality. In actuality the French were positioning themselves to screen the Spanish convoys (numbering 220 vessels) and stopped well short of the entrance to the Med, about the latitude of Cape Palos.

Interestingly, the British Admiralty knew more of the enemy plan than their theatre commander. Perhaps this is why they delayed sending more ships, including the five from Norris. On the other hand, Haddock had instructions to go after the convoys, and, if he could not catch up before the troops were landed, to at least attack the transports on their way back to Spain. Such an operation was beyond his power. In his weakened state, Haddock remained at Gibraltar, leaving the seas to the Bourbons. Fortunately, at that particular time he had not received explicit orders to attack. By the time the orders did arrive, with Captain Cornewall, the first convoy had landed its cargo of soldiers and a second, larger one was in preparation, covered by the combined ships of Cadiz, Cartagena, and Toulon.

[London, Richmond remarks, seemed to believe the ships moved as fast through the water as they did on paper.]

Cornewall had an interesting time reaching Haddock. He sailed with the following ships: *Bedford (70), Elizabeth (64), Marlborough (90), Essex (70)*. After waiting an inordinate time at Portsmouth for the obligatory tacked-on convoy to muster, the ships then ran smack into a heavy gale in which several nearly foundered. The convoy scattered. *Marlborough* became separated. Then, before he could reorganise, Cornewall ran smack into the Cádiz Squadron off Cape St. Vincent and had to run away, pursued by every Spanish ship that could make sail. He finally put into Lisbon on 16 December. Only *Marlborough* avoided all the fuss and reached Gibraltar, badly damaged by the gale.

The Spanish were headed into the Med to assist with the Italian campaign while Haddock was refitting at Gibraltar. The latter eventually sortied and did catch up with them about Cape Palos, only face a screen of French ships. The admiral forbore to attack under those circumstances. It was not just a matter of relative strengths. He had not been given authority to initiate a war with France.

End of the Year

By now, it was known throughout Europe: the Great Expedition had been an abysmal failure. The Bourbons crowed and the neutrals wagged their heads. In Britain the Opposition licked its chops. Admiral Vernon would remain in the Caribbean until the middle of 1742, trying to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, but the bulk of his command returned to England. This allowed more ships to join Haddock toward the close of the year, some of them on a temporary basis. Some came from Vernon's West Indies command by way of Portsmouth and some from Norris: *Duke (90), Chichester (80), Princess Caroline (80), Russell (80), Torbay (80), Galicia (60), Dartmouth (50), Panther (50), Diamond (44), Lightning (10*) bomb. Other than those sent to the Mediterranean, the returnees participated in no further operations this year.

The last squadron sent to the Mediterranean in 1741 reached Gibraltar on 1 January 1742. It was commanded by Commodore Lestock, who had spent most of the year in the West Indies. Again, the squadron consisted of a few vessels returned from there and refitted in England, plus ships donated by Norris: *Neptune (90), Barfleur (90, Lenox (70), Nassau (70), Royal Oak (70), Winchester (50), Romney (50),* and *Sutherland* hospital ship. At the start of 1742 Haddock's command (he would be replaced by Admiral Matthews at the end of May 1742) consisted of twenty-two ships and six smaller vessels.

By convention and common sense all navies (usually) went into 'ordinary' once the weather became consistently foul due to the Autumnal Equinox. Haddock's reinforcement groups were one notable exception, and the Spanish troop convoys were the other. However, the Bourbons placed all their idle vessels in ordinary. The British left minimal forces to watch key places like Cádiz and Brest. After the

remaining heavy ships were bedded down in English ports for the winter, the following remained active:

Bay of Biscay: *Rupert (60), Newcastle (50), Argyle (50), Port Mahon (24)*

Irish Coast between Waterford & Cape Clear: *Dolphin (24*)

Bristol Channel: *Ruby (50)*

Milford to Lundy Island: *Shark* sloop

Start to the Isle of Wight: *Carcass* bomb

Downs to Portsmouth: *Scipio* fireship

About 30-40 leagues west of the Scilly Isles: *Lynn (40, Lyme (20)*

Scilly to the Lizard: *Biddeford (20)*

Ushant to Scilly: *Bridgewater (20*)

Clarifications from the Spanish Perspective

Most of what the Spanish did in 1741 is clear enough when described from the British perspective. They had two major operations underway during the course of this year: preparing for and executing the Italian invasion, and sending reinforcements to the Caribbean, mainly to support Cartagena des Indías. There was also the scotched rendezvous with the inbound *flota*.

The invasion proceeded without interference. It would run into difficulties later. The only 'win' the British scored in the Med was political. By sending a couple of small patrols to Naples in August, Haddock intimidated the Bourbon king into remaining neutral (though he did secretly supply some 'volunteers').

The Spanish did not have many ships they could use as escorts across the Atlantic. On average there were only two manned ships at El Ferrol. Few of those at Cádiz had crews; their end of year sortie in aid of the Italian campaign took most of the preceding months to arrange. For the transatlantic crossing several ships had to be hired from the Caracas Company, or from France. The first supply run was executed during the spring, and another went out in October. These were not single convoys but small streams of vessels, as if the Spanish were turning a faucet on and off. As has been described, sometimes detachments being sent from Cádiz to El Ferrol had chance encounters with the British, but these were not planned and tended to fray the nerves of the Spanish government.

A sample sailing, authorised in March, involved three ships departing from San Sebastian, travelling alone at four-day intervals to avoid detection. Four pinks would sail from El Ferrol in a similar fashion. All would take a roundabout route, and stick close to the Spanish Main without stopping at Puerto Rico as they usually did. At least one vessel, hired from France, sailed from Bayonne with French papers — if captured, even if the cargo and crew were obviously Spanish, they would have to be 'returned' to France. Cargoes ran the gamut from flour and other dry goods to replacement soldiers. The October run was made entirely under the auspices of the Caracas Company.

[A pink (pinque) is a small, fast ship with a narrow stern and a shallow draft. They could have a variety of rigs, depending on who built them and where they operated.]

The Northwest Passage

Despite the war, the eternal quest for Knowledge continued unabated, and in 1741 a pair of ships set out on yet another search for the fabled Northwest Passage. These were the bomb vessel *Furnace (10)* and a converted collier called the *Discovery*. Both were given the 'H.M.S.' honorific even though the *Discovery* was not a warship, because the expedition was a joint venture between the Royal Navy and the Royal Society. Colliers were often used in this capacity — Captain Cook's ship *Endeavour* was a 'Whitby cat' — and the reinforced hulls of bomb vessels gave them a better chance of survival in Arctic waters.

The *Furnace* was captained by Christopher Middleton, who had been a privateer in Queen Anne's War (the War of the Spanish Succession in America), but who had also made no less than sixteen supply runs for the Hudson Bay Company during the 1720s and 1730s. The scientific observations he made while on those routine voyages won him election to the Royal Society in 1737. William Moor, his cousin, captained *Discovery*. Like Middleton, Moor sailed supply ships for 'The Bay' and did exploring on the side. He was something of a protege of Middleton's.

The expedition was backed by an Irish MP of Scottish birth named Arthur Dobbs, who also happened to be the Surveyor-General of Ireland. In 1745 Dobbs would purchase 400,000 acres in North Carolina and become an influential figure in the emigration of Scots-Irish to that colony in the troubled times after Bonnie Prince Charlie's rising. Fort Dobbs is named after him. He also, curiously enough, was the first to report the existence of the carnivorous plant known as the Venus Flytrap. His involvement with Middleton, however, stemmed from his own desire to locate the Northwest Passage. Dobbs had a bee in his bonnet about it, and campaigned vigorously to have the Bay Company's monopoly revoked so that people would be encouraged to try the route in search of new trading opportunities. Originally conceived in 1740, Middleton's expedition also seems to have been tied into Anson's voyage. At least, it was suggested the two rendezvous off the coast of California (assuming the Passage could be found). It may be that Dobbs obtained Navy support by making the suggestion.

Furnace required a certain amount of refitting, and Middleton was given command on 5 March 1741, setting sail from Deptford in May, in company with the *Discovery*. Their first stop was Hudson Bay, where they wintered at Prince of Wales Fort (a large star fort which still exists, across the Churchill River from Churchill, Manitoba). Once the ice had broken up — winters in the 1740s were somewhat colder than typical for the period — and the crews had recovered from sickness, they sailed north. At Wager Bay, a discovery they named after the First Sea Lord, they were caught in the ice for three weeks, but they managed to progress up the main passage, Roes Welcome Sound, until they reached Repulse Bay. This place was also named by Middleton. Finding their path completely blocked,

they decided to abandon the expedition, arriving back in England at the end of 1742.

Despite the expedition's failure, Middleton was awarded the Royal Society's Copley Medal in exchange for the observations he made during the voyage, which took the form of a paper on magnetic declination. In 1745 he was made captain of the *Shark* and served as a naval officer until the end of the war, after which he went on half-pay for the rest of his life, dying in 1770.

Middleton tried to get his old job back at The Bay without success, possibly due to his ties to Dobbs. Which seems rather unfair, as upon his return from the expedition Dobbs violently attacked him in the press for supposedly taking bribes from The Bay to conceal the fact that they *had* found a passage, just so the Bay Company could retain its monopoly.

Dobbs seems to have had some sort of unbalanced fixation about the whole Northwest Passage concept. Moor, who sided with him on the Middleton issue, was employed by Dobbs on another investigation around Hudson Bay in 1746. Again two ships were used, both commercial vessels: *Dobbs Galley* and *California*. After wintering at York Factory (about 200 Km south of Churchill), in the spring of 1747 the two ships began separate explorations — the company factor at the settlement noted that Moor and the other captain, Francis Smith, did not get along at all. They proved to their satisfaction, if not Dobbs', that Wager Bay was not a strait, and discovered Rankin and Chesterfield inlets, also dead ends.

The new inlets they discovered are quite a bit south of Wager Bay, and all three indentations are well over 500 Km south of the first real passage, the Fury and Hecla Strait. In fact, assuming ice is not an obstacle, ships would be better off travelling up the coast of Greenland to Baffin Bay and turning west into Lancaster Sound. That is the widest passage and it eventually opens onto the Beaufort Sea, north of Alaska.

[York Factory is a ghost settlement today, but it survived into the middle of the 20th Century. It was the eastern terminus of the York Factory Express, an administrative supply route that ended on the Columbia River at Fort Vancouver, in Washington State. The journeys were clocked at 3 months and 10 days, or 40 Km per day.]

Moor seems to have vanished into obscurity after this. His employers were not happy with his performance as a commander. Seven men died of scurvy at York Factory and his crew was on the verge of mutiny when he abandoned the expedition. But, it appears that some of the insinuations can be put down to investor displeasure because he refused to trade illegally under cover of his explorations.

1742 — SEA CHANGE

Musical Chairs

1742 brought a political sea-change. In Germany, the Austrians went on the offensive against France. In Italy, the Spanish expeditionary corps landed and began a campaign against the Austrians in the Po Valley, but was isolated when the King of Sardinia (that is, the ruler of Savoy-Piedmont) refused to open the passes through the Maritime Alps. And in England, there was a change of ministry.

The failure of the Cartagena des Indías expedition was not the primary cause of the Administration's fall, but it helped. Walpole's Ministry began to topple in January of 1742, when the City of London and the principal towns petitioned the Government to do something about losses suffered at the hands of enemy privateers. This issue came on top of some rather close-run local elections, and became a stalking horse. The Government retained a majority but lost much support. The Country Party, the alliance of conservative Whigs and moderate Tories, split with the Administration on the issue.

Desperate times lead to desperate measures. Walpole's bloc resorted to bribing the Prince of Wales with an offer to increase his income (paid out of State revenues) and pay his (considerable) debts, if he would reconcile himself to his father, the King. The point of the exercise was this: the Prince was the titular head of the Opposition, who manipulated his estrangement with his father to give themselves a figure to rally around — a common enough phenomenon in monarchies. If the Prince and the King were reconciled, there would be a split between the Patriot-Opposition hardliners and the Opposition moderates. But the Prince would not take the bait. Instead, he counterattacked, saying he was open to reconciliation without demanding any terms at all, save the dismissal of Robert Walpole.

Walpole fought on for a time, but each vote in the House came with less and less of a majority. Eventually, an important motion was passed by only three votes. Seeing the writing on the wall, Walpole saved face by turning a minor vote on an election question into a vote of confidence. It could have been worse. With such a slim majority, his enemies in the House could have successfully voted his impeachment, meaning a trip to the Tower. Instead, he was kicked upstairs, created Viscount Walpole and Earl of Orford. He retained the favour of the King. The Prince, by the by, was publicly reconciled to his father, for now.

[Though as a Peer Walpole was banned from the Commons and all the exciting legislative work, and, more importantly, lost his power base — since he no longer had the means to reward his followers with election plums and ministerial jobs — he remained something of a 'grand old man', especially after the new Administration proved itself worse than his.]

The New Face of Britain is generally termed the Carteret Ministry. Lord Carteret was Secretary of State for the Northern Department, not Prime Minister — that was Henry Pelham, brother to the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, a.k.a. the Duke of Newcastle. But, from 1742

until 1744 King George lent Carteret his ear; H.M. preferred flunkies who agreed with a 'Hanover First' policy, which meant not doing anything to provoke the French or their new ally, Prussia, both of whom were fielding large armies in Germany. With an eye to the future, Carteret himself played a notch higher, exploiting King George's neutralist requirements as cover for forging a closer bond with Austria, and starting the buildup of an army in the Low Countries.

Carteret began shifting strategy eastward. Of the £6,000,000 voted for supplies for the current year, £500,000 was earmarked for Austria and 16,000 men were landed in Flanders, where they joined a Hanoverian corps. As yet these troops had no objective beyond making a statement by their presence. Flanders, or more accurately, the lands now constituting Belgium, belonged to the Habsburgs and were known as the Austrian Netherlands. (The British usually talked of 'Flanders' because of their ancient commercial ties with that coastal region.)

The shakeup in the Administration extended to the Navy. An ally of Walpole, Sir Charles Wager had to resign. He was replaced by Lord Winchelsea, a man who publicly admitted he had no clue what he was doing, but accepted the post anyway. Norris was invited to be his number two, but refused, believing the head of the Commission should be a professional — himself for preference. There was an opening for a field command when Haddock sent in a request to be relieved on grounds of ill health. Norris was offered the Mediterranean command, but would only take it if he could also head the Commission. Carteret rejected this bargain. Norris would have resigned but King George turned his request down, saying he wanted his council, so instead, Norris asked to remain on shore. This boon was granted, but he soon found himself sidelined.

The Caribbean was downgraded to a minor theatre and forces there brought home or diverted to the Med — much of the reshuffle had already taken place, as described at the end of the last chapter. The War of Jenkins' Ear is generally assumed to have lasted until 1743, and the final naval battle of the war took place off Cuba in 1748, but there were no more grand expeditions. 1742 would see a Spanish offensive into Georgia which faired about as well as the British attempt on Florida two years before. After that there was only patrolling, raiding, and the odd attempt to knock out a fort or two. In the Med, things would heat up as the British attempted to interfere with the Spanish lines of communication to Italy and defend their own commerce.

No major action took place in home waters during 1742. In fact Richmond lumps the affairs of 1742 and 1743 into one chapter as far as Biscay, the Channel, and the North Sea are concerned, and spends most of his time discussing the depredations of privateers and British attempts to deal with them. The main fleet at Portsmouth was commanded at the end of 1742 — things were so quiet Richmond does not bother to give any details of who commanded what through the year — by an Admiral Stewart. With Norris on the beach there was no overall naval commander. This undoubtably was a problem, but to the mindset of the era a supreme leader was necessary only when there was some great endeavour in the offing.

Even the Straits were relatively quiet. There was considerable merchant traffic and privateers aplenty, on both sides. Beatson records an action during the summer in which Captain Lord Forrester took a 24-gun prize off Cádiz that had aboard a Spanish bishop, priest, general, and several other officers of his suite, all bound for Naples with rich presents for Don Carlos, the ruler of that territory. But, the important actions, such as they were, took place on the Catalan coast, on the French Riviera, and in Italian waters.

The Soundings

In home waters the critical zone for the British was the western approach to the Channel, known as the Soundings, the stretch of water between Ushant and the Scilly Isles. Despite its importance, until now there had been at most two ships stationed there at any given time. They typically rotated on month-long cruises. Ideal cruisers were the light 20-gun frigates (6th Rates) but there were so few of these that 50-gun 4th Rates and even 60-gunners were used. Very quickly after the war broke out a flock of Spanish privateers had made its way into the Channel and had been operating there ever since. By 1741 there were over 50 British prizes in San Sebastian alone. According to Lloyds of London, 100 merchantmen were lost that year, mostly in the Channel or Bay of Biscay. The merchant community claimed over 300 losses. According to Beatson, from 1739 until the end of 1741 the enemy deployed no less than 390 privateers, of all shapes and sizes, accounting for 372 losses.

In May of 1740 the Admiralty had addressed the issue by sending an extra 50-gunner and a sloop to cruise off the Cornish coast. That was all. Elsewhere there was a standing patrol of a 20-gun frigate and a sloop on the Portuguese coast, one or two ships in the Irish Sea and Bristol Channel, and a picket boat or two along the Channel which sometimes took a gander at the North Sea.

(The Cornish coast is famous in legend as a haunt of pirates and smugglers and it would not be surprising to learn that the locals were dealing with the Spanish. England is not part of Cornwall.)

Things got so bad that in the fall of 1741 a Great Petition, signed by 214 merchants, was presented to Parliament. The Navy's response was, 'if you want protection, sail in convoy, otherwise you're on your own'. Though there were many warships in the Channel they had better things to do than hold the merchants' hands on a one-for-one basis. Convoys were nothing new, and had been practised since the start of the war — so far, there had been 80 of them. It was a matter of the merchant captains choosing profit over safety. No one was forced to travel in convoy and many did not, since getting to port slightly ahead of everyone else meant making more money. The Navy argued for regulation. This also was nothing new and there were many regulations on the books, but they had been allowed to lapse or were ignored. Interestingly, one objection to sailing in convoy was the illegal extortion of protection money 'for the maintenance of the escort'. Another was the fact that

the merchants were required to be armed, which cost money. So of course the captains argued that since they were armed they might as well travel alone as in escort. But most merchant ships had tiny crews.

[Richmond lists the convoys: fourteen outward and twenty-one homeward convoys had sailed to and from Portugal; eleven and ten to and from the Mediterranean; six and eleven to and from the West Indies; four to North America and three from thence homeward.' (vol. 1 p. 184).]

The arguments went on for some months, a new petition being presented by the London Merchants to both Houses on 20 January 1742, supplemented by a string of further petitions from other towns. It needs to be noted that these petitions, though legitimate, were also used as a tool by the Opposition — which is why such a flood of them gushed through all at once in a coordinated manner. But, the effort had an operational effect over and above strengthening Lord Carteret's bid for power. By February 1742, when the two Houses agreed to receive deputations of merchants, home security had been increased to fifteen vessels and a greater area was being covered. The following ships were on patrol at that time:

Across St. George's Channel: *Bridgewater (20), Spy* sloop

Cape Ortegal to Cape Pinas (the former is the headland right at the northwest tip of Spain; the latter is the headland just toi the west of Gijón in the Basy of Biscay): *Leopard (50), Dolphin (20), Port Mahon (24*)

30-50 leagues west of the Scilly Isles to Cape Clear: *Newcastle (50), Tartar (20)*

80 leagues west of the Scilly Isles: *Biddeford (20)*

Ushant out 50 leagues to the SW: *Deal Castle (20), Hound* sloop

Bristol Channel: *Ruby (50)*

Milford to Lundy Island: *Shark* sloop

Portland Bill to Lands End: *Deptford's Prize* sloop, *Success* sloop

Plus a standing convoy escort from Portsmouth to the Downs: *Scipio* sloop

This was not enough for the merchants, who pushed for a dedicated naval force to protect them. Previous acts along those lines (this argument was nothing new) had allocated upwards of forty ships. Despite precedent, this time the bill, voted on in May, did not pass. But the Navy did increase the numbers on patrol; by July there were twenty-five vessels on this duty. Richmond lists the additions, the actual ships being those present in July:

Between Ushant and Isle of Wight: *Stirling Castle (70)*

From the Lizard to the Scilly Isles: *Launceston (40)*

From Dieppe to La Hogue France: *Kinsale (40)*

Off Oostende and Dunkirk: *Hastings (40)*

Convoying troops to Flanders: *Liverpool* (40)

Off Belle Île (the large island west of Nantes): *Seaford (20)*

Orkneys and Shetlands: *Tartar (20)*

Convoying trade to Elsinore (Helsingør, Denmark): *Gibraltar (20)*

Cruising the North Sea: *Lyme (20)*

Between St Malo and Île de Batz (about two-thirds of the way from St. Malo to Brest): *Success* sloop

Isle of Wight to Portland Bill: *Deptford's Prize* sloop

Oostende to Calais: *Neptune* sloop

12 more vessels either escorting local convoys from Beachy Head round to the North Sea, or pursuing privateers.

Minor Actions

Richmond goes on to talk of further measures adopted in 1743 and 1744, such as establishing a four-ship squadron in the Strait of Gibraltar, nominally under the Mediterranean Squadron but actually immune to its control. This was a product of Admiral Haddock's tribulations. He, by the way, was allowed to resign. His replacement, Admiral Thomas Mathews, assumed command of the Mediterranean station on 25 or 26 May 1742. Mathews would command there for the next two years; the change of command took place off Villefranche, which indicates the Squadron's change in priorities.

Apart from their privateering, the Spanish did very little in 1742, and their histories have almost nothing to say about their activities in the Atlantic, beyond mention of the infrequent and small shuttle runs to the Caribbean. The British were more active, without doing anything dramatic. Cruising squadrons were established in the Bay of Biscay.

[When Richmond describes these patrols he seems to be making two points: first, the adoption of methods very similar to modern ones, that would be very useful once the French started commerce raiding, and also how these standing patrols evolved into the much more powerful Western Squadron (which will be discussed later).]

British efforts against Spanish trade were less lucrative but this was only because there were comparatively few enemy ships at sea in 1742, outside of the Med. Most of the prizes were, as one would expect, obtained in the Caribbean. Beatson provides details for several small actions off the Portuguese coast and in the Bay of Biscay. Most are not dated, but are probably listed in chronological order.

On 13 June the *Loo (40)* chased a Spanish privateer at Porto Nuovo (at the entrance to the same large bay as Pontevedra, north of Vigo Bay). The enemy being only a small vessel, it slipped up the local river into shallow water. The *Loo* anchored close to Porto Nuovo and was taken under fire by the town's cannon. After cannonading the town, marines were landed. They took the battery and dismounted four enemy guns.

Then, on 7 July, the *Loo* met the *Deal Castle (24)*, bound for Vigo Bay, where it was reported some enemy ships were located. The pair took four prizes at Vigo, and, after receiving musket fire from the town, cannonaded it, doing considerable damage. The ships appear to have parted company after this — probably, they were patrolling separate beats — and the *Loo* made another attempt to dig

out the privateer at Porto Nuovo by arming one of her small prizes. The attempt failed, but she did take another prize.

Elsewhere, the *Hastings (40)* captured the *N.S. del Assumption*, a register ship, and then a 24-gun privateer, which had to be sunk because the prize crew was too small to guard the prisoners (most privateers had crews of over 100 men). The *Leopard (50)* took a 24-gun merchantman loaded with cargo, while *Biddeford (20)* took a privateer called *San Antonia (16)*, and a San Sebastian privateer called the *Santa Familia (14)*; many of its crew were French.

[Register ships, navio de registro, were issued a special licence by the Spanish Crown allowing them to trade independently of the royal monopoly, typically within prescribed regions or for particular cargo.]

A pair of British ships, the *Launceston (40)* and the *Port Mahon (20)*, captured a 14-gun privateer near Santander, rescuing five prizes. The *Lyme (20)* took a 12-gun San Sebastian privateer near its home port. The *Bridgewater (20)* took the *Santa la Rita (18)* (a.k.a. *Neptuno*). And, the *Saphire (42)* encountered a privateer and its prize off the coast of Portugal on 2 December. This turned into a chase, with the two Spanish ships splitting up. At the time, *Saphire* did not know which to pursue. The one she picked turned out to be the privateer, of 8 guns, which surrendered when caught. The prize, a ship that had come from Ireland, was also taken eventually, after a very long chase.

Beatson's final account for 1742 is rather lengthy and is quoted in full (Beatson, vol. 1, pp.160-161):

On the 27th of December, the Pulteney *privateer, a large brigantine of sixteen carriage guns, twenty-six swivels, and one hundred and forty-two men, commanded by Captain James Purcell, was returning to Gibraltar from a cruize [sic] in the mouth of the Straits. As she was standing in for the bay from the west, with little or no wind, she was seen from Old Gibraltar, from whence two large Spanish zebeques, each carrying twelve carriage guns, a great number of patteraroes and musquetoons, and one hundred and twenty men, were sent out to make prize of her. Considering the* Pulteney *as an easy prey, they made all possible expedition with their oars, and soon came up with her, a little to the east of Europa Point, and almost within the reach of the cannon there. The garrison of Gibraltar looked on with regret, as, from the great superiority of the enemy, they thought the* Pulteney *could not escape being taken; but the brave Captain Purcell resolved to defend himself to the last extremity; and he prepared for an obstinate resistance. After a few single guns, the Spaniards came near, and having hailed the vessel and her commander by name, entreated the Captain to strike, and by that means preserve the lives of his men, other wise to expect no quarter. These threats were answered from the mouths of his guns; on which the Spaniards attempted to board the* Pulteney*, but were repulsed with considerable loss. They made two more attempts of the same sort; but Captain Purcell reserving the fire of half his broadside till they came quite close, they durst not venture to board him; yet, as they exposed themselves very much in this last attempt , their loss was so very great, that they were obliged to take to their oars, and make off towards Malaga. The [enemy] vessel was greatly damaged; and they had one hundred men killed. The engagement lasted one hour and three quarters. The* Pulteney *had but one man killed, and five dangerously wounded. So trifling a loss is very extraordinary, considering the sails and rigging were cut to pieces, and every man on board had his clothes shot through. Several of the enemy's nine-pounders went through the masts and hull. Boats were sent off from Gibraltar, which towed the* Pulteney *safe into the Mole: and the garrison had such a high sense of the merit of this action, that the Governor, officers, and the principal inhabitants of the place, contributed together, and bought a handsome piece of plate, on which they had a proper inscription engraved, and presented it to Captain Purcell; giving, at the same time, a genteel reward to the sailors for their bravery.*

Total prizes and British losses for the year were 126 Spanish and 130 British, of which 90 and 109, respectively, were taken in European waters. But, the values amounted to £30,000 in Britain's favour. The British lost the following naval vessels: *Tyger*, *Tilbury*, *Gloucester (50)*; *Drake*, *Grampus*, *Saltash* sloops.

Beatson also notes the establishment of a cartel with the Spanish, seemingly for the first time in this war. Cartels were agreements by which prisoners could be exchanged. He also mentions a number of trials of British captains charged with mistreating their own men; the cases seem to have led to the cashiering of the officers in question, or the mulcting of their wages. This issue, a common problem in many periods and in many organisations, was particularly sensitive at this time when the Admiralty was desperate to enlist men. Carteret's Administration had voted for another 40,000 seamen in April this year, and did so again in 1743, but just like Walpole's regime, could not seem to find the bodies.

Spanish Dispositions

With the caveat that details are scarce, the active vessels of the *Armada* in Atlantic waters should have been:

Santa Ana (70)
Soberbio (66)
Brillante (66)
Neptuno (66)
Ave de Gracia (54)
Constante (64)
Halçyon (60)
Oriente (64)
San Fernando (62)
Fama Volante (52)

All seem to have been at Cádiz; *Neptuno (66)* transferred there from El Ferrol at the turn of the year. It is quite possible vessels moved between those ports during the course of the year.

In the Med would thus have been:

Réal Felipe (114)
Santa Ysabel (80)
Galga (56)
Hércules (60)

San Isidoro (62)
América (64)
Paloma Indiana (52)
Aurora (28)
Águila (28)
Liga (28)
San Francisco-Xavier (52)
plus 5 or so small vessels

The small ships worked escort. Most of the line vessels were sheltering at Toulon, penned in by the British. *América (64), Águila (28)*, and *Liga (28)* were at Cartagena.

French Preparations?

The French continued to worry the British, and at the end of 1742 yet another rumour arose that France was going to declare war on Britain. Credence was given it because the Brest Squadron showed signs of activity. In early November the *Seaford (24)* was directed to observe the port in company with the *Biddeford (20)*. The *Seaford* was to raise the alarm and return to her post in case there were more ships coming out, while the *Biddeford* was to shadow the enemy. Admiral Stewart was ordered to make ready the ships he had available and keep them ready, with four months provisions. Nothing happened.

Richmond lists the ships involved:

St George (90)
Sandwich (90)
Duke (90)
Shrewsbury (80)
Princess Amelia (80)
Princessa (70)
Monmouth (70)
Orford (70)
Stirling Castle (70)
Dreadnought (60)
Hampshire (50)
Lynn (40)
Diamond (40)
Roebuck (40)
Hastings (40)
Plus *Scipio* and *Aetna* fireships.

At a guess, the French disposed of:

Brest: *Bourbon (76), Dauphin Royal (76), Lys (72), Juste (76), Sceptre (74), Superbe (76), Eclatant (64), Elizabeth (64), Fleuron (64), Mars (64), Sainte Louis (64), Triton (60), Sainte Michel (58), Hercule (60), Appollon (56), Brillant (56), Contente (60), Rubis (54), Gloiré (44), Auguste (52), Astrée (30), Castor (26), Embuscade (38), Vénus (26), Subtile (26), Medée (26)*.

Rochefort/La Rochelle: *Conquérant (78), Sainte Philippe (74), Ardent (64), Néreïde (44), Parfait (46), Contente (60), Jason (32), Victoire (22), Volage (26*).

1743 — QUIET BEFORE THE STORM

Lord Carteret's influence may have been a hinderance to the British Admiralty's naval strategy, but on the wider stage he changed the dynamics of the war. During the course of 1742 his Administration steadily built up the pro-Austrian coalition known as the Pragmatic Alliance. Through several bilateral treaties ratified around the end of the year they managed to detach Prussia from France (for a short time), rope in the Russians (defensively), and persuade the Dutch to pick a side — Austria's.

(The Russians were, until 1743, at war with Sweden, but by now the 'steamroller' was moving unstoppably toward Stockholm. Since it was the French who had cajoled the Swedes into attacking them, the Russians were predisposed to listen to Britain. Denmark would enter the same war this year on the side of Sweden, but Denmark was also pro-British and had no intention of aligning with France.)

From Austria's perspective the defection of Prussia (eased by massive Habsburg concessions which were supposed to be temporary) was key, but for Britain earning Dutch support was the main advantage. Britain and Holland were old allies as well as rivals, but the French also had strong ties with the Dutch. Beyond the fact that they were neighbours, they had assisted the Dutch in their war of liberation, and if they also invaded the country from time to time, a significant portion of the population remained <nervously> friendly. During the present conflict the 'republicans' who favoured trade with France had so far been the dominant Dutch faction. Over the last few years the French had sowed mistrust of England. Already there had been some minor 'incidents' at sea between the Dutch and British over 'freedom of navigation' — that is, the right of British ships to stop and inspect whomever they pleased, without any reason for doing so. Considering that quite a bit of trade was done with France, including the selling of naval stores, the British actually had some justification, but that only made their 'stop and search' policy more annoying. Carteret's machinations, however, strengthened the anti-French Orangists, who would assist him in creating a political 'tripwire' along the lines of communication that ran from the North Sea to the Habsburg heartland through the Austrian Netherlands.

[Ironically, Louis XIV despised the bourgeois republicans, but there was longstanding antagonism between the Houses of Bourbon and Orange that prohibited any sort of 'conservative' alliance.]

Gradually, therefore, the Dutch began to accept that France was the greater threat. The question for the leading politicians, particularly the republicans, was whether the British were simply countering French propaganda with words of their own, and even, as the French insinuated, trying to get the Dutch to do their dirty work, or whether they would commit themselves to defending Holland if required. Carteret made sure Holland witnessed Britain fulfilling its promises to Austria by stationing an army in the Austrian Netherlands, and paying for the significant Hanoverian component out of her own pocket instead of taking up a subscription among the German states. The Dutch voted to honour their commitment to the Pragmatic Sanction and

field 65,000 men. By the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht they were also committed to loaning the British 6,000 men in case of invasion, as well as twenty ships of the line. For this narrative the last item is the most important; it was also the one that proved the most difficult for the British to obtain.

1743 was not a particularly good year for the Bourbon powers. France tried to go it alone in Germany with the help of their ally Bavaria, but they were everywhere defeated, most notably at Dettingen, on 27 June. The battle ought to have been a French victory — they were blocking King George's retreat route — but instead it turned into a French rout. This year was Fleury's last, and the tussle between him and the hawks at Versailles led to divided councils and all-round failure. With his death and the sting of Dettingen still fresh, the French would declare war on Britain in 1744.

Spain and France would sign the Treaty of Fontainbleau (sometimes called the Second Family Compact) in September of 1743. By this treaty, France would undertake to declare war on Piedmont and Austria; this would occur on 25 October. Louis XV was by then thoroughly embarrassed by his successive failures to aid Spain, and also annoyed that the Piedmontese, virtually a cadet branch of his House, had been playing their old game of stringing France along only to wind up allying with the British and Austrians (Treaty of Worms, also signed in September).

At sea, the Caribbean remained quiet. 1742 marked the end of major operations there. Strategic emphasis had shifted to the Continent. The Royal Navy was needed to protect the transfer of the army to the Low Countries, and the Spanish were trying vainly to support their army in Italy. The forces remaining in the Caribbean would spend the next few years beating off each others' privateers and trying to maintain fleets in being. The British took their supply convoys through the eastern Windward Passage, and the Spanish ferried silver (including two years arrears of pay for the Havana Squadron), food, and wood for ship construction from México to La Habana, where it piled up. Operating at opposite ends of the sea, the protagonists rarely caught sight of each other. No *flota* was formed in 1743.

In the Med, despite deploying significant forces, Admiral Matthews, who replaced Haddock in May, found himself unable to hinder the Spanish much, and his opponent, *Jefe d'Escuadrilla* Don Juan José Navarro, was irritatingly ubiquitous. The concentration of Bourbon ships at Toulon, both Spanish and French, which was permitted under the Treaty of Fontainbleu, would result in the largest naval battle of the war, just off Toulon, at the opening of 1744. During the current year, however, the French remained quiet and Matthews was able to make cruises and conduct escorts without too much trouble, since the Spanish were unwilling to risk a fleet action on their own.

Small Actions

Activities around Britain were limited to the same sort of things as the previous year — patrolling and escort. More ships were allocated by the British but Spanish privateering continued to be effective. The French were closely watched, but did not stir.

Saphire, the ship that captured a privateer toward the end of 1742, kicked off the new year with an attack on some privateers at Vigo. She was warned of their presence by a Dutch ship whose captain wanted some payback. It would be tricky. There were five enemy ships, and though two were being careened the other three were afloat near the quay, covered by three batteries: six 6-pounders by the church in the town, south of the quay a battery of of six or eight light pieces, and on the quay, three 24-pounders. But, since these were ship's guns it did mean the privateers themselves had less armament. Arriving on 15 January, *Saphire* charged straight for the harbour, taking three hits and having a gun dismounted before anchoring broadside on. She then blasted the shore batteries and privateers. Both of the floating privateers were sunk; the others were shot to pieces. Her job done, *Saphire* departed.

To combat Spanish attacks in the Strait of Gibraltar, yet another patrol was sent out. For the first time, the Mediterranean Squadron, though nominally in charge, was not actually responsible for their conduct. The ships were dedicated to patrolling a fixed 'beat' and were replaced at intervals throughout the year. Four vessels were on station at any given time, and the first such were: *Lowestoft (20), Solebay (20), Saltash* sloop, and *Shark* sloop.

The Bay of Biscay also came in for greater attention, starting in March, with the following sector patrols: Finisterre to Ortegal covered by the *Hampshire (50)*; Bilbao to St. Jean de Luz (just south of Bayonne) by *Biddeford (20), Bridgewater (20), Lyme (20)*, and *Loo* (19 April addition). These ships were rotated out as the year wore on and replaced by others. The patrols lasted at least until July and may have lasted until it was too late for convoy sailings.

In March there was a report that the Caracas Company had dispatched three ships to San Sebastian, so the Basque Coast patrol was augmented for three weeks, starting about 19 April, by the *Sutherland (70)* and *Leopard (44)*. In June, more Caracas ships were reported (5-6) and privateer activity in Biscay increased, leading to the deployment of the *Hampshire* and *Augusta (60)* supplementing the current primary vessel, the *Sutherland*.

At the end of June a new patrol was established between Cape Finisterre and Cape Machichaco (the most prominent headland east of Bilbao), the first ship being the *Prince Frederick (70)*, reinforced by *Lyme* and *Dolphin (20)*.

As in 1742 the Spanish presented fewer targets, though their trade was actually picking up. Much of the traffic belonged to the Caracas Company, so the British specifically targeted the company bases in Venezuela, with mixed results. This tactic was not employed on the Iberian coast.

Starting on 6 May pairs of ships were sent to cruise the Azores and the Canaries. The first were respectively *Dreadnought (60)* and *Deptford (60)* under Captain (later Admiral) Boscawen, and *Monmouth (70)* and *Medway (60)* under Captain Windham. The size of many of these ships engaged in cruising, and the small numbers involved, show that the British were still short of suitable vessels, but they were aware of the problem and trying to fix it.

Windham and Boscawen were given quite flexible orders, allowed to spread their ships out and station them where they saw fit. If they learned that the Spanish squadron in the West Indies (under Don Rodrigo) was returning, they were to combine, but Windham (the senior) had liberty to make his own plan, so long as he tried his best to pursue and harass the Spanish. After their provisions ran low the ships were to cruise along the coast from Cape Spartel to Lisbon, re-victual there, then escort any homebound trade. In the event, Don Rodrigo did not return this year.

Following common practice the four ships also escorted an outbound convoy, of 67 ships, when they left England. Windham arrived in the Canaries on 20 May, appearing in the Santa Cruz roads by Gomera Island (west of Tenerife). Here he took fire from three forts, so closing to within 400 metres of the shore and anchoring his ships, he engaged each and proceeded to rubble them after a few hours work. The town was also badly damaged. Continuing to cruise, Windham captured two schooners, a sloop, the *St. Michael (18)* privateer of Bilbao, and a 300-ton Spanish merchantman holding a royal commission, armed with 14 cannon and with a complement of 25 soldiers. She carried £100,000 worth of goods, and 66 tons of quicksilver — an *azogue* at last!

Both Windham and Boscawen, who seems to have had no luck at all, returned home in July. Other actions, described by Beatson, include the taking of the privateer *Pearl (14)* of Bilbao by the *Hampshire*, the taking of the privateer *St. Theresa de Jesus (16)* of San Sebastian in a five-hour battle with the *Port Mahon*, the taking of another privateer with its two prizes by the *Fox*, and similar actions in the Caribbean.

Captain Byng (he who would be executed in the next war) also commanded a patrol. Previously he had been stationed at Gibraltar. This time his ships cruised (*Captain (70), Jersey (60), Biddeford (20)*) from the end of June to early September around Belle-Île and the mouth of the Garonne. He does not seem to have accomplished much. In the fall he took the *Captain*, accompanied by *Antelope (50)* and *Hampshire (50),* to cruise Cape Ortegal, while in October another group under Captain Barnett (*Prince Frederick (70), Jersey (60), Leopard (44)*) covered Cape Cantin and the seas about 50-60 leagues to the northwest of it.

Beatson provides statistics: 136 British ships taken in European waters and 126 in America, 51 Spanish taken in Europe and 95 in America. In monetary terms £567,000 to £438,000. But Beatson notes this does not include the ships taken by Anson in the Pacific, which boosts Spanish losses to £751,000, or a net gain for Britain of £184,000. Of course, one might set against that the losses suffered by the British insurance companies, who issued policies to both sides' merchants.

If Byng's lack of success is anything to go by, the French coast was pretty quiet. Just like last year, there was a scare over the ships at Brest and a brace of frigates was detailed to observe. Again, nothing happened, but it gave Norris, in *de facto* retirement, an opportunity of expressing himself. In Richmond's words (vol. 1 pp.195-196):

'As the French were now reported to have a squadron ready or nearly ready at Brest, it was proposed to fit out a force in the Channel, and Norris was sent for by the King and asked to take command. The Admiral of the Fleet reminded the King of the circumstances in which he had asked leave to retire in the previous year, but the King repeated his desire, and further gave Sir John permission to express his opinion generally upon naval affairs. This Norris at once did. The first thing, he said, in view of the armament now preparing at Brest, was to assemble a strong force at Spithead: for, if the French should come over with their fleet to St Helens as they might suddenly do "we have not sufficient strength at that place in readiness to oppose, and that would prevent the junction of other [squadrons] and put the country in great consternation: and our squadrons lying in their road near Toulon might be an inducement for them to do it if they found we were not in readiness to receive them". How correctly the old Admiral appreciated the possible action of France was proved by subsequent events.

Norris further told the King that he did not believe we had above ten ships of war at Spithead in a condition for action. The King said that this could not be so, for he had been shewn a list of no less than thirty sail that would soon be ready for service; to which the Admiral bluntly replied that he did not believe the report—a disbelief which was amply justified later. The King thereon directed him to put down in writing what he thought should be done. In accordance with this order Norris submitted the following question to the Duke of Newcastle, on behalf of the King. "If the squadron at Brest, which according to Lord Waldegrave consists of 35 sail, of which 22 are from 78 to 60 guns, should come into the Channel and place themselves at St Helens, what force is there provided at present to drive them away or even to look them in the face?

This direct question was put before the Council at its next meeting on April 25th [OS]. Lord Winchelsea, in reply on behalf of the Admiralty, read a report from Brest which stated that ten ships were ready, but the remainder were not as yet in a condition for sea, some still being in need of repairs. Reassured by this the Cabinet took no further steps. Nothing was done even to keep a squadron superior to that of the French ready for immediate service. The English fleet remained scattered at the three home ports and, as the preceding narrative has shewn, further broken up into small divisions to attack trade. Norris was thus appointed to a phantom command. His flagship was at the Nore, unready for sea. Some ships were at Spithead, others off the Canary Islands, others at Plymouth, Chatham and the Nore. To crown all, when he asked the Admiralty for a list of the ships in commission, with their stations and

muster, so that he could form some idea of the force he would have under his command, it was refused him! Yet at this moment England's own policy was leading straight to war with France. An army under the British King in person was marching against the French in the Palatinate, and a British fleet was lying outside the principal French naval port. It was not to be expected that France would submit tamely to such treatment; nor did her manner of behaving shew her to be unresentful of the British action.

It is certain that when the failures of this war are under consideration the share borne by an Administration which behaves in such a manner must be given full weight.'

As a matter of fact the Brest and Rochefort Squadrons did make ready for sea in earnest at the tail of the year. France was committed to war at least from November, when the Second Family Compact was signed. The British guessed the ships — seven from Brest and five from Rochefort — intended to block the Strait of Gibraltar, possibly in conjunction with a combined Franco-Spanish sortie from Toulon. In response, three ships of the line (*Boyne (80), Chichester (80), Burford (70)*) were dispatched to the Med in December. It was widely accepted that France would be declaring war on Britain very soon.

THE AUSTRIAN SUCCESSION

1744 — FRANCE AGAINST BRITAIN

I have indeed never doubted one moment that the Brest squadron was to the westward of us and that the ships that have appeared at the back of the Goodwin sands was a different squadron composed of much smaller ships. Had I been believed in what I represented last Spring when the King was going abroad, we had been now in a condition to drive the Brest ships out of the Channel and at the same time been covered from any insult or attempt from Dunkirk: but I was treated then as an old man that dreamed dreams. I pray God I may not live to see them come to pass."

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Norris to the Duke of Newcastle, 13 February 1744. Quoted in Richmond, vol II. p. 69.

1743 marks the official end of the War of Jenkins' Ear, the fight over trade now becoming more of a tactic than a strategy. Britain's naval struggle with Spain merges into the general conflagration, though that can still be divided into discrete elements, such as the war in Italy and the upcoming war in Flanders. The war in Germany can even be divided into Austria's struggle against Prussia and her struggle against Bavaria/France. The naval war retains distinct Mediterranean and Caribbean components, the former being of much greater importance, but apart from the Battle of Toulon, it is the Atlantic coasts of France and Iberia, and the 'home waters' of Britain where the chief action lies.

Britain's rupture with France in 1744 already existed under the surface but became manifest in 1744. It had several specific causes, besides the 'natural enemies' argument. The death of Cardinal Fleury in 1743 brought no single replacement to the fore at Versailles but a faction of 'ultra' hawks; King Louis' guilt over doing so little to help his Spanish relatives in Italy has already been alluded to. Both these factors led to the signing of the Second Family Compact, or Treaty of Fontainbleu, which provided for a full alliance between the Bourbons rather than moral support. There was general irritation with British highhandedness on the high seas. And, there was Dettingen. However, perhaps the most significant cause of an immediate rupture — a 'rush to rupture' — was a series of violent debates in the British Parliament in which not only the Administration was castigated but King George himself. These attacks were so vitriolic that they gave the Jacobite exiles and their French supporters the erroneous impression that England was ripe for rebellion.

Maurepas Conceives a Cunning Plan

It was *M. le comte* de Maurepas, *ministre de la marine,* who arranged the Treaty of Fontainbleu, or Second Family Compact, in concert with his Spanish friend, the *principe* de Campo-Florido (a.k.a. Esteban Reggio y Gravina-Branciforti y Gravina). Although government departments were not as well defined as they are now, arranging a treaty in this way was still unusual. One would think at the very least it would involve the *Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires étrangères*, M. de Amelot. Departments might have vague boundaries, but in France at least they were run like family businesses, and one overstepped one's bounds at one's peril.

But Jean-Jacques Amelot, *marquis* de Combrande, last seen as French Ambassador to Britain, was perhaps too busy — he was also *intendent des finances*, among other things — and of a relatively low social rank, while Maurepas was currently in high favour; he and Campo-Florido were also on the same wavelength. In their view, colonies were the key to a nation's greatness and therefore England was the prime enemy, not Austria. Furthermore, if a spoke could be put in Britain's wheel she would be unable to subsidize the Habsburgs and their Italian ally, the House of Savoy. Unfortunately the Army (no surprise) had difficulty wrapping its collective head around this 'indirect approach'.

Maurepas' plans were drawn up in November of 1743, as the Compact was being negotiated, and swiftly agreed to by King Louis. Maurepas aimed at nothing less than the overthrow of the Georgian regime. (Campo-Florido had an iron in this fire, too, because his family sympathized with the many Jacobite exiles residing in Spain.) It was assumed that a landing made in sufficient force would be welcomed by the mass of the people, who were clearly very unhappy under George II and Carteret's Administration. This would embolden the Jacobites to emerge from their holes and call for the restoration of a Stuart king. By now, the best part of the British Army was located on the Continent. The French estimated (and probably overestimated) that there were a mere 16,000 troops in Britain, holding down garrison posts, and that the Royal Navy was overstretched. Even if the invasion ultimately failed, the British would be busy for many months, or even a year or two, allowing the French to get on with their own schemes, which involved an invasion of the Low Countries, intended to cut the lines of communication between Austria and Britain. Maurepas was also convinced it was a cheaper way of showing support for the Spanish than an offensive in Italy.

Setting aside the logistical difficulties of a cross-Channel invasion, the main challenge arose from internal French

politics. Since this sort of thing was not strictly Maurepas' department, other actors, such as *maréchal* Noaïlles (the senior general of the Army), and *maréchal* de Saxe (pegged to lead the invasion), were allowed to make changes. This fact does not really concern the current narrative, except to point out that the plan was hazy on the details. It also needs to be pointed out that the Treaty of Fontainbleu primarily benefited Spain. That is, although it brought France into the war and therefore in theory allowed her to invade Britain, in real terms more effort was still to be put into supporting the war in Italy, because that is what Spain wanted.

The other man of influence where an invasion was concerned was Cardinal Tencin, Pierre Guérin de Tencin. Within the power vacuum created by Fleury's death Tencin was the nearest thing to a successor. Although not made an official Grand Poobah, in 1742 he was given the post of minister of state without portfolio, which allowed him to meddle in whatever took his fancy. As a senior clergyman he held much influence over King Louis, who in 1744 was going through one of his pious phases. And, he had Connections at Rome. He was also a friend of the exiled Stuart dynasty (James Edward Stuart recommended him to the Pope). The idea of a Jacobite coup was essentially his. Like many other Continental observers since, he completely misinterpreted the dynamics of British politics.

As will be seen, the attempt at direct invasion failed due to factors other than the loyalty of 'H.M. Loyal Opposition'. This discredited Maurepas, as well as Amelot, who backed him. Tencin, the 'ideas man', seems to have escaped censure. After the failed invasion Maurepas went back to his ministry and concentrated on naval affairs, resulting in the strategy of commerce raiding and dispersed patrolling usually termed *guerre de course*. This strategy was always a good one for France to adopt, because Versailles never did have a clear vision of how to use *La Royale* and the Navy rarely received the resources it needed for major fleet actions. It may be that Maurepas' failure led to his ministry being deliberately snubbed, so that *guerre de course* was less a brilliant strategy or even one forced by the nature of the war, but one forced by ministerial and personal rivalries. Since bureaucracies still behave this way, the present author feels this is a likely possibility.

Amelot was dismissed. A period of ministerial chaos ensued from April to November as the King notionally assumed direct control of affairs but in practice left everything to a committee. In November, one of the members of that committee, the *marquis* d'Argenson, manoeuvred himself to become the new *Secrétaire d'État aux Affaires étrangères*. D'Argenson was an anti-Habsburg zealot with absolutely no interest in colonies; Spain was useful to him only as a tool for fighting Austria in the Po Valley. And so, after one grand gesture, *La Royale* was relegated to playing second fiddle for the rest of the war.

Maurepas' Plans in Execution

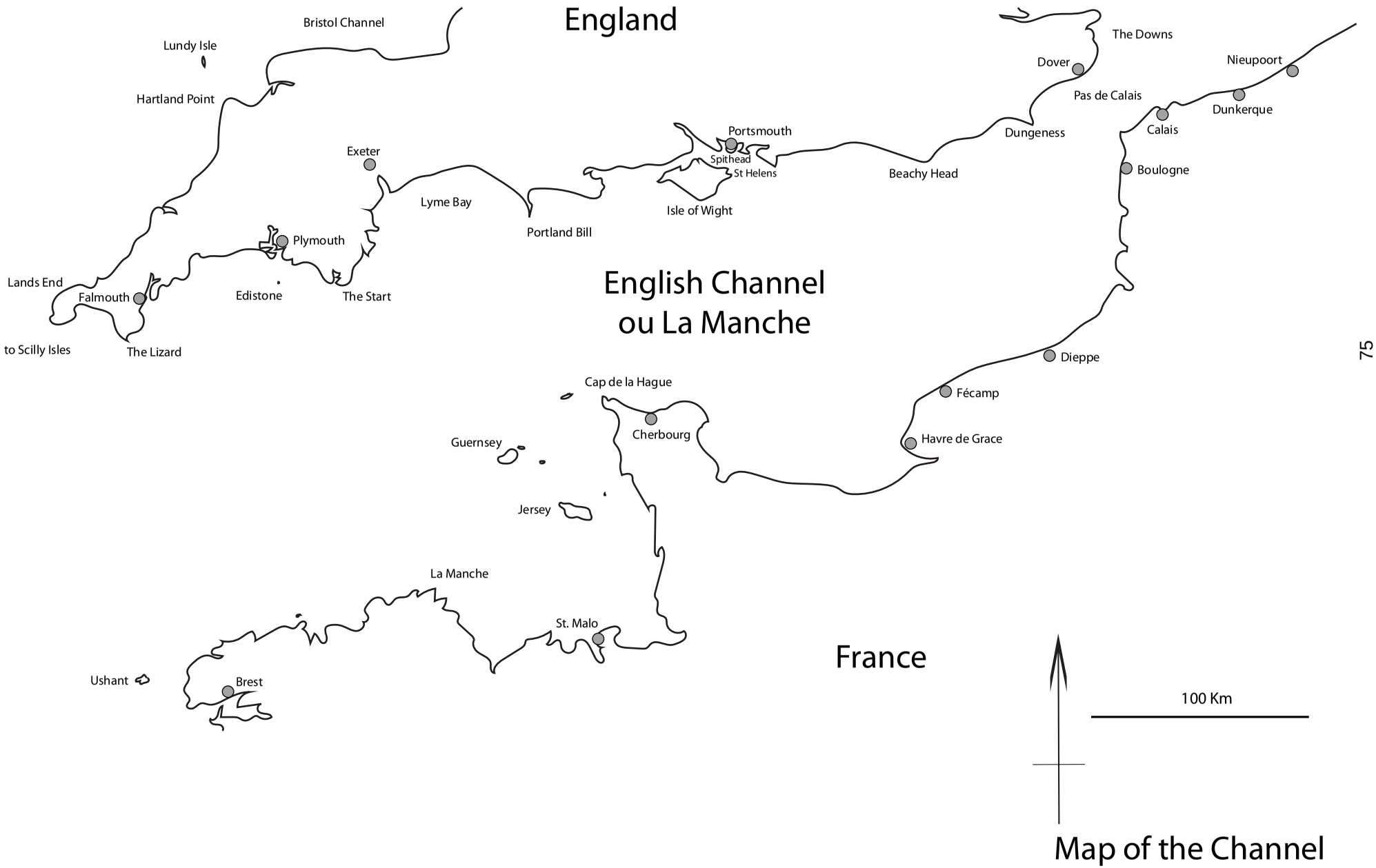
The naval war had been going on for five years now and not one fleet action had been fought. (Cartagena des Indías involved a close blockade, but the Spanish turned their ships into blockhouses.) That was about to change when, on 21-22 February the French and Spanish sortied from Toulon and were engaged by Admiral Matthews. The Spanish had used Toulon as a place to hide for several years, but the bulk of the Cádiz Squadron had slipped into Toulon late in 1743 in preparation for this sortie required by the Treaty of Fontainbleu. There were two objects, first to gain local naval supremacy to ease the supply situation in Italy, and second to allow the Toulon Squadron to manoeuvre, either to pin down British forces in the Med and possibly force them to send reinforcements, or to link up with the Brest Squadron. The course adopted would depend on circumstances.

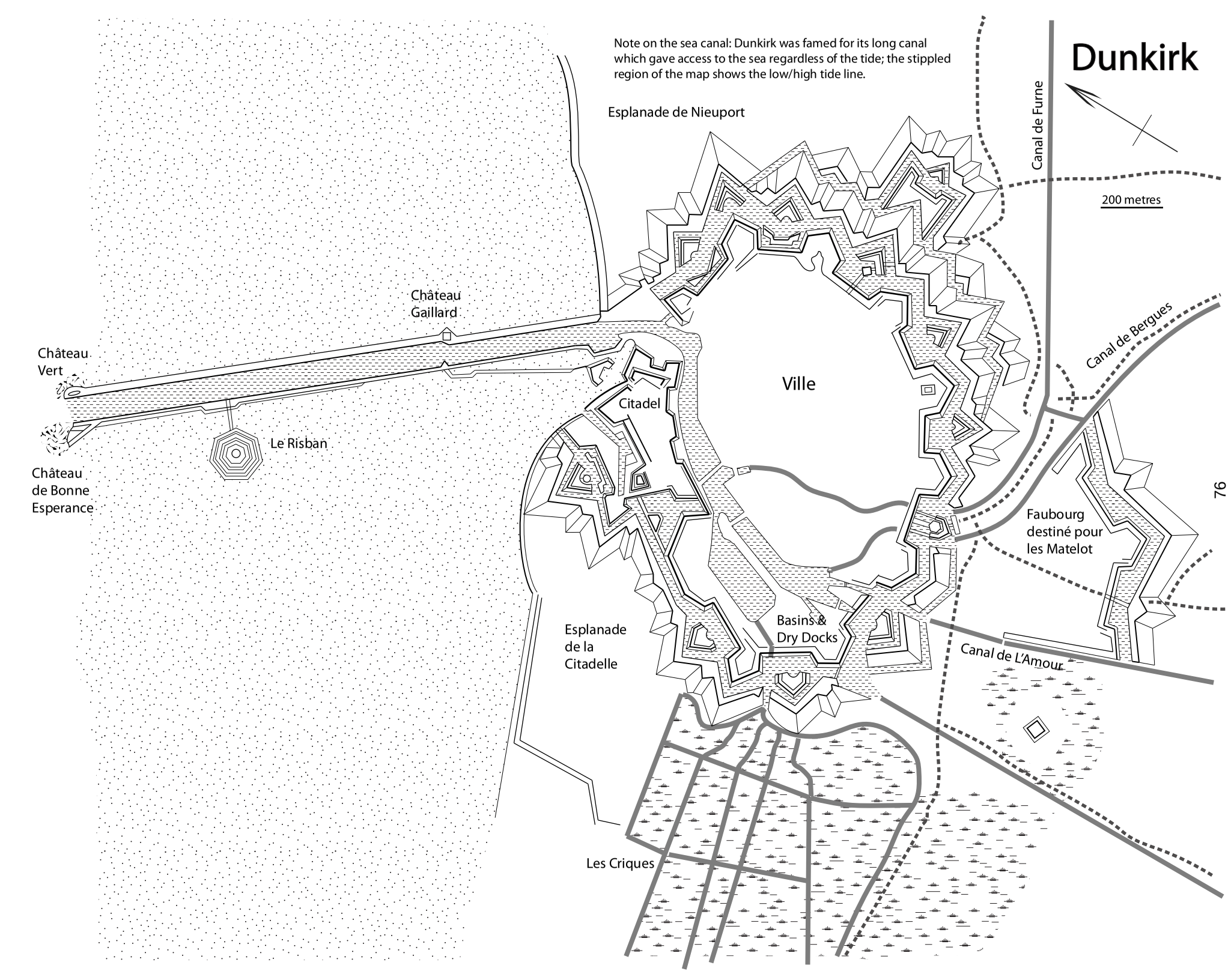
Unfortunately the battle was not only tactically inconclusive, but strategically favoured the British. Matthews and most of his command would be summoned to stand trial for their poor performance — a grand affair that took over a year to resolve — but this did not alter the fact that the French withdrew into Toulon, never to emerge again. This ultimately crippled Spanish efforts in the Med. Their land campaign would stall and a counter offensive would ensue. At the moment, thanks to the treaty they were able to support their armies by land through the Maritime Alps, and had the support of a strong French corps, but their bulk shipping was very vulnerable.

The matching sortie from Brest, with the object of supporting the invasion of Britain, did not rely on the Toulon Squadron or the Spanish, but it would have been nice to achieve a coordinated strike. The French almost managed it. According to British sources, Tencin and Maurepas' plans called for 20,000 men under *maréchal* de Saxe to assemble around Calais. The same old routine would take place: the Brest Squadron would sail up the Channel, defeat or pin the Royal Navy, and the invasion barges would cross the Strait of Calais. This was roughly the idea, but not precisely. The French only had 12,000 men. But, de Saxe had written authorisation to act as James Edward Stuart's executor, which effectively meant he could raise an indigenous army. The precise assembly point was Boulogne, and the precise objective was the Thames Estuary, following the model of the Dutch wars. Though this meant challenging the Chatham naval base with its forts and block-ships, Maurepas believed the facilities were weaker than they appeared. The enemy squadron in the Channel had only to be neutralised long enough to allow the crossing, after which it would hardly matter if the seas remained open or not.

But, the British Admiralty, always sensitive on the matter of enemy invasion, was rapidly preparing. There were inklings of a sortie from Brest in November and December of 1743. On 29 December of that year a Captain Broderick sailed for Brest in the *Phœnix (20)* with orders to scout the Biscay coast at least as far as Rochefort. It had been reported that six ships had just sailed from Brest, possibly bound for Toulon, but what about the rest of the Squadron?

[The rebasing ships do not seem to have been significant vessels. All the capital ships that fought at Toulon, or that were present at Toulon later in the year, seem to have been based there for some time.]


England
Bristol Channel
Lundy Isle
Hartland Point
Exeter
Lyme Bay
Portland Bill
Portsmouth
Spithead
St Helens
Isle of Wight
Beachy Head
Dungeness
Dover
The Downs
Pas de Calais
Nieupoort
Dunkerque
Calais
Boulogne
Plymouth
Lands End
Falmouth
Edistone
The Start
to Scilly Isles
The Lizard
English Channel
ou La Manche
Dieppe
Fécamp
Havre de Grace
Cap de la Hague
Cherbourg
Guernsey
Jersey
La Manche
St. Malo
Ushant
Brest
France
100 Km
Map of the Channel


Dunkirk
Note on the sea canal: Dunkirk was famed for its long canal which gave access to the sea regardless of the tide; the stippled region of the map shows the low/high tide line.
Esplanade de Nieuport
Canal de Furne
200 metres
Château Gaillard
Château Vert
Château de Bonne Esperance
Le Risban
Ville
Citadel
Canal de Bergues
Faubourg destiné pour les Matelot
Esplanade de la Citadelle
Basins & Dry Docks
Canal de L'Amour
Les Criques
76

The British Reaction

Leaving port at 7am, Broderick made Ushant by 4pm on 30 December. On 2 January he was in Bertheaume Bay (the westernmost bay on the south side of the northern promontory of Brittany). Here he learned the French admiral de Roquefeuil was outfitting 9 ships of the line in Brest harbour and received confirmation that 'some' had sailed earlier. Broderick did not penetrate farther into the Brest Roads, instead investigating Port Louis (6 January) and scouting Rochefort (12 January). Port Louis is located on the south exit of the of Lorient's bay; Lorient is about 4 Km farther up the estuary, on the other shore.

Broderick seems to have been rather a bold sea dog. Wanting more information, on 18 January he sailed right into Brest harbour and requested to take on water. Since the authorities had no instructions to the contrary, they gave him water, though he was not allowed to land anyone. To buy time he asked for far more than he needed. The amount, 22 tons, was so large the French could not deliver it until the next morning. While it was being shipped aboard and the excess surreptitiously pumped out again, he counted the French ships: twenty-one in all. Twelve were 64s or 74s, five were 64s or 54s, and four were frigates. Broderick lingered until Roquefeuil warned him that he risked detention and sailed away on the morning of 20 January. He spent 21 January hovering about, then sped for home with his intelligence, arriving at Plymouth at 5pm the same day.

Broderick's information tallied with what had been learned through diplomatic channels about the Second Family Compact, which among other things loaned Spain 30,000 men (to be used in Italy) and seventeen ships. Some question arose about the role these ships were to play. It was learned that vessels rebasing to support the Spanish were to sail for Toulon not later than 16 January, but at the same time twenty-four ships of the line and several frigates were supposedly earmarked for the guessed-at invasion of England. Could the count of French vessels be wrong? Were the Spanish going to appear in the Channel?

At the end of December the Admiralty relaxed a little, rescinding orders for a couple of 60-gunners — *Dreadnought* to be pulled out of refit and *Plymouth* to be brought to Portsmouth from Plymouth — and and ordering *Duke (90)* and *Cornwall (70)* plus four bomb ketches on an escort mission to the Med. But, Broderick's report galvanized them. On 2 January the British Admiralty issued orders for all serviceable ships in port to make ready and take on four months provisions. On 6 January a 'hot press' was ordered. A hot press allowed every captain to sweep the town and impress as many men as he needed with impunity. Ideally, only men with nautical experience would be rounded up. On 7 January the *Squirrel (20), Drake* sloop, and *Grenadoe* bomb were sent to scout the French side of the Channel, from Ushant to Boulogne. The *Phœnix* was also sent out (30 January) to cover the sector from Brest to the Île de Sein — in other words, to cover the entire width of the multiple bays comprising the tip of the Breton penin3sula. *Dolphin* was given similar orders. On the off chance that there were British 50-gunners at Lisbon, the consul's dispatches contained orders for them to sail for the Med and join Admiral Matthews.

[Île de Sein is notorious for reefs, bad weather, and inhabitants who cultivated the nasty habit of rearranging the beacon lights for the purposes of 'salvage'.]

The British admirals commanding in home waters this year were Rear Admiral of the Red Thomas Davers (Portsmouth) and Rear Admiral of the Blue William Martin (Spithead). Beatson states that Norris was in charge at Spithead. This was technically true, as he had been recalled to the colours in the emergency, but physically he was London at this time. Martin and Sir Charles Hardy were his subordinates, with the former acting as deputy.

[Hardy's promotion to Vice Admiral of the Blue is recorded for 1743 but this may be a mistake. Davers was promoted to Vice Admiral of the White later this year and Martin was made Vice Admiral of the Blue.]

Richmond does not list many available ships at Spithead:

Duke (90)
St. George (90)
Sandwich (90)
Shrewsbury (90)
Northumberland (90)
Royal Sovereign (90)
Princess Royal (90)
Princess Amelia (80)
Cornwall (70)
Plymouth (60) — at the port of the same name

There was also the *Dreadnought (60)*, called out of refit, then sent back. Though a number of other ships were engaged in various activities and could be summoned, the Royal Navy not in good shape to engage the full Brest Squadron.

Duke and *Cornwall* were told not to sail for the Med. *Dreadnought* was taken out of refit again. The *Ipswich* was taken out of quarantine (this was done to give her crew to the *Royal Sovereign*). A fast sloop was sent to Gibraltar to warn the Mediterranean Squadron. Notice was published in the *Gazette* that all naval personnel were to rejoin their ships or be treated as deserters. Every available ship was to concentrate at Spithead (except the *Sutherland (50)*, permitted to refit at Plymouth).

Otherwise, business went on as usual. *Biddeford (20)* and *Kinsale (40)* escorted a West Indies convoy on 9 February. *Hector (40)* went out to escort in some East Indiamen about the same time.

Broderick remained a key player. At 5pm on 12 February he was off Ushant, where he encountered *Dolphin* and *Drake*. They had counted twenty-two sail in Brest. *Dolphin* turned to cruise south of Île de Sein, being recalled to England by the *Grenadoe* on 20 February, without seeing anything more. Broderick and the *Phœnix (20)* cruised the same sector but had more luck. On 17 February he witnessed the entire French fleet emerging from the main sound. That was at 1pm. Broderick shadowed them overnight at about three miles distance and by 4am the lights of the last ship had reached open sea. The French were headed north 'under

easy sail'. By 7pm they picked up a 'fresh' ESE breeze ('fresh' means something like 30-40 kph) and steered by it NNE. Broderick, to windward — that is, to the northwest — let the distance get too great and lost them. He followed in their wake during the night but the weather turned foul, heavy seas and a wind from the ENE bringing thick snow.

In his report he recorded the French sixteen leagues off Ushant on 18 February. After scouting south for a couple of hours he guessed they were indeed bound for the Channel and made for England himself. But, at 11am he sighted four ships to windward of him and at 5pm another eleven. This suggested not so much that they had turned for home, but that the fleet was scattered by the heavy weather and stragglers were being rounded up. He arrived at Plymouth at 5pm on 21 February.

Broderick's report landed on the Admiralty desk at the same time (22 February) as a report that Bonnie Prince Charlie had escaped his 'minders' in Rome and was reportedly bound for France. This was not part of Maurepas' plan. In fact, the French were incensed because the Young Pretender threatened to reveal their operation by his very presence. Also, the Jacobite royals were by treaty forbidden to enter France and this could give the British an excuse to preempt the French. Charles Edward Stuart, a.k.a. the Young Pretender, was grandson of the deposed James II. In his early twenties, living in Rome with his family under constant observation by both British and French spies, he had of course learned of the coming invasion from the talkative exile community there. His shackles chafed. A French commander had been given authority to lead the expected British uprising because his father, James Edward Stuart, was too old. Charles, partly from youthful exuberance and partly perhaps due to flattering letters he had received from some of the exiles, upset that a French soldier was going to command the Expedition, believed he was needed.

Norris was ordered to Portsmouth:

"Upon receiving these Our instructions you are to repair immediately to Portsmouth and take under your command all our ships at Spithead, and all other ships that are now at home, or that come home" (Richmond, vol. II, p.63).

The order was signed by the King (and the Admiralty lodged a complaint because of the power it gave Norris). The Admiral of the Fleet was ordered to ready as many ships as possible as quickly as possible, locate the French, and, provided they were threatening the British coasts, destroy them. Britain and France were not yet at war.

Though it seemed likely the French were planning to escort an expedition to Britain — for which they would probably head for the Strait of Calais — they might yet double back, and the Mediterranean Squadron was warned; contingency plans were laid to send a reinforcement there.

In case the Pretender attempted to slip into England on his own, Customs was alerted to arrest the following: "a short squat man sent from Rome with secret commissions to England: he wears his own brown hair commonly tied in a bag. He speaks bad Italian." Ominously for the French, when King George made the enemy's preparations public (15 February), there was a great outcry and many demonstrations of loyalty from around the country and from both sides of the isle in the Houses of Parliament. A subscription for £1,800,000 toward the costs of the war was filled in one day. The Administration also suspended Habeas Corpus for six months and began arresting known subversives.

According to Richmond, the Royal Navy's ships in home waters now numbered twenty-three of the line (counting 50-gunners) and five 44-gun frigates. Discounting those still in refit, there were nineteen of the former and two of the latter. At Spithead were eleven real ships of the line and a 50-gunner, and in Portsmouth harbour the *St. George (90), Jersey (60)*, and *Roebuck (40)*. *Victory (100)* was enroute from the Nore, where lay also *Princess Royal*; *Princess Amelia* was at Plymouth and *Dreadnought* at Sheerness.

Getting into the Channel was often just as difficult as getting out of it. On 14 February French sail were sighted near the Eddystone Rocks (23 Km SSW of Plymouth), and the next day west of the Casquets (Guernsey), but some of their number were still west of the Lizard.

By 18 February, while Newcastle was losing his hair over diplomatic reports from Paris, Norris, who raised his pennant at Spithead on 17 February, had assembled fourteen ships of the line, including *Dreadnought* and *Princess Royal*. He felt he needed at least five more, and was disquieted by news that Roquefeuil might have been reinforced by the small Rochefort squadron and some East Indiamen from Lorient. Lord Newcastle was pressing him to sail. Reinforced to sixteen capital ships including *Princess Amelia* and the *Kinsale* (which had had a run in with the French beyond the Lizard but got her convoy away safely), Norris felt he could proceed. Meanwhile, news was received from various sources. These suggested Calais was Roquefeuil's final destination. A 50-gun ship had turned up there, along with pilots and additional crews. However, there was no confirmation.

At Dunkirk were about fifty merchant or privateering vessels averaging 150-200 tons apiece. These might be commandeered to transport soldiers, but more important was the news that an embargo had just been placed on the port to prevent any sailing. Similar embargoes were reported elsewhere. The mail packet was also held back. These steps were a clear sign a declaration of war was due. The British reciprocated the measures. It was now 20 February. The same day the British learned four more ships had sailed from Brest on 15 February.

Roquefeuil now disappeared from sight for several days. Lacking clarity, the Admiralty's response remained confused. All bases had to be covered. Had the Brest Squadron come up the Channel or only made a feint and turned around? If the latter were true, was Roquefeuil back at Brest, or headed for Toulon? The plan (very roughly) was for Norris to sail west. Once he found the French (assuming they were nearby) he was to detach Martin with a considerable force to follow them. If the French could not be found, Martin must check Brest, then, if they were not there, head for the Mediterranean. Norris would remain in the Channel with a skeleton force. This sounds sensible in

itself, but the Admiralty added all sorts of conditions. For example, Martin, to be prepared for a long journey, must make the pursuit with his own convoy of provision ships. These latest orders seem to have shifted the weight of the threat from an invasion of the homeland to an enemy concentration in the Med. At least, the instructions given to cover the eventuality of Roquefeuil coming all the way up the Channel as initially feared were vague in the extreme. It may be that the delays imposed by the weather led the British to assume Roquefeuil's movements were really a bluff. After all, the Spanish had done almost the same thing in 1740.

However, once the French were sighted again, it was obvious they were bound for the Calais Strait. A customs ship had seen sixteen sail at rest off The Start on 21 February. Tying this to the fact that for the last week the winds had been easterlies, it became clear Roquefeuil indeed wanted to sail east, but could not. This meant Norris could wait at Spithead until the French came up, and engaged them at advantage. Except that on 22 February it was reliably reported that twenty-three French sail had been seen passing Calais! Details followed from other quarters: on 20 February seven enemy men of war rounded Cap Griznez at 10am, followed by three more in the evening. On 23 February there were reports of at least seventeen sail passing the Goodwin Sands on 22 February. Now, reports from spies came in. Seven battalions of infantry were counted in a camp at Calais, and 8,000 foot and 1,000 horse in another camp at Dunkirk.

The day this was known — 23 February — the British Government ordered the coastal forts manned and summoned the Army from its garrisons, and called out the militia. Scotland and Ireland were alerted. Orders were issued to remove all navigation buoys at the Nore and to hide the lights at the lighthouses around the Thames Estuary as soon as the French were sighted.

Norris was given direct orders to attack the French. There was just one small problem. He did not believe the reports. On 22 February nineteen French ships of the line had been reported off Portland Bill. Given the light winds that day these surely could not be the twenty-three sail counted in the Strait of Calais. Given also that Norris himself could not sortie due to those same persistent light winds, Roquefeuil's failure to sail up the Channel seemed very creditable. But, orders are orders, especially when signed by the King. Norris arrived in the Downs on 28 February.

The next day he was informed that eighteen French sail had been sighted at 6:30am that day, and they were still off Portland Bill. Moreover, the observer had approached and actually conversed with men aboard the ships. Although a spokesman talked in English the crew was obviously French. When notified, the Admiralty, which had been about to issue orders for Norris to attack the merchantmen at Dunkirk changed their mind. Instead, they sent Norris the following (Richmond vol. II p.70):

'His Majesty in these circumstances does not think proper to send you any particular order, having a most perfect dependence on your skill, ability and zeal.'

That was nice of them. But they also said he had to destroy the French fleet and the merchantmen at the same time. Richmond notes that this decision was arrived at without input from any naval officers.

On 28 February the British asked for the loan of 6,000 Dutch troops. This loan was guaranteed by treaties stretching back to 1678. For once the Dutch readily agreed and London sent transports to Willemstadt to collect six battalions.

Norris held a council of war on 29 February. Its conclusion was to request clarification — His Majesty must pick a target. Meanwhile, the *Gibraltar (20), Fly* sloop, and a cutter were sent to observe Dunkirk and count masts. Their report came back on 1 March: four 60-gunners and a number of smaller vessels. The big ships chased the patrol off, but information from other sources tallied 59 transports and estimated 20,000 soldiers.

[Richmond points out that within the framework of his times Norris could not take aggressive action without clarification from a superior, not matter how experienced he was or how much discretion he had been given. One did not question a King's Order, even if the paperwork was written by a clerk, but clarity was essential. Besides Martin and Davers there were two other admirals in the council of war, unnamed by Richmond.]

By now there was a full gale blowing. The Downs was fairly sheltered by banks, despite seeming to be in the middle of the sea, but the British were not going anywhere. Neither were their opponents. After a bit of to-and-fro between the Norris and London, on 3 March the Admiral was ordered to first deal with the transports and then the French fleet. But, this could not be done; a succession of gales continued to blow with only short interruptions. Even with good weather, attacking the enemy transports would be difficult, since the coast from Boulogne to Holland is protected by a maze of shoals requiring local knowledge to navigate safely. And, good weather would bring Roquefeuil within range.

About 10am on 4 March Roquefeuil was seen off Brighton with between ten and fifteen sail. Seven more (five of the line and two frigates as it turned out) were already at Dunkirk. Norris had to reckon on the fact that Roquefeuil might be near Dungeness by the time he had received this information, but nothing was known for sure. Norris decided to move to a position off Dunkirk and block the exits. But, the last gale only blew itself out on 5 March; in the evening word came that Roquefeuil was indeed off Dungeness. Therefore, on 6 March Norris decided to sail down to Dungeness (the wind was from the northwest) and attack, after first swinging by Dunkirk and detaching a blocking force. Already a large crowd was gathering on the Kentish coast to watch what promised to be the battle of a lifetime.

According to Richmond, as of 28 February Norris' fleet consisted of the following:

Victory (100)
Duke (90)
Sandwich (90)
St. George (90)
Princess Royal (90)
Princess Amelia (80)

Shrewsbury (80)
Cornwall (80)
Prince Frederick (70)
Captain (70)
Northumberland (70)
Suffolk (70)
Princess Mary (60)
Medway (60)
Worcester (60)
Jersey (60)
Dreadnought (60)
Augusta (60)
Deptford (60)
Preston (50)
Kinsale (40)
Anglesea (40)
Dolphin (20)
Gibraltar (20)
Plus fireships *Aetna* and *Scipio*
Plus bombs *Terror* and *Lightning*

Phœnix (24) and *Fly* sloop arrived 29 February and *Monmouth (70)* and *Plymouth (50)* were at Plymouth; they were supposed to join, but the French were in the way.

The French Perspective

Maréchal de Saxe had 334 officers and 9,695 men, siphoned off from the main army gathering on the border of the Austrian Netherlands under *maréchal* de Noaïlles. By transporting about 1,200 men on the expected warships, the French could get away with hiring a mere 7,755 tons of shipping. Ships were acquired from as far away as Rochefort and Nantes. Many gave out they were bound for Holland or the New World. The ruses seem to have worked, at least in the short term. As for the troops, there was nothing unusual in large numbers camping around Calais over the winter. Both sides had been beefing up their forces along the border for a couple of years. Making the attempt in the dead of winter was deliberate. Not so much because that the French expected to achieve surprise, but because armies preferred to execute side operations before the main campaigning season opened. Surprise would have been nice, but it was always unlikely, and the immanent arrival of Bonnie Prince Charlie made it almost impossible.

There had been debate over whether the transports should be escorted from Brest by the whole fleet, or slip over to Dunkirk in small batches, or be escorted by a detachment. There was no question of actually loading the troops at Brest. This had been done in 1689, but the target then was Ireland and the troops were already camped there. It would give the game away to march an entire corps from Calais to Brest in the middle of winter, plus, the soldiers might be stuck on board ship for weeks. In the end, it was decided those transports that were not based near Dunkirk would be escorted by a division of the fleet.

The *comte* de Roquefeuil was appointed to command the Brest Squadron in November of 1743. He was a veteran with 62 years of service. In charge of the escort was M. de Barailh, another old officer, who joined the service in 1689. Roquefeuil's other (presumably 'rear') admiral was the *chevalier* de Chamilly, who was as old as him. These men were told nothing but to have their ships ready by 20 January, with six months provisions, which suggested a trip to the Caribbean. No further orders were issued, but Barailh was told he would be detached on special duty during the mission; Roquefeuil would get replacements from Rochefort.

Details of the French preparations are hard to come by. The following is a list of the ships at Brest and Rochefort, or operating out of those bases, in the early months of 1744:

Brest

Dauphin Royal (76) — divisional flagship
Juste (76) — divisional flagship
Lys (72)
Neptune (74) — divisional flagship
Sainte Philippe (74)
Sceptre (74)
Superbe (76) — senior flagship
Alcide (64)
Ardent (64) — from Rochefort
Constant (64)
Eclatant (62)
Elizabeth (64)
Fleuron (64)
Grafton (70) — prize ship
Mars (64) — sent to West Indies; returned later
Sainte Louis (64)
Sainte Michel (60)
Triton (60)
Appollon (56) — from Rochefort
Brillant (56)
Content (56) — sent to West Indies; returned later
Argonaute (46)
Auguste (52)
Gloire (44) — from Rochefort
Griffon (44)
Mercure (14) — from Rochefort; ex-56-gun, hospital ship
Parfait (46)
Rubis (54) — from Rochefort
Marquis d'Antin (44) — possible
Galathée (26)
Medée (26)
Mutine (24)
Panthère (20)
Rénomée (32) — may have launched end of 1744
Vénus (26)
Dryade (26)
Chameau (36) — storeship
Salamandre bomb
Tonnant bomb

Plus possibly up to four East Indiamen of 30 guns each. The best guess for their names are: *Aimiable, Brillant, Fleury, Parfaite*. These ships are listed at Brest throughout 1743 and were thus available to be commandeered.

Rochefort

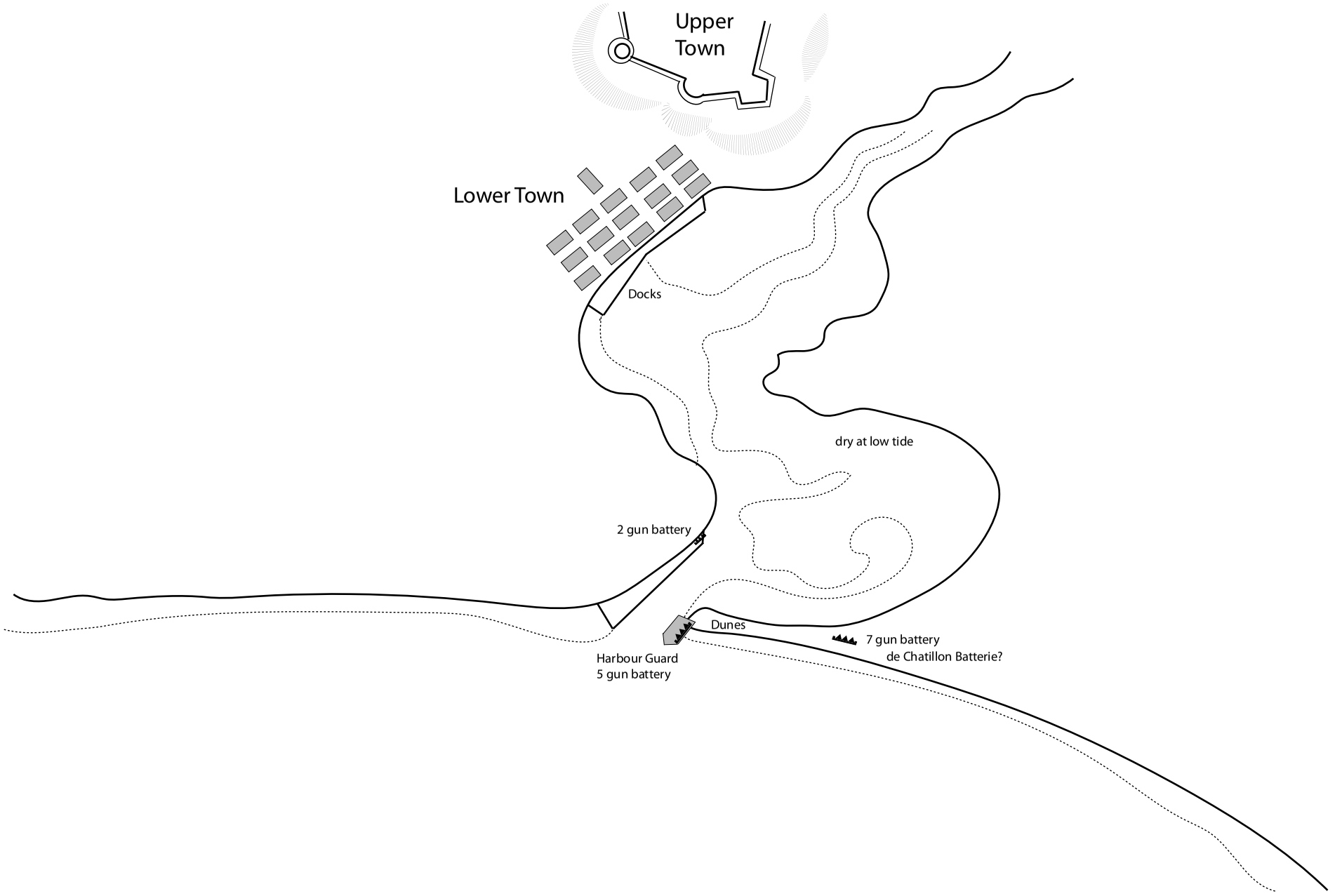
Invincible (78)
Bourbon (76) —in the process of being scrapped
Baliene (42) — storeship
Canada (24) — storeship

Map of Boulogne

from a period sketch provided in Richmond

no scale

Notes: the original sketch is a perspective; no two maps of the period seem to agree on details.
Only this sketch shows the various batteries and the construction at the harbour entrance.
Bellin's map of 1764 appears to be the best 'standard' map. It shows a four-pointed star fort overlooking the estuary entrance on the north side, to the left of the 2-gun battery, and called the Tour d'Ordre; also a large ruinous fort on the left (south) bank of the estuary, above the inner harbour.
Bellin also shows a wider beach on the coast; Richmond's sketch notes a depth of 7 fathoms around the estuary entrance.



Charante (28) — storeship
Élephant (16) — storeship
Gironde (28) — storeship
Profond (40) — storeship

Bayonne

Amphitrite (30)
Mégare (26)

Many historians are of the opinion the invasion stood a real chance of success if it had been launched on time. Of course, it was delayed. Actually, the delay itself might not have done much damage. It was the 'raincoats on, raincoats off' routine the operational commanders had to go through that made the difference.

The weather could not be helped. As already recounted, high winds prevented the French from leaving port — but also prevented the British from doing the same. Delays in outfitting the ships might also come under the heading of 'operational friction', but again, the British were suffering from the same problems. Another delay was political. The Jacobite leadership, a contentious and prickly bunch, argued the invasion should come on the heels of a Parliamentary vote on the question of paying for King George's Hanoverian troops. This, always a contentious issue, would be taken at the end of January, and was likely to inflame anti-government opinion. Not fully understanding the subtleties, the French deferred to the Exiles' special knowledge. These delays permitted Bonnie Prince Charlie to arrive in France.

When the Prince was spotted at Antibes about the end of January, Versailles hastily ordered Roquefeuil to sail immediately, before the British could get wind of the Prince's arrival (or attach himself to the expedition, which might be even worse). All chance of surprise was lost if the British found out he was back in France, not the least because the French had removed his family from their country at Britain's request years ago and welcoming him back would indicate they were about to declare war. Here is where delay transformed into confusion — first Roquefeuil was told to wait, then he was shoved out the door at short notice.

[According to some sources B.P.C. was recognised at Antibes on 9 February. However, Roquefeuil sailed on 8 February. Therefore, either the orders were issued as soon as it was learned B.P.C. had left Rome and not when he arrived in France, or there is some confusion with the dates and he was actually spotted on 30 January. The former is more likely; they would know exactly where he was headed, and why.]

Once off Ushant Roquefeuil was to open sealed orders and follow them. Roquefeuil's troubles after passing Ushant also helped conceal his destination. His sealed orders were not very specific, only to enter the Channel and attack everything in sight, particularly shipping. Interestingly, a list of British ships was attached which seems to have been out of date, since it named only about ten sail at Spithead and claimed most of them were still fitting out. The course of action suggested in the orders was to sail as far as the Isle of Wight and lure the British out by a sudden appearance. Once the main battle fleet was destroyed he could range at will.

This proved difficult to achieve. Roquefeuil suffered nearly a month of bad weather after leaving port. Also, his crews were nowhere near as experienced as the British. Many of their officers were equally unskilled. Even before they left their anchorage there had been a collision between the *Elizabeth* and *Juste*. A number of ships lost masts or rigging in the gales which followed and had to return to base: *Médée* (11 February), *Triton* (18 February), *St. Michel* and *Dryade* (19 February).

Roquefeuil reached the western tip of the Isle of Wight on 21 February, but had to double back to the Lizard. The winds became favourable, but he needed sea room to use them. Off the Lizard he was found by the *Rubis* on 24 February. She had new orders which at last told him the full intent of the mission — sail to Dunkirk and escort an invasion flotilla to England. More precisely, Barailh, with four ships of the line and a frigate, would do the escorting and Roquefeuil, with the remaining seventeen vessels, would engage the Royal Navy, still believed to be at Spithead, even if that meant entering the anchorage. If the weather did not permit an attack, he was to cruise between the Isle of Wight and Calais to screen the invasion force. In the last extremity he could also use his squadron to escort the invasion, which was bound for the Thames Estuary.

Off Plymouth Roquefeuil decided to keep his ships together until they were beyond Spithead. Barailh was not to split off until he had pilots to guide him safely into Dunkirk. For this purpose the *Vénus* was sent on ahead. While waiting, Roquefeuil was able to dispatch a letter to Maurepas outlining some of his concerns. Specifically, because he believed there were three large enemy ships at the Nore, he wanted to increase the size of the escort, perhaps to include his entire force. It would also be easier to maintain station in the Thames Estuary. His recommendation would be agreed to and the amended orders dispatched from Versailles on 2 March, but they would arrive rather late. Barailh, meanwhile, was sure the whole enterprise was doomed and did not hesitate to say so.

The wind having veered it took the French four days to reach the Isle of Wight again. On 27 February, Versailles' new orders not having arrived yet, it was decided Barailh should proceed according to the original plan, while the *Médée* (she had been repaired) was sent to scout the British anchorages behind the island, particularly St. Helens.

Now the weather became blustery, mixed with fog. *Médée* lost a mast and her way. This was actually a good thing, because her observations turned out to be completely wrong. Norris had just sailed up the Channel but *Médée* assumed the British were still at anchor. Roquefeuil soon learned from other sources that there were no ships at St. Helens or Spithead, but he made his own mistake. Believing the British outnumbered, he assumed they had retreated deep into Portsmouth harbour. So, the French tried cruising off the east end of the Isle of Wight, but could not maintain station because of the weather. The French admiral therefore decided to head east himself and get

ahead (so he thought) of the British. He reached the lee of Dungeness Head about 8pm on 3 March.

Barailh meanwhile had carried on and arrived at Calais about 11am on 29 February. Here he found the *Vénus*, only now docking with Roquefeuil's dispatch to Versailles — the one requesting that the escort be augmented. The letter still had to be conveyed to Paris. Barailh made Dunkirk on 3 March. Luckily for de Saxe's soldiers, the local authorities had decided not to store them on board the transports until they had protection.

Richmond notes that de Saxe, who was given his orders in Paris on 11 February, had developed a plan of campaign, but the details are unknown. Apparently, he intended to follow the Dutch template and enter the Thames, taking Dover and Chatham as bridgeheads. He, like Roquefeuil, was disquieted about the opposition he faced, and had nightmares involving enemy merchant ships outfitted with cannon forming an unbreakable wall on the river.

Norris was reported to be in the Downs as of 3 March; Barailh confirmed this on 5 March. Amusingly, the new Minister of War (Marc-Pierre de Voyer de Paulmy, *comte* d'Argenson), mirroring Norris across the Channel, refused to believe the news because the *Médée* had at last sent a report — erroneously — that Norris had been at Spithead as late as 28 February; clearly he could not have sailed past Roquefeuil!

De Saxe allowed himself to be persuaded by d'Argenson and ordered the embarkation for 4 March. Despite Barailh's report the loading continued into 6 March. That morning, Barailh sent the frigate *Subtile* to Calais, where another frigate had earlier been sent to collect pilots who had knowledge of the Thames. The first frigate was taking too long and *Subtile* was supposed to chivvy her captain. She soon had a more important role to play. Only half an hour after leaving port, *Subtile* signalled the approach of a large fleet from the Downs. Soon, Roquefeuil's squadron, holding position near the British coast off Dungeness, could see them too, coming round the South Foreland. Wishful thinking that they were a convoy did not last long. The French had fifteen sail against nineteen, their flagship the *Superbe* had a broken main yard, and the tide was in the enemy's favour.

Norris had weighed anchor at 5am on 6 March, the wind from the northwest, but veering west. As noted earlier, he had been keeping an eye on Dunkirk, wanting to attack Barailh's ships but unwilling to risk the shoals, especially in such heavy weather. With Roquefeuil located at last, he reluctantly decided to engage him. Hopefully the battle could be won before the enemy transports could sail and gain too much of a lead. There was the potential here to defeat the two elements of Roquefeuil's fleet separately, but this would not be as easy of execution as it would be in a land battle, when the rate of movement could be accurately predicted. Too much depended on conditions remaining favourable.

Off Dover the wind became 'dead foul' in Richmond's words. Norris managed to work his way toward the enemy using the strong tides of the Channel. He was joined by *Roebuck* from the direction of Dunkirk during the morning, who reported 'all well' in that quarter — so far. Then the tide turned and the wind died, so that the British were forced to anchor, eight miles from the French.

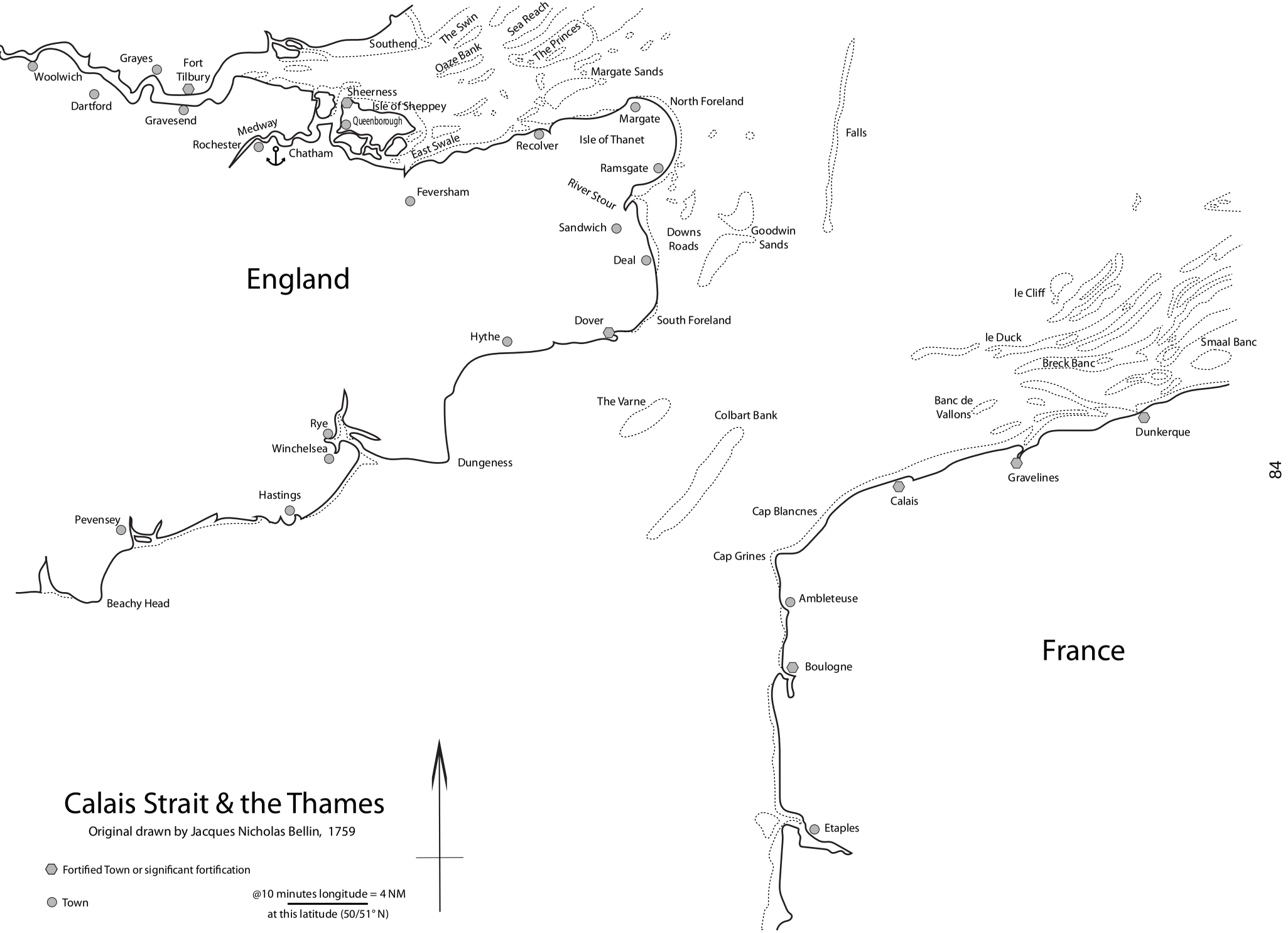
Given a respite, Roquefeuil called a council of war. It was decided to retreat. At 9pm, on the ebb tide, their lights dowsed, the French slowly drifted out of range. Again the weather refused to cooperate. A nor'easter sprang up. Luckily its chief effect was to scatter Norris' formation; many of his vessels had to cut their anchors and ride the gale down the Channel, preceded by the French, who managed to maintain their distance, gradually moving out of visual range. The gale blew all through the next day (7 March) and into the next. Both sides were too busy trying to survive to bother with each other.

By the evening of 7 March Norris decided to regroup at the Downs. By the time the gale died all but one of his ships was damaged, five so severally that they had to go into extended refit, and one had sunk. Roquefeuil's squadron fared better, but not by much. His ships were scattered and they dribbled into Brest over the next week, their crews glad to be alive. Sadly, the 78-year-old Roquefeuil expired aboard his ship on the night of 8/9 March. Some say he died of mortification, but old age and stress are more likely causes. It is highly unlikely that he either regretted missing a battle or that he believed posterity would call him a coward. His retreat was a sound tactical decision and could in theory have facilitated the invasion by pulling Norris away from his post.

For Barailh and the transports were still at Dunkirk. Unfortunately, they also had been badly hit. Several ferry boats were grounded and six transports wrecked. Casualties were light but much of the equipment and stores had to be written off. Three more transports were wrecked in a second gale on 11 March. Barailh got away while Dunkirk remained uncovered and eventually made Brest. He and his last four ships sailed on 28 March. De Saxe was glad of the excuse to offload his men. He was more than happy to take them into the Austrian Netherlands and fight some real battles. The Young Pretender paused his journey in Paris, where he would kick his heels for a year, ignoring polite hints for him to go back to Rome.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster the French decided to try again, but the uncertainty of Norris' whereabouts, the unfitness of Roquefeuil's ships, and the onset of that second gale with the promise of more to come led to the tacit abandonment of the whole campaign. After the fact, both sides were in agreement that but for the extraordinary gale of 7-9 March the British would have won a naval victory. As it was, Britain was saved from any future threat of invasion. The affair also seems to have convinced London that operational commanders should be granted more discretion, which might reduce the number of lost opportunities.

Richmond devotes several pages to an analysis of the invasion attempt (he does the same for the Battle of Toulon). He argues that a surprise descent without escorts would probably have had the best chance of success, because the initial preparations were successfully



Calais Strait & the Thames

Original drawn by Jacques Nicholas Bellin, 1759

Fortified Town or significant fortification

Town

@10 minutes longitude = 4 NM
at this latitude (50/51° N)

concealed from the British. Because of the presence of some large enemy ships at the Nore (though only partially manned) the landing should have been made at Maldon, which was at a relatively safe distance. Also, those ships were commanded by men believed to be pro-Jacobite; if this was true they might only go through the motions of resistance and take their time coming as far as Maldon. A bigger threat would have been the fleet of customs vessels, whose officers and crews were loyal. Though small, these ships were quite heavily armed for their size and could have inflicted major damage on the convoy.

Once the decision to use an escort had been made, preparations could no longer be concealed, but the French did a good job of sowing confusion. If Roquefeuil had sailed on 20 January as originally planned he could have successfully pinned Norris at Spithead, though not for long. Timing between the various elements would have had to be unrealistically precise.

The last thing Richmond discusses is the lack of a British pursuit. He assumes as a general principle that the destruction of enemy forces at sea was the desired end. Though he may be overlaying Mahanian doctrine onto a different mindset, it is true that after Toulon Admiral Matthews was censured for breaking off a pursuit, so he may be correct. Norris was not censured; the destruction of the enemy transports trumped the destruction of warships. Besides, he was Admiral of the Fleet and bound for retirement; what could they do to him, take away his birthday?

[Richmond also notes that in popular culture the gale was believed to have saved England, just like the Spanish Armada in 1588. But, this gale actually saved the French.]

Sea Lanes

Even now, France and Britain were not officially at war. As grave a step as it was, the invasion of England could speciously be placed under the heading of ‘assisting an ally’, but marching an entire army into the Low Countries, which Noaïlles and de Saxe were just about to do, could not.

Meanwhile, Norris had other things to worry about, namely, the protection of the sea lanes. There were three of these: the shuttle service between England and the Low Countries, the route to the Mediterranean, and to a lesser extent, the route to the New World. These had always been a source of worry, but now that France was going to war with the British their protection was of prime importance. Notice that such things as the Baltic trade and the North Sea fishing grounds, though valuable, did not fall into the same category — military resupply, not trade, was now more important.

So long as the British controlled the eastern end of the Channel, their supply line to Flanders was safe, and as had just been demonstrated, it was very difficult for the French to wrest control from them. The main theatre of the war — Flanders — was thus one in which both sides were operating with very short lines of communication.

Communication with the New World was much less liable to interception because the sea lanes were so wide. Also, the war there had devolved into small, local actions that did not require much outside support.

This left the passage to the Mediterranean. Convoys were safe once they cleared the Channel, but the French could pounce each time they passed Brest. There was also a risk if the convoys chose to sail down the coast of the Iberian Peninsula, and again when they approached the Strait of Gibraltar.

The first test came with a large victualling convoy, being organised while the contest in the Channel took place. The Mediterranean Squadron only had enough provisions to last until the end of April. Because of the Brest Squadron, Norris would have to use his most powerful ships as escort. But, Lord Newcastle, who seems to have remained in panic mode after 9 March, insisted Norris remain off the Downs; Norris believed this was pointless and would only wear out his ships. So, he submitted a written protest to his superiors in the Admiralty. They in turn submitted a written protest to the Privy Council, complaining that Norris had a) been given too much authority, but b) also not been granted enough information to make the right decisions. That is, the Admiralty complained, rightly, that they had been left out of the loop. The Government made no official policy change, but later, the Admiralty was allowed to resume its proper role without interference. The main effect was to sour relations between the various parties even further.

To fulfil his obligations Norris had to divide his command up. *Victory, Duke, Sandwich, St. George, Princess Royal, Cornwall, Shrewsbury, Princess Amelia*, and the heavy frigates *Preston* and *Roebuck* were assigned to escort the victualling convoy. All but the frigates would return after the ships had safely passed Brest, and the commander, Sir Charles Hardy, was also instructed to observe La Hogue in case any of Roquefeuil’s ships were skulking there. Captain Boscawen was assigned to escort the convoy of Dutch troops, who were still wanted, using *Dreadnought, Jersey, Saphire, Dover,* and *Harwich*. Norris kept his remaining ships at the Downs and initially focused on destroying the rest of the transports at Dunkirk. This seemed a practical undertaking but the spell of good weather that came after the Channel encounter did not last long.

Boscawen got away on 7 March and seems to have run into no difficulties, despite the weather. His mission did not take very long. Hardy was unable to leave the Downs until 15 March and was forced to refit at Spithead for some time (among other problems he had 300 sick). He was required to remain in port until his superiors could discover what had happened to the Toulon Squadron — after the battle it had been seen sailing for Cádiz and possibly the Atlantic. But, when the French gave official notice of their intention to declare war on 22 March Hardy was immediately ordered out. His instructions were modified slightly. Previously, the frigates, *Roebuck* and *Preston*, were to accompany the convoy to Gibraltar. Now they were to stop in the mouth of the Tagus and send word to the Mediterranean Squadron by way of the picket ships stationed there. This would alert Mathews to send a strong escort to pick the convoy up.

Victualing the Mediterranean Squadron was going to remain a major undertaking and for most of the summer significant elements of the fleet were allocated to Admiral Mathews' lengthy supply line.

France officially declared war on 25 March, but Hardy was still in port, thanks to yet another sou'wester. It was 31 March before favourable winds allowed him to proceed. He sailed for all of two days before being forced to take shelter from another gale. Ordered again to sail on 12 April, he had now to chaperon not only his own convoy but all the accumulated trade for the South, a massive number of ships.

[Richmond says war was formally declared on 25 March. Beatson says war was declared by France on 20 March and reciprocated by Britain on 31 March. Browning says 15 March. The sequence of events is probably that King Louis authorised the declaration on 15 March, it was proclaimed on 20 March but formally dated 25 March, received in Britain a few days later — the French ambassador warning the British of the document's pending arrival on 22 March — and responded to by 31 March.]

Hardy sent the *Phœnix* and another frigate to scout Brest. Apparently elements of the Brest Squadron managed to put to sea between 3 April and 12 April. According to his instructions, if the Brest Squadron was back in port he was to follow the original plan, but if not, he was to take his whole force to Lisbon with the convoy. On 14 April he learned at least thirteen French ships were cruising off Finisterre, probably with the express intention of attacking his convoy. There were six more sail under Chamilly cruising in the Bay of Biscay (in anticipation of a French convoy from the West Indies).

At last, on 25 April, with a mighty reinforcement consisting of a lone 40-gunner (*Torrington*) to guard his 'herd of cats', Hardy sailed out of the Channel, reaching Lisbon on 3 May. Worried because the west end of the Channel was unguarded, he then raced back, arriving at Spithead on 19 May. The French did not interfere in a coordinated manner, but there were some encounters.

The first was with the *Médée (26)*, which sailed from Brest on 26 April and blundered into Hardy's main body on 29 April, about sixty leagues southwest of Ushant. *Dreadnought* and the sloop *Grampus* were detached to pursue. Fifty hours later they caught the unlucky vessel, bringing her a prize to Spithead on 12 May. There was greater incentive now for royal ships to take prizes. As of 3 April, the King had authorised naval personnel to receive the full value of any prize taken; privateers and the like were by custom permitted to negotiate their shares.

After seeing his charges safely into the Tagus on 3 May, Hardy turned for home the next day. North of Finisterre on 8 May, Captain Watson of the *Northumberland (70)* was detached to investigate a strange sail. He was not supposed to lose visual contact with Hardy, but a haze developed about 2pm. Instead of turning back, Watson carried on and when the haze lifted sighted three French men-o-war. They were the *Mars (64), Content (62)*, and *Vénus (26)*, under *capitaine de vaisseaux* Hubert de Brienne, *comte* de Conflans. This is THE Conflans, *vice-amiral de Ponant* from 1756. In 1744 he was merely a senior captain, lately commandant of the *gardes de la marine* school at Brest.

For some reason, Watson chose to attack, perhaps because the French were spread out and not supporting each other. Also, he was to windward and so had the advantage. However, instead of merely making a pass and escaping Watson targeted the flagship, *Mars*, made his pass, then swung around and made a second pass on the leeward side. After that, he was surrounded. Starting about 5pm, the fight continued for three hours. Watson was badly wounded, the Master took over, and promptly surrendered, hauling down his colours without bothering to consult the First Lieutenant — a Master had charge of the ship, but the First Lieutenant was second in command under the captain when it came to fighting the battle. The Master was later sentenced to life imprisonment. The *Northumberland* served in the French line of battle for the rest of the war.

The swift renewal of French activity was due to Roquefeuil's replacement, *chef d'escadre le chevalier* François de Rochambeau (no, this is not THAT Rochcambeau). He determined he had fourteen ships of the line fit for sea. Aware of the British victualling convoy, he intended to intercept it, but sent his ships out in ones and twos to make a secret rendezvous far from land. When he failed to locate Hardy, however, he sailed for the Tagus, hoping to blockade the victualing convoy there. Which he successfully did. Conflans' ships operated independently. Probably, they had orders to escort a convoy of their own, but this is not made clear.

The Channel

French privateers now became as ubiquitous as the Spanish had been — thirty converted transports at Dunkirk alone. French merchant captains, and even fishermen, began arming their vessels. The Brest Squadron also seems to have instituted a standing patrol in the Bay of Biscay. When Chamilly's six escorts returned in early May another six ships were sent out.

The British felt pressed enough to ask the Dutch for more aid. By treaty, the States-General was to provide twenty ships. But each province was responsible for outfitting their own quota; the first vessels did not arrive at Spithead until July: *Dordrecht (54), Damiate (64), Leeuwenhorst (54), Edam (54), Assendelft (54), Delft (54)*.

Ever since Hardy sailed the location of the Brest Squadron had been unknown. *Squirrel (20)* was ordered to check all the ports and anchorages from Calais to Brest, and if possible to enter the roads at Brest, as well as gather intelligence about the ports on France's western coast. After the usual delays (calms and fogs at this time of the year) *Squirrel* sailed on 5 June, returning on 4 July.

The picture that emerged was this: the French were busy escorting merchants to and from Rochefort, while at Brest elements of the Squadron were cruising to the west in rotation with fairly large contingents. Specifically, in early June three frigates at La Rochelle were preparing to escort six merchants to the West Indies; a few days later the number jumped to seven frigates; also, a French 56-gunner and a 40-gunner were stationed off Brest. The French

admiral was reported to be at the fortress of Brest. The key element missing from this picture is Rochambeau's squadron at the Tagus, which suggests the British were still unaware their convoy had been blockaded.

(The word 'Admiral' by the by, is used loosely. Possibly the British did not know it, but for the next few years the French had no real admirals, only a handful of geriatrics who held the rank by right of birth and refused to be pushed into retirement. Rochambeau, a mere *chef d'escadre*, was the senior man on the Atlantic station — and not for long. This Rochambeau is not the famous one who fought in the American Revolution; most probably it is his father.)

The Admiralty also decided to imitate the French and created two divisions (orders of 21 May) to cruise the Channel. Boscawen and Captain Savage Mostyn commanded them. Boscawen (*Dreadnought (60)* and *Prince Frederick (70)*) cruised off Cape Clear to protect incoming convoys, while Mostyn (*Hampton Court (70)*, *Chester (50)*, and *Grampus* sloop) covered the Soundings down to the Bay of Biscay (latitude 46° to 48°). Boscawen was to cruise for thirty days, Mostyn to cruise until he ran low on provisions. Between 11-22 June, Mostyn captured no less than eight armed merchantmen.

However, the Royal Navy did not keep its ships working together as teams but habitually broke up formations and repurposed the ships. Richmond provides the example of Hardy's escort, a fairly powerful cruising squadron that was redistributed when it returned, with four ships being caulked for a voyage to the Caribbean, three being sent to refit, and one separately tasked to act as a West Indies flagship (the commands there were also being restructured), while one (*Princess Mary*) was placed in storage.

In late May and early June Boscowen and Mostyn's patrols were augmented, thus:

- Regular Channel and Baltic convoys were instituted. This does not seem to have been done before, at least in this war, the previous convoys being long-distance ones.
- The *Jersey (60)* was sent to Newfoundland to protect the summer fishing. This was routine but had been an intermittent practice. *Jersey* was a replacement for the *Kinsale*.
- *Port Mahon (20)* was stationed off Bristol for local protection.
- *Torrington (44), Eltham (44), Success (20),* plus *Merton* and *Vulture* sloops and 2 cutters out of Folkestone were to cruise off Dunkirk. This was intended to be a blockade, albeit a weak one.
- *Sheerness (20)* and *Alderney (20)* were to cruise the Orkneys and Shetlands. Much traffic passed north of Britain — usually well north because of the nature of the winds and currents which made the passage difficult nearer Scotland.

There was a flaw in this redistribution. It protected local trade at the expense of the West Indies traffic, which did not please the Planters. Now dispersed, the Royal Navy lacked the escorts to protect their convoys and lacked the ships to deal more permanently with the Brest Squadron's own patrols in the Soundings. No West Indies convoy was able to sail until November.

Almost unnoticed, on 14 (some sources say 15) June, Commodore Anson returned from his voyage around the world. Being unnoticed was a good thing, since there was a French force in the Soundings at the time. Of course, once he dropped anchor he was universally acclaimed. The treasure he brought back filled thirty-two wagons and was valued at £1,250,000.

Balchen and the Brest Squadron

Once it became known that Rochambeau was at sea, and that the critical victualing convoy was trapped in the Tagus, Sir John Balchen was ordered to put together a new squadron (14 July). As usual he was also to escort a mixed convoy bound for such diverse regions as Newfoundland, New England, Portugal, and the Med. After fulfilling this part of the job, he was to cruise for six weeks in a location specified in his sealed orders, though he was at liberty to patrol elsewhere, too. He was to a) locate and engage the Brest Squadron or elements of the same, and/or b) take prizes, and/or c) protect British shipping. Overriding these instructions was an order directing him to blockade Brest if he found the enemy there.

Though he had been asked to protect the outbound merchantmen, for once, Balchen was not required to wait for them. All the same, after hoisting his pennant on 19 July he was still delayed by the weather. Which may have been just as well. A late arrival, the *Prince Frederick*, late of Boscawen's patrol, reported a run-in they had had with the French off the Lizard on the night of 11 July. The *Dreadnought* saw at least thirteen large ships out there, about 85 leagues SSW from the shore.

When given this news the Admiralty ordered Balchen to sea immediately. He sailed at first light on 26 July (Beatson says 28 July), with a favourable wind. His force, which was a large one (see below), travelled in dispersed groups, sweeping the Channel. They were to rendezvous at 50-70 leagues west of the Lizard and begin their six weeks' cruise from there.

Balchen's Squadron:

<u>Dutch</u>

Damiate (64)	Vice-Admiraal Scrijver
Edam (54)	
Dordrecht (54)	Vice-Admiraal t'Hooft
Delft (54)	
Assendelft (54)	
Leeuwenhorst (54)	Rear-Admiraal Reynst

<u>British</u>

Dreadnought (60)	
Hampton Court (70)	
Jersey (60)	
Augusta (60)	
Captain (70)	
Victory (100)	Admiral of the White Sir John Balchen
Princess Amelia (80)	

Falkland (50)
Suffolk (70)
St. George (90) Vice-Admiral of the Blue William Martin
Strafford (60)
Exeter (60)

Sunderland (60)
Monmouth (70)
Duke (90) Vice-Admiral of the Red James Steuart
Prince Frederick (70)
Princess Mary (60)

The Dutch

The Dutch sailed in their own division. Because their ships were provided by different provinces there were no less than nine flag officers to distribute among their twenty promised ships. In addition to the six listed, two more arrived at the last minute, commanded by yet another admiral, named Gravé.

Using Dutch auxiliaries was always fraught with difficulties, no matter which war one examines. Apart from the usual anti-British and pro-French sentiments, there were simple administrative difficulties. There would be disagreements over the size of the burden being imposed on a given province, difficulty collecting taxes, and difficulty finding workmen and crews. Their service was also top heavy with admirals, who did not just argue with the British, but amongst themselves, too.

The Seven Provinces had FIVE (5) separate admiralties (!) each of which sent its own instructions to its own men, not only bypassing the British command structure entirely, but the other admiralties as well. At least in the early stages, the Dutch captains regarded British orders to be 'optional'. Even when the Dutch commanders wished to be helpful, any change in operating procedure would require the agreement of all the Provinces.

Logistically, their ships were given minimal provisions, usually not more than two weeks' worth. This ensured they could not be used on prolonged cruises.

Seeking Rochambeau

Unfortunately, by the time Balchen got out of the Channel the French had gone. They were observed off Dodman Point (a.k.a Deadman's Point, a headland on the Cornish coast east of Falmouth) on 25 July, but Balchen did not find them. The *Falkland* and *Fly* sloop were sent to Brest but only observed nine sail, of which the largest were a pair of 50-gunners. Where were the rest?

Balchen took six French San Domingo merchantmen on 29 July. On 14 August a Portuguese ship was encountered which claimed to have seen six French ships of Cape St. Vincent, bound for Cádiz. This news was six weeks old. Believing most of the French were still somewhere in the Soundings, Balchen decided to continue escorting the British merchantmen who were headed south and do some patrolling around Cape St. Vincent and Cape Spartel, then return to his original station.

This decision caused him to miss the latest news received by London. Information dated 15 July indicated Rochambeau had seventeen sail, ranging from 40 to 70 guns. *Saltash* sloop had been sent to look for them while *Cruiser* sloop looked for Balchen. London feared the French were renewing their invasion attempt, and now Balchen was missing.

On 24 August the Admiralty learned the French were, as of 15 August, cruising off Lisbon and Cádiz, a division in each location. This was worrying. A new convoy was headed in that direction and it was not known whether Balchen was escorting them or still prowling around the Soundings. Fortunately, he was. Also, the French were unaware of his approach.

At the time Balchen was sailing southward, the Bourbon ships were deployed in sectors, as follows: six ships in the Soundings under Chamilly, six ships from Belleisle to Cape Finisterre under de Nesmond, at least six ships under Rochambeau from Finisterre to Cape St. Vincent, and six, from Toulon, farther south, under de Piosin. This accounts for the variety of sightings which caused a certain amount of confusion at the Admiralty. All were French vessels. The Spanish effort seems to have been at a low ebb, with most of their active ships in the West Indies or the Mediterranean.

Nesmond appears to have reinforced Rochambeau off Lisbon once they found the British victualers there. Rochambeau was thus able to blockade the Tagus with twelve vessels. He faced only five escorts, all from the Med Squadron, so could send the rest of his ships (six according to the Portuguese vessel's report) to Cádiz to wait for the *flota* under Don Rodrigo, whose time in the Caribbean was up. (This time, the *flota* was coming, a rare event.)

Concerned lest the French intercept the latest convoy, the Admiralty sent Balchen new orders, but he was more or less carrying them out anyway. He reached the Tagus on 31 August and soon learned the full state of affairs. The French retreated in front of him as he escorted the combined convoys to Gibraltar. What was more, he blockaded the enemy in Cádiz. There was still a concern that the remaining French and Spanish ships might combine against Balchen, but this did not happen. The assumption is because Bourbon strategy, never focused on sea denial in any case, was now (as of 10 August) formally directed toward *guerre de course*. Inertia probably also played a role.

Maurepas' new plan was to simultaneously attack British shipping and have ships on station to escort friendly convoys. The British did not 'twig' to his new policy for some time, so their actions remained geared toward protecting the home islands and keeping the lines of communication open with the Caribbean and (especially) the Med. As for Rochambeau, though his deployments suggest he was complying with these orders, his actions do not. Maurepas would become wroth when he found out.

On 16 September London, unaware Rochambeau had been bottled up and still fearful for the second convoy, decided to reinforce Balchen, using a mix of ships, including a group that had been earmarked for the Caribbean, and which would proceed there later. The commanders were Admiral

Davers (eventually to be Ogle's replacement in Jamaica) and Henry Medley (being sent out to the Med). The ships were: *Edinburgh, Lenox, Weymouth, Falkland, Torrington, Beekvliet (Dutch), Cornwall, Sandwich, Enterprise,* and *Grampus*. (The last four were the West Indies ships.) Balchen was to keep Davers with him as long as he felt necessary. With these reinforcements he should be able to master the French and have the opportunity to intercept Don Rodrigo, whose immanent return had been reported by the Jamaica Station.

At this time also, the Bourbon forces in the Mediterranean were beginning to shift their attention from the Gulf of Lyon and support of the fighting in Italy, to a concentration around the Strait. The Med Squadron, now commanded by Vice Admiral Rowley, sent warnings to London. He also shifted his focus to the Strait.

The Admiralty had a better picture by 8 October. The *Grampus* had been sent back with fresh news. Rochambeau and de Nesmond were locked in Cádiz. Other Bourbon vessels, pursued by Rowley, were headed for the Strait. Don Rodrigo was still coming. But, so far the only actions of note had been the capture of the *Solebay* frigate (out of Gibraltar and now in Cádiz) on 16 July and the loss of some Dutch merchantmen carrying British provisions about 4 August — part of a small convoy under an escort from the Med which scuttled back to Gibraltar. These two Bourbon victories seems to have been enough for trade to dry up, giving them no further targets of note.

[The captain of the Solebay *was courtmartialed because, though outnumbered 7:1, he did not fire a salvo before surrendering. He was docked a year's pay.]*

Fresh orders instructed Balchen to pursue the Brest Squadron — that is, Rochambeau and de Nesmond — wherever it went. Rowley would come under his command if they passed into the Med. When the French had been defeated he was to return to England. Apparently Balchen never received this last instruction. Establishing a base at Cape Spartel, he set up his blockade, but on 9 September his Dutch division begged off. They had only a month's supplies and not much water, and intended to sail for Spithead. This left him with seventeen ships covering twelve in Cádiz, but there were also Piosin's six roaming about and Don Rodrigo's escorts. At a council of war it was decided that, rather than split Balchen's command, they would all sail home.

What London would have done to Balchen is unknown, for this was the voyage in which the *Victory* sank. Balchen left Cape Spartel on 14 September. Two weeks later he ran into a violent gale off Ushant. Though his ships were scattered and badly damaged, all reached England except the *Victory*. All 1,100 of the crew were lost. At the time, it was believed she struck the Casquets, the rocks just to the west of Guernsey, since guns were heard firing from that vicinity on 4 October, and a rescue party found wreckage on the coast of the island. When Richmond wrote his book over a century ago, this was still all that was known, and the disaster was generally attributed to some navigational mistake made by Balchen or his officers. The lighthouse keeper on Alderney was also courtmartialed for allowing his light to go out. However, in 2008 a dive team finally located the wreck, not on the Casquets, but about 80 Km southeast of Plymouth. This is right in the middle of the Channel, roughly in line with the Casquets, but about 80 Km to the west, probably on a course that would have avoided the rocks. It was determined that the gale, coupled with a top-heavy design and perhaps rotten timbers, was responsible. That is, the ship foundered instead of being wrecked, though undoubtedly some of her superstructure washed ashore. There was a good reason 1st Rate ships generally wound up acting as stationary headquarters at major naval bases. As of 2019 the question of recovering portions of the wreck for posterity remained before the courts.

Rochambeau sailed home to France in November, where he was 'beached' for his lacklustre performance. His replacement was a cousin of Maurepas' (who was obviously looking for an excuse to find an opening for his protege), the *duc* d'Enville, who was made *lieutenant-général des armées navales* on 1 January 1745. The man was only 35 years old. Scandalous!

Sir John Balchen (1670-1744)

Balchen's naval career spanned six decades. Conscientious and capable, he was not lucky. Wealth and prestige eluded him, though his reputation was not tarnished (or perhaps because of that). He was twice captured, each time being overwhelmed by numbers, and received commendation for the actions, not censure. His career began in 1685, at the age of fifteen, and served for seven years before being promoted to Lieutenant. During the Nine Years War he served mainly in the Caribbean (here, at least, he was lucky enough not to die of fever). By the end of the war he was a Captain. During the War of the Spanish Succession he served under Rooke and in 1702, as part of Rooke's taking of the Spanish treasure fleet at Vigo Bay, was given command of a 56-gunner prize he had captured. He did not make his fortune, however. After this he served in home waters, where he was taken prisoner for the first time at the Battle of the Lizard in 1707; the three-ship convoy escort was outnumbered four to one and his ship was boarded by three enemy 74s. After returning from parole he was forced to surrender again in 1709, at the outset of his first cruise since being released by the French. On both these occasions the Admiralty exonerated him. By the end of the war he was serving in the Mediterranean, did a brief tour in the West Indies , then returned to the Med for the War of the Quadruple Alliance. He then served under Norris in the Baltic and participated in the short campaign to relieve Gibraltar, placed under siege by the Spanish in 1727. The next here he was promoted to Rear Admiral, and in 1734, to Vice Admiral, after which he took a rest on his estates.

Recalled in 1739 Balchen's remaining active career has been recounted in these pages. There are a few noteworthy details to add. He was considered an expert seaman and tactician, and was noted for his opinions on ship construction. Now in his seventies, he had grown resentful of men like Vernon who always seemed to get the plum jobs:

'[We] have Nobody spoke of Now but Mr. Virnon [sic]; he has all the Glory, and success pursues him. The West Indie [sic] people will be so Rich there wont be Roome for them to purchase Lands; whilst I am forced to drudge from place to place for Nothing.'

Quoted in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

(By 'West Indies people' he meant the captains and senior commanders who were serving in the West Indies as much or more for local planter interests as for the home government.)

Despite his grumbling, Balchen was in fact a high profile officer, well known to the British public, who might even be described as a personification of the Royal Navy in the popular imagination. He was also popular within the service for his championing of the lot of the common sailors. News of his death sparked national mourning.

Beyond the tragedy of the sinking itself there is a fair amount of pathos and irony surrounding Balchen's death. In 1743 he was effectively retired form sea duty by being given command of the Greenwich Naval Hospital and an annual pension of £600. In the spring of 1744, now 74, he was forced into actual retirement. However, as just recounted he was recalled to lead the squadron being sent to rescue Sir Charles Hardy's convoy, trapped at Lisbon; as an added inducement he received a knighthood. His ship, the *Victory*, was regarded as state-of-the-art, being only seven years old. And, when she went down his squadron was returning with the greatest haul of loot he had ever made — six fully loaded merchantmen.

John Balchen c1695

Minor Actions

Beatson as usual makes mention of several other incidents.

Commodore Barnett was sent to India to assist the East India Company. Issued his orders in December 1743, he left Spithead on 16 May with four ships: *Deptford (60) (flag), Preston (50), Medway (60), and Dolphin (20)*. Barnett was one of Anson's circle of 'Young Turks' and could be relied upon to act sensibly without supervision. His orders were not drawn up by the Admiralty, but by the Secret Committee of the East India Company. As might be expected, he was to protect the Company's interests and attack those of the French. The British East India Company also applied for letters of marque to hand out those of their captains who were interested. In 1744 no less than thirteen of these were issued, five of them against Spain as well as France (the Company did business in the West Indies, too). The French did not adopt this method, preferring instead to use their Company ships to augment the royal squadrons.

[Richmond says Barnett sailed from St. Helens on 30 April. Adjusting to NS this would be 11 May. Beatson says 5 May. It is hard to know if Beatson is using OS or NS dates; earlier in the same chapter he switches to OS, though he normally uses NS. Both say Barnett arrived in the Cape Verde Islands on May 26, which suggests they are both using OS; thus the date of 6 June (26 May +11 days) is used above.]

Barnett's actions in the Indies are mostly beyond the scope of this commentary. However, on 6 June he arrived at Porto Praya in the Cape Verde Islands. Here he captured the Spanish privateer *Amiable Maria (14)* and its latest prizes, the *Molly* pink, and an American brig out of New York. Because this was a Portuguese harbour, he needed justification, which was given him by the brig. She had been taken at the Isle of May, where the privateer had also burned a pair of vessels, and it was this news which sent Barnett searching for the Spaniard. Because the Isle of May was also Portuguese property the Spaniard had thus violated the rules of engagement. So, Barnett informed the Governor he intended reprisals, and took them. Privateer and pink were taken together, the latter being sent to rescue marooned seamen at the Isle of May. The brig was off on her own with a prize crew, but was soon spotted drifting and abandoned. Later it was learned that seven British prisoners aboard the vessel had tried to retake her. All had died in one way or another, but the surviving Spanish were badly wounded and decided to abandon ship. Barnett left the islands on 14 June, arriving at St. Augustin on the southwest coast of Madagascar on 6 September, his crews suffering badly from scurvy.

[Beatson says the burnt ships were British. Richmond says they were American.]

Other actions cited by Beatson include the taking of a Spanish register ship coming from Vera Cruz to Cádiz, by the unfortunate *Solebay* (later captured herself) on 24 February. On other occasions *Fly* sloop took the *N.S. del Rosario (22)* privateer in a two-hour fight, *Phœnix (20)* captured *Neptune (24)*, *Port Mahon (20)* took *Golden Lion (18),* a merchantman from the Mississippi, *Roebuck (40)* took another Spanish register ship out of San Sebastian. These were Atlantic actions. In the Channel, the *Hound*

sloop chased and captured a Dunkirk privateer as well as the privateer's latest prize; *Hound's* commander was made a post captain for the exploit. *Harwick (50)*, which had been on patrol to the Baltic, encountered three French privateers in the North Sea and took one, *La Solide (24)*.

On the other side of the ledger, Rochambeau's squadron took the *Northumberland, Solebay, Seaford (20)*, and *Grampus* sloop. Besides the *Victory*, the *Colchester (50*) was also wrecked, in September; having struck on the shoals between Dover and Dunkirk she could not be lifted off (the pilot was sentenced to two years in prison). And, at the end of November the *Rye (20)* ran around near Yarmouth.

Losses to shipping inflicted by the Spanish were 122 (84 in European waters). The French took 228 vessels in only nine months. However, the British took 194 Spanish (119 in European waters) and 346 French, not counting Barnett's efforts in Southeast Asia.

Some command changes were also made during the year. Anson, swiftly promoted to Rear Admiral of the Blue, was given a seat on the Committee of Council, an unusual step. Davers, now Vice Admiral of the White, was sent to Jamaica as mentioned above. Medley, now Rear Admiral of the White, was earmarked to replace Matthews in the Med. The latter had been recalled to face a court martial over his handling of the Battle of Toulon.

Year's End

The biggest failure for the British was probably the safe arrival of the Spanish *flota*, the last of these to sail during the war. Deceiving British spies in the West Indies with the story that the Havana Squadron was sortieing against Jamaica, Don Rodrigo sailed for home in early November. He took with him:

Glorioso, *Principe* — 70s
Europa, Castilla — 60s
Plus frigates *Flecha* and *San Ciriaco* (a presumed British prize).

Glorioso and *Castilla* carried 8.275 million pesos in silver; some merchantmen carried 700,000 pesos more.

The actual voyage was uneventful, barring a hurricane that struck Cuba and delayed the sailing. *Principe*, developing a severe leak, was forced to shelter in the bay of San Francisco, at the western end of Puerto Rico. There was supposed to be local French support but those ships were not found, since their sweeps were out of sync with the Spanish movements. *Europa* became separated from the rest of the escort, as did the merchantmen, but all otherwise reached Cádiz safely by the end of the year.

[De Torres' sailing dates are confused, possibly due to aborted attempts and bad weather. The official accounts amounted to 9 million pesos, but there was a lot of unregistered silver as well, so the full amount may have been nearer 12 million pesos. To give some idea of the value of these sums, they enabled the Spanish Crown to pay for 2-3 years of wartime naval expenses.]

On 28 September a report came to the British of twenty French ships somewhere west of Land's End. From the description, this could be the Brest Squadron, though the observer, a Danish vessel, though only six or seven were ships of the line. If so, perhaps it was another invasion, as unlikely as that might seem. Admiral Davers, the ranking commander at the time, ordered all trade stopped and made ready to sortie with what he had on hand.

It soon became known that much of the Brest Squadron was still at Cádiz (*Grampus*' report on 27 September). Under the assumption that the 'twenty sail' were merchantmen, perhaps escorted by the local French (Chamilly's) sector patrol, Davers was ordered to proceed with his original mission — reinforcing Balchen — while protecting the fall merchant-run. He had already been appointed to replace Ogle (10 September) in the West Indies. As it turned out, the French ships were merchants from Martinique, escorted by a couple of warships that had crossed the Atlantic with them.

Before Davers was ready to leave, Balchen's ships arrived (4 October) and the orders were changed. Now, Davers was to take four of his ships (probably *Cornwall, Sandwich, Enterprise,* and *Grampus*) and escort the latest convoy to the West Indies. The rest of his command was given to Medley, who had not yet left for his new command and had orders to cruise the Soundings until 21 November. Three scouting lines were to be established, one in the Soundings, one from Portland Bill to the Casquets, and one from the Isle of Wight to Cape La Hague. Richmond notes that this squadron, of nine or ten ships, was the largest to cruise that area so far: *Lenox (70), Hampton Court (70), Edinburgh (70), Monmouth (70), Dreadnought (60), Augusta (60), Falkland, (60)*, plus 2two or three unnamed Dutch.

Davers sailed about 21 December, with 81 merchantmen in tow. Medley escorted him the standard 100 leagues, then followed his own orders, which were to collect a convoy of 80 sail from Portugal, current escorted by a single ship, the *Saphire*, then intercept a bevy of French East Indiamen coming (rather unexpectedly) from Louisbourg with an escort of three or four ships, and then to generally protect trade. He cruised until the middle of January 1745. It was a division of his ships that had the next encounter with the French.

1745 — REGIME CHANGE?

"Whereas we have appointed you to command a squadron of his Majesty's ships to be employed in the Soundings and seas adjacent in order to protect the trade of his Majesty's subjects outward and homeward bound, to annoy the enemy's ships and commerce, and particularly to clear the sea of their cruisers and privateers which squadron is at present to consist of the ships named in the annexed list,... so soon as the four 70 gun ships now fitting out at Portsmouth shall arrive at Plymouth... you are upon the arrival of the said four ships as aforesaid, to hoist your flag on board such ship as you shall think fit, and proceed to sea with as many ships of your squadron as are ready to accompany you, leaving orders in the hands of the Commissioner of the Navy at Plymouth for the rest to follow you where you shall appoint. You are to proceed and cruise with the ships under your command thirty leagues S.W. from Ushant, with a liberty of stretching as far as sixty leagues, when you think it proper to do so, by reason of any advices you may get of the enemy, taking care not to be absent from your first station longer than ten days."

[Orders to Admiral William Martin, commander of the Western Squadron. Quoted in Richmond, vol. II p. 147.]

Trials and Tribulations

Both Beatson and Richmond expend considerable paper describing the various courts martial which convened in March of this year and continued on into 1746. The background to all the trials, which included those of several captains and all senior commanders right up to Admiral Matthews, was the conduct of the Battle of Toulon. The trial had been initiated by Vice-Admiral Lestock's complaints against his boss, Admiral Mathews, but included the trial of Vice-Admiral Lestock himself. Lestock got off but Mathews was cashiered. The trials are mentioned here solely as a footnote, but occupied much public attention at the time, despite the fact that during the same period of time Bonnie Prince Charlie was gallivanting about in the North and King George was contemplating fleeing back to Hanover. Those readers who are interested in such things are recommended to study the accounts for themselves. Richmond has the most complete version.

One amusing incident toward the end of the affair was the arrest of the President of the Court Martial, none other than Sir Chaloner Ogle, late of the Jamaica Station, on behalf of the Court of Common Pleas! Some of his subordinates in the West Indies lodged a civil complaint of mistreatment and false arrest. Even in those days civil authority trumped military authority, but that did not stop the members of the Court Martial from verbally abusing the civil power and issuing a remonstrance, resulting in their own mass arrest! They did not get off until they apologised in writing. In fact, the military men were reportedly in ignorance of just how powerful the Court of Common Pleas was; the case became a precedent demonstrating that even in time of war, civil authority remained above military authority.

First Action of the Year

Captain Griffin (C*aptain (70), Hampton Court (70), Sunderland (60), Dreadnought (60)*) encountered the French on the morning of 7 January, 1745. It will be remembered Rear Admiral Medley had been given command in the Mediterranean, but was spending the last weeks of 1744 cruising the Soundings. His subordinate, Griffin, had lost contact with him on 29 December, due to bad weather. Now, while on a southwest course Griffin spotted sails to the northeast and moved to intercept. The opposing ships were on a similar course but were eventually overtaken. They appeared to be three merchantmen, two large and one small. The small ship turned to leeward and Griffin gave chase on his own, losing sight of the others. He captured the vessel, which turned out to be the *Mars* — not the French 64, but a well known British privateer that had been captured by the French at an earlier date.

[Beatson calls the Mars *the* Dartmouth*.]*

The other French ships were men-o-war, *Neptune (74)* and *Fleuron (64),* but since Griffin did not know this he continued the pursuit. The *Sunderland* dropped out when her main topmast went overboard. *Dreadnought* had lagged behind and was now six miles distant when *Hampton Court* (Captain Mostyn) suddenly realised she was about to engage two major French warships. Mostyn slowed down to allow *Dreadnought* to come up, which she did about 7 or 8pm. They decided to follow at a distance during the night and engage in the morning.

By daylight *Dreadnought*, which had a reputation for wallowing, was again about three or four miles back, while the French were still tightly grouped. Mostyn was to windward but his lower gun deck was underwater because of the stiff breeze, so he decided to wait for *Dreadnought*. At about 11am the two ships again met and the captains decided they needed better conditions to engage since by the time *Hampton Court* was in range *Dreadnought* would probably have fallen back again. So the pursuit continued, but the French outpaced the British and got away.

[Mostyn received a severe remonstrance for his conduct and demanded a court martial, which exonerated both him and Griffin. The Fleuron *would be destroyed in an accidental fire before the year was out.]*

Griffin's ships then returned to Spithead, as did Medley about the middle of January.

Beatson notes also that *Hampton Court* captured a St. Malo privateer, the *Lys (32)*. The *Captain* likewise captured a matching vessel, the *Achilles (22)*. Both were purchased by the Navy. It is not clear from Beatson whether these ships were taken in this or a later cruise.

The Wider War

1745 was d'Argenson's year to shine. D'Argenson, remember, was the French Minister of War. Since last year the French had been aiding the Spanish in Italy, aiding Bavaria in Central Europe, and engaged in their own campaign in the Austrian Netherlands. Only the latter had really gone well.

Frederick the Great had renewed his contest with Austria in 1744 but his temporary withdrawal in 1743 had left the Franco-Bavarians in an untenable position. His Second Silesian War curtailed a seemingly unstoppable Austrian offensive which overran Bavaria (whose Duke had been enjoying a precarious existence as the semi-official Holy

Roman Emperor) and rolled into Alsace and Lorraine. In December, however, Frederick would win the Battle of Hohenfriedburg against his former allies, the Saxons, and quit the war for good, well satisfied with his gains.

Meanwhile, D'Argenson's plans for the Low Countries this year would be first hindered and then aided by Bonnie Prince Charlie, who, after failing to persuade the French to let him help in the invasion last year gambled on a solo venture. His escapades lent an air of chaos to the situation, but gave the French opportunities in Flanders when the British Army was recalled to deal with him. Before then, France would win a near-run victory at Fontenoy.

Spain remained committed to her Italian war, which was quickly becoming a quagmire. It did not interest the French, even though the campaign there was the official reason for allying with Spain. Relations were souring, not least because on the high seas the Spanish took the opportunity afforded by French involvement to reduce their commitment; there would be little naval coordination and no combined operations.

In Britain, Lord Carteret was removed from affairs of state and replaced by the so-called Broad Bottom Administration, which was in reality the platform of the Pelhams (that is, the Duke of Newcastle and his brother). Carteret was created Earl Granville about the time d'Argenson took over in France, and punted to the House of Lords. Carteret had ignored the Admiralty, while Newcastle had been working closely with it, but this did not translate into a change in strategy — Newcastle's participation was decidedly detrimental — though naval activity increased and gradually became more effective.

The strategic focus remained in the Low Countries, even though Newcastle engineered Carteret's dismissal on the grounds that he was too involved in Continental affairs. Actually, Carteret's fall was due mainly to his inability to get a solid commitment from the Dutch (despite some nice letters to the Republic from King George himself), either on land or by sea. They felt were doing enough to fulfill their obligations. Newcastle's Whig faction, known as the Old Corps, promised to make the Dutch pay their fair share.

Newcastle's promotion led also to a shakeup at the Admiralty, and a new sense of purpose. Only two of the previous commissioners retained their office, and they did not include the First Commissioner. This post was now held by the Duke of Bedford. Richmond believes most of the operational improvements that occurred in the later half of the war were thanks to newly-promoted Rear Admiral of the Blue George Anson, who returned from his circumnavigation of the globe in 1744. Anson was noted for his attempts in earlier years to create, in Richmond's words, 'a society for the propagation of sea-knowledge'. There was still no official Commander-in-Chief; there had been none since Norris retired. Instead, there were a number of 'sector commanders'. Norris had been recalled to the service during the crisis of 1744 but was now back in virtual retirement as Governor of Deal Castle; he would fully retire before the year was out. The closest thing to a C-in-C was Admiral Vernon, who got command of the North Sea Squadron this year when the Pretender made his landing, and thus played a central role, but he was never appointed C-in-C. His subsequent pamphlet war because of this fact earned him dismissal from the service in 1746.

The Western Squadron

1744's series of nail-biting ups and downs persuaded the Royal Navy to shift its center of gravity farther down the Channel. A Western Squadron was not a new idea. There had been one in the last war. But, since 1739 the Privy Council and Admiralty seemed to have (in Richmond's opinion) displayed rank incompetence. More likely, some lack of professionalism — two of the members of the naval committee frankly confessed they had no experience — was combined with an idea that the war was to be short and sweet, and mainly intended to take stuff from Spain on the cheap. The idea that they were facing a 'real' war was absurd. Carteret's fall may partly be due to the perception that he was using the War of Jenkins' Ear to justify Continental 'adventurism'.

The other 'new' idea was to abandon the use of battle fleets as convoy escorts. Unfortunately, these changes in strategy could not be implemented immediately, since the British were very overstretched — the use of ships of the line for escort was hardly a strategy, it was simply making use of what they had. Resources were stretched even further when the States-General unilaterally withdrew the Dutch squadron to protect their own merchant ships on 17 January. After a good deal of argument they agreed to leave 10 vessels under nominal British command:

Tholen (64), Goes (64), Assendelft (54), Brederode (54), Dordrecht (54), Edam (54), Leeuwenhorst (54), Ramhorst (54), Prince Friso (54), Vriesland (54); Admiral Gravé served as senior admiral.

Of course, this would happen just when the British received news (30 January) that the French were abroad again. Apparently not all of the Brest Squadron had sailed for home with Rochambeau last November. Up to fifteen sail were still at Cádiz, from whence they sailed on 23 or 24 December 1744 and were observed off Lisbon on 9 January. Counting the sail still based at Brest this could give them as many as thirty operational ships of the line. Or so the British feared. It was in response to this news that the British created the first 'official' Western Squadron, at first just an expedient measure.

Such squadrons were historically based out of Plymouth, not Portsmouth. Although the physical distance between the ports is not great, when the factors of currents, tides, and weather are considered, response times out of Plymouth were much faster for cruises to the West.

Admiral William Martin was placed in charge. His first orders were dated 23 February 1745, and his command consisted of the following:

Currently cleaning at Portsmouth: *Lenox (70), Edinburgh (70), Prince Frederick (70), Hampton Court (70), Captain (70), Princess Louisa (60)*

Monmouth (70) — enroute to Portsmouth for same

Canterbury (60) — fitting out at Plymouth; the flagship

Defiance (60) — at Longreach (Plymouth)

Cruising at the west end of the Channel: *Sunderland (60), Chester (50)*

Portland (50) — at the Nore

Also at Plymouth was the *Mary* galley.

The preamble to Martin's orders is cited in the heading to this chapter. Additional instructions allowed him to patrol farther south or make a detachment, because a large number of enemy merchantmen were expected from South America and the Caribbean — possibly this is a reference to the *flota*, which had in reality already arrived. He was also to regularly observe Brest and the other ports on that coast, or otherwise obtain intelligence about them. If the French were concentrated at Brest and inactive, he could break up his command to hunt for prizes; if they appeared to be readying or actually sailing for a Channel cruise he was to return to Plymouth and either receive new orders or join the main fleet at Spithead. Critically, he was to remain at sea for as long as possible; he would receive reinforcements so that ships in need of cleaning and repair could be sent back.

[One interesting instruction was for Martin to watch for ships smuggling wool from Ireland.]

Martin's efforts were supported by a small independent squadron under direct control of the Admiralty. This consisted of three ships (*Augusta (60), Falkland (50), and Saphire*) under a Captain Hamilton. His orders were to cruise between Cape Clear and latitude 44° and attack privateers and enemy merchants. He was also allowed to cruise in the Bristol Channel. One of his ships was to remain in sight of Cape Clear and Hamilton was to rejoin it after twenty-one days. He held this independent command until 25 July, at which time he was put under Martin's command — there was a hunt on for a large enemy convoy. Sometimes Hamilton received augmentation. For example, on 26 June Captain Griffin and four ships joined him to search for a French 74 reputed to be in the vicinity.

Following long established precedent, Martin was not able to sail immediately, because somebody sent him orders to wait for all the merchantmen heading west. This was no longer regarded as an ironclad order, though, and the Admiralty allowed him to ignore the instruction provided he could find a sufficiently good reason. Martin found one in early March. From information received it was learned the Brest Squadron was preparing to escort a large convoy to Canada.

[The Commissioner of Portsmouth was to be given authority over the merchantmen in the event that Martin choose not to wait.]

First Cruises of the Western Squadron

The French fortress of Louisbourg, on Cape Breton Island on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence estuary, was regarded as a clear and present danger by the inhabitants of New England. The Boston Governor, William Shirley, drew up a proposal to attack the fortress. Unable to obtain aid from the West Indies the New Englanders decided to take the place anyway, using only local resources. They did, however, ask permission from London. After some debate a blessing was given and the Admiralty was asked to provide indirect assistance by interfering with any French relief efforts. This was the spur that put Martin to sea.

He was ordered (17 March) to sail as soon he had at least five ships ready and left at daybreak on 21 March, with seven sail under his command. *Captain, Monmouth*, and *Princess Louisa* were with him at Plymouth; *Lenox, Hampton Court, Edinburgh,* and *Prince Frederick* came down from Portsmouth and rendezvoused at sea. On 19 March four Dutch ships were added to his command. They were to be fully under Martin's orders, and to clean in British ports, but they were still supplied by their own provinces. They also took nearly a month to put in an appearance.

Predicting, because of the winds, that the French would not head south immediately, and might even risk a direct east-west crossing, Martin made for his originally assigned station in the Soundings. From here he extended patrols well into the Bay of Biscay. Time passed. Martin took a tour of the Biscay coast, seeking for signs of French activity. Off Nantes he captured five rich merchantmen from San Domingo and Martinique, which slowed him down. Unwilling to spilt his ships, he kept them in formation and assigned *Princess Louisa* to watch the prizes and put as many crew aboard as possible (88 men in all). Fortunately, before anything bad happened the wind strengthened and swung to the southwest, locking the Brest Squadron up so that the prizes could be got away.

On 28 March Martin captured a snow which turned out to be a French prize, the *Ann*, only recently captured. From her he learned a French convoy with an escort of six ships (two 66-gunners, two 56s, one 50, and one 30) under M. des Herbiers de l'Etanduere (at 64, one of the youngest flag officers the French had), was bound for Le Cap (Haiti). A council of war decided that the French were only 70 leagues WSW and, being slow, could be overhauled. Four days later a neutral merchantman reported the French, having picked up a NNE gale, were nearly 240 miles away. Now 750 miles from Brest himself, Martin decided to abandon the chase.

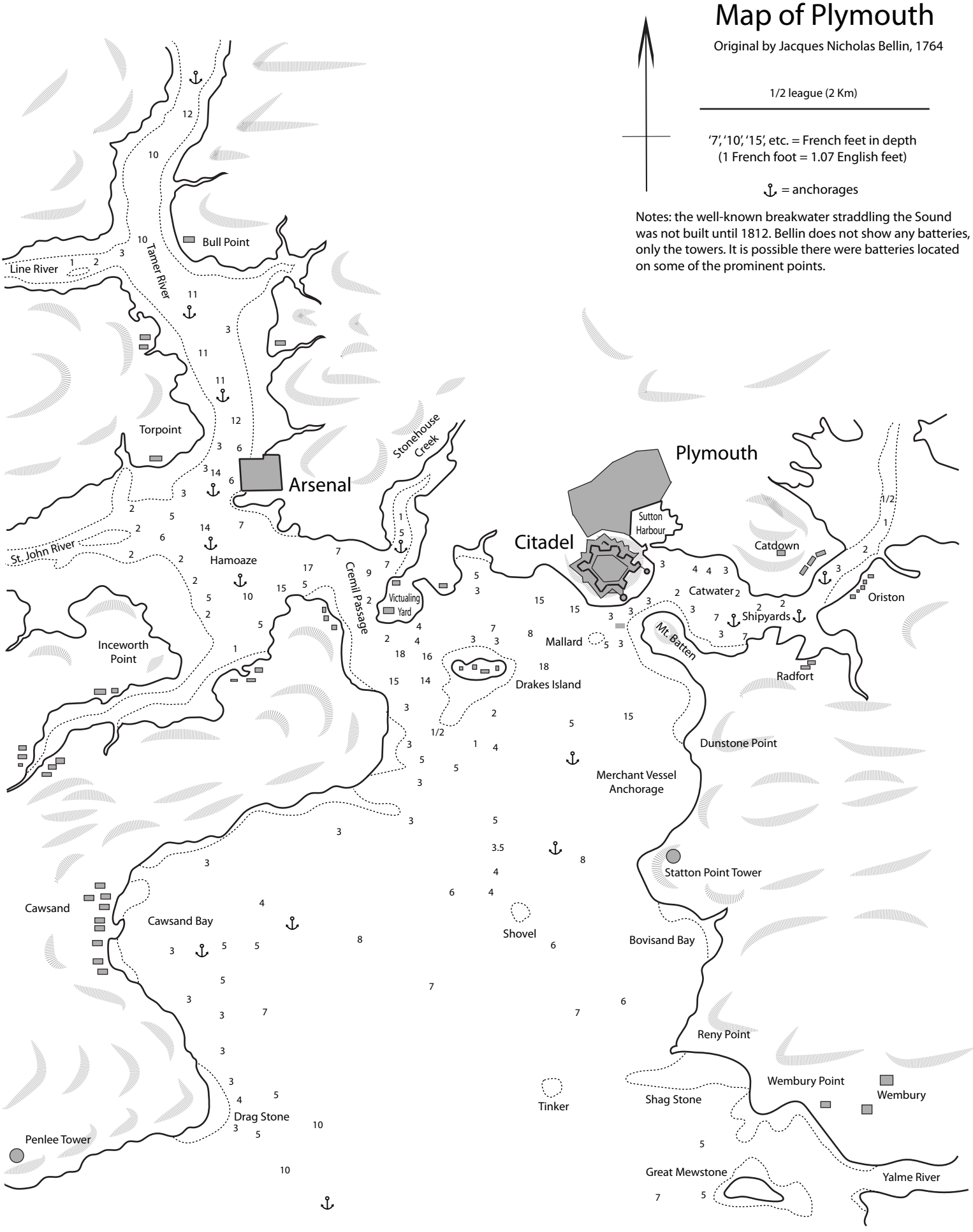
[Snows are square-rigged ships with a sharp bow and a mizzenmast joined to the main mast, giving it a similar rig to a three-masted ship.]

[The chase was made at 'full canvas' with the ships in line abreast at one mile intervals. Martin generated concern at London because in his dispatches he interpreted 'Le Cap' to mean Cape Breton. However, all that could be done was to warn the station commander in New England, and in the event, there was no danger.]

Ushant was regained on 13 April. Here Martin received the *Princess Louisa* back along with *Defiance*, plus the four Dutch ships allotted to him on 19 March. He cruised for another month, keeping close to the French coast. Intelligence gleaned from other sources had been confusing. From close observation it seemed there were anywhere from four to twelve ships at Rochefort and eight of the line, with perhaps four frigates, at Brest. These did not appear to be in a condition to sail. There were also

Map of Plymouth

Original by Jacques Nicholas Bellin, 1764



supposed to be about forty merchantmen incoming from the West Indies — or maybe not.

By 7 May Martin had been six weeks at sea and needed a complete refit; he arrived at Plymouth on 12 May. Though it was not evident at first, his cruise had been very successful. The taking of the prizes and his observable presence had spooked many of the French traders into remaining in port until it was too late to sail without risking the Caribbean hurricanes. The Admiralty decided to maintain the patrol and *Captain, Monmouth,* and *Princess Louisa*, which were still fit for service, were sent back out, Captain Griffin commanding.

Martin's was certainly not the only active force. Richmond provides a comprehensive list of the British ships operating within the 'home waters' command, as of May 1745:

Off Lisbon: *Blandford (24), Alderney (24)*
Off Oporto: *Ferret* sloop
Bound for Oporto: *Greyhound (24)*
New England Convoy: *Eltham (44)*
Portugal Convoy: *Ludlow Castle (44)*
Off Cape Clear: *Augusta (60), Falkland (50), Saphire (44)*
Embargo duty Kinsale & Cork: *Terror* sloop
Bristol Channel: *Mary* galley, *Mortar* sloop, *Baltimore* sloop [after cruise listed below]
Convoy Bristol to Plymouth: *Port Mahon (24)*
Convoy Plymouth to Downs: *Pearl (44)*
Convoy Penzance to Nore: *Bridgewater (24)*
Convoy Torbay to Plymouth: *Serpent* sloop
Convoy Southampton to Channel Islands: *Vulture* & *Lizard* sloops
Convoy Rye to Exmouth to Downs: *Hawk* sloop
Cruising Beachy Head to Dungeness: *Baltimore* sloop
Convoy to Elbe: *Grenadoe* sloop
Convoy East Indiamen to the Lea: *Newcastle (50)*
At Leith (Edinburgh): *Fox (20), Hazard* & *Happy Jennet* sloops
Convoy Humber to Rotterdam: *Gibraltar (20)*
Cruising for 2 privateers off Hull: *Shoreham (24)*
Cruising for 3 privateers north of Tynemouth: *Dover (44), Jamaica* sloop
Convoy Yarmouth to Holland: *Squirrel (20)*
Cruising behind Yarmouth Sands: *Falcon* sloop
Trade protection at Lynn, Boston, etc. (i.e., East Anglia): *Swift* & *Speedwell* sloops
Icelandic fishery: *Tryal* sloop
Cruising Milford to Plymouth: *York* & *Jon and Ann* armed vessels
Humber: *St. Quintin* sloop
Tynemouth: *Charles* sloop
Mounts Bay: *Fly* sloop and *James and Mary* sloop

Western Squadron (Martin)

Edinburgh (70)
Lenox (70)
Prince Frederick (70)
Hampton Court (70)
Monmouth (70)
Captain (70)
Princess Louisa (60)
Defiance (60)
Tavistock sloop
Plus 4 Dutch ships

Conveying King George to Flanders (then to cruise the Channel)

Yarmouth (70) — detached Western Squadron
Pembroke (60) — detached Western Squadron
Portland (50)
Gloucester (50)
Kinsale (44)
Success (20)
Sheerness (24)
Wolf sloop
Saltash sloop

In Home Ports

Royal Sovereign (100) — Nore
Royal George (90) — Chatham
Sandwich (90) — Spithead
Princess Royal (90) — Spithead
St. George (90) — Spithead
Duke (90) — Downs
Prince George (90) — Chatham
Shrewsbury (80) — Spithead
Lion (60) — fitting out at Woolwich
Hastings (44) — Chatham

Since the Dutch provided ten ships this year, six remain unaccounted for.

By June the British thought they had a good idea where the enemy were, or at least their ships of the line. Richmond again provides the list:

12 French and 9 Spanish in the West Indies opposed by 10 British
6 French and 17 Spanish in the Med opposed by 35 British — the Spanish were concentrated at Cartagena, but 12 of the British were off Cádiz.
8 French at Quiberon Bay
4 French at Brest
3 French at Rochefort
6 Spanish on the Biscay coast
12 French on escort out of Brest and expected to return there soon.

Richmond also notes the British had 15 ships of the line dispersed among North America, the East Indies, West Africa, St. Helena, and the Atlantic Irish coast. This gave them 78 in all, against an estimated 77 Bourbon.

Martin's next patrol was originally intended to renew the watch on Brest, but the Admiralty were tempted by news of a lucrative convoy scheduled to sail from La Rochelle. But, before he could actually return to sea London was refocused on Louisbourg by news (12 June) that six ships were about to sail from Brest for Cape Breton. They lapsed into another of their bad habits by making Martin wait for a pair of British merchant ships bound for Virginia, then cancelled that order but gave him the similar one of sailing down to collect the Lisbon trade (16 June) before trying to intercept the French. Clearly the merchant community were

putting pressure on the Government, either as a lobby or as individuals buttonholing their ministerial pals and asking for favours.

Martin put to sea on 17 June. He missed the 'rich' convoy, which sailed with an escort of five ships under Conflans — it was sighted by British privateers on 19 June who reported to Martin on 24 June. He also missed another convoy behind him, coming out of Brest with an escort of seven ships under *capitaine de vaisseaux* Jean-Baptiste Macnémara which sailed on 1 July. This was not known to Martin until 19 July. Both French convoys were bound for the West Indies.

All Martin was able to achieve was the capture of a 20-gun frigate, the *Pánther*. She encountered the schooner he had sent to England with the latest intelligence, not very far from his squadron; the schooner fled back for safety and the frigate pursued too close. She was run down by the *Monmouth* after a night's chase.

So far there had been up to five significant French convoys, all of which went to the Caribbean. Their movements are badly documented, not only in British sources, but in French ones as well. The following can be gleaned:

- *Capitaine de vaisseaux* Charles Tubières Grimoard Pestel Lévis, *Chevalier et Marquis* du Caylus, sailing out of Cádiz, arriving at Martinique on 28 March. He had been appointed Governor of the Windwards thanks to his close connection to Maurepas, and his squadron *(Espérance (74), Northumberland (70), Trident (64), Serieux (64), Diamant (50), Aquillon (42)*, two or three frigates, two bombs, and some fireships) was primarily an escort for him, though some merchantmen also carried a load of *Compagnies franches de la Marine*.
- *Capitaine de vaisseaux* le *comte* de Conflans, sailing from La Rochelle. This convoy only seems to appear in British sources and it may be that there is confusion with L'Estenduère's convoy, which had the same number of escorts. Its precise destination (assuming there was one) is not given.
- *Capitaine de vaisseaux* Henri-François des Herbiers, Marquis de L'Estenduère sailing directly to Cap François in Haiti, arriving in May, with escorts *Juste (76), Caribou (60), Ardent (64), Alcide (66),* and *Mutine (26).*

[British reports described this squadron as 'two ships of 66, two of 56, one of 50, and one of 30 guns'.]

- *Capitaine de vaisseaux* Jean-Baptiste Macnémara sailing 1 July and arriving 31 October; escorts *Invencible (74)*, *Jason (36), Atalante (34).* Macnémara is usually called a *chef d'escadre* (rear admiral) but he was not promoted until 1746.
- *Capitaine de vaisseaux* du Guay, most likely arriving at the same time as Macnémara; escorts *Magnanime (80)*, *Rubis (54)*.

[Richmond lists Macnémara's ships as: Mars, St Michel, Rénommée, Parfaite, Galatee, Argonaute, Étourneau*. The reason for the discrepancy is not obvious.]*

Du Guay and Macnémara probably sailed together but apparently made landfall separately; the former encountered the British off Martinique, with dire consequences, but Macnémara seems to have sailed directly to Cap François.

Whether there had been five enemy convoys or only four, the British captains could all agree that despite some early successes it had been an unproductive year so far. On 14 July Martin held a council of war. Two days before he received word that there was a large gathering of merchant ships in the Basque Roads, protected by only five men-o-war; another thirty ships of Nantes were said to be joining it. Presumably this information concerned Macnémara's and du Guay's convoys, which had already departed, as Martin learned five days later. However, they may have been another agglomeration.

Acting on the assumption that the merchantmen were present, a debate ensued. Should the British attack the merchantmen? If not, should they divide to cover both Rochefort and Brest simultaneously, and perhaps increase the odds of actually catching something? If so, what enemy warships were likely to be present? It was decided not to enter the Basque Roads. That was a treacherous bit of coast, they had no pilots, and their ships were too large for the sort of manoeuvres required. As for dividing, they came to the conclusion it would be better to just cover one port, Brest for choice. This turned out to be wise, not only because the French had already gone, but because there were eleven French ships at Brest ready for sea.

Martin cruised about Ushant until he ran out of water, arriving at Plymouth on 12 August. Captain Griffin was left cruising 20 leagues SW of the Scilly Isles with four ships (*Captain, Princess Louisa, Monmouth, Portland*). Martin's main difficulty continued to be a lack of light ships for inshore cruising. Supposedly, he was to maintain his station at all times, but without reinforcement he was required to take everyone back to port to replenish. If he had had smaller ships he could have worked them to death and spared his battlewagons. As can be seen from Richmond's list on the previous pages all the lighter vessels in service were being used as escorts, sometimes for single ships, or for sending dispatches. But, there was worse.

Trouble in Flanders

Most of the attention in France, from the King on down, was centered on the Low Countries. Their convoy runs, which seemed to be working out successfully, were part of Maurepas' grand scheme of worrying the Royal Navy while supporting the colonies — his ministerial bailiwick — but Versailles did not deem them essential to the war. Glory was being won in Flanders and by July they had nearly succeeded in driving the British off the Continent. For Martin, this meant no reinforcements; all available ships were being assembled to protect the Kentish coast from invasion.

On 4 July the town of Ghent in Belgium fell to the French. Ghent was the supply base of the British Army in Flanders. Most of the coastal towns simply opened their gates. Oostende held out. The Coalition forces fell back on

Antwerp. That day, Newcastle had a meeting with a quorum of the Admiralty at which it was decided to quickly erect a 'wooden wall' of ships at the Downs. According to French intelligence they would number about twenty and be commanded by Admiral Vernon.

British fears were justified. The French had been so successful in their offensive that they were indeed thinking of making another invasion. Or rather, some at Versailles were thinking of doing so. Those opposed could argue that no preparations had been made and the season was getting late. The argument in favour ran as follows: it was known the British were emptying their home garrisons to defend Antwerp, and these troops would need protection as they were convoyed across the North Sea; with the enemy's ships all operating in known locations, whether west or east of the Channel, the French could sneak past them.

Fearing just such an eventuality the British began redeploying. On 27 July all 'clean' ships were ordered home from the Med. Martin was not recalled but was warned. Vernon, given the Downs command on 7 July, kept one eye on the western end of the Channel as he mustered his flotilla. Both he and Martin had orders to blockade Brest if they could.

Fortunately for all concerned, King Louis vetoed the idea of invasion. Too risky. If the French wanted to beat the British they could do that easily enough outside Antwerp. The news was a disappointment to the Jacobites, both in exile and in Britain, so they were thrilled when Bonnie Prince Charlie, the most disappointed of all, decided to make a solo run. Cardinal Tencin, the family friend, was probably the only senior French official who had any notion of what was afoot. Some of the most trustworthy of the exiles went along with the prince.

The Prince Has Landed

The timing was not propitious. Charles' supporters in Britain had been plotting uprisings for a long time and last year had made some preparations with the help of French agents. But when the invasion was abandoned they hardly expected it to be renewed so soon. They were in the midst of packing away their gear for a later war when the Prince landed in Scotland.

Charles had remained in France once he arrived there. Officially he was not present, but his supporters and the Cardinal took care of him. The question of whether to invade this year had been raised and quashed very quickly, and the Prince made his decision with the same rapidity. Simple logistical arrangements were already in place. On 7 July he left the port of Nantes aboard the small commercial ship *Doutelle*. Off Bell-Île he rendezvoused with his escort, the *Elizabeth (64)*, which was also carrying arms, money, and 100 experienced volunteers. Maurepas had decided to back the enterprise. He was not averse to sowing confusion on the high seas and did not object to loaning a ship which could carry out commerce raiding after the escort mission was over.

The wind was NNW so they had to stand well out to sea; on 9 July the *Lion (58)* sighted them in latitude 47° 57'. Interestingly, the *Lion's* captain, a man named Piercy Brett, had been Anson's captain aboard the *Centurion* when they sailed around the world. Brett closed, and about 3pm recognised them as French. At 4pm the French hoisted their colours; at 5pm the *Lion* engaged *Elizabeth* 'yardarm to yardarm', in Richmond's words. Brett reported:

"By 6 my mizen topmast was shot away and soon after that my mizen mast and mizen yard came down upon deck. By 8 o'clock the quarter of my main yard and foretopsail yard arm were shot away, and main topsail yard in the slings. By 9 all my lower masts and topmasts were shot through in many places...The enemy did not receive much damage in his masts and yards but his hull must have suffered greatly. At 10 o'clock he sheered off...The small ship in the beginning made two attempts to rake me but I soon beat him off with my stern chase."

[Quoted in Richmond, vol. II p.164]

The engagement lasted 5 hours. *Lion* lost 45 killed (Beatson says 55) and 107 wounded (7 later died); *Elizabeth* lost 64 killed and 140 wounded. Both combatants limped back to port, the British unaware of the significance of the action. *Doutelle* broke off quite early and escaped north, round the west coast of Ireland; B.P.C. landed on the shores of Moidart in Scotland on 25 July. His enterprise would not be resolved until April of 1746, though any real danger to King George's regime would end by the New Year.

Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745

Further Cruises with Martin

The Government was aware of increased Jacobite activity in the days before the French decided not to invade, and Martin was ordered to prevent ships from supporting the Jacobites by way of the western ports. However, he was also to intercept the next wave of enemy merchantmen who would be heading for the West Indies. Shortly before B.P.C.'s departure, on 8 July, Martin made a reconnaissance of Brest and the other French ports, discovering there were only four ships in Brest harbour, but that four days before eleven had been at Rochefort along with 200 merchant ships bound for the West Indies. He also learned that after escorting the merchants to the open ocean, five of the warships would return to Rochefort and the rest carry on to the Caribbean. But, before he could take steps Martin was ordered back to the Lizard as part of the plan to prevent invasion.

Vernon, tasked with defending the other end of the Channel, remained at Portsmouth until 7 August. The Powers That Be do not seem to have given him any orders until then, despite having formalized their plans as early as 23 July. By now the threat of invasion had receded and B.P.C.'s presence in Scotland went relatively unnoticed. He was not the Navy's responsibility, at any rate. Vernon was ordered to link up with Martin. They would then proceed to Brest, deal with any threat that might come from there or the other ports, and round up as much French trade as they could. This was to be a long operation; Vernon was to receive reinforcements as they became available.

[Richmond is a little unclear, saying that Martin was ordered back to the Lizard, but then that he was 'not recalled', so it may be that he came north and received new orders at sea, or that the orders for the withdrawal were not actually dispatched.]

Once again the orders changed before Vernon could hoist sail; he was to revert to the original plan of concentrating at the Downs. Martin was ordered to carry on as usual. The invasion was on again. B.P.C.'s arrival had at last been noticed and the Administration was losing its head — as it would do several times in the coming months.

Martin remained cruising until the end of November, between Brest and the Scilly Isles. Later on, he received reinforcement in the form of some of Vernon's larger ships. This may have been when he needed to provide escorts for an incoming East Indies convoy. A squadron of five ships was kept in the Soundings over the winter, just in case, though by then it had long been known that the remaining ships at Brest were in no condition to sail. Nearly all of France's best vessels were either in the Med or the Caribbean.

As of 19 July Martin had *Edinburgh*, *Hampton Court, Yarmouth (64), Prince Frederick*. On 20 July he received *Captain, Monmouth, Princess Louisa*. On 29 July, after he cruised past St. Malo: *Gloucester, Portland, Edam* (Dutch), Tavistock sloop. Other ships sent out at the same time were mostly for Vernon's use: *Assendelft* (Dutch) to Plymouth; *Dordrecht* (Dutch), *Brederode (54)*(Dutch), to Spithead on 2 July; *Baltimore* sloop, *Hinchinbrook* sloop to the Downs on 24 July; *Milford (44)* to the Downs on 3 August.

Richmond's data for 28 August is as follows:

Under Martin's command but at Plymouth: *Yarmouth, Edinburgh, Hampton Court, Prince Frederick, Lion*.

Cruising 20 leagues SW of the Scilly Isles: *Captain, Monmouth, Princess Louisa, Portland*.

Irish Channel: *Augusta (60), Falkland (50), Saphire (40), Baltimore* sloop

Skye and Mull (looking for Jacobites): *Port Mahon (24)*, *Serpent* sloop, *Terror* sloop, *Furnace* sloop

Under Vernon's orders: *Royal George, Prince George, St. George flag, Sandwich, Duke, Nottingham (60), Tilbury (60), Gloucester (50), Success (24*).

Plus 6 Dutch, of which only 1 was ready for certain (*Tholen (54)*).

And, under Vernon's orders after they conveyed King George home from Hanover (August 31):

Norwich (50), Kinsale (40), Ludlow Castle (40), Poole (44), Folkestone (44), Sheerness (20), Bridgewater (20), Glasgow (20), *Weazel* sloop, *Wolf* sloop.

Of Bourbon convoys returning to Europe, there appear to have been two French and one Spanish, travelling at different times. The French were those of l'Estenduère and Conflans, taking the homebound trade of Hispaniola. l'Estenduère left that island about 5 August. Conflans is said to have left earlier. Conflans snapped up three British prizes enroute, and l'Estenduère five British privateers. The escorts cannot be identified precisely but should have consisted of *Northumberland* (Conflans' flag), plus possibly *Espérance, Trident, Serieux*, and perhaps *Ardent*. *Juste, Caribou, Alcide,* and *Mutine* belonged to l'Estenduère, as did *Ardent*. There was also a frigate operating with them in the Caribbean which may either have been one that went to the West Indies with du Caylus, or a privateer. The large numbers of merchantmen reported on the Biscay coast disappear from the record. Either they sailed with the outbound convoys already listed or their captains were unwilling to depart without a strong escort, which could not be provided. This was a problem that would grow exponentially in the coming years.

Spanish activity outside the Med and the Caribbean was minimal. In October, *jefe d'escuadra* Espinola was dispatched to Spain from the West Indies with a small *flota* carrying four million pesos, but he had to turn back due to bad weather; he was then shut up in La Habana by the British. Though several vessels would manage solo or paired runs over the next few years, this was the last attempt at a Spanish convoy run.

William Martin (c1696-1756)

Apart from the barebones of his career, not much is recorded about William Martin. He joined the Navy in 1708 as a 'volunteer-per-order', serving first on *H.M.S. Dragon*. Most of his service, during that war and the for the first few years of the War of the Austrian Succession was in the Med; he also served there during the 1727 crisis when the Spanish laid siege to Gibraltar. The only real break in the

routine came when he served under Norris in the Baltic, during the Great Northern War. During the War of the Austrian Succession his most notable achievements were through 'gunboat diplomacy' to force the Neapolitans, who had been considering joining the Spanish, to remain neutral, and with less success to try and prevent the Genoese from supplying the enemy with war materiel.

At the end of 1743 he was made Rear Admiral and returned to Britain, where he served under Norris again. Promotion to Vice Admiral came in June of 1744. He was picked to replace Balchen and commanded the western half of the Channel Fleet that became the Western Squadron, replacing Vernon as overall commander in 1745 but retired in 1746 due to ill health. (Curiously, his first real cruise, aboard the *Dragon*, had been avoided for the same reason; she went to Newfoundland but after his recovery he went to the Med.) Though 'retired' he was promoted to Full Admiral in 1747. Apart from his sea service, Martin's most notable contribution to the Navy was to push for the adoption of true naval hospitals — in his day such places were run by civilian contractors, with the expected results.

[Volunteer-by-order was a naval rating applied to young boys apprenticed to become officers. Introduced by Samuel Pepys in 1676 it paid £24 per year and the recipient was given a royal letter guaranteeing him promotion after two years at sea, provided he could pass the Lieutenant's exam. For daily duty a volunteer-per-order, or King's Letter Boy, would replace a midshipman. The rating was phased out in 1732 after the Royal Naval Academy was founded (though it was still possible to sit for the Lieutenant's exam after joining the service as an officer's servant).]

The Narrow Seas

Meanwhile, the British were reacting to the Jacobite Rising. Step One: prevent an invasion from France. Vernon set up shop in the Downs on 21 August. At the beginning of September he had five ships of the line, six heavy frigates, and four light vessels. He complained he was on a fools errand, and that deploying 90-gunners in the eastern mouth of the Channel was not the best way to use them — they needed sea room. They were also useless for chasing small ships, which is what he expected he would really be doing. A compromise with the Admiralty allowed him to send two of the 90s to Martin and acquire five 40s. On 3 September the Dutchman Admiral t'Hooft arrived with three ships. The Dutch may have been a drag out in the Atlantic, but their 54s were perfect for operating near their own waters.

[While describing Vernon's actions at this time, Richmond expends several paragraphs talking about the Western Squadron. Pedantically speaking, it did not yet exist. Martin's current patrol zone, just off Plymouth, was still too far east, allowing the French to escape to the west or south, or even get into the Bristol Channel. Vernon wanted a heavier force deployed farther out.]

Although Vernon did not observe the gestation of an invasion — his scouts reported only eight sail at Dunkirk while newspaper rumours put the number at thirty — a couple of enemy ships, of 36 and 30 guns, did manage to slip out with reinforcements for the Jacobites. Engaged and chased by the *Mary* galley, they escaped. This was just the time that the Prince was marching on Edinburgh, which he entered on 17 September. At the opening of the Rising, General Cope had marched into the Highlands to fight the Jacobites with much of the garrison force remaining in Britain, but he missed the rebels and had to be transported by sea from Aberdeen to Leith, the port of Edinburgh. An escort is not recorded by Richmond. There should have been one, if only to scare off privateers. Cope then proceeded to lose the Battle of Prestonpans (21 September), giving the Jacobites control of most of Scotland. They now had a base that could receive French aid in men and materiel. Fortunately, the French had not thought much of B.P.C.'s gamble and were unprepared, giving the Royal Navy time to respond.

As early as 10 September, to counter any future efforts at resupplying or reinforcing the rebels, Rear Admiral Byng was ordered to cruise along the Flanders coast and to pursue as far as Scotland any enemy ships he encountered. He took with him the *Kinsale* (flag), three 50-gunners, two 40s, a 20, and two sloops. At the same time, a small squadron (*Fox, Glasgow*, and a few small vessels including some Dutch) patrolled the Firth of Forth. The Jacobites were at that time investing Edinburgh Castle and using the Forth ferries for resupply and communication.

Byng's patrol also covered the movement of troops from Holland. Dutch troops brought to Britain in 1744 had soon gone home again, but a new contingent of 6,000 was now enroute to Britain. By the end of the month Vernon's ships were busy ferrying a constant stream of troops back from the Low Countries. An administrative headache, but not an operation fraught with great danger. With Flanders mostly in French hands the troops travelled from the chief Dutch naval base at Helvœtsluys across to the Swin — one of the passages in the Thames estuary — and from the Swin to Newcastle (Leith now being in enemy hands). Each leg of the journey had a single 40-gunner British escort.

Learning that some French vessels had evaded him and gone north, Byng pursued but had no success. The French, carrying a small contingent of troops and some arms, were bound for Aberdeen but Byng was not allowed to sail north of the Forth. This changed in early October when he was given command of the whole naval defence on the East coast of Scotland and ordered to act in accordance with instructions from the Army. While the rebels were enjoying success, his ships interdicted the movement of supplies and recruits between the coastal towns and landing stages. When the rebels retreated in late winter, 1746, his ships protected the large supply convoy that the Duke of Cumberland used to support his army in its march north to the final match at Culloden.

French aid to the Jacobites was intended as a promise of bigger things to come. After Prestonpans the Jacobites had better success persuading King Louis to support their efforts. Even before Prestonpans a limited invasion plan had been hastily scrawled out which would involve a corps of 6,000 men and a shipment of arms. The numbers were boosted to 10,000 once the Prince's forces won their first battle, and the *duc* de Richelieu was given command (de Saxe could not be spared and was uninterested in any case).

Getting to Scotland was going to be tricky. Naval support would be minimal. Should the French make a hasty landing

in England as a diversion, or join the Jacobites in Scotland? The best bet seemed to be, as always, a landing at the mouth of the Thames. Currently there were between thirty and forty transport vessels at Oostende — which had by now surrendered to the French — which could be used. Most were armed in some way or another. To increase the chances of at least some getting through, the ships would not sail in convoy.

But, the French Ambassador in London squashed the idea of a Thames landing. Too many enemy ships in the estuary. He suggested Bridlington Bay, on the coast of Holderness just north of Kingston upon Hull. In theory this would cut the Government forces' lines of communication, allowing Prince Charles to consolidate his position. Unfortunately, the Government's army, based at Newcastle, was relying primarily on seaborne supply — the roads in that part of Britain were atrocious.

In early October, then, Vernon began noticing an increase in numbers of ships at all the ports from Havre to Oostende. They all seemed to be armed, with anything from thirty to fifty guns. Having already decided that blockading all the Continental ports was impracticable, Vernon arranged for flying squadrons to be stationed at various points to intercept any ships that broke through his cordon. This is how Byng came to command the ships on the Scottish coast. He had just (17 October) returned to the Downs after chasing the original pair of French blockade runners and was immediately sent back north. Another squadron of 50 and 40 gunners was proposed, to be stationed in Hollesley Bay, on the East Anglian coast about the latitude of Ipswich. This was not approved, however.

On 25 October Vernon sent his last three 90 gunners to Portsmouth. This required permission from the Privy Council, but he represented to the Admiralty that they would not stand the strain of a North Sea winter. As of 18 November, Vernon's forces were arranged as follows:

In the Downs: *Norwich (50), Ruby (50), Folkestone (44), Poole (44), Dordrecht (54), Ter Goes (54), Hornet sloop, Hound sloop, Weazel sloop, Success (24)*.

Off Dogger Bank: *Mary galley (44)*, *Squirrel (20), Sheerness (24)*

Flanders coast: *Badger* sloop, *Triton (24)*

Enroute to the Downs: the Dutch ships *Edam (54), Leeuwenhorst (54), Prince Friso (54)*

The Dutch once again asked to be excused. Even close to home they remained poorly provisioned, perhaps deliberately so. This time, however, the British Administration put its foot down.

The British were racing the clock, trying to defeat the rebels before the French could invade. Fortunately the enemy's efforts were slow and uncoordinated. The Jacobite army entered England, reaching Preston on 26 November. Some French troops were successfully slipped through to Scotland, but because the Prince chose to take the western road south these reinforcements were left behind, landing on the northeast coast and only marching as far south as the Forth River. The men and material involved consisted mainly of Jacobite exiles returning home, plus arms and ammunition. Elements of three 'regular' formations did appear. An ersatz body of *Irish Piquets* — Jacobite volunteers who had been serving in the French Army — FitzJames' Horse, and *l'Écossais Royale.* These last two were French regiments composed, officially at least, of Scots and Irish.

The crisis broke in December. Vernon received a report dated 3 December that 15,000 French were about to embark at Dunkirk. This fact allowed him to at last deploy his 'backstop' squadron at Hollesley Bay: *Hastings (44), Ludlow Castle (44), Gibraltar (24), Success (24), Syren (24),* the *sloops Mortar, Speedwell, Granada,* and *Hawk, the armed vessel St. Quintin,* and the *yachts William and Mary, Charlotte, Fubbs, Chatham,* and *Queenborough*. There were also a handful of smaller vessels, like cutters and snows. These were commanded by Commodore Thomas Smith aboard the *Royal Sovereign (90)* at the Nore. Smith was instructed to remain in contact with both Vernon and Byng. Vernon himself obtained four cutters from Folkestone to use as scouts, and hired three privateers familiar with Dunkirk (*Eagle, York, Carlisle*) to keep a close watch on the town.

Richmond provides the following list for Christmas Day:

In the Downs: *Monmouth (70), Yarmouth (64), Tilbury (60), Princess Louisa (60), Nottingham (60), York (60), Norwich (50), Ruby (50), Falkland (50), Triton (24)*; sloops *Weazel, Hinchinbrook, Vulcan* (possibly a bomb ketch), *Pluto*

Enroute to the Downs from Plymouth: *Princess Mary (60), Superbe (60), Defiance (60), Canterbury (60), Lion (60), Portland (50)*

Enroute to the Downs from Spithead: *Sunderland (60)*

Enroute to the Downs from elsewhere: *Syren (24)* and sloops or light vessels *Lizard Speedwell, Salamander* (possible bomb ketch), *Delight, West, Dolphin, Antwerp*, and 7 Custom House cutters

Off Dungeness and Boulogne: *Saphire (44), Folkestone (44)*; sloops *Badger* and *Hornet*; cutter *Cholmondeley*

Off Dogger Bank: *Mary galley (44), Squirrel (20)*

Off Dunkirk and Oostende (Sheerness (24), *Eagle* privateer

Off Gravelines and Calais: *Duke of Bedford* privateer

Off Boulogne: *Carlisle* privateer

At Gunfleet and Hollesley Bay: *Hastings (40)*, sloops *Convener* and *Mayflower*; 15 smacks, cutters, and armed yachts.

In refit: *Earl of Sandwich* privateer

Ashore, the Government ordered the manning of the various fortifications and preparations were made to douse lighthouses and take up navigation buoys, as well as erect a chain of signal fires. The 300 marines aboard the other 90s at the Nore (*Royal George, Prince George, Duke*) were disembarked to garrison London. The *Royal Sovereign (90)* was to moor as a block ship. Transports waiting to collect

more troops from the Low Countries were to be employed in a similar role.

On 15 December a large body of French ships was reported to have sailed from Dunkirk. Commodore Smith sent the sloop *Mortar* and a smack to investigate and found the news to be true. But, it was not known for some time where the vessels had gone. It turned out they were bound for Boulogne, being merely about sixty small vessels carrying stores and weaponry, sneaking along the coast inside the banks. They were spotted by two of the privateers off Calais, who attacked them like a couple of seals plunging into a shoal of fish. Seventeen were either taken, run aground, or blown up. The rest escaped, but the effect of this relatively minor action was to cause Richelieu to abandon any attempt to invade England. The British did not know this, however, and continued to bring in reinforcements. Ironically, although Richelieu had given up he was afraid to tell King Louis, and reinforcements continued to be sent to him, heightening British fears.

The French flotilla's movement down the Channel suggested a possible landing in the Channel itself, so Martin was brought east with the *Yarmouth* and all the 50 and 60-gunners at Plymouth. Thinking that it would be possible with an adverse wind for the French to cross to Dungeness right in front of his face, Vernon persuaded the Government to call a general muster in Kent. Between 18 and 21 December Martin joined Vernon in the Downs. The latter, aboard the *Monmouth*, then waited for a NE wind (26 December) and took all his frigates and light craft (*Monmouth (70), Falkland (50), Norwich (50), Ruby (50), Saphire (44), Folkestone (44), Triton (24),* the sloops *Badger, Hornet,* and *Weazel,* the privateer *Eagle*, and four or five cutters) west along the English coast to Folkestone. Martin was left commanding the heavies in the Downs. Vernon cruised about Dungeness until 2 January. At that point his command was terminated (orders dated 26 December). Martin remained in command of the whole.

This sudden break was in fact the termination of Vernon's career. Over the years he had had major disagreements with the Admiralty over the nature of his orders and the condition of the fleet, not to mention how he had been treated personally on a number of occasions. The 'straw that broke the camel's back' came in November, when his choice to fill a relatively junior vacancy on one of his ships was rejected by the Admiralty, who told him to employ their own man. By recent precedent — Sir John Norris — Vernon felt the admiral on the spot ought to have that power. His attitude was not improved when Martin was ordered to join him during the height of the invasion scare. He assumed, incorrectly, that their Lordships were manoeuvring to replace him. So, like Norris, he resigned. Unlike Norris, he lacked the connections to get away with it. The affair did not end here. Vernon was a national hero. It reflected badly on the Admiralty that he had taken this step. So they said he had been dismissed for negligence in the execution of his duties. Vernon counterattacked in the timeworn manner of anonymously publishing his own correspondence. When called to answer whether he was the source he told the Admiralty it was none of their business. So they struck him off the List of flag officers. Martin thus did replace him, being made chief commander of the fleet in home waters, seconded by Perry Mayne.

Minor Actions

At years' end the British dispositions were as follows:

- At the Downs, Martin with 4 heavies and roughly 7 small vessels.
- In the Dungeness-Boulogne sector, Mayne with 4 heavies and about 15 small vessels.
- Commodore Knowles with 2 ships and 7 other vessels closely watching Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne. Knowles was a fire-eater. He wanted to send fireships in to burn the French transports, or bombard the ports. Eventually Martin allowed him to make a combat appreciation but it proved more difficult than he originally thought.
- Smith covering the English coast from Yarmouth to the Thames — not an easy task with all the estuaries, channels, and bays.

Beatson says 1745 was a notable year for minor actions. Worthy of mention were the following:

The *Augusta* captured the St. Malo privateer *Comtesse de la Riviere (22)* and sank the *Grand Biche (24*), another privateer of that port, which made the mistake of attacking the *Augusta* thinking she was a merchantman; the *Grand Biche* sank with all hands after the second broadside.

The *Fowey* ran another St. Malo privateer, the *Griffin* (24), ashore near Fécamp (on the Normandy coast halfway between Le Havre and Saint-Valery); she could not be brought off and was deliberately wrecked. This was on 12 June.

On 3 July frigates *Bridgewater (24)*, *Sheerness (24)*, and the armed vessel *Ursula (16)* encountered three Dunkirk privateers (*Royal (28), Duchesse de Penthievre (26)*, and a dogger of 12 guns) off Oostende, bound for their home port with seven prizes in tow. After a hard fight all were taken except the dogger.

[A dogger, as its name suggests (from Dogger Bank, which got its name from the boats) was a two-masted Dutch trawler. It was not uncommon to equip them with cannon during wartime, usually to act as support vessels.]

Greyhound, transiting from Cork to Lisbon, took two French merchantmen.

Monmouth captured the *Vestale* (18) privateer.

Off the coast of Africa, *Sutherland* and *Gosport* engaged a French East Indiaman of 38 guns, forced her aground, and burnt her. They will have been the pair assigned to the West Africa Station, so this action will probably have taken place south of the Sahara.

Chester sank a French privateer off Ushant. The ship tried to gain the cover of the guns on that island but did not last long.

Saphire captured an 18-gun merchantman and the Spanish privateer *Bilbao (16)*.

Lowestoffe took a rich armed merchantman.

With all these successful actions it is striking that B.P.C. escaped the nets so readily.

In addition to actions by the Navy, the City of London outfitted a trio of privateers: *Prince Frederick (28)* flag, *Duke (20), Prince George (20)*. Commanded by Commodore Talbot, they sailed from Cowes on the Isle of Wight on 2 June. *Prince George* capsized on 7 June but the others proceeded to the Azores, victualled, and made for the Grand Banks, off Newfoundland. On 10 July Talbot fell in with three St. Malo privateers which had been haunting the Pacific shore of South America for the past four years and were returning home laden with treasure. They were the *Marquis d'Antin (24), Lewis Erasmus (28),* and *Notre Dame de Deliverance (22)*.

At first, the French, flying no colours, ignored the British, but when *Prince Frederick* fired a warning shot they raised the flag and formed line. The British seem to have been abreast of them, because, *Duke* closing first, engaged to windward, while *Prince Frederick* was to leeward. She closed to within pistol shot of the *Marquis d'Antin* and maintained station as they traded broadsides. The *Lewis Erasmus* came up on Talbot's bow and tried to drive him off, but *d'Antin* struck her colours first, after a three hour fight. *Erasmus* was then pursued and taken. Meanwhile *Duke* went after the remaining ship, which managed to escape, though she was later taken off Louisburg by the *Chester* and *Sunderland*.

Chester and *Sunderland* were doing well themselves. Serving closer to home waters earlier in the year, at 10am on 20 February they had taken the *Elephant (20)* after a chase and engagement that lasted until she was dismasted around 6pm. On board were the Superintendent of Louisiana and his family, a full load of cargo and 24,000 pieces of eight. The value of the privateers captured on the Grand Banks was similar in scale. When brought to Kinsale on 30 July they fetched £700,000 (and each able seaman received £850). However, in a patriotic gesture, given that B.P.C. was in Scotland when the men were paid, they all donated the prize money to the war effort. (Talbot treated his prisoners with honour, but refused to ransom the ships, so that his crews were able to find all sorts of goodies stashed away between the planking.)

Privateers also accounted for two French East Indiamen that were attacked sometime during the year, though the locations and times are not given: one attacked by the *Surprize* was badly holed and sank the next day, while the French *Redoubtable* was taken by the *Sheerness*. There was also the *Aigle (30)* out of St. Malo, taken by the *Tygress,* but she may have been taken in the West Indies.

In popular culture, British privateers always help the Rebels. Some did, but at least one important cargo was intercepted by the London privateer *Ambuscade*. This was a Spanish brigantine called *San Pedro*, out of El Ferrol. She was found to be carrying 2,500 stands of arms, 110 barrels of gunpowder, 70 casks of musket balls (400 lb. each), many flints, and 60,000 pistoles. Only 1,200 of these were found on board, the rest having gone over the side, along with the ship's papers, during the chase. The captain of the *Ambuscade*, a man named Cooke, received 500 guineas from King George.

[Pistoles, like guineas, varied in absolute value, but were deemed to be 3 écus each. They were also valued at 10 livres apiece. Which begs the question, what is an écu? And, what is a livre? A livre was originally a pound of silver, just like the British pound. And like it, livres were subdivided into 20 sous or sols (equivalent to shillings) each divided into 12 deniers (pence). Denier is of course derived from the Roman denarius. After the currency crisis of the early 18th Century the denier was restored to 1/12 of a sou, a sou to 1/20 of a livre — basically matching the old British monetary system. There was also the Louis d'or, worth 24 livres, the demi-Louis worth half as much, and the double Louis worth twice as much.

But a silver écu was worth 6 livres, not 3, so the 10 livre valuation is the more logical one. Otherwise, a pistole valued at 3 écus would be worth 18 livres, not 10. The pistole was a gold coin, and so perhaps was more valuable in its physical form than on an accountant's balance sheet. Livres did not appear as coins in their own right, except for some special issues in the 1720s, but were simply an accounting unit. Francs were not introduced until 1795.

Also, pistoles were not minted in France. They were actually Spanish double escudo gold coins — in best 'pirate-English' they were doubloons. An escudo was worth 16 silver reales. The eight reale piece, or piece of eight, was the dollar (hence the terms 'two-bits', or 'a quarter'; in Spanish it was also known as a peso.) So, a gold escudo was 2 silver dollars, and a gold double escudo, or doubloon, or French pistole, was 4 silver dollars. 60,000 pistoles would therefore be $240,000 Spanish, or 600,000 livres; assuming (naively) a pound of silver is a pound of silver, that would be £600,000.]

Thus the year ended. Knowles requested and was authorised to try attacking the enemy ships still at Boulogne and Calais, but would have to wait until the weather improved.

Louisbourg

The taking of Louisbourg does not directly affect the narrative of events in Europe, but it should be discussed somewhere. It has already been recounted how the New Englanders cobbled together an operation to take the place and how Martin sought to intercept a potential relief convoy from France.

In North America the British held the lands that would come to be known as the Thirteen Colonies, with Georgia as a debatable bit north of Spanish Florida, Massachusetts on the northern boundary, and the French claiming everything else, including what is now New Brunswick and Maine. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) gave Newfoundland to England. Acadia (mainland Nova Scotia) was settled by the French but also came under British control, except for Cape Breton Island on the southern shore of the St. Lawrence estuary, where the fortress of Louisbourg was constructed. In Acadia the British established posts at Annapolis and Canso, but the colony retained its French population.

French Canada learned of the state of war before the English colonies, allowing them to send 6,000 men under a M. du Vivier to capture Canso without interference. Annapolis, a (barely) fortified place, was invested in August of 1744. If taken it would give the French all the key ports north of New England, allowing them not only to protect their own trade route up the St. Lawrence, but to intercept British trade, and worse, interfere with the colonists'

Map of Louisbourg

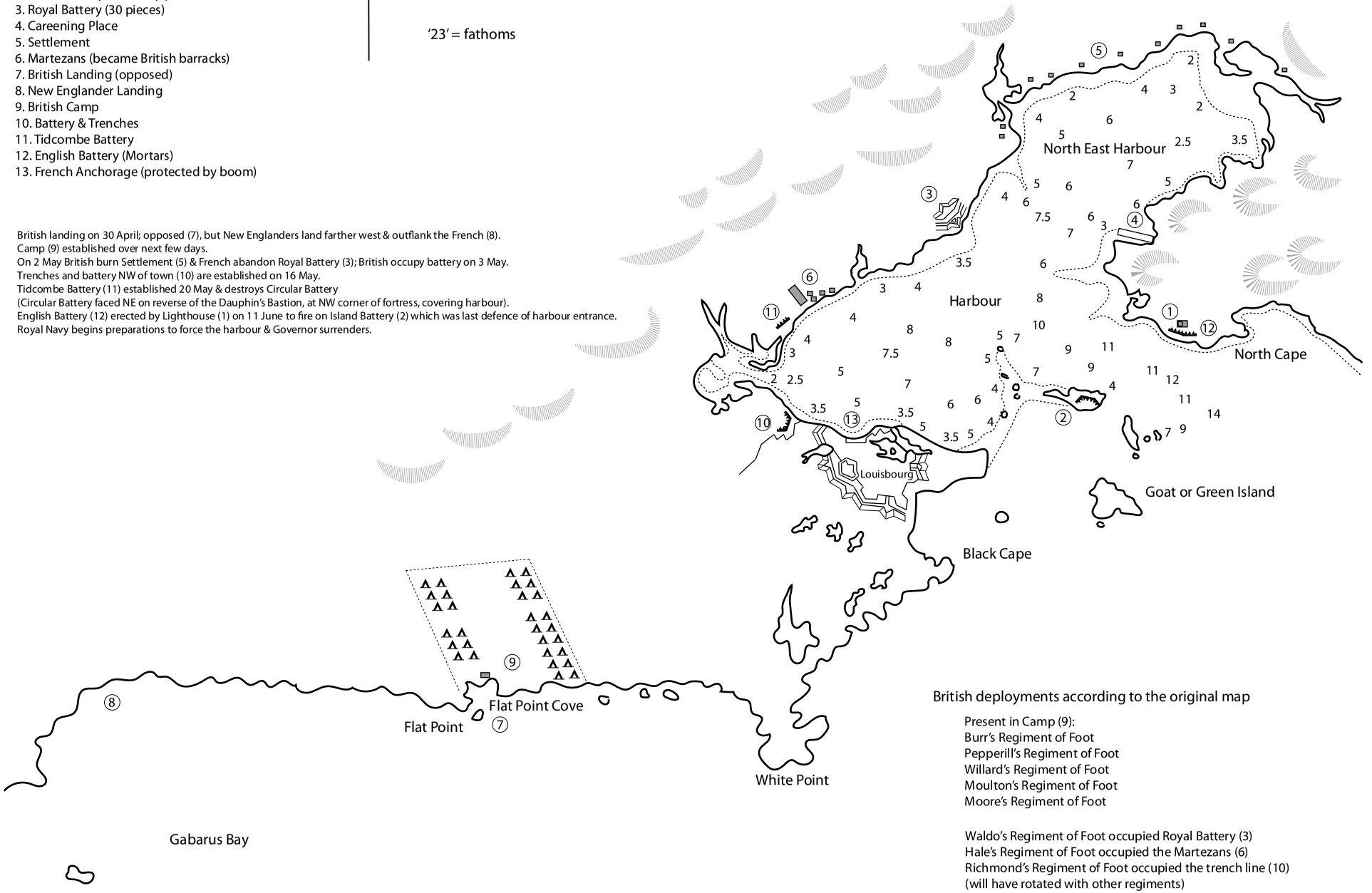
Original drawn by T. Jeffreys 1757
showing the 1745 campaign

1 Mile

'23' = fathoms

1. Lighthouse
2. Island Battery (30 heavy pieces)
3. Royal Battery (30 pieces)
4. Careening Place
5. Settlement
6. Martezans (became British barracks)
7. British Landing (opposed)
8. New Englander Landing
9. British Camp
10. Battery & Trenches
11. Tidcombe Battery
12. English Battery (Mortars)
13. French Anchorage (protected by boom)

British landing on 30 April; opposed (7), but New Englanders land farther west & outflank the French (8).
Camp (9) established over next few days.
On 2 May British burn Settlement (5) & French abandon Royal Battery (3); British occupy battery on 3 May.
Trenches and battery NW of town (10) are established on 16 May.
Tidcombe Battery (11) established 20 May & destroys Circular Battery
(Circular Battery faced NE on reverse of the Dauphin's Bastion, at NW corner of fortress, covering harbour).
English Battery (12) erected by Lighthouse (1) on 11 June to fire on Island Battery (2) which was last defence of harbour entrance.
Royal Navy begins preparations to force the harbour & Governor surrenders.



British deployments according to the original map

Present in Camp (9):
Burr's Regiment of Foot
Pepperill's Regiment of Foot
Willard's Regiment of Foot
Moulton's Regiment of Foot
Moore's Regiment of Foot

Waldo's Regiment of Foot occupied Royal Battery (3)
Hale's Regiment of Foot occupied the Martezans (6)
Richmond's Regiment of Foot occupied the trench line (10)
(will have rotated with other regiments)
Gorham's Regiment of Foot occupied the Lighthouse (1)

fisheries. But, Annapolis, with a tiny garrison under Major Mascarene, held out until relieved by a force from Massachusetts. The Governor of that colony, William Shirley, also spread a rumour that Britain intended to send an expedition to take Canada. Vivier withdrew in September.

The Colonists assumed he would be back next year. But, if they could take Louisbourg before then he would be unable to support an army in Acadia, which was short on roads. Moreover, as a base for the Royal Navy Louisbourg would secure the Grand Banks fisheries and complete cut all French trade with Canada. The idea was not novel, but finding the resources to take the place was difficult.

The French, meanwhile, spend much of 1744 completing plans to reinforce Louisbourg. Aware of this, Shirley informed the Admiralty — the English governors were, like their French counterparts, under Maritime authority; curiously, they were better informed about affairs affecting them than London was. In fact, Shirley told London when the French planned to sail: in February of 1745.

Unwilling to rely on London, the Massachusetts colonists voted (25 January 1745) at their General Assembly to send an expedition to take the fortress. Shirley had told London the place was badly maintained and the garrison unhappy. This may have been to encourage authorisation of an attack, but it was also true. The New Englanders hoped Britain would do something to interdict the French relief effort but they relied mainly on speed. 4,000 men were assembled in Massachusetts by the beginning of March, 3,000 of them from that colony. Local privateers were hired, and a 400-ton ship was bought and outfitted as an escort. (The regiments were officially designated the 65th and 66th regiments of the line for the duration of the war.)

Help from the Jamaica Station was not forthcoming, but the senior RN commander in North America, Commodore Peter Warren, did what he could. He had been in favour of the idea from the start (he was a major landowner in New York, with a Bostonian wife). Warren was at Antigua when Shirley's letter reached him on 22 February. At a council of war his captains declared they were not in a position to help, but Warren sent to London strongly urging the Admiralty approve and assist the project, and also wrote back to Shirley, encouraging him. Warren also sent him the *Launceston (40)* and *Mermaid (40)* frigates (there was a third ship, *Weymouth (60)*, but she was wrecked).

London had in fact already approved the plan and dispatched orders for Warren to join the expedition with the aforementioned ships, plus the *Hastings (40)*. These orders arrived on 8 March. Warren decided to use the *Superbe (60)* instead of *Weymouth*. His commanders, including Knowles, who was then serving on the Antigua Station, submitted a written protest — there was a general fear that the French at Martinique were about to start something. Warren sailed anyway.

[Warren was forced to give the fiery Knowles a direct order to give up his flagship, the Superbe*, and assume command of the Antigua Station.]*

Warren sailed on 13 March. Two days later Shirley received a note from him saying he was proceeding direct to Louisbourg to save time, barring a watering stop at Canso (which although nominally captured had no defences). Instructions were sent to the *Eltham (44)* at Piscataway and a prize, the *Bien Aimé,* then at Boston, to rendezvous at Louisbourg.

Shirley's expedition set out from Nantasket Road on 24 March with the 4,000 men aboard 90 transports under 'General' William Pepperill (he was a merchant by trade), and an escort of thirteen small ships under Captain Tyng (*Massachusetts (24), Caesar (20), Shirley (20), Prince of Orange (16), Boston packet (16)*, five sloops of from 14 to 8 guns, a 20-gunner hired by Rhode Island, and two 16-gun sloops from Connecticut).

Canso was reached and retaken in early April. An 8-gun fort was erected there. Louisbourg was a different matter because the St. Lawrence was still icebound, so the troops remained drilling at Canso. However, cruisers were sent to keep a watch on the state of the ice.

On 18 April the French frigate *Rénommée (36)* appeared at Canso but was chased off by the New Englanders. *Eltham* arrived on 22 April, and the next day Warren and his squadron appeared. The ice cleared before month's end, allowing Warren to set up a blockade of Louisbourg. Pepperill was informed on 27 April and on 29 April he set out. As it turned out the French in the West Indies had indeed started something; Warren was informed on 23 April. He decided 'one job at a time' and stayed. There is more than a hint that Shirley delayed passing on the news until it was too late to turn back.

[It will be recalled that according to Richmond, though not French sources, Macnémara's convoy included Rénommée*, but he sailed for the New World in July. It is entirely possible the* Rénommée *went out on more than one run, though.]*

As might be expected, someone had drafted the 'perfect plan' to take Louisbourg, which naturally proved to be unworkable on the spot. The place was supposed to be surprised by a night landing at Gabarus Bay to the west of the fortress. The men were supposed to row up to the town wall where it approached the shore at a small cove and use scaling ladders. But, the expedition was delayed and only arrived at 8am on 30 April. Instead, the landing was made in broad daylight at Freshwater Cove, about four Km west of the fortress. The garrison sortied with 100 men and skirmished with the landing party until the ships came in close and drove them off with grape shot. Half the attackers got ashore that day and the rest the following day.

The French, following the sieges-for-dummies playbook, burned all the houses outside the town and sank what ships there were across the harbour entrance. But, the New Englanders marched around the end of the harbour to the Grand Battery, which they carried without loss because its garrison abandoned it beforehand. The French had spiked the guns, but the attackers drilled the spikes out and prepared to use the cannon on the town.

The next target was the King's Battery, which fronted a vast boggy area. The besiegers had to pull their guns through

two miles of the stuff, but managed it by using wooden sledges sixteen feet long, pulled by teams of 100 men. Wooden rafts were used to bring the stores ashore. All preparations were complete by 7 May, at which the Governor was summoned to surrender, and — not following the playbook — refused to do so.

By this time more ships were arriving from England (by way of Boston): *Princess Mary (60)* on 4 May, and *Hector (40)* on 19 May. French ships also began to appear, but they were all small blockade runners. Ten were taken and two got through (thanks to a thick fog). On 11 May it was decided not to conduct a formal siege, but to try and starve the defenders out. This seemed certain of success… until camp fever broke out.

On 19 May the Navy captured the French Vigilant, in the following manner. *Mermaid* sighted a large sail to the southeast, the wind being ENE. She was at that time detached from her squadron, which was operating south of the town, but not that far away. Seeming to be alone, she was pursued by the French ship and fled toward the squadron, concealed in a fog bank. The chase lasted until 2pm, when the Frenchman suddenly saw the British squadron emerging from the fog close by. Now it was *Mermaid's* turn to give chase. A faster vessel, she was able to manoeuvre and give a broadside every so often. By 6pm a privateer snow had joined in the fun, firing her bow chaser. By 8pm *Eltham* and *Superbe* had closed the distance. At 9pm the Frenchman struck. It was the *Vigilant*, a 64, loaded with six months' of provisions and replacements for the garrison. The *Vigilant's* capture did not end the siege but it probably would have ended in the French favour if she had got through.

Pictured above: the capture of Louisbourg, showing Warren's squadron entering the roads after the destruction of the French shore batteries. By Peter Monamy.

By 28 May the besiegers were down to 2,100 men, including all the spare personnel Warren could loan Pepperill. An attempt to speed the siege by an attack on the Island Battery, which commanded the harbour mouth, was repulsed with a loss of 189 men out of 400, depressing everyone. The only gain was the realization that the battery was vulnerable to fire from the opposite shore at Lighthouse Point, where a mortar battery was duly set up.

This was around the time l'Etanduère sailed from France and was mistakenly believed to be sailing for Cape Breton instead of Cape François. In response, London sent five more ships to Canso: *Sunderland (60), Canterbury (60), Chester, (50), Lark (44). Chester* arrived 10 June and the others on 13 June. The British had a lot of firepower, but unless they could silence the batteries at the harbour entrance it could not be employed very effectively. More troops were being raised but they might not arrive in time. In fact, they might be needed at Annapolis, which was under siege itself by a French and Indian expedition under M. de Ramesay. Both sets of defenders were imploring their side's besieging team to come and save them!

Alas, the mortars at Lighthouse Point proved decisive. The Harbour Battery was nearly done for. Warren called a council of war and urged that they bring their ships into the harbour. Either the fortress would surrender or they would flatten it. A simultaneous assault by land would also take place.

There was no need. The Governor knew what would happen once the Harbour Battery was silenced, and beat the *chamade*. Louisbourg surrendered on 17 June. It would be handed back at the peace, so General Wolfe could have something to practice on before he took Quebec.

Gains and Losses

Though there were no major naval engagements, 1745 was a very active year. The British lost five warships to enemy action, four of which were sloops, two of them in European waters. The fifth ship was the *Anglesea (40)*, engaged by a 54-gun privateer, the *Apollo*. The *Anglesea* fought (22 April) until disabled, but her surviving senior officer, a second lieutenant, was sentenced to be shot and executed at Spithead. They also lost three privateers: *Black Prince (50), Bristol (30),* and *Dartmouth*.

[Some records show this Anglesea *— there were three editions during the war, so it is hard to tell which is which — remaining in British possession and being sunk as a breakwater.]*

Losses to the weather were more severe: *Pembroke* was sunk in the Medway by a sudden squall, losing over 100 men. She was later raised. Similar occurrences, and weather-induced collisions, put ships out of action, like the *Royal George*, which struck and sank the *Cape Coast* in Tor Bay. Two ships were run aground in heavy weather, the *Tyger* on the Berryhead, and the *Fox* near Dunbar. In *Fox's* case all perished. She was carrying a load of Jacobite prisoners. Mirroring the combat losses, three British privateers were wrecked: the sloops *Mediator, Fame,* and *Saphire's Prize*.

The Bourbons lost 370 prizes (including warships and privateers) in European waters, the British 375. About a fifth of the Bourbon losses and about a sixth of the gains were Spanish. When all losses are counted the British came out ahead by 22 ships.

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The Deadliest Seas

Excursus by David Hughes

Today they are no longer the deadliest — the giant waves of the North Pacific and South Atlantic are the greatest threat to modern ships, while the universal availability of GPS, radar and sonar have tamed them. But in the 18th Century the coasts around the British Isles and especially the North Sea and the Channel had the greatest chance of taking warships unaware and exposing them to damage and distress. It is all a matter of uncertainty — of course the shockingly abrupt winds found in the Gulf of Lyon and the unmatched ferocity of the hurricanes in the West Indies were dangerous beyond compare, *but* even in the 18th Century they were predictable and any capable ship master knew how to try to avoid them by either course or season of travel. It was very, very different around the United Kingdom in the home waters of the Royal Navy, La Marine and the Admiralties of Holland. To best understand the nature of these waters and their risks to mariners, we will arbitrarily divide them into three: The Bay of Biscay, the North Sea and English Channel and the Scottish Islands.

The Bay of Biscay

For these notes the Bay of Biscay is deemed to also include the extreme west of the Channel, the western approaches to Ireland and England and much of the Irish Sea. The problem here is simplicity itself, deadly simplicity in the age of sail. The prevailing winds are from the west, and because they have travelled across the Atlantic Ocean they have generated large waves (the technical term is 'fetch' the measurement of distance over which waves can form). Of itself this would not be an issue as while the waves are formidable the deep waters means that their amplitude (meaning the ratio between the distance between waves and the height of their crests) is not especially impressive, allowing ships to ride relatively easily between each wave. In fact, the greatest risk is in the Irish Sea despite it having a much smaller fetch, as the winds from over Ireland clash with those driving south from the narrow gap between it and Scotland and north from the gap between Ireland and England, all too often setting up a confusion of crossing and toppling waves.

But the real problem is of course that to the east lies an often-inhospitable coastline, dotted with reefs and with very few harbours — areas like the Brittany Peninsula, the coastline of Devon and Cornwall and further north the formidable cliffs along the west coast of Ireland. Even modern yachts take care to keep a distance when the westerlies blow but in this period the risks were far worse. For rather than sailing as close as 30 degrees to the wind as in a typical craft today, the typical square-rigged ship of the line would be lucky to do much better than 60 degrees. So, if your squadron was off the coast of France or England, a westerly coming up with the waves passing closer together and crests starting to break, you had to make some hasty decisions. Funnily enough the easiest solution *if* you were far enough to the west was to turn round (called 'wearing') and take advantage of the high speed of your square-rigger with the wind behind it and head as far to the south or north (depending on what would give you most sea-room from the land) as far as necessary. If you were very lucky you would run straight up the Channel. Hence, in this period, the endless delays that took place as fleets tried to return to their station after what mariners called 'a good blow'. Of course, all too often you could not and then you started the soul-destroying process of endless hours of close-hauling and tacking in a desperate attempt to keep as far to the west as possible.

The North Sea and the Channel

Now for the North Sea, which is considered for this purpose to include the Narrows of the English Channel. The first point to comprehend is that this is a very, very new sea —archaeologists and geomorphologists differ somewhat but all agree that it was as late as the Stone Age, some 8,000 years ago that what was once a flat plain of grassland, sand dunes, and placid rivers was submerged. Some say by a steady rise in global sea-level, more recently there is a suggestion that it was created by a giant tsunami triggered by a series of massive landslides in Norway. Regardless, what was left was what a mariner would

call ‘a right mess-up of soundings’, an area always pretty shallow but in many places littered with sandbanks, sometimes just below the surface of the sea, places with redolent and warning names like the Dogger Bank and the Fisher Bank. That alone would be bad enough but the problem is made much worse by the impact of tides and currents.

The North Sea tides are almost absurdly complex. We now know (mariners of the time had no idea of course) that they normally radiate out from specific points known as amphidromic centers, becoming greater in range as they radiate out: (These centers occur as a result of the clash between the Coriolis force of the earth’s rotation and the effect of multiple irregular coastlines.) They tend to be rare — perhaps four for the entire Indian Ocean — but yet there are three within the far smaller area of the North Sea. These are also unusually close together, resulting in tidal patterns unmatched in their complexity, and certainly not fully understood by 18th Century sailors. In places these can reach over 25 feet between high and low tides and unfortunately for a hapless navigator that range increases in shallow water, either near a coast or over an especially large submerged sand-bank. It goes without saying that such tidal ranges added enormously to the problems experienced when a squadron wished to enter or leave a port — as not only did the wind direction become an issue but that had to be matched against the direction of a tide. ‘Direction’ of course is not the right word for a tide but to an English mariner seeing the water level rise as a high tide flooded into the mouth of the Thames or around the Isle of Wight it meant that he would pray that soon there would be a nice westerly wind with the tide just ebbing from the high (and therefore flooding east) when he wanted to leave. It is not only the tidal range that is affected by shallows, so are the type of waves. This because the southern half of the North Sea and the eastern part of the Channel have relatively shallow water it means that their wave pattern is very different to that of the Atlantic. In particular the wave length (the distance between two crests) decreases while the wave period (the speed at which wave crests move under a ship) increases. To a mariner this simply meant that your ship was in continuous movement across frequent waves. It also affected the design of ships specifically intended to serve in the region, as a longer but still weaker ship could finish up with bow and stern on two crests and the center of the ship largely unsupported — a process known as ‘hogging’. Hence many British and Dutch early ‘frigates’ (of 30-50 guns) were given less length. This in turn meant a shorter gun-deck. To maintain gun-power a second gun-deck was needed, which did nothing for the sailing qualities of these small warships.

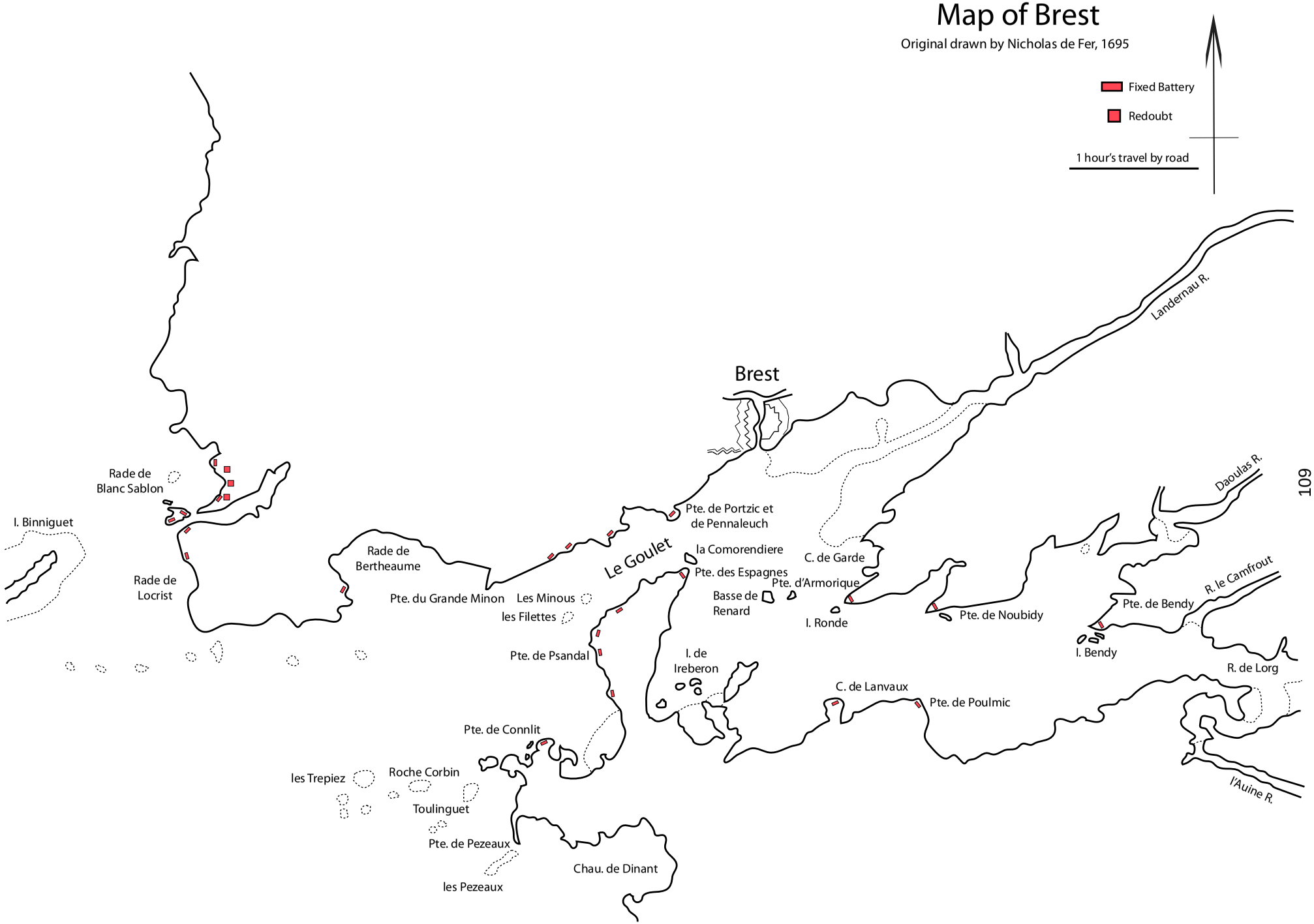
Currents add to the complexity: the main movement is of course from the Gulf Stream passing to the north of Scotland and then running south along the British and the Swedish/Danish coastlines. The Coreolis Force generates multiple semi-circular spin-offs to the east from both branches causing particular clashes of competing water-masses in the Skagerrak and along the coast of Denmark. But to the south the pattern is very different — Gulf Stream and Westerlies create powerful surface currents running east up the English Channel, usually placid and predictable, but with a high degree of chaos and uncertainty in two areas. One of these is along the western edge of the Cotentin Peninsula (which is why the French never built naval bases between Le Havre and Brest in the age of sail); the other takes place in the narrows of the Channel where the two currents, the one moving east and the other south past East Anglia, collide. The sole advantage to mariners of these currents, especially those in the southern North Sea was that their strength and consistency created long lines of sandbanks, dominantly running NE-SW, behind which, and therefore partially protected from bad weather, even large fleets could rest. The best-known and most-used of these was The Downs, a large area of relative shelter at the estuary of the Thames, but similar troughs were employed by the French near Calais and the Dutch along almost their entire coastline. In passing, but of great importance, one should note that local currents were made even more complex by the fresh-water discharge of major rivers, such as the Seine, Thames and Rhine.

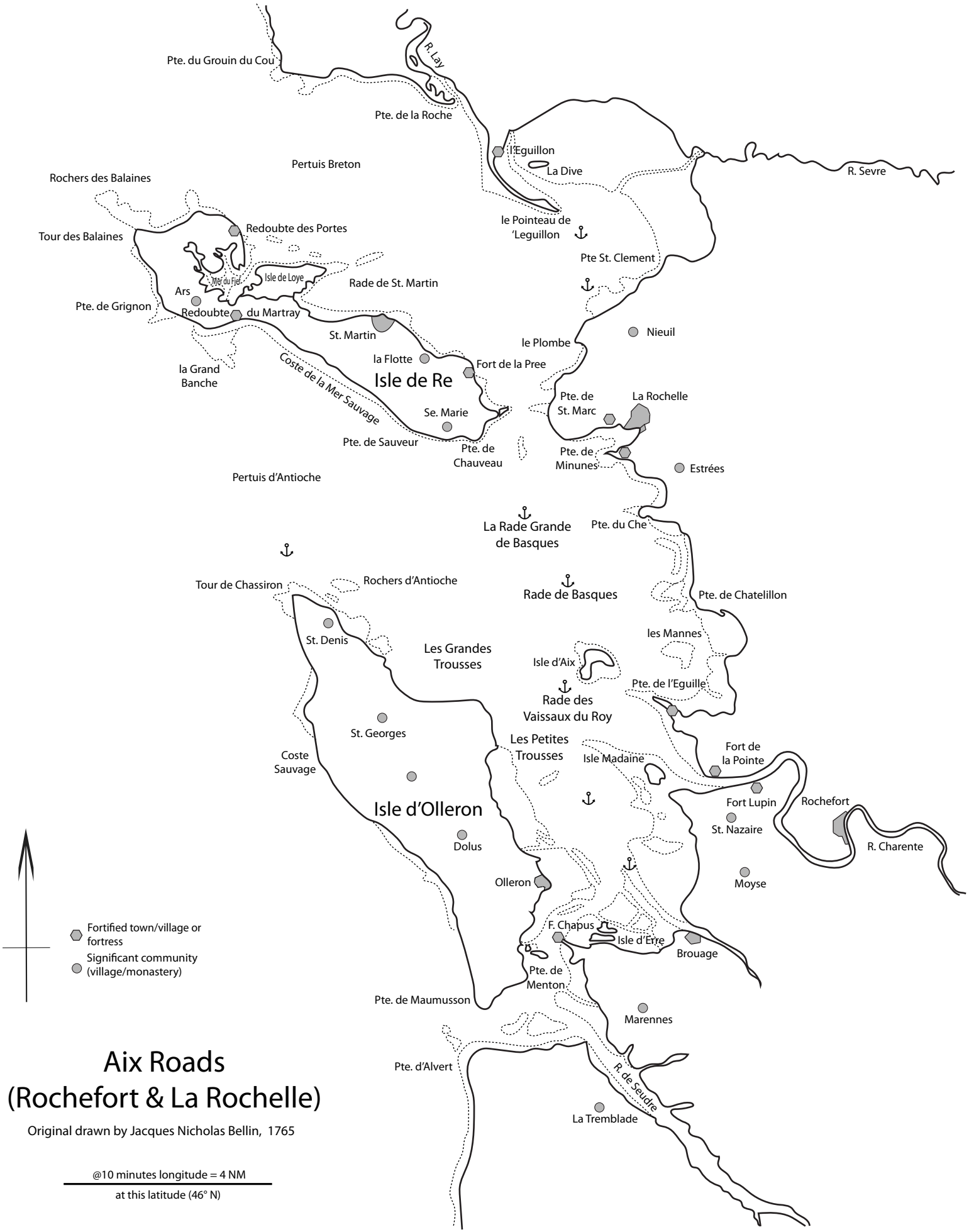
A famous example of the problems of navigating, let along fighting, in a shallower area of the North Sea came in the closing stages of the Four Day’s Battle of 1666 (the greatest battle of the Age of Sail measured both in number of warships and length of battle). Towards its close one division of the Royal Navy was compelled to quickly retreat west towards safety in England and in the judgement of its navigators could do so across the Galloper Shoal (one of those submerged sand-banks mentioned earlier) ‘in view of the setting of the tide and the movement of the seas’. And the White Squadron did safely pass over, but at its rear the squadron flagship, the Prince Royal, a first rate of 92 guns, ‘took the sands’ and was forced to surrender. It seems that the ship had been rebuilt from 80 guns a few years earlier and either her greater draught was not appreciated or the depth of the sandbank had been changed by the currents.

Finally, the rest of the area — that around the coasts of western Scotland and Ireland and north to the Faeroes and Orkneys. This is still an area of tricky navigation, not for the neophyte and only for those well equipped with charts and GPS and, if possible, radar and sonar. It’s the lack of predictability that matters, coupled with the sad fact that rain and strong winds are virtually the norm. All this because the Western Isles, the Hebrides and the Orkneys lie directly to the south-east of the Icelandic low-pressure zone, the source of nasty weather in that part of Europe. Even in the summer, successive gales are all too common (famously in the middle of the 2013 summer there were three gales in succession!). To make matters worse these of course drive a sailing craft towards the implacable coastline, while the strong currents that swish between and around the islands and thick fog is often generated when Gulf Stream waters meet chilled Scottish land. The worst spot of any on the game map is the Gulf of Corryvrecken, to the north-west of the Clyde Estuary, where the tides drive at over 15 kph, the waves are often 5 meters high and the maelstrom is the third largest in the world. And this is in the same region where, in 1745, the Stuart Pretender landed and of course where the Royal Navy had to maintain a blockade against French intrusions. The Admiralty was careful to send to the Scottish station (more accurately the North Sea Station) ships with only the very best navigators in command and led by men with an acute recognition of the risks.

Map of Brest

Original drawn by Nicholas de Fer, 1695





Aix Roads
(Rochefort & La Rochelle)

Original drawn by Jacques Nicholas Bellin, 1765

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1746 — RIPOSTE

1746 was the year of Rocoux, the biggest battle of the war to date, which took place in the Low Countries. Another French victory, counterbalanced by a worsening situation for the Bourbons in the Mediterranean and the end of the Jacobite Rising.

The Broad Bottom (Pelham) Administration fell as a result of its inept handling of the Jacobite crisis, which made King George look bad (he had been persuaded to pack his bags and make ready to flee for the Continent on his private yacht). The new Ministry was that of the Earl of Bath, formerly Walpole's old rival, William Pulteney, leader of the Patriots. But with him, the Government finally hit rock bottom. Bath's ministry lasted exactly '48 hours, three quarters, seven minutes, and eleven seconds'. He was jokingly praised for having made no mistakes during his term and for leaving the Treasury exactly as he found it. The King reluctantly asked the Pelhams to return; Henry would remain 'prime minister' for the rest of the war, and beyond.

[Walpole reputedly greeted his rival in the House of Lords with, 'well, here we are, the two most useless men in England'.]

Highly successful on land, the French continued their *guerre de course*. With the failure of the Jacobites and the concentration of enemy ships around their own shores they would push their operations farther out: to the Caribbean, to India, and also to North America in an attempt to succour Louisbourg.

Spain was nearly out of the war. Only her unchronicled privateering waxed hotter than ever. Her Italian campaign had backfired, and on 9 July King Felipe V died of apoplexy. His heir was his son by his first wife, by name Ferdinand VI. The new monarch had a significantly different outlook on European affairs than his stepmother and quickly began to seek ways out of the conflict. The man most committed to continuing the struggle was the *Marqués* de la Ensenada, effective prime minister of Spain. But even he only wanted to strengthen Spain's bargaining position. Other members of Ferdinand's council would have been happy to simply walk away cold.

The *marqués* de Villerias, whom Ensenada had replaced but who was still on the royal council, suggested a separate peace with Britain and Austria. The Habsburgs, enjoying renewed success, were cool to the idea but London and Madrid exchanged ambassadors. However, a fast settlement was rendered impossible by Spain's intransigence over the questions of Gibraltar, Minorca, and the *Asiento*. She wanted the two territories back and the contract cancelled so it could be given to France (technically, it had only been 'suspended' for the duration of the war). Given that Britain's bargaining position was growing stronger by the day, this was shortsighted.

Zenón de Somodevilla, Marqués de Ensenada (1702-1781)

The word 'ensenada' can be punned as 'en si nada', which means 'in himself nothing'. That was the name the courtiers gave him He had no past, but he had ability and was given a variety of administrative jobs as he rose through the ranks of the bureaucracy. Diplomatic jobs also — during the War of the Polish Succession he was involved in obtaining the thrones of Parma and Naples for the sons of Elisabeth Farnese; the Neapolitan one, Charles, awarded him the Marquisate of Ensenada.

In 1739 he seems to have been an 'advisor without portfolio', and was busied with the improvement of the naval base at El Ferrol. Though this seems a comparatively minor task, as mentioned in the section for 1740 his opinions carried weight in the royal council. In 1742 he was made Secretary of State and Secretary of War to Philip, *duque* de Parma, the Farnese's other son. But, in 1743 the Secretary of the Navy/Colonies died suddenly and Somodevilla, now forty-one years old, got the job. Actually he was given four appointments all at once: Minister of Finance, Minister of War, Secretary of the Naval, and Secretary of the Colonies. He refused to accept but was told he had no choice. He proved himself extremely able, instituting many reforms. He was pro-French and therefore anti-British, and stuck to this policy throughout his tenure, which lasted without break until 1754. At that time he was involved in a court scandal and exiled to the provinces until 1759. In 1766, however, he offended the King, was stripped of his offices, and exiled permanently from Madrid.

The End of the Jacobites

At the turn of the year the British still anticipated an invasion from France, or at the very least, a sizeable corps of French veterans sent to fight alongside the Jacobites. B.P.C. had inexplicably turned back on his march when he reached Derby, but his army was still a coherent force. So far as the Government could tell there were 15,000 men camped at Calais and Boulogne and about 230 craft to convey them. A French deserter said (18 January) that every man had been trained in boarding and disembarking, even to the vessels being clearly numbered and each man knowing his own transport. The landing was to be between Beachy Head and Dungeness. A few days later ten ships were reported readying at Brest, with more at Toulon and El Ferrol. This last ought to have suggested exaggeration, but the Government was taking no chances.

To some extent the troop concentration was a deliberate bluff. Winter quarters were often set up in that sector; using the troops' presence as a threat was an obvious move. But the news from Scotland was so positive, and the reports of the British Government's state of panic so prevalent, that the French dusted off their plans. By the time all was ready the Jacobites were in retreat, but this was not known on the Continent for some time. It was expected the landing would facilitate the rebels' march south, after which there would be a link-up in front of London or thereabouts. If a crossing proved impossible, the threat ought to tie down several enemy regiments, and perhaps even force them to pull more troops out of Flanders.

The Royal Navy reacted vigourously. Knowles was given the green light to destroy the transports across the way. With his command ship, the *Tilbury*, he took two sloops, six smacks, and all the smaller ships and made his way to the French coast. And found the plan as impracticable as before. Fortunately, the French were at last beginning to realise the Rising was doomed; attention shifted back to Flanders.

[Knowles was that Royal Navy trope, the commander who always thinks outside the box, regardless of practical considerations. Sometimes his zany schemes worked, sometimes they did not.]

Meanwhile Martin held himself ready to counter the Brest Squadron and detached a squadron on 12 January under Captain Legge (*Captain (70), Prince Frederick (70), Nottingham (60), Augusta (60), Lyme (60), Falkland (50), Maidstone (50), Lizard* sloop) to cruise in the Western Approaches to prevent the various French squadrons from linking up.

Until 6 February nothing was known for certain and the wildest rumours were chased down. On one occasion five French sail turned out to be the Dutch division. But, in the end calm prevailed. It was learned the Brest Squadron had some ships, but only four were ready and they were planning to escort the West Indies trade. Enemy troop numbers turned out to be vastly inflated. On 7 February Martin was ordered to prepare a new Western Squadron based out of Plymouth. Mayne took command of the Downs Squadron until mid February, when he had to participate in the court martial of Admiral Mathews.

Operations around Scotland continued. In February, *Gloucester* and *Hound* sloop from Byng's flotilla interdicted the town of Aberdeen, where the rebels were getting resupplies of ammunition. Possibly the largest Jacobite nautical operation involved ferrying 2,000 soldiers of the Jacobite lords the Duke of Perth and Earl Cromartie across the Firth of Cromarty. This was shortly before the Battle of Culloden (16 April). The Jacobites were already in their last camp about Inverness when they received word that the *Prince Charles* (ex-H.M.S. *Hazard*) had run aground at the Kyle of Tongue on 20 March. The vessel carried a vital load of stores, ammunition, and cash, but the Kyle of Tongue is about as far north as one can go in Scotland. It would be a gamble whether they could get there and back before the Duke of Cumberland arrived with his army. The crossing took place in a thick fog and was a complete success, despite the presence of Byng's vessels in the outer bay. After crossing, 500 of the men held posts while the other 1,500 men were dispatched north in a race against Loyalist clansmen under Lord Loudon and Earl Reay. Ultimately, the mission failed.

A handful of R.N. ships patrolled the Western Isles, at first trying to prevent clansmen from joining the rebel army; later they would hunt for the Prince. Apart from the massive logistics effort required to supply the Duke of Cumberland's army as he marched north against the Jacobites — which, typically, is glossed over in the histories as boring and unimportant — the only operation of note took place on 4 March, when Knowles encountered and took the *Bourbon* and *Charité* carrying 5-600 men of FitzJames' Horse. Richmond says a third vessel with 100 men from the regiment slipped through, but accounts of the Rising often speak of 250-300 men arriving, *sans chevaux*.

After this, both Knowles and Byng went ashore, the latter to attend the Court Martial, which was still running, and the former to head up a new expedition to Cape Breton. Knowles handed command over to Commodore Matthew Mitchell, Byng to Commodore Smith.

The Rising ended at Culloden. A number of frigates and light vessels searched for fugitives but most of the Royal Navy were already busy with other tasks. The French organised a rescue mission, resulting in *Greyhound (20)* and *Terror* sloop engaging a pair of privateers in Loch Nouay (Lochaber region) at the end of April. The privateers escaped with quite a few of the senior Jacobites.

Bonnie Prince Charlie flitted about the Highlands and Islands all summer until the St. Malo privateer *Bellona* managed to locate him on 20 September; he arrived at the small port of Roscou, near Morlaix in Brittany, nine days later, after dodging a Government squadron.

Richmond's list of the ships deployed during the windup of the Rising is as follows:

Downs Squadron (Mitchell)

In the Downs: *Princess Louisa (60), Defiance (60)*

Off the Dutch coast: *Ruby (50)*

Off Oostende (in French hands): *Syren (24), Badger* sloop, *Vulcan* bomb, *Swift* privateer, *Salamander* bomb, *Eagle* privateer, *York* privateer

Off Boulogne: *Squirrel (20)*, *Swift* sloop, *West* armed vessel.

Patrolling Oostende to W. Caple: *Success (24), Triton (24)*

Patrolling Beachy Head to the North Foreland: *Hornet* sloop

Refitting: *Carlisle* privateer

Smith's Squadron (from the Gunfleet to Hollesley Bay)

Hastings (40)
Convener sloop
Mayflower sloop
Princess Mary sloop
Whirlpool sloop
Sarah & Mary smack
John & Mary smack
Robert & Elizabeth smack
Royal Escape armed vessel
James & Mary sloop
John & Elizabeth smack
Nacton supply hoy
Kings Yachts: *Fubbs, William & Mary, Charlotte, Mary, Catherine*

Byng's Squadron (Cromarty & Orkneys and Shetlands)

Eltham (44)
Bridgewater (24)
Shark sloop
Vulture sloop
Exeter (50)
Gloucester (50)
Glasgow (24)
Hound sloop
Happy Jennet armed vessel
Winchelsea (24)
Shoreham (24)
Scarborough (24)
Sheerness (24)
Port Mahon (24)
Greyhound (24)
Baltimore sloop
Hazard sloop
Speedwell sloop
Serpent sloop
Ursula sloop
John & Ann sloop
Ferret sloop

The rest of the home waters command was serving with Martin's Western Squadron, preparing for the expedition to Canada, preparing for an expedition to India (a small reinforcement under Commodore Griffin departing on 8 April), or in refit. There was also the Dobb's Expedition to Hudson Bay.

[Griffin's command consisted of Princess Mary (60) *and* Pearl (44)*, the latter collected at Madeira along with some East Indiamen.]*

Cape Breton

The British very much expected the French would try to retake Cape Breton. Their control of Canada depended on it. There had been rumours in the immediate aftermath of its fall, especially of a squadron being sent from Toulon. So far, nothing had materialized. Even local reports of strange ships turned out to be will-o-the-wisps. But, the Admiralty predicted an attempt would be made in the spring of 1746.

With B.P.C. on the ropes, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Duke of Bedford, suggested the British should get a jump on the French and seize Quebec City, rendering the recapture of Louisbourg pointless. The Committee met on 10 April and this item came up for discussion on 14 April. They determined they would need 5,000 men to augment Commodore Warren's garrison (he was now the official Governor of the fort). About 1,500 were already enroute from Gibraltar and England to bolster Louisbourg. The colonies would be asked to raise another garrison regiment. About twenty ships, mostly lighter vessels, would also be needed, in addition to the handful already present. Apart from direct fire support they could also land cannon to form siege batteries. At the meeting it was decided to inform all the colonial governors and have plans drawn up — quite similar to those used when Canada was conquered in the next war. That is, a naval descent on Quebec and a land invasion from Albany against Montréal. Dispatches were sent off in early April and arrived in North America in early June. But the locals were not keen on the idea.

There were a number of reasons why. First, they had just disbanded their militia and the letters from London indicated they would have only five weeks to raise more men. The also thought 5,000 men was a ludicrously low number — the French were erroneously believed to have 40,000, plus their Indian allies. And so, the project to take Canada fizzled. However, news of it had an effect on the French.

Martin's Patrols

The Western Squadron never really ceased patrolling. A small group of ships remained in service all winter, first under Commodore Legge and then under Commodore Fox. (Legge had to attend Mathews' court-martial.)

Admiral Martin, still in overall command, received new orders on 22 February and prepared to execute them. Martin's ships consisted of:

Royal George (90)
Prince George (90)
Captain (70)
Prince Frederick (70)
Devonshire (80)
Augusta (60)
Lyon (60)
Maidstone (50)
Lizard sloop
Plus *Monmouth (70)* and *Falkland (50)* slightly delayed.

Fox's command remained on detached duty and is not included in the list. Three of his ships were *Yarmouth (64), Hampton Court (64)* and *Portland (50)*.

Apart from privateer and convoy hunting, Martin was especially to look out for a number of enemy warships coming to Brest from El Ferrol. They were believed to number five French and four Spanish. At Brest were thought to be twenty-six sail but only three were known to be ready. Because London did not know for certain that the ships were on their way, Martin's main focus at this time remained routine sweeps.

About the beginning of March a juicy target was identified. It was learned that 160 Bordeaux merchantmen were going to rendezvous off Île de Ré (by La Rochelle, midway along the western French coast). Because most of his ships were in refit (despite what his orders said), on 13 March Martin sailed with only *Monmouth, Falkland,* and *Lizard*, looking to collect Fox enroute. Not finding him off the Scilly Isles, he sent the *Tavistock* to Cape Clear (which Fox was required to pass by every two weeks). Located there, Fox joined Martin on 19 March. They cruised between the Île de Ré and latitude 46°.

The merchants did not appear so the British cast about for other targets. Orders dated 16 March informed Martin of four French men-o-war and nine transports, expected to leave the mouth of the Charente (that is, Rochefort) bound for Martinique. Then, on 28 March London learned that at least the Spanish had sailed from El Ferrol under sealed orders, which usually meant a special operation. But, before Martin could be redirected to this new target word came that sinister activities were taking place at Brest. Five ships of the line and three other warships plus fourteen large merchantmen were preparing to sail under the *duc* d'Anville. Ominously, artillery had been taken on board and there were soldiers camped in the vicinity. The French had laid an embargo on their ports to prevent word leaking out (not very effectively, it would appear — the news was corroborated by a number of sources). The three guesses were England, Ireland, or Cape Breton, with heavy odds on the last. At this date the Jacobites were not quite finished, but helping them now would have been a waste of resources.

The Admiralty added *Defiance (60), Ruby (50),* and *Salisbury (50)* to Martin's command and he was ordered to blockade Brest. Unfortunately this allowed Conflans and his squadron of four ships (*Neptune (58), Terrible (74), Alcion (50), Gloire (46)*) to escort a huge convoy of 250 merchantmen (the original 160, plus the nine, plus a balance the British had been unaware of) to Martinique (18 April).

Martin found he was unable to comply with his orders. Being rushed out of port and spending a month at sea, only two of his small squadron were now seaworthy. He put into Plymouth on 3 May with *Yarmouth, Monmouth, Prince Frederick, Captain, Lyon,* and *Falkland*. The *Devonshire* also needed a refit but went to Portsmouth. Meanwhile, his three reinforcements, under Captain Lord Harry Powlett, made for the rendezvous at Brest (22 April) and spent several days looking for him.

On 27 April Powlett captured the *Embuscade (40)*. Not finding Martin at Brest, Powlett made for 'the alternate' off the Scilly Isles. A Dutch merchantman told him they had sighted ten English sail 'to the south' the previous day, so back went Powlett to Brest. But, he, sent *Embuscade* to England with the disturbing news that d'Anville had eighteen warships ready to sail, plus fifteen transports. Martin received this news the day after he arrived at Plymouth, and shortly another report came in from the privateers *Duke of Bedford* and *Earl of Sandwich* that seven French East Indiamen and two men-o-war were readying at Port Louis (by Lorient). Additional intelligence clarified the strength of the Brest Squadron: eight ships of the line, ten frigates, twelve transports, two fireships, and a hospital ship. The inclusion of fireships, used to carry stores, and the floating hospital, virtually guaranteed an amphibious operation. The enemy troops being loaded numbered 2,000 and were led by M. d'Estournelles. It was guessed the force planned to rendezvous with the ships from El Ferrol, now at Port Louis. The latter, a mixed Franco-Spanish squadron, numbered ten additional sail. The destination had to be Louisbourg; the presence of the Spanish, who had no interest in Canada, meant they would get there via the Caribbean.

[Sailing in a circular route by using the Trade Winds and the Gulf Stream was, despite the distance, far faster than heading directly west from Europe. With no chronometers ships could not even be sure they were making progress against the strong prevailing westerlies.]

On 30 April London heard that a 'large fleet' had sailed from Brest. They were greatly agitated on learning Martin had put into Plymouth three days later. He was told to get to sea again as quickly as possible. They did give him three more heavy ships from Portsmouth (*Duke, Prince George,* and *Princess Louisa*), plus two that were refitting at Plymouth (*Augusta* and *Maidstone*). Martin had left *Hampton Court* and *Portland* covering Brest, and *Defiance, Ruby,* and *Salisbury* were already enroute to reinforce them. Altogether, he would have thirteen ships, not counting support vessels.

It was 13 May before Martin sailed, with only five ships under his immediate command (*Yarmouth, Captain, Augusta, Lyon, Falkland*). They had to fight a southwest wind and did not make Ushant until 20 May. The *Tavistock* was sent into Brest and came back with the news that the harbour was empty, except for three ships and some smaller vessels, probably frigates or privateers. Martin was not particularly perturbed. He had met a Dutch ship on 19 May which had seen forty sail headed for a place Richmond calls 'St. Martin's', on 16 May. This will have been Saint-Martin-de-Ré, on the north shore of Île de Ré. Martin believed he could intercept them near Rochefort. The enemy was probably in the waters off Lorient at the moment. His council of war agreed.

It was decided to sweep for the French as far as Belle-Île, west of Nantes. The captains were ordered to keep their ships cleared for action at all times. In accordance with London's instructions, since the French were not at Brest, *Maidstone's prize*, a small privateer captured during the voyage out, was dispatched to Cape Breton to alert Warren

of the danger, while *Tavistock* was sent to England. This left Martin with only one scouting vessel, the *Rochester*.

[Richmond notes that Martin's dispositions and instructions during this sweep made it into the textbooks.]

Martin arrived in the vicinity of Île de Groix, southwest of Lorient, in a thick fog, which lasted four days. By firing their cannon the ships managed to maintain contact; none were lost. On 30 May the fog lifted and there were signs of a SW gale. Meanwhile, *Rochester* visited Belle-Île and found nothing. Martin proceeded to Rochefort, and found what he was looking for. From information received locally it appeared there were ten Spanish sail, several French, and a host of transports. As quoted by Richmond (vol. III, p.12), 'The report of the master of the ship [*this was a prize taken three days out from Bordeaux*] said he "was so close in that he could count the Spanish ships by their colours, but there were so many with French colours that he could not be certain of the number of ships of war"'. But from other reports they knew the Brest Squadron had eight of the line and four frigates, and the Rochefort Squadron four of the line. This was too much for the British to tackle. At a council of war it was decided to resume station off Ushant while waiting for reinforcements.

This was done, Martin cruising from 20 to 70 miles southwest of Ushant. On 2 June *Defiance, Portland,* and *Ruby* joined him. From passing merchantmen the British added to their store of knowledge. The enemy at Rochefort numbered fourteen French men-o-war. They had arrived on 13 May, along with roughly 100 transports. The Spanish, arriving two days later, numbered twelve large vessels and several small ones.

On 3 June Martin 'acquired' six more ships: *Monmouth, Advice, Windsor, Mermaid, Chesterfield,* and *Lizard* sloop. These had been sent a few days before to hunt down a French squadron sighted off the Scilly Isles — which turned out to be a British patrol. Since it was his own ship, the *Rochester*, that made the false sighting, an inspired Martin chose to interpret the new ships' appearance as a response to his personal request for reinforcements. In other words, he commandeered them. (The British patrol had been captains Powlett (with three ships) and Saumarez (*Nottingham, Sunderland, Falcon* sloop).)

On 4 June Martin learned from another Dutch merchantman that the Bourbon fleet had been preparing to ail a few days before; it might already be at sea. The sailing date had been openly published — 30 May. The common gossip at Rochefort was that the soldiers were embarking for Ireland. In hopes that the sailing had been delayed an attack on Rochefort harbour was discussed by the British captains, but they had too few pilots to navigate the channel, especially if there was going to be smoke from cannon fire lying over the water. They were still keen to engage, the numbers of capital ships being now nineteen to twenty-two.

Martin had three choices. He could head southwest and lie in wait off Cape Finisterre (the large Bourbon fleet would take much longer to get there than he would) in hopes they were bound for Cape Breton, or he could head out into the Atlantic and hope to intercept them heading for Ireland (to get there a fleet from the Continent had to go well out into the ocean), or he could wait where he was, which was the default condition since the defence of England was paramount. And, that is what he chose to do.

On 7 June Martin encountered the Lisbon packet, which reported the British homebound convoy had been due to leave the Tagus on 29 May. It had a small escort (*York* and *Folkestone*) but Martin felt that was not enough. He pushed west against heavy winds until, on 9 June, he encountered one of the convoy's vessels that had become detached and learned the bulk of the ships were a long way to windward and thus safe from attack. Martin decided to remain in his new position, though, because his 90-gunners were prone to drifting in high winds and needed sea room.

New orders and three more ships (*St. George (90), Prince Frederick (70), Elizabeth (70)*) were sent to Martin on 8 June, followed by amended orders the next day. The orders were somewhat contradictory, the first set based on his own reports and the next on an assumption that the fleet at Rochefort, supposedly still there, was much weaker than Martin believed it to be. The Duke of Newcastle had taken it upon himself to compose his own set of instructions. These the Admiralty forcefully compelled him to rescind, but contradictions remained. The core of the problem was a statement that Martin must defend England regardless of circumstances, paired with instructions to be more aggressive.

This bundle of orders reached Martin on 20 June. He then sailed for Oléron, the large island opposite Rochefort. He was required to investigate Rochefort again, destroy the enemy ships if they were weak, or if they had sailed, to pursue them. If neither were possible he was to sail to Cape Clear and wait for new orders. On the chance the enemy was headed for the Straits, he was to warn the Mediterranean Squadron, now under Admiral Medley. Medley would head for Cádiz and Martin would follow the enemy and combine with him. However, these were just contingency plans. Cape Breton was still regarded as the most likely enemy objective.

Martin arrived off Oléron on 27 June. The *Mercury (20)* found him there the next day, to report that the French had sailed on 22 June, led by the senior man on the Atlantic coast, Jean-Baptiste Louis Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld de Roye, *duc* d'Anville, promoted in January of 1745 to *vice-amiral de Ponant*. Richmond says d'Anville took no precautions and ought to have suffered for it, but Martin had overestimated his strength, pulled back out of reach, and thus gave the Frenchman an opportunity that he was not even aware of. London's more aggressive orders turned out to be based on solid intelligence. In reality the Bourbons had only nine ships of the line, two heavy frigates or 4th rates, and three ordinary frigates, plus 60 transports carrying 3,500 soldiers. (Beatson says if every vessel were counted there would be nearly 100.)

Now that he had a better picture of the situation, Martin reacted quickly. The *Chesterfield* was sent to England with the latest news and he began to make for Cape Clear — his most recent orders forbade him from chasing the French. Also, it was vital to get out of the Biscay before the winds

pinned him against the coast. On 30 June, while still south of Oléron, he met a privateer out of Jersey who reported that weeks earlier she had boarded one of the enemy transports coming from Bayonne and found a consignment of clothing for the troops at Quebec. This confirmed Louisbourg was d'Anville's destination, almost. Martin detached the *Amazon* to cruise the Spanish coast for signs of more enemy vessels; she had orders to warn Medley at Cádiz first.

The next week was spent battling severe gales. Martin's command became divided. Four ships (*St. George, Portland, Defiance, Salisbury*) went missing in a fog. On 11 July two 'cruisers' (probably sloops) were deliberately detached to inquire at Kinsale, and on 14 July, when he made Cape Clear, Martin sent the *Swan* cutter to Baltimore (Ireland) for more news. The French, it seemed, were nowhere near Ireland. Given this, and the fact that his squadron was falling to pieces, Martin and his captains conferred and agreed to sail home. Martin brought the bulk of his ships into Plymouth on 17 July. However, six ships and two frigates under Captain Boscawen were left to cruise between the Soundings and Cape Ortegal.

Richmond breaks the ships down as follows:

Under Boscawen: *Namur (74), Monmouth (70), Prince Frederick (70), Hampton Court (70), Windsor (60), Advice (50), Mermaid (44), Mercury (20)*

Under Martin: *Duke (90), St George (90), Prince George (90), Yarmouth (70), Captain (70), Princess Louisa (60), Ruby (50), Defiance (60), Lyon (60), Augusta (60), Swa*n sloop, *Aetna* and *Scipio* fireships

Salisbury and *Portland* were still missing at this time.

The orders waiting for Martin at Plymouth were almost identical with the ones he had just issued himself, the only difference being that Boscawen was specifically to look out for a convoy from San Domingo which had a three-ship escort. Martin was also required to send a ship to escort some British East Indiamen newly arrived at Galway Bay — and again, Boscawen, learning of this, took it upon himself to carry out the instructions. But, this was no longer Martin's problem. Having been on active duty since 1738 he now proceeded to retire (20 July), leaving a vacancy in the command of the Western Squadron.

Jean-Baptiste Louis Frédéric de La Rochefoucauld de Roye, duc d'Anville (1709-1746)

D'Anville (he was created duke in 1732) was a distant cousin of the Rochfoucauld dukes, and held the reversion to that title too, which his son eventually inherited. His father was Lieutenant-General of the Galleys, one of the hereditary naval offices. Although d'Anville is often named his father's successor, he only held reversion of the office (from 1720), and since his father outlived him, he never occupied the post. However, he did serve as a galley officer, until 1734. At that time the Galley officer corps was abolished (though some galleys remained in service for harbour defence) so he transferred to the Marines. Technically speaking, the Galleys were not part of *La Royale*, but the Marines were, so this involved a transfer of service, which was not uncommon, but placed him in a new cultural environment. Officers of marines could serve aboard ship or ashore (there was a dedicated regiment for the latter role); d'Anville served aboard ship. In January of 1745 he was suddenly elevated to *vice-amiral de Ponant*. Doubtless this was due to his family connections and the need to find a commander of suitably high social rank to lead the high profile expedition to recapture Louisbourg. Occasionally such appointments worked out, usually they did not, and this was a typical case. D'Anville had little experience of fleet operations and no experience in leading them. His career ended abruptly on 27 September, 1746 when he died during the mission.

Duc d'Anville

D'Anville's Expedition

As originally conceived, the expedition to retake Louisbourg was to involve twenty ships of the line, twenty-one frigates, and thirty-two transports. The numbers vary with the source, and indeed varied from moment to moment. The number 54 is sometimes cited, and certainly a different mix of ships eventually took part. The land component would consist of 800 cannon (dismounted from the warships for the most part), 3,000 infantry, and 10,000 marines. Again, the numbers were significantly lower in reality.

British estimates of what eventually left France seem to be correct — that is, nine ships of the line, two heavy frigates, and three ordinary frigates. There was no special reason for why the numbers were so different, just the usual discrepancy between the pipe dreams of the bureaucrats in Paris and the reality of the waterfront. *La Royale* had great difficulty obtaining stores, replacement parts, sailors, and

money, even for an expedition of so great a magnitude that it had to be commanded by the most senior admiral.

The most accurate list seems to be the following:

Ships of the Line:

Férme (74)
Alcide (64)
Ardent (64)
Borée (64)
Mars (64)
Trident (64)
Diamante (54)
Carillon (60)
Caubon (60)

Heavy frigates:

Aurore (44)
Tigre (56)

There were two other ships of this class present, but they had been modified: *Argonaut (26)*, a 44 converted to a troopship, and the hospital ship *Mercure (14)*, a cut-down 56.

Frigates:

Mégare (26)
Sirène (30)

Argonaute (36), an East Indiaman, may constitute the third frigate.

Two other frigates participated in the operation but appear to have been sent later, probably with dispatches: *Mutine (24)* and *Rénomée (32)*.

The following 'specialty' ships are also listed: *La Judith* sloop, *Louisbourg* bomb, *Prince d'Orange* store-ship, *Saint Pierre* and *Vainqueur* fireships.

At Quebec were a couple of 5th Rates, built there, and possibly the *Caribou (52)*, which is listed in those waters for 1746. These ships do not seem to have participated in any way, unless *Caribou* sailed from France instead.

Since the British counted 60 or 70 transports but the troops were estimated at 3,500, it may either be that the transports were smaller than anticipated so that more were required, or that a number of merchantmen attached themselves to the expedition for safety. It is hard to know how many marines were really available; both French and Spanish vessels carried larger complements than the British, but the number of 10,000 would have been based on having forty-one warships, not fourteen. It is also possible the troops did amount to something near 10,000 since their numbers were cut severely during the voyage.

Despite the time absorbed in preparation, the expedition left in a rush. Badly fitted out and poorly provisioned, with inexperienced crews and an inexperienced admiral — though he was seconded by two able *chef d'escuadres*, La Jonquière and d'Estourmel — it sailed on 22 June. Blithely sallying through the open door unwittingly provided by Martin, d'Anville took 86 days to reach the New World. An average crossing time was perhaps 50 days. Low on provisions, the French lost 1,200 men or more to scurvy, and, after they reached the West Indies, Yellow Fever. Trailing dead men in its wake the expedition reached Nova Scotia — Acadia — without incident, sighting that coast on 10 September.

On 13 September they were caught in a terrible storm off Sable Island and completely scattered. Because Sable Island (then a French possession) is 300 Km off the coast, it would appear d'Anville intended to sail directly for Louisbourg. But, the storm put paid to that idea. The *Ardent* was blown clear back to France, severely battered (only to be captured by the British at Quiberon Bay). *Mars* suffered a similar fate, as did two of the frigates. Other damaged ships made the choice to return as well. The remnant put into Chibouctou (Chebucto) Bay — modern day Halifax — on or about 27 September. There was a small post here, still controlled by the Acadians.

[Beatson says 15 September and Richmond says 17 September. Both are obviously using OS. 27 September would be the 16th in OS. The ships will not all have come in at the same time, either.]

Commodore Warren, Governor of Louisbourg, sailed down for a look at the end of the month. He was aware of d'Anville's predicament from intercepted letters. The British counted forty transports and ten men-o-war. A head count by the French gave them 7,006 men, of all ranks: sailors, soldiers, and marines. Supposedly, Conflans, who had taken the spring convoy to Martinique, was to have joined d'Anville. Conflans led the *Terrible (74), Neptune (74), Alcion (54),* and *Gloire (46)*. But the only vessel known to have sailed north from the Caribbean for the purpose was the *Northumberland (70),* which had been stationed there since the previous year in the service of the Governor of Martinique, du Caylus. That would have given the French eleven warships, so perhaps *Northumberland* was still enroute.

By now, d'Anville was already dead. He died of apoplexy (the more romantic said of a broken heart) two days before his squadron made landfall, while pacing his forecastle at 3am. His successor was d'Estourmel, but he tried to commit suicide on 30 September and was badly wounded. La Jonquière assumed command. Experienced, and probably more psychologically stable than the previous two commanders, Jonquière knew the situation was dire, but tried for a time to carry on, planning an attack on lightly defended Annapolis Royal, located in the Bay of Fundy on Nova Scotia's western coast — 150 Km overland or 450 Km by sea. It could not be done without local aid, but that might be obtained. Meanwhile, those who were still fit began a training regimen.

In mid October the British offered a prisoner exchange (mainly so they could count masts). This was refused, but the French were now in despair. Probably as a result of the offer, another head count had been made. Since landing, 587 men had died and 2,274 were sick. The number of remaining fit was also lower because four of the transports had sailed for Canada on 10 October. They required an escort, too, the *Renommée*.

After three weeks waiting for local reinforcements, la Jonquière decided to return to France, departing on 24 October. In some accounts he still intended to head for Annapolis Royal and only changed his mind two days later. Under some circumstances it might have been politic to publicly announce they were continuing the mission and abandon it once everyone was aboard ship, but that is very unlikely in this case. No one wanted to remain. Or, the account may be true and he was persuaded to change his mind by his captains — eight of the ships were floating hospitals. Or, for the benefit of eyes at Versailles, he may have already decided to sail for home but in his reports made it look like he had to be forced to change his orders.

Sailing for home would not be that easy. They still had to run the gauntlet of the Western Squadron and whatever Nature could throw at them.

The Descent on Lorient

Les Anglais, remplis d'arrogance
Sont venus attaquer Lorient;
Mais les Bas-Bretons,
À coups de bâtons,
Les ont renvoyés
Hors de ces cantons.

The English, full of arrogance
Came to attack Lorient;
But the Low-Bretons,
Beat them with sticks
And sent them back
Out of these counties.

Breton marching song

[Beatson and Richmond differ considerably regarding the dates of the Lorient expedition. The dates which follow are from Richmond, adjusted from OS to NS, with key dates, such as the day of landing, anchored by modern historians. Beatson, for example, says the expedition left Spithead on 5 August. Richmond, using OS, says 31 July, which translates to 11 August NS. When compared with modern histories, Richmond's dates line up and Beatson's do not.]

Though the French expedition to Canada was not as strong as the British feared, d'Anville's breakout had a significant effect. For one thing, the British expedition to take Quebec was scotched. Preparations had continued into early June, but were lacklustre. By that date only five warships and a few transports were assembled at Spithead, though the troops were (oh, joy) already aboard. Command of the escort was given to Commodore Cotes, who was competent, and command of the soldiers to Lieutenant General St. Clair, who was better than average. Poor weather delayed matters into July, with the usual adverse winds followed by a short lull that allowed sailing, followed by a repetition of adverse winds that halted operations until news of d'Anville's departure made the whole operation too risky. They could not sail after the end of July in any case, because the St. Lawrence would begin to ice up by the time they arrived.

Nevertheless, it was decided to take the risk. More ships were added to the escort and the whole placed under Admiral Lestock, who now had seven of the line, a 50-gunner, three frigates, and three sloops:

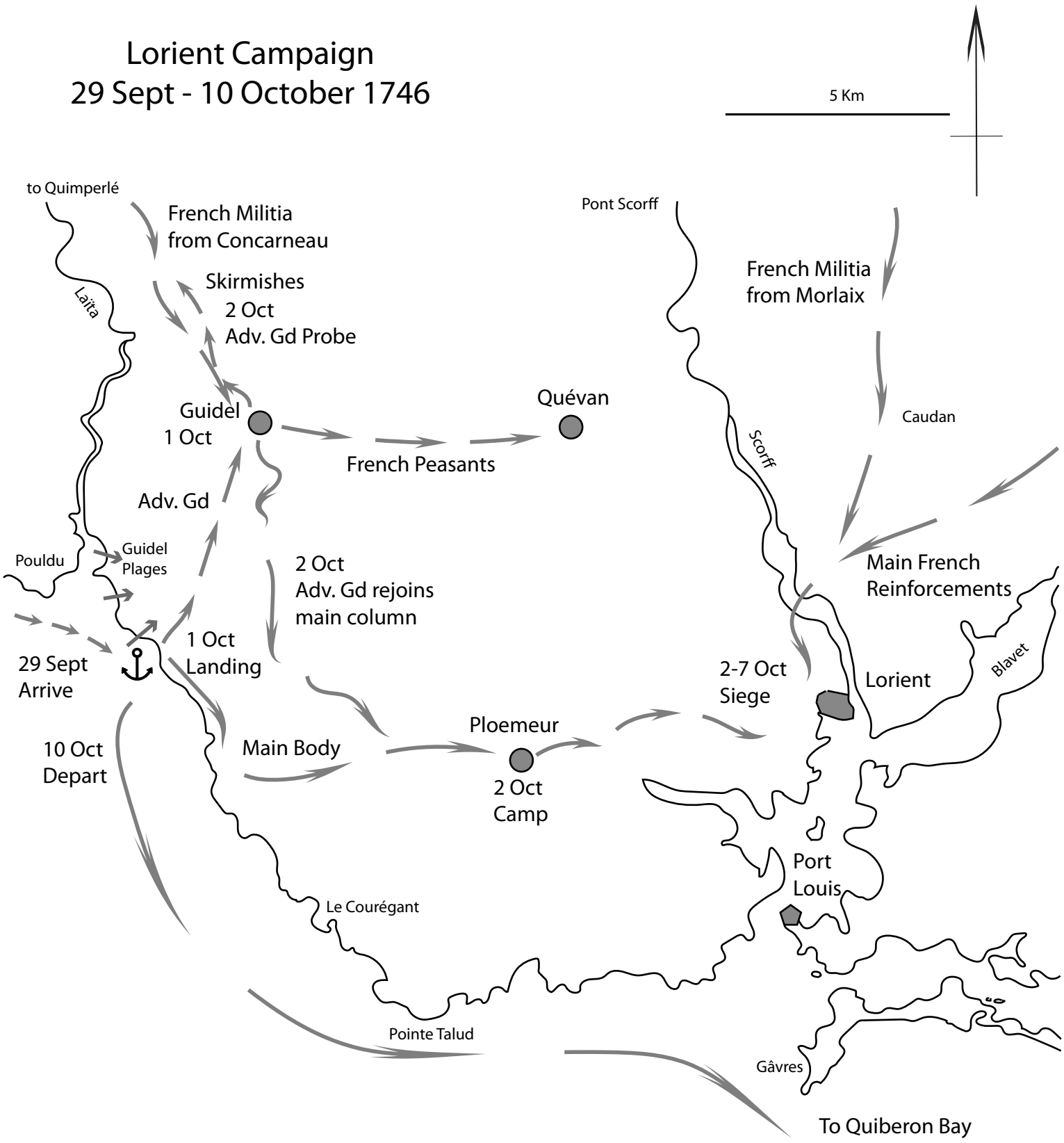
Princessa (70)
Devonshire (80)
Edinburgh (70)
Tilbury (58)
Superb (60)
Exeter (60)
York (60)
Ruby (50)
Hastings (44)
Poole (44)
Saphire (44)
Tavistock, Mortar, and *Vulcan sloops*

He was to sail for America by way of the West Indies and pick up additional ships (three of the line, three 'fifties', and three 'forties', plus more light vessels) in the Leeward Islands. It was assumed he would be riding d'Anville's tail and would have to use the soldiers to recapture whatever locations that the French had captured with their own expedition. It was expected that Louisbourg could hold on its own, but Canso and Annapolis could not. There was also the possibility that Jamaica was the real target. As for the attack on Canada it might still be possible for the New Englanders to secure Lake Champlain in preparation a land advance for next year (the Colonials laughed at this idea).

Lestock's orders were dated 28 July. The expedition left Spithead on 11 August, even though replenishment was not complete — the troops and crews were eating the stores as fast as they arrived and the local communities were running out of provisions — because it was the first day the wind was suitable. A week later the ships were off Sandown on the Isle of Wight, only 10 Km from Spithead. Thus matters remained until mid August, when the expedition was at Plymouth. By now, Public Opinion, for whom the operation was primarily being staged, was grumbling about the waste of resources and manpower, so the Powers That Be decided on a flashier publicity stunt: the troops would make a diversionary landing on the French coast.

This idea seems to have originated with Lieutenant General St. Clair, but was not a plan, merely an offhand remark that the Duke of Newcastle desperately grasped at. The landing, possibly in Brittany where there was Huguenot support, or possibly on the Biscay coast, would be a surgical strike, after which the expedition would return home, wintering together in England or Ireland in anticipation of sailing for Canada next spring. This was emphatically not what St. Clair had in mind. Insofar as he had thought of the matter at all, it was to be a feigned landing, made enroute to America. Lestock also objected, saying his navigation charts were inadequate and they had no pilots. Nevertheless, perhaps because he had only recently emerged from court-martial proceedings and felt he needed to make a demonstration of loyalty, he made the mistake of saying he and the General would carry out any orders they were given. Newcastle wasted no time. They were issued on 6 September.

The target was to be Lorient or Rochefort. St. Clair was encouraged to make a secure lodgement that could be held and reinforced. Lestock and the General objected in writing. Newcastle put the pressure on by saying the King 'found their lack of faith disturbing' (though not in those words). He


Lorient Campaign
29 Sept - 10 October 1746
5 Km
to Quimperlé
French Militia
from Concarneau
Skirmishes
2 Oct
Adv. Gd Probe
Laïta
Guidel
1 Oct
Quévan
French Peasants
Adv. Gd
Pouldu
Guidel
Plages
2 Oct
Adv. Gd rejoins
main column
29 Sept
Arrive
1 Oct
Landing
10 Oct
Depart
Main Body
Ploemeur
2 Oct
Camp
Le Courégant
Pointe Talud
Pont Scorff
French Militia
from Morlaix
Caudan
Scorff
Main French
Reinforcements
2-7 Oct
Siege
Lorient
Blavet
Port
Louis
Gâvres
To Quiberon Bay

airily dismissed the question of pilots by saying he had found one and doubtless they could find others, then sent them the 18th Century equivalent of a Michelin Map of Gascony. "…and if no good comes of it, I think no hurt can; for the Admiral will certainly not risk the fleet unnecessarily in hazardous navigation…" (quoted in Richmond vol. III p. 27). As for the question of secrecy, the Government seems to have given up even trying — everyone knew which MPs were shooting off their mouths in the coffee shops.

There was also a confusion of roles between Lestock's force and Anson's. Admiral Anson had been asked his opinion of the plan and thought a 'descent' might be successful, which encouraged Newcastle, but it seems the admiral was given the impression he was the one being asked to execute it, and furthermore only thought it good in the same sense that St. Clair did, as a pretended landing or show of force. The Admiralty had to expend much letterhead clarifying who was going to command what.

Lestock and St. Clair made their decision between Rochefort and Lorient on 14 September. Lorient, the home base of France's East India Company, would be the target. On 6 September a small squadron (*Edinburgh, Ruby, Hastings, Tavistock, Royal George* cutter) under Commodore Cotes had been sent to find a suitable landing stage and anchorage, and to examine the fortifications of Port Louis and the Île de Groix. Newcastle gave his final orders on 22 September. Sailing took place on 26 September, and the expedition — 55 transports — arrived off Groix on the evening of 29 September. Cotes met them and indicated a suitable spot for landing about sixteen Km from Lorient.

(The regiments involved were 1*. Battalion Royal Scots, Munro's, Bragg's, Harrison's, Richbell's, Frampton's,* and several companies of marines.)

The British had not been expected. They had been sighted by a bark out of Port Louis, but were believed to be a returning West Indies convoy under the command of *chef d'escuadre* Macnémara. Once the mistake was realised beacon fires were lit, and the guns of Groix blazed away ineffectually. In Richmond's words: '*Late that night the whole fleet was at anchor about nine miles to the westward of the estuary of the Scorff between Pointe Talut and Pouldhu Bay a road open very nearly from W.N.W. to south. For any hindrance caused by the defences it appears that the squadron might have proceeded right up the Channel to L'Orient; but the Admiral had neither charts nor pilots to indicate which were the approaches.*' (Vol. III, p. 28.)

Lorient lies on the north (right) bank of the Blavet's estuary, three or four Km from the Biscay coast. In those days it was bounded on the east by the Scorff, which flows from north to south into the estuary. The Blavet flows from northeast to southwest, with the estuary opening out about four Km above the Scorff. Poldhu sits at the mouth of the next river northward along the coast, which is the Laïta. Pointe Talu[d] is the headland between. The British had to land immediately, before the weather changed; the fleet would shelter in Quiberon Bay to the south.

Few sources describe the expedition in any detail and what details there are are slightly (but not irreparably) different in each source. St. Clair apparently intended to land and march ENE to Pont Scorff, about twelve Km inland and ten Km north of Lorient. They would cross the river and head for Hennebont, ten Km to the southeast. This was the place to cross the Blavet. After, they would have to march in the same direction for at least twenty Km — to avoid another estuary — before angling south to strike Quiberon Bay. This would be a circuit of about sixty Km, or anything from a three-day to a week-long march. St. Clair did not plan to take Lorient or establish a beachhead, as Newcastle wanted.

The landing was made on the morning of 30 September, covered by fire from the bomb vessels and three 40-gunners under Cotes' command. For some reason Lestock chose to land in daylight even though the previous night had featured a full moon and light inshore breezes. By morning the surf was rather heavy and not much could be done until the afternoon. It gave time for the local militia to mount a response.

The coast here features wide sandy beaches interspersed with low rocky headlands. Three suitable sites were identified, the most distant being next to the Quimperlé River. Any force reacting to a landing at that beach could only approach by fording the Quimperlé at low tide. On the headland dividing that beach from the next was a battery of one or perhaps two guns. The other two beaches had easier access from the landward side and were already guarded.

There was light opposition by some cavalry and a small body of militia, inflated to '3,000 men' by the British. After feinting at the southernmost beach, 600 men were landed at the northern beach, along with St. Clair and two of his three brigadiers. After repulsing an attack made by the guardians of the middle beach, who came to meet them (the fleet could not observe to fire on this beach), more were landed at the now-empty middle beach — the defenders of the southern beach were enroute there but the march was a long one. Before the morning was out, 1,000 men under Brigadier O'Farrell had landed on the middle beach and pushed inland as far as Guidel.

[The other two brigadiers were Richbell and Graham. It should also be noted that the philosopher, David Hume, was St. Clair's secretary — when Voltaire wrote a fanciful account of the operation, Hume took it as a personal affront, leading to a celebrated war in print between the two.]

The landing was complete by the next morning. The marines remained on the beach to finish unloading cannon and stores. 100 men were stationed at Guidel. (Richmond does not distinguish between Guidel Plages, on the coast, and Guidel itself, about five Km inland, but in this case the latter must be meant.) At some point the French erected a battery to fire on the transports on a height at the mouth of the Quimperlé River. There was only one cannon (Beatson says two and that they were already emplaced). A 160-man landing party captured the cannon, used it to chase away the French, then dumped it off a cliff.

At sea, the *Exeter*, *Tavistock* and *St. George* cutter were sent into Quiberon Bay with orders to cruise between there and Bell-Île, while *York, Saphire,* and *Fly* sloop cruised from Île de Groix and the Glénan islands — that is, across the southwest side of the landing zone. The remaining ships remained off the beaches for now. Meanwhile, the rest of the expedition marched off in two columns, one toward Plœmeur and one toward Quimperlé. Now, these villages lie in opposite directions. The most likely explanation is that the march on Quimperlé was a feint. It was too early in the campaign for foraging, and while there may have been some idea of fanning out and sowing terror, that would be risky. It may be the British were seeking intelligence, but a feint seems the most obvious reason, given what happened soon after. Quimperlé is on the Laïta, about ten Km NNW of Guidel. Plœmeur is eight Km in the opposite direction.

Neither lies in the direction of Pont Scorff; in fact, going to Plœmeur would force the British to attack Lorient. Possibly, this was also a feint combined with reconnaissance, the two columns simply clearing a beachhead before regrouping and marching east. There are no indications that the plan had changed, as yet.

The local Governor was the *marquis de* l'Hôpital. His situation did not look good. The coastal provinces were required to maintain 'coast guard' militia, so he had 2,000 local levies and three companies of cavalry on hand when the British arrived. These were dispatched to block the enemy's advance. As one might expect from badly trained militia, their march was higgledy-piggledy, but at least they were enthusiastic.

L'Hôpital next wrote to the neighbouring towns for aid. This ultimately produced 300 men from Vannes, two detachments of militia from Josselin, a body from Rohan, 300 from Morlaiz, a few dozen musketeers from Lamballe, and 1,000 militia from Rennes. The peasantry were also of some service; they and the militia fought a series of rearguard actions as the British advanced inland. In fact, at one point 300 of them forced the column bound for Quimperlé to retreat. This will have been Richbell's and Frampton's regiments, whom English sources admit were 'disordered'; a company of grenadiers under a Captain James Murray are said to have repulsed the enemy. The French sources convey the idea that the British were foiled, but it seems evident they decided their repulse was as good a time as any to end the feint. The columns concentrated at Plœmeur, which was sacked.

It is not clear when St. Clair changed the plan, but the obvious reason was that the French had broken down the bridges on their intended route. This may have been the main fact gleaned by the columns' advance. (The locals spoke Breton, not French, so interrogations yielded almost no information.) Also, heavy rains had begun. This would slow everyone down, but a march around the town was now out of the question. At least if they took Lorient they could reembark from the docks. The clincher was the engineers' report. While at Plœmeur an advance party examined the defences of Lorient, picked a site for a battery, and stated the town could be flattened in a single day. (Actually, they said they could burn it down; the intention was to use hot-shot and incendiary mortar bombs.) Lorient had no ditch and only a thin wall with loopholes.

The British made camp at Lanveur about 3pm on 1 October, a position roughly 3,000 metres east of Plœmeur and perhaps 2,500 metres from the town center. There was a hill here with a windmill on it. HQ was at Plœmeur. On the morning of 2 October the town of Lorient was summoned. The sources usually say l'Hôpital negotiated with St. Clair, but in fact the Governor had resigned the day before. He had wanted to use his better troops as guerrilla fighters and leave the militia and peasantry — now a vast host, all demanding action in best 'Yankees at Bull Run' style — in the town. The local notables had mostly packed their belongings and fled, so l'Hôpital had to be replaced by the next senior officer to show up, who happened to be a Major de Villeneuve. He did not arrive until the evening of 3 October, which means the British terms were likely discussed by a motley collection of lesser-ranked bourgeois at a town hall meeting. One can imagine the scene. L'Hôpital was still in residence and may have given an opinion.

While waiting for the reply the British held a council of war aboard ship, resulting in the landing of ships' cannon, crews, and marines. By next morning everything was ashore and the train was enroute to the expedition's camp. The next few days were a nightmare. Three straight days of heavy rain turned the country lanes into bogs. The locals hid themselves or took potshots; they also hid their food and their livestock. That included horses, donkeys, and oxen, so the guns had to be pulled by teams of men, amounting to a third of the expeditionary force.

A deputation from the town met St. Clair at Plœmeur, probably on 3 October. They were prepared to open their gates, but l'Hôpital had insisted the regulars in the garrison be accorded honours of war. This meant they would be able to march out under arms, with all their kit. The militia was to be allowed to go home. The British were prepared to accept this. However, there was also a demand that the French East India Company property not be touched. This rather made the whole exercise pointless. St. Clair changed the deal. It was to be 'surrender at discretion', a polite form of unconditional surrender. British sources say no more than this but the French say what this amounted to was the handing over of a large sum of money to the British officers and four hours 'pillage-time' for the men. (This may have been in lieu of sacking the *CIO's* warehouses.) The deputation refused to consider it and returned to Lorient.

The British unmasked their battery of two 12-pounders and a 10-inch mortar on the morning of Wednesday 5 October. Then they realised they had forgotten the oven for heating the shot. It was brought up by the afternoon, along with a couple of extra 12-pounders. By the time they arrived it had been discovered that the town walls were too far away (maximum range for a 12-pounder was about 1,800 metres). All they could do was drop a few mortar bombs. Since the town's buildings were primarily of stone, this did little damage. During the course of the bombardment the French lost only six killed and twelve wounded. Only two houses were set on fire, two more were badly damaged,

and fifteen suffered light damage (enough to claim insurance, one supposes).

At 5pm St. Clair called a council of war. His artillerymen now stated there was insufficient forward ammunition to maintain a continuous fire, and there were not enough people to haul it from the beach fast enough. They were out of mortar shells and the cannon had only 34 rounds apiece. To cap it all, the chief artillerist had the gout. Moreover, the expedition was down to 3,000 effectives. Morale was low, not only because of harassing attacks, rain, and pointless hard work, but because there were rumours of 20,000 French soldiers preparing to counterattack. This was a half-truth. There were perhaps 15,000 peasants and militia, all keen to have a go at the invaders, but there were no professionals.

Versailles got news of the landing on 5 October and King Louis immediately ordered the recall of twenty battalions from Flanders, plus a dragoon regiment and two cavalry regiments. This, of course, was what London hoped would happen, but *maréchal* de Saxe rightly assessed the damage St. Clair could cause and only made a show of doing anything.

The British held two more councils the next day, and decided to call off the siege. The deciding factor was the weather. Lestock warned them a major storm was coming. But, they did not pack it in entirely. It was decided to shift the operation down to Quiberon Bay.

An element of farce now enters the tale. Having decided to spike their artillery and reembark, the British decamped in the night of 7 October and reached on the coast at 3am. They loaded up silently and expertly. It was while they were doing this that the French decided to surrender Lorient. Major de Villeneuve had been in command since the evening of 3 October. About 5 October he was superseded by the *comte* de Volvire, the royal commander in Brittany. From prisoners the French had information about the true size and composition of St. Clair's expedition (they had feared it numbered 20,000 — that number again…). Also, Lorient had a considerable number of cannon; on 7 October they discharged 4,000 rounds at the British positions, including grape and chain shot. But, Volvire did not believe his 15,000 men were capable of anything. L'Hôpital, newly reinstated, concurred. When a British cannon ball fell near their HQ they decided to call a council of war. At it, they were the only ones to advise surrender, but as the senior officers they overrode the rest. Out l'Hôpital came with his white flag and drummer boy at 9pm to find only a spiked battery and a cooling furnace. *A mille tonnerre! These English, they do not even know how to accept a surrender*. At first a ruse was suspected, but the peasants explained the British had truly marched away. Then, it was believed there would be a new landing at Port Louis and attention shifted there.

On 9 October a southwest gale blew up. The British got away just in time. St. Clair blamed his 'in-name-only' engineers for the fiasco, but Richmond points out that none of the British leaders showed much resolution. This might be due to the usual mounting sense of dread one gets when landing on a foreign shore with no information, but it may also be because no one wanted to be there in the first place. L'Hôpital had the honour to be presented to the King on 14 October. He used the audience to bolster his and Volvire's reputation, earning advancement.

Richard Lestock (1679-1746)

Probably the most controversial admiral of the war, Lestock had a rocky career. Yet another volunteer, he joined the Navy in 1690; his father, also Richard, was already a captain, though in the merchant marine. The father volunteered for naval service at the same time and got command of a ship the next year. The younger Lestock was promoted by Sir Cloudesley Shovell during the war of the Spanish Succession (1704), becoming master and commander of a fireship. Then next year he was made captain of a 6th Rate, which he was forced to surrender during an action in 1709. For this he was court-martialled, which was routine; he was acquitted. He then served in the Caribbean, and after the war patrolled against Swedish privateers under the elder Byng in 1717, who became his patron. In 1718 Byng took Lestock along during the War of the Quadruple Alliance, as second captain of his flagship. After the Battle of Cape Passaro, however, Lestock spent the next decade on half-pay.

He next served under Sir Charles Wager, later head of the Admiralty, in the Med (1731), and in 1732 was appointed to command the Jamaica station. But, the weather delayed his sailing, and for some reason Sir Chaloner Ogle was given the command instead. Lestock regarded this as a deliberate snub. He was confirmed in his opinion when he was passed over for promotion no less than five times and found himself commanding a guard ship in the Medway for four years (1734-38). Whoever his enemies may have been, every man was needed for the new war and Lestock was given an active command, sailing with Ogle to the West Indies in 1739. While in the Caribbean he joined Vernon's circle, being made a Commodore and third-in-command of the fleet. During the Cartagena des Indías affair he led naval attack on one of the forts and was badly repulsed. Moved to the Med as interim commander-in-chief in place of Haddock, he was at last promoted to Rear Admiral but was passed over yet again when Mathews was appoint the new permanent C-in-C of the Med.

Lestock and Mathews had worked together before; while the former was posted to the Medway, Mathews was a commissioner at Chatham. Their relationship seems complicated. On the one hand, Mathews, who had political duties (trying to keep the Italian coalition against Austria from growing) relied on Lestock to run the fleet, but on the other he was openly critical of him from the start, and became more dissatisfied as time went on. Lestock's excuse was poor health. He himself let the Admiralty know just what he thought of Mathews (despite this he was promoted to Vice Admiral of the White, perhaps to shut him up).

Lestock is best known for his role in the Battle of Toulon, which was a negative one. He failed to support Mathews, was suspended, and sent home. This led to a grand court martial involving most of the senior officers who had been present at the battle at which Lestock was acquitted. The trial, which was the outcome of a public inquiry and a pamphlet war initiated by Lestock, seems to have been mainly a grudge match between him and Mathews. Public opinion believed Lestock had let the side down, possibly on purpose. Mathews was more popular, but the Admiralty was always suspicious of such men and gave Lestock the benefit of the doubt. Mathews was fired and Lestock reinstated. Lestock seems to have been one of those men who become fixated on perceived slights and do everything they can to bring the target person down, even to their own ruin, combined with that irritating type who knows all the angles. On the other hand, being passed over for promotion time after time would give anyone a persecution complex. His death in December of 1746 was due to a stomach ailment and not 'disappointment' at the failure of the Lorient Expedition.

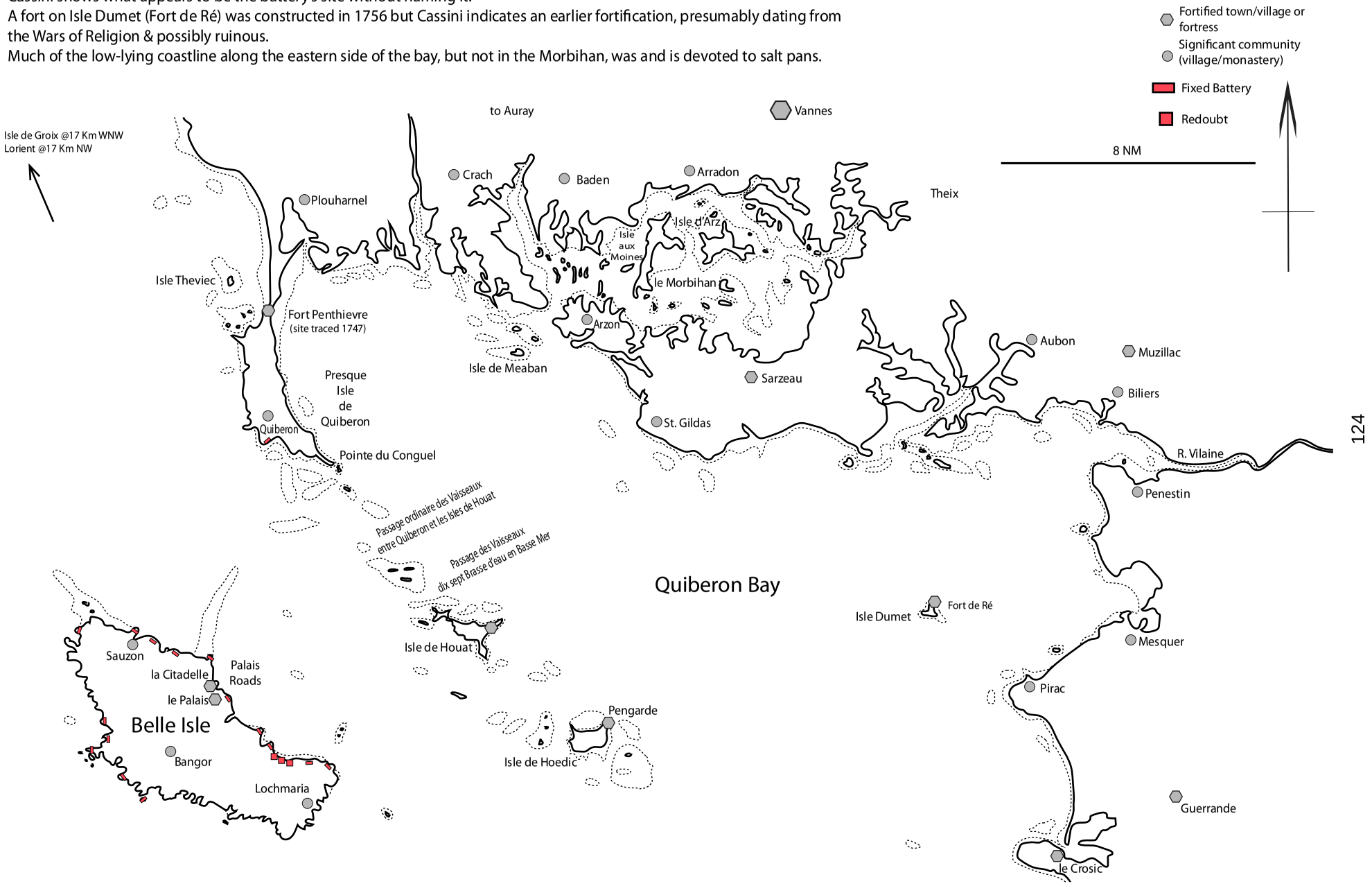
Quiberon Bay

Unwilling to go home without accomplishing anything, the British moved down to Quiberon Bay, where there was shelter from the weather. The squadron left its anchorage on the open coast on 12 October. Soon, they recorded a success. A French man-o-war was found in Palais Road and despite the heavy seas chased by the *Exeter, Tavistock,* and *Poole*. The enemy sailed for the shore in a northerly direction to hide under an 8-gun battery built at the southwest tip of the Quiberon peninsula. The *Exeter* followed — it seems the cannoneers could not depress their pieces or the place was not manned — ran alongside, and began pounding away. *Tavistock* and *Poole* each came up separately to help. After four hours, the Frenchman, dismasted and down to only a few operational guns, deliberately ran ashore. The crew mostly escaped. *Exeter*

Quiberon Bay & Belle Isle

Original drawn by Cesar-François Cassini, 1750

After the British landings in 1746 it was decided to augment the defences along this coast. The original for this map was drawn in 1750; thus it is unclear which fortifications on Belle Isle, apart from the Citadelle and Palais, were in existence at the time.
Fort Penthievre was ordered built in 1747.
The location where the Ardent was driven aground was below the battery on the Quiberon Peninsula;
Cassini shows what appears to be the battery's site without naming it.
A fort on Isle Dumet (Fort de Ré) was constructed in 1756 but Cassini indicates an earlier fortification, presumably dating from the Wars of Religion & possibly ruinous.
Much of the low-lying coastline along the eastern side of the bay, but not in the Morbihan, was and is devoted to salt pans.



In the time of Louis XIV Belle Isle belonged to the Fouquet family; Vauban fortified it on behalf of Nicholas Fouquet, the King's financier.
This contibuted to Fouquet's downfall on the charge of lèse-majesté - his ambition also led to Louis' decision to rule with as little assistance as possible. Belle Isle became a royal fortress.
In The Man in the Iron Mask, Alexandre Dumas' character, Porthos, supposedly died on the cliffs by Lochmaria, fighting in Fouquet's cause, while his companion Aramis fled from there by boat.

was nearly on the rocks herself and as the gale mounted in intensity had trouble escaping being wrecked.

The enemy vessel, examined later, turned out to be the *Ardent (64)*, one of d'Anville's mutilated squadron. From her the British learned something of the disaster. Lestock thought that more ships might trickle in and sent out some patrols: *Saphire* to cover the Glenans to Île de Groix, *Poole* to cover Île de Groix to Belle-île and *Exeter, Postboy, Ruby,* and *Tavistock* to cover Belle-île to the Cardinal's Rocks.

[Richmond says Anson faulted Lestock for not taking his force to cruise off Ushant, but the latter had a convoy of troops to worry about. Suppose d'Anville sailed direct to Quiberon?]

The British anchored in Quiberon Bay on 13 October. Five transports carrying soldiers had gone missing in the storm but there were still plenty of men to effect a landing. The British captured an 18-gun fort (apparently unoccupied). Otherwise, the place seemed deserted. (The missing ships, four transports and a stores vessel, returned safely to Spithead.)

The British dug in on the peninsula and conducted reconnaissance for five days, but found nothing of interest. Before leaving they decided to raze a fort on Île de Houat (20 October), the first in a chain of islands leading off the peninsula. This fort had eight guns. *Exeter*, *Hastings*, and *Tavistock* bombarded it and a landing party of 130 seamen went ashore and conducted demolitions. The operation went so smoothly that the fort on the next island, Hœdic, received the same treatment (24 October). These forts had no garrisons, only a handful of caretakers. The British then spent two days destroying their own defensive works and transhipping *Ardent's* brass guns — the ship had at last been burnt, as had many small craft around the bay. On 29 October the British sailed away.

The French believed the sudden departure was due to news of the Battle of Rocoux which could mean the release of reinforcements. This may be so but is unlikely. It would take weeks for a corps of royal soldiers to arrive and the British had no intention of establishing a permanent beachhead, despite Newcastle's desires. During the French Revolution the British would count on Royalist and Separatist sentiment in the region, but right now the population was decidedly hostile.

There is some confusion in the sources about how Lestock's command was divided up at the end of the mission. Richmond and Beatson say he sailed for Spithead with the warships while the transports went to Cork, where the troops would winter. French sources say Lestock accompanied the transports with at least part of his squadron. When he did return to Spithead he was relieved of command; he died only a month later. Lorient had been his chance to repair his reputation after his poor performance at Toulon in 1744. HIs failure gave his enemies all the ammunition they needed. There was even a rumour that he kept a prostitute on board his flagship, whom he permitted to give counsel about the campaign. True or not, there were those who wanted to believe such things.

Excluding the finger-pointing which occupied everyone's time when the British returned home, the expedition had a minimal impact. Richmond does point out that at least the inter-service relations were cordial and functioned smoothly, unlike a certain Caribbean expedition that one might name. The root of the failure, according to him, is that the expedition was an afterthought of an afterthought: 'something ought to be done about Canada don'chya know… yes but the season, my dear fellow… ice and all that… I say, what about a diversion? Keep the chaps in form… pester the Frogs…' Richmond notes the amount of time spent in planning amounted to 'inside a fortnight'.

Officially the operation was made to divert French attention from Flanders. How many believed that spin is debatable. The French were reaching the culmination of their campaign by the time the landing was made and were not likely to lose focus. De Saxe was ordered to send a sizeable corps to Brittany, but he first used it in the Battle of Rocoux and did not dispatch it until his army was going into quarters for the winter.

That said, if not for bad timing Lorient might have fallen. If it had, the consequences would have been dire. It was the French East India Company's base, valued in Richmond's words at 'a million and a half' (Sterling, one presumes, at 1908 rates). A success like that might also have caused the French to garrison their coastline with regular soldiers, weakening their efforts elsewhere.

Martin's Replacement

Admiral Martin's successor was George Anson, now Rear Admiral of the White. The forces under his command took no part in the Lorient Expedition. They were undergoing a complete reorganisation. The Western Squadron concept was a good one, but it was not yet a successful one. To date, a cruising squadron of ten ships had been operating regularly under Admiralty orders, but without real authority over any other patrolling ships, and without a system of reliefs that could keep it in being at all times. It was not strong enough to closely watch the main enemy ports, nor could it safely engage the full strength of the enemy. Anson wanted to make improvements. Now also a key member of the Privy Council's Commission, his words carried weight. (He retained his seat on the Board despite holding an active command.) The chief change would be to put a stop to cruising for prizes, which led to ships being dispersed all over the ocean, and create a single concentration that could smash any sortie the French made. Enemy trade would dry up of its own accord once it could not be protected.

George Anson, 1st Baron Anson (1697-1762)

Anson is one of those key figures in the development of the Royal Navy, a Jackie Fisher of the 18th Century. He joined the War of the Spanish Succession fairly late, in 1712, at the age of 15. Like several other famous admirals he started as a volunteer. Post war he served, again like so many others, in Norris' Baltic Squadron, as a Lieutenant (1716). And, again, in the War of the Quadruple Alliance, fighting at Cape Passaro. At the end of that war he was serving under Admiral George Byng (father of the Byng in this narrative) on his flagship. His promotion first to

Commander and then to Post Captain took place during peacetime, as a reward for exemplary service suppressing smuggling between Holland and England. In the late 20s he was transferred to the Carolinas Station and served there for most of the 1730s (a section of Charleston is still called Ansonborough), apart from a brief stint with the Channel Fleet (1730) and West Africa duty (1737). At the outbreak of the War of Jenkins' Ear Anson was made Commodore and placed in command of the 'special operation' to harass the Spanish in the Pacific, returning to England in June 1744 after circumnavigating the globe; his departure and return have already been recounted. (Finding and reading an account of this voyage is strongly recommended; it cannot be given justice here.)

The voyage made Anson both famous and rich, and also bought him political influence. This turned out to be fortunate for the Royal Navy, though at first it appeared his career had stalled — he refused promotion to Rear Admiral of the Blue because the Admiralty refused to ratify the promotion of one of his officers. Later, also, there was a court martial over complaints made by some of his expedition whom he had left behind in Tierra del Fuego (he considered them mutineers). However, his newfound wealth and influence made him unassailable and he rose swiftly through the admiral ranks: RA of the White in April 1745, VA of the Blue in July 1745 (skipping RA of the Red).

Promoted to Admiral of the Blue right at the end of the war, in 1749 he was made Vice Admiral of Great Britain. This was usually an honorary post, but for Anson it simply gave him greater leverage; he was made Senior Naval Lord (FIrst Sea Lord) a few months later. In 1751 he became the First Lord of the Admiralty (that is, the political chief rather than the operational chief) and remained in office for most of the Seven Years War, sometimes commanding the fleet in person. As head of the Royal Navy he oversaw many reforms that improved the service; he was also the one who introduced the familiar rating system used for British ships. But even as a junior captain he had begun to develop a clique or school bent on reforming both administration and the operational art. These included many of the captains who served under him in the Western Squadron.

Anson's command was increased, both by the addition of ships still in port and the assignment of most of the vessels operating to the west of Spithead, other than Lestock's command, which was kept entirely separate. Under his immediate command were to be seventeen ships of the line, six 'fifties', four frigates, and two sloops:

Duke (90)
Namur (74)
Yarmouth (70)
Kent (70)
Prince Frederick (70)
Hampton Court (70)
Monmouth (70)
Captain (70)
Elizabeth (70)
Defiance (60)
Augusta (60)
Sunderland (60)
Windsor (60)
Nottingham (60)
Princess Louisa (60)
Lyon (60)
Eagle (60)
Falkland (50)
Salisbury (50)
Portland (50)
Maidstone (50)
Advice (50)
Portland's prize (50)
Hector (44)
Mermaid (44)
Inverness (24)
Amazon (27)
Despatch and *Falcon* sloops

(*Portland's Prize* was the *Auguste (50)*, taken on 20 February by the *Portland (50)* after a two and a half hour fight in which the *Auguste* had all her masts shot away before she struck.)

Anson's orders allowed him far greater latitude than any previous commander. The flow of operations would be similar to what had been done before, but at his discretion, not London's. As before, he had to intercept and pursue enemy warships and flotillas, interdict enemy trade, and suppress privateering, but he was permitted to place his ships wherever he saw fit within the zone he was to cover. He could also form detachments at his own discretion, and issue orders without consultation. He was also allowed to send ships to port for refit and recovery, and could order them to rejoin him, or not (instead of having them stripped away for one of Newcastle's harebrained projects). No termination dates for his cruises were required; he could

decide when to stop, and whether he would return to port with all his ships or only a portion. Richmond is at pains to mark just how more successful Anson was.

But, the Admiral still had a hard time putting the squadron together and was unable to sail with even a portion of it until the end of August. There appeared to be no threat from enemy capital ships, since d'Anville was somewhere off Nova Scotia, but the French convoys were returning from the New World, which gave everyone a sense of urgency.

One of these convoys was Macnémara's (for whom Lestock had been mistaken), believed to consist of 90 sail (actually 75 and three escorts). Boscawen, still patrolling the Soundings, attempted to intercept but failed to find him and returned home on 29 August. On 3 September the *Syren,* sent on a long-range scouting expedition, brought news. Macnémara had visited La Coruña, where he had rendezvoused with twelve men-o-war from Rochefort, believed to be his escort. It was hoped they were still there, waiting on the wind.

Anson could not sortie against them until 13 September, when he was able to send Boscawen out with a vanguard — mostly the latter's ships just back from their cruise. Boscawen was to make for Finisterre and remain within twenty leagues of the cape until Anson showed up. He was to intercept the French if able. Anson followed him on 15 September. Fortuitously, he encountered a detached squadron under Captain Charles Watson cruising in the Bay of Biscay and commandeered it. According to Richmond, the British were arranged as follows:

Boscawen: *Hampton Court, Prince Frederick, Namur, Sunderland, Plymouth, Monmouth, Windsor, Advice, Mermaid, Panther, Ambuscade (ex-French Embuscade)*

Anson: *Yarmouth, Kent, Captain, Lyon, Portland, Falkland, Amazon, Falcon sloop*

Watson: *Princess Louisa, Elizabeth, Salisbury, Augusta, Defiance, Viper sloop*

How such a large cruising squadron as Watson's came to be where it was is not explained in Richmond or Beatson. It was probably operating under direct Admiralty orders. But, Anson now had the authority to take it under his command.

[Richmond provides locations for British ships in the North Atlantic at this time, excluding the Caribbean. Anson's and Lestock's commands have already been listed. At Cape Breton were: Kingston, Pembroke, Vigilant, Canterbury, Chester, Norwich, Kinsale, Dover, Torrington, Rye, Hinchinbrook, Hind, Shirley, Albany, Louisbourg.*]*

Anson spent the voyage drilling his crews and ships in fleet tactics and evolutions. This was not common practice, though there are records of other commanders doing so periodically. He joined Boscawen on 29 September, and proceeded to sweep, his ships at one-mile intervals because he lacked the light vessels for scouting. (The Admiralty had picqueted four 20-gunners at the west end of the Channel to deal with privateers but promised to send any remaining ships to him; so far, none had arrived.)

Not having found the convoy after about two weeks, on 5 October Anson made for Cádiz, whither a Spanish convoy was supposedly bound; the Mediterranean Squadron was at this time in the Gulf of Lyon, assisting the Habsburg war effort, which left Cádiz open. Boscawen remained detached off Finisterre. Anson reached Cape St. Vincent on 25 October, but again found nothing. On paper, the Admiral could cruise as long as he liked, but in practical terms a six-week cruise was about all his ships could handle. So, he turned for home. Boscawen rendezvoused with him on 29 October. Some ships were exchanged, but the latter's patrol was left on station. Anson reached Plymouth on 8 November.

Immediately upon his arrival, he learned that d'Anville's ships were dribbling home. *Ardent* had been taken by Lestock, but *Mars* also had been captured off Cape Clear on 22 October. This action involved the *Nottingham (60)* and Captain Saumarez, who was on an independent cruise in that zone. He lost only three or fourmen while *Mars* lost forty. *Mars* was bought by the RN.

Anson sent the *Ambuscade* to warn Boscawen and have him come north to Ushant; *Monmouth*, *Windsor*, and *Falcon* sloop were to remain off Finisterre. But, Boscawen already had the same news from a prize, on board which were found letters describing d'Anville's exploits in detail. The letters made grim reading. Thus, the day Anson reached Plymouth, Boscawen began cruising thirty leagues southwest of Ushant. Now British strategy switched from hunting convoys to hunting *La Royale*.

Anson rushed his refit and sortied again with fourteen ships on 20 November, intending to cruise off Ushant until 18 December, then proceed to Finisterre, where intelligence predicted a Martinique convoy, currently replenishing at Cádiz, could be expected. Anson's ships, excluding Boscawen's command, were now: *Yarmouth, Kent, Captain, Princess Louisa, Salisbury, Augusta, Falkland, Elizabeth, Princessa, Edinburgh, Panther, Weazel* sloop, and a cutter.

Joining Boscawen, Anson took them all as close to Brest as he dared, while a series of southwest gales pummelled them. Ships were sent to re-provision in rotation so that he could maintain an average of fifteen sail on station. On 26 November Boscawen took the expedition's official hospital ship, the *Mercure*, when the *Namur* chased her into the waiting arms of his squadron. On 29 November *Portland (50)* captured the frigate *Subtile (26)*, sent from Brest to warn the incoming French of the British presence. Convinced by these encounters that Jonquière was in the offing, the British stuck out the harsh weather. But, the enemy never appeared. Warned by a Dutch ship, Jonquière made a detour and reached Rochefort safely. So much for allies.

*[*Subtile *was taken into British service as the* Amazon*.]*

Anson tried to carry out the second part of his program, the hunt for the Martinique convoy, missing the news that Jonquière was already in port by just two days. Not finding the convoy off Finisterre he proceeded south as far as Lisbon before scurvy forced him to sail for home. Boscawen stayed at Lisbon to refit, while Watson stayed to patrol off Finisterre. Anson made the Channel in mid January but was

buffeted by gales and could not anchor until his ships reached the Downs — on 17 February 1747.

The Flanders Coast

With the war in Flanders raging, that coast and the Scheldt estuary had become a vital sector for the British. However, activities here were strictly routine. Commodore Matthew Mitchell was put in charge. Based out of Flushing (Vlissingen) on Walcheren Island, his vessels escorted the North Sea trade and endeavoured to hinder the French Army's activities by interdicting river and cross-river traffic; many of his vessels were shallow draft and purpose-built by the Dutch for operating along canals. They themselves appear to have done little, as they were still officially neutral.

Minor Actions

As always, Beatson can be relied on to recount a variety of minor actions, such as:

The capture of the French privateer *Duc de Chartres (32)* by the *Edinburgh*; in British service the ship was known as the *Inverness*. As such she in turn captured a St. Malo privateer, *Le François (22)*.

The capture of the St. Malo privateer *Fortune (22)* by the *Prince Frederick*.

The capture of the *Embuscade (40)* by the *Defiance* in a two-hour fight. *Defiance* had only one man killed and three wounded. *Embuscade* was taken into service under the same name (*Ambuscade*).

The taking of the *Hercule (18)* and a valuable cargo by the *Sheerness*.

The taking of the *Leopard (22)* privateer by the *Windsor*, along with two of the *Leopard's* prizes.

The taking of the San Sebastian privateer *Esperance (16)* and the Nantes privateer *Shoreham (22)* by the *Eagle*.

The taking of the St. Malo privateer *Intrepide (20)* and a snow, by the *Namur (90)*. The snow was carrying dispatches for d'Anville at Chibouctou.

The taking of the *N.S. de Begona (18)* Spanish register ship, bound for Cádiz, by the *Dublin* privateer. Apart from a cargo worth over £100,000 she was carrying the Governor of Guatemala and his suite.

Captain Graham (*Nottingham*), commanding a small squadron, forced aground and burnt the *Bacchus* privateer, captured two French ships from Martinique, and took a 26-gun ship from Panama. (This may have occurred in the Caribbean.)

On 23 March *Saltash* and *Warren* privateers sighted a small French convoy near Port Louis, accompanied by a single escort carrying 10 guns. The privateers attacked from either side and took four merchantmen plus the escort. Sixteen more vessels were driven ashore; before these could be destroyed or brought off the privateers were routed by a large ship coming out of the port. Most of the captured cargoes turned out to be shipbuilding materials. It was actions such as these that helped to slow d'Anville's preparations.

In April, the Bristol privateer *Alexander (26)* perceived a large ship anchoring under the guns of a fort in St. Martin's roads at the Île de Ré. The ship was boarded and brought off and turned out to be the *Solebay (22)*, captured earlier in the year from the British. The ferocity of the boarders, who numbered 50 against 230, drove the enemy below decks, where they were secured. *Alexander's* captain, a man named Phillips, was awarded 500 guineas and a 200-guinea gold medal by King George.

On 19 October *Weazel* sloop took pair of Channel privateers, the *Jeantie (6)*, and *Fortune (10)*; *Weazel's* captain was rewarded with the command of a frigate.

The master of the *Shoreham*, Mr. William Brown, achieved renown for several exploits. First, as part of Martin's squadron early in the year, while ten leagues west of the Groyne — Beatson probably means Coruña, for that is the English translation of the town's name — he participated in the capture of a pair of French privateers, *St. Michael* and *Le Chasseur*, both of 18 guns, and was given *St. Michael* to command. With this ship, on 3 March he chased and took a privateer snow from Bilbao in an epic fight. The enemy vessel was pursued from 5am to 11:30am, but as he closed she decided he was small enough to take on. The two ships fought for six and a half hours. The snow was dismasted but Brown was out of ammunition. So, he had his vessel rowed in and boarded her. Two days later, off Viana (probably Viana do Castelo, north of Oporto), he engaged another, smaller, Spanish privateer and took it. As a reward, Brown was given command of a sloop of war.

The most important British loss this year was the *Severn (50)*, taken by the 74-gun *Terrible* when escorting a homebound convoy from the Caribbean. Other losses to enemy action were the *Albany* and *Hornet* sloops. The *Lightning* bomb capsized in a storm off Leghorn, but otherwise there seem to be no losses to hazards.

Summary

Beatson's balance sheet for the year: in European waters the Spanish took 105 prizes and the French 328, total 433. The British took 28 Spanish and 260 French, total 288. (Spanish numbers were dropping overall, with only another 88 taken in the Americas.) Counting other theatres, however, the net was 126 in Britain's favour, with the financial cost even more so.

In Richmond's opinion, both the French and British failed in their New World operations because they delayed too long, but d'Anville at least saved Quebec by forcing the British to abandon their expedition entirely; the French were also able to open their communications to the St. Lawrence because Warren had to focus his attention southward. D'Anville, on the other hand, was cursed by bad weather, poor hygiene, and 'indifferent seamanship'. Newcastle and the First Lord of the Admiralty (Bedford) sought to renew the expedition, mainly for domestic political reasons, but the rest of the Committee of Council opposed them, as did Warren, who arrived in England in mid January of 1747. He was not

opposed to the concept *per se*, but felt that a great deal of groundwork needed to be laid first.1747 A British Ocean

"But though your station is limited as above, if you get any information of the enemy's ships of war, trade or privateers without the bounds of your station, you are at liberty to go yourself with all or any part of the ships, or to send such of them as you shall think proper in quest of the ships of war, trade or privateers, using your utmost endeavours to take or destroy them."

[Admiral Anson's instructions to his captains, quoted in Richmond vol. III, p. 78.]

1747 was in many respects a repeat of 1746. In Europe, another big battle (Laffeld). In the Caribbean, not a peep from the Spanish apart from a dwindling number of privateers. In the Med the British again concentrated on the Riviera in support of Austrian operations on land. The French continued their round-robin of convoys. The balance of trade losses was now heavily in Britain's favour; the unglamorous attritional routine was paying off. In this regard the Atlantic would prove the decisive theatre.

Back in the Ring

Anson was not out of action long. The Western Squadron would take until April to reform, but there were still small squadrons here and there, and when he was told, only two weeks after his arrival, that a convoy from Martinique was due, he sent out what ships he could.

Thus in February (according to Richmond):

Boscawen at Lisbon: *Namur (74), Bristol (50), Hector (44), Amazon (24)*

Watson off Finisterre: *Princess Louisa (60), Edinburgh (70), Eagle (60), Nottingham (60), Lyon (60), Weazel* sloop

And, sortieing, Captain Savage Mostyn (orders of 4 March; sailed 25 March): *Hampton Court (70), Prince Frederick (64), Falkland (50), Ambuscade (40)*, *Inverness* (24), plus *Syren* (24) on 20 March.

Mostyn was to cruise the Soundings between latitudes 46° and 47° 30', with an eye to Brest; if the weather was clear he was to check Belle-Île and the Penmarch islands (due west of Lorient). The cruise was to last 30 days. To ensure news got through, he was to use two sloops when making his reports.

Already, on 6 January the *Gloucester* and *Lark* took a Spanish register ship named the *Fort de Nantes (32)* bound for Cádiz. She was worth £300,000. On 7 January, the privateers *King George*, *Prince Frederick*, and *Duke* took the *N.S. del Buenal Consigo (24)* register ship off the Portuguese coast. She was outbound to Buenos Aires with a cargo worth £150,000, and three South American governors and their families aboard.

On 16 March Mostyn took the *Comte de Lowendahl*, a small ship out of Brest. From the crew it was learned there were twenty sail of the line in the port and great preparations going forward, with four men-o-war and six East Indiamen bound for India (it is not clear if the four ships and Indiamen were included in the total).

Mostyn moved in close to Brest. Unable to learn anything new, on 26 March he sent a dispatch boat that had just arrived into the roads, while he sailed farther south, to Belle-Île and the Penmarchs. While off the latter on 29 March the British observed eighteen French sail and closed the range to investigate. They mostly appeared to be 74s and 50-gunners. At a council of war, Mostyn's captains unanimously opposed bringing on an engagement. *Inverness* was sent to England with the news.

What Mostyn had seen was a convoy of East Indiamen and other armed merchantmen, fifteen in all, with an escort of three royal ships (which it had taken a 'deal of conjuring' to get King Louis to agree to). Commanded by the *Chevalier* Grout de Saint-Georges, they were carrying cash and supplies for the French bases in India, where the British currently enjoyed a tremendous advantage.

The royal ships were:

Invincible (74)
Lys (64)
Jason (32)

The Company ships were:

Auguste (34)
Prince (34)
Appollon (30)
Aimiable (30)
Futoy (30)
Légère (22)
Chasseur (22 or 12)

plus the private vessels *Vigilant (22), Lyon (20), Thétis (20), Modeste (22), Dartmouth (18), St. Antonie (20)*, and two more.

[It is somewhat annoying that ship owners lack imagination when it comes to names.]

While waiting for reinforcement, Mostyn continued to cruise around Belle-Île. On 5 April the *Ferret* sloop arrived, as well as *Monmouth* and *Prince Frederick*, with a prize in tow. *Ferret* had news. There was another large French squadron on the sea. Concerned that these might be warships out of Brest, Mostyn decided to return to Plymouth, which he reached on 7 April. However, he sent *Ambuscade* (Captain Montague) down the French coast, and on 8 April she located the East Indiamen again.

In a heavy gale with driving rain the *Ambuscade* engaged the squadron on her own, picking on the 34-gun *Auguste*. It was difficult for the other ships to come to *Auguste's* aid, and for two hours she was battered by *Ambuscade* before Montague had to veer away in the presence of a pair of the royal ships, who chased him for a number of hours. He sailed for England, disappointed, but his action did for the *Auguste*, which foundered in the gale. The weather seemed to be on the British side. *Légère* capsized and *Chasseur* was wrecked. The rest of the squadron had to put in for repairs at Aix Roads (Rade des Basques, at the northeast end of Oléron), apart for *Lys, Aimiable*, and *Futoy*. Those three made India eventually, refitting at a Brazilian port.

The news that the British had spotted the convoy was soon known in Paris, and the Company representatives tried frantically to push Saint-Georges out to sea again, before the enemy could show up with a fleet. The fact that Mostyn mistook the Company's ships for the Brest Squadron, whose presence would require the British to make more extensive preparations than for attacking a convoy was not known. But, the Company was willing, indeed suggested, that Saint-Georges seek protection with another convoy that was about to sail. This was a West Indies convoy, of twenty merchantmen and four escorts, under Jonquière.

In England, the winter refit was winding down. Anson remained based in the Downs but many ships were being shifted west to Plymouth. Mostyn's faulty intelligence threw the Admiralty's plans out, but in the end, this worked to Britain's advantage. The original plan called for another routine cruise of the Western Squadron, supplemented by the usual small standing patrols round about, and for a squadron of eight ships to head for Louisbourg, under Rear Admiral Warren. Because of Mostyn's report it was decided (10 April), at an unusually large meeting of the Committee of Council, to mass as many ships as possible under Anson, with Warren to act as his second in command. The latter could, if the French made for the West Indies, be detached there himself in order to reinforce North America; he would be given a regiment of soldiers to bolster the colonial defences. Governor Shirley and Commodore Knowles (the current RN station commander at Louisbourg) were to be warned.

[Knowles would be promoted to Rear Admiral of the White this year.]

Selecting Warren to work under Anson was an excellent choice, even if it simply arose from circumstance. Anson was both aggressive and meticulous, while Warren was both aggressive and a born diplomat. They got on famously.

Anson's orders (dated the same day) matched his orders of last year almost verbatim, except for Warren's inclusion. His command was to consist of:

St. George (90)
Devonshire (80) (Warren)
Pembroke (60)
Chester
Prince George (90) (Anson)
Dolphin
Yarmouth (64)
Monmouth (64)
Hampton Court
Edinburgh
Namur (74)
Kent (70)
Prince Frederick (64)
Princess Louisa (60)
Defiance (60)
Bristol (50)
Windsor (60)
Eagle
Lyon
Nottingham (60)
Centurion (54)
Portland
Salisbury
Gloucester
Falkland (50)
Portland's prize
Hector
Ambuscade (40)
Inverness
Shoreham
Syren
The sloops *Otter*, *Kingfisher, Viper, Vulture, Falcon*
The fireships *Pluto*, *Terror,* and *Vulcan*
Plus some small vessels.

First Battle of Cape Finisterre (14 May 1747)

Anson weighed anchor at Spithead on 17 April, with *Prince George, Devonshire, Lyon, Defiance, Princess Louisa, Bristol, Chester, Pembroke*, and *Terror*. The rest would sail mainly from Plymouth. The fireships *Yarmouth*, and *Kent* were delayed. On 18 April he arrived off Plymouth and was joined by *Namur, Hampton Court, Prince Frederick, Monmouth, Falkland, Nottingham, Eagle, Windsor, Centurion* and *Otter*. On 19 April the augmented squadron left Plymouth for a secret rendezvous: from latitude 46° to 47° 30' twenty leagues west of Belle-Île.

So far as he knew, Anson had the job of containing the bulk of *La Royale* and whatever Spanish warships remained before he could begin intercepting enemy convoys. Activity was reported at all the ports along the Biscay coast, while the Toulon Squadron was said to be at Cartagena. Of course, the Bourbons might be combining for an Italian operation, but the French still wanted Cape Breton back.

After arriving off Belle-Île Anson sent *Falkland* and the *Tavistock* cutter to observe Brest. Due to the weather they were unable to learn anything. The passing traffic that Anson interrogated had nothing to tell. But then, on 1 May, he learned that, as of three days ago, there were twelve ships of the line and nine merchantmen at Saint-Martin-de-Ré. Rumour had it they were bound for Canada. Anson guessed this was the Brest Squadron. So, he decided to pick an intercept point farther south, and sailed for Cape Ortegal. To make sure, *Falkland* and the *Tavistock* cutter were left to scout all the anchorages about Rochefort and La Rochelle, while *Inverness* and *Viper* were positioned to relay reinforcements to him (probably at the rendezvous). Enroute, he detached light vessels to scout all the harbours, and, just like last year, he exercised his ships constantly. Still short of frigates, he trained his 50s and 60s to act as scouts, operating at the maximum observational range for signals. The heaviest ships were placed in the center of the line of battle, whether the fleet manoeuvred in line ahead or line abreast.

[Richmond says the intelligence was received on 20 April, but from the context and other dates this must be OS. Adding 11 days for NS would make it 1 May.]

The flotilla was to cruise a sector stretching between five and forty leagues to the north of Cape Ortegal. They had just about reached the northern extent of their cruising zone, in latitude 45°, when several sail were sighted to the

northwest, at dawn on 14 May. With the British squadron in line abreast on a SW heading, *Monmouth* dropped out to investigate. About 7-8am *Falcon* returned to the pack (in company with *Inverness* she had been detached on 13 May to scout Rochefort). About 4pm yesterday she had spied thirty sail on a heading SE by south, travelling west. This matched the current sighting and suggested the bulk of the enemy formation was ahead of Anson on his current heading, so the ships shook out more canvas and started the pursuit. Half and an hour later *Namur* had a sighting, right where it had been predicted, and Anson signalled 'General Chase'.

The ships cleared for action (Richmond says most dumped their ship's boats overboard and cut the lines of anything in tow) and the fireship *Vulcan* was made ready to burn. The enemy became fully visible to the fleet about 11am. It was Saint-Georges and Jonquière, with their combined convoy.

Now Anson ordered his cruisers — the 50s and 60s — to close up. Until now his ships had been about 2,800 metres apart. At 12pm the French escort of 12 ships was observed forming line of battle abreast to screen the convoy, which was racing away at full sail.

Richmond lists the following ships for each side:

British

Prince George (90) — Anson
Devonshire (80) — Warren
Namur (74)
Monmouth (64)
Prince Frederick (64)
Yarmouth (64)
Princess Louisa (60)
Defiance (60)
Nottingham (60)
Pembroke (60)
Windsor (60)
Centurion (54)
Falkland (50)
Bristol (50)
Ambuscade (40)
Falcon sloop
Vulcan fireship

French

Sérieux (66) — Jonquière
Diamante (56)
Gloire (46)
Eméraude (24)
Rubis (52)

Invincible (74) — Saint-Georges
Jason (52)
Appollon (30) — East Indiaman
Philibert (30) — East Indiaman
Thétis (20) — East Indiaman
Dartmouth (18)— East Indiaman (British prize)
Vigilante (22)
Modeste (22)

By 1pm Anson was about 5,500 metres from the French, who were still headed southwest, the escort formed behind the convoy. But the French warships soon came about, facing northwest in line of battle ahead — that is, 'crossing the T'. Anson began straightening his formation and switched to line ahead. This was a standard drill. In an ideal world the British would manoeuvre to form a matching parallel line so they could engage the French broadside on. But, sailing in line abreast and then having each ship simply make a quarter turn to create such a parallel line when they were within range was not how a formal battle was supposed to occur. The ships had to arrange themselves one behind the other, then sail into range, and swing along the length of the French line. If not to windward they would round the end of the enemy line and come down (or up) on the windward side. Or, they might 'cross the T' if that was how they could stay to windward, though the manoeuvre was not common. In earlier times, both sides would anchor themselves so their ships became floating bastions. Running fights and small engagements done 'on the fly' did not work like that, but it was roughly how Toulon was fought (though very badly executed on both sides). The linear drill maximized firepower but took a long time to arrange. In this case two hours were wasted before the attempt was abandoned.

There appears to be no record of exactly why the plan changed, but change it did. Warren normally gets the credit, though Anson's partisans say he needed little persuading. As the manoeuvres into line of battle required some ships to slow and even pass by each other, Richmond is of the opinion that Anson and Warren had a chance to confer in person. Beatson also assumes this was the case. Warren was convinced the French were putting up a bluff and wanted to go pell-mell for the enemy center, in a foreshadowing of Trafalgar.

[It should be noted that even Nelson fought line against line on some occasions. What is at issue is not a change in doctrine but the ability to dispense with current doctrine when the need arises, and improvise. Warren and Anson had that capability, whereas a man like Mathews did not. Of course, if Mathews had more influence with the Board, he might had been more willing to take chances…]

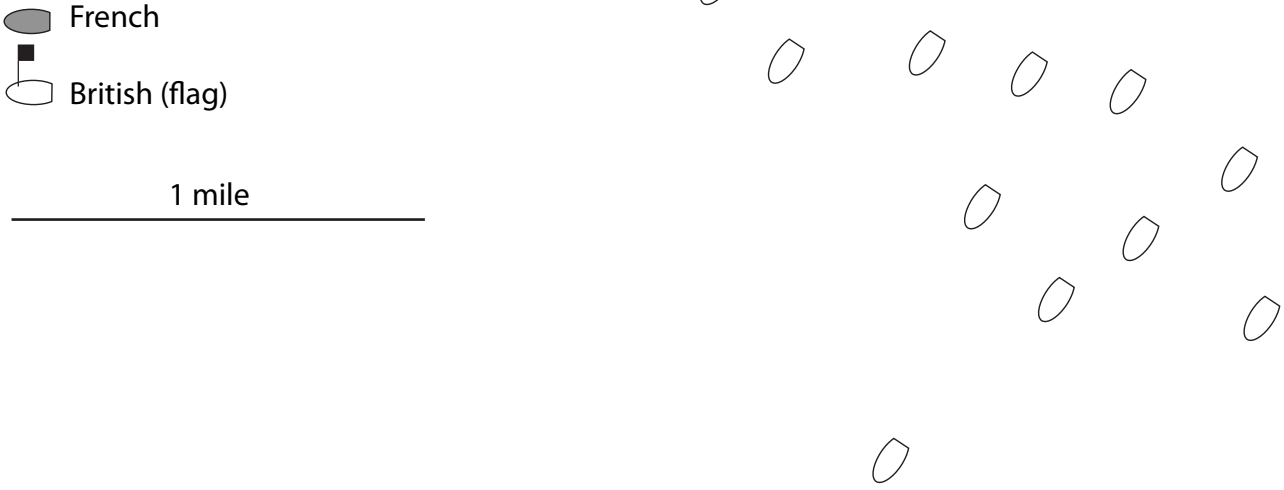
The personal conference, if there was one, may or may not have changed Anson's mind. The impression one gets is that have having spent the whole of last year plus the last few weeks drilling his squadron to perfection, he was itching for a chance to show what they could do in the way of complicated manoeuvres, and was severely put out when Warren took matters out of his hands. However, Anson was willing to accept what now took place and work with it.

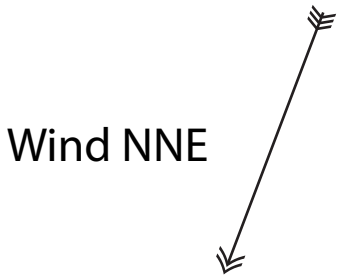
What now took place was this. Anson had set a course WSW against the lead enemy ships, his van, commanded by Warren, 'leading large' — that is, at a distance from the main body. Anson signalled to close with the van, which was the next bit of the drill. Warren promptly 'bore away in chase' straight at the enemy line, several of the van following him, thus breaking up the British formation. Anson angrily signalled for him to reform but was ignored, at which he signalled for the van to 'lead larger', which sent all of them charging down on what would be the French center when the enemies converged.

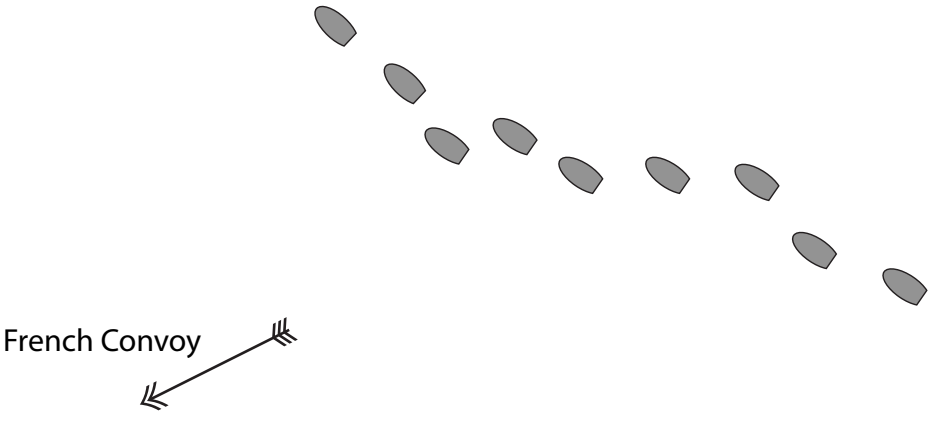
Anson & de la Jonquière

3 May 1747 @1pm

original by Richmond



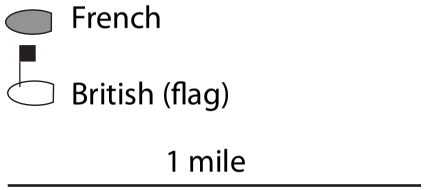


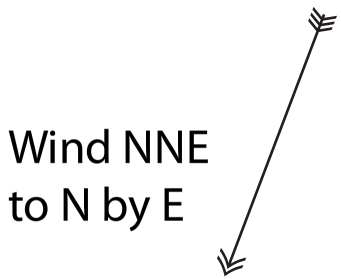


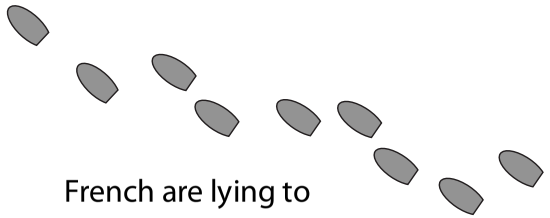
Anson & de la Jonquière

3 May 1747 @1:30pm

original by Richmond







Anson & de la Jonquière

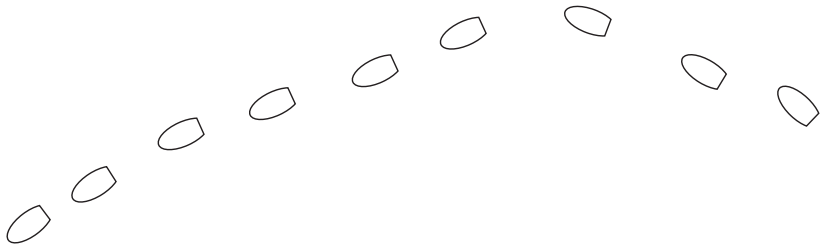
3 May 1747 @3:15pm

original by Richmond

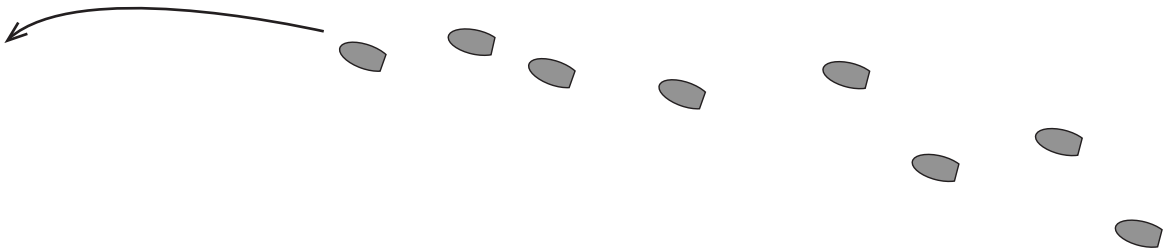
French

British (flag)

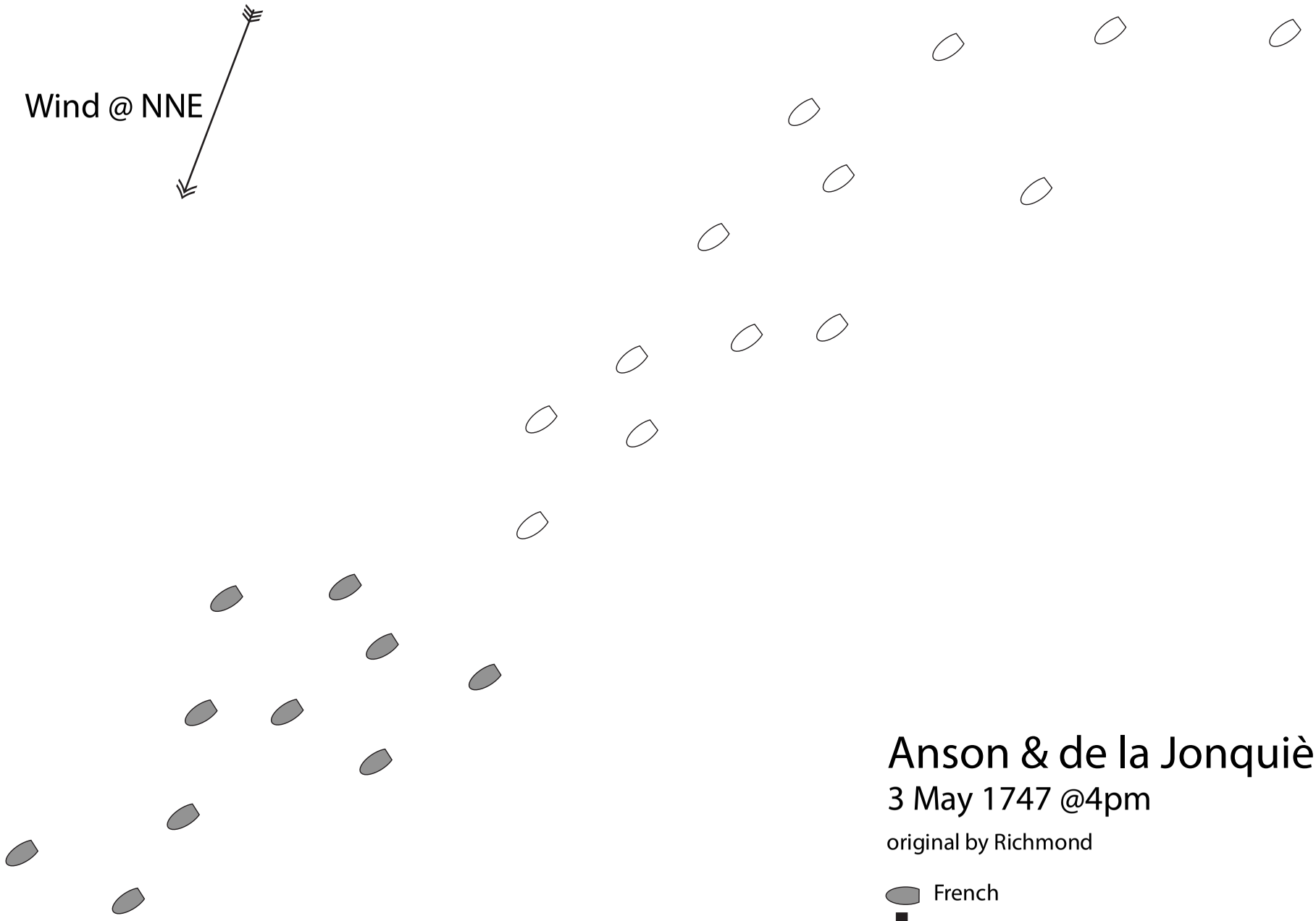
1 mile



French make sail after seeing British filling sails & bearing down ahead of them; after a few minutes they break line and put on more sail; Anson orders General Chase



Wind @ NNE



Anson & de la Jonquière

3 May 1747 @4pm

original by Richmond

French

British (flag)

1 mile

Richmond suspects that even if they had no chance to confer Warren and Anson actually had similar intentions — in other words, that Anson was not really going to fight a stock battle in the first place — but that he wanted to avoid the heavy casualties that would ensue if the French line held and was able to blast his lead ships several times before they could engage. The French crews were probably not up to the task, but the British could not be sure. Warren was more sanguine and felt they were letting an opportunity slip. Whatever mix of tactical thought was at play, Warren's instincts were right. The net effect was to force the French into immediate flight. They turned WSW and picked up speed. Anson signalled General Chase again.

[Warren's disobedience — it was that, because Anson at first signalled for him to reform — had no political fallout. First, probably, because the battle turned out so well in the end; second, probably, because both men quickly anticipated the outcome would be satisfactory; and third, probably, because neither had anything to prove. There was no need for Anson to indulge in petty service rivalry. The way Jarvis handled Nelson's disobedience at Cape St. Vincent is very similar.]

Gradually the British van caught up with the French, engaging first with bow chasers and then taking on individual ships as they overhauled them. The first was *Centurion*, who fought the *Sérieux* and *Invincible*, eventually receiving support from *Namur*. *Defiance* and *Windsor* closed next; now these ships were engaged with five of the French, *Defiance* moving to aid *Namur*, which was under heavy fire. After, it was the turn of *Nottingham*, *Yarmouth*, and *Devonshire* (Warren's flag), while the leading British ships forged ahead to engage new targets. *Devonshire* took on the already battered *Sérieux*, reserving her fire until within pistol shot; one broadside from the *Devonshire* and *Sérieux* struck. *Devonshire* continued on to engage *Invincible*, already hammered by *Namur*, and compelled the captain to surrender when his gun crews could not be persuaded to fight anymore.

The following journal entries are quoted in Richmond (vol. III p.92):

'The conduct of these ships is described thus in the Captain's Journal of the 'Yarmouth.' "[About] 4.30 we began to fire, and sheering from quarter to quarter with the 'Namur' and 'Princess Louisa ' soon put the enemy to great disorder by shattering their sails and rigging and carrying away several of their yards and topmasts." The 'Princess Louisa's' Journal says, "About 4 began to engage one of the enemy's largest ships. Soon after the 'Centurion' had her maintopmast shot away. Do.,[sic] run further to leeward between her and the enemy and gave her our broadside. At the same time received the fire of the French admiral and engaged him and the other ship for some time 'till more ships astern came up." Boscawen in the 'Namur' says, "We came within gun-shot of the sternmost of the enemy when they began to fire their stern chase upon us. We stood on and soon after came very near three or four of them where we were warmly engaged on both sides for about 3/4 of an hour… we then shot ahead and about 1/2 past four engaged the 'Serieux' (flag) within pistol shot more than half-an-hour when she struck to us. We left her and made sail ahead and soon came up with the 'Ruby.' She struck to us likewise." The 'Centurion,' which boldly led into the middle of the fleet, was engaged by the 'Serieux' and 'Invincible' together for nearly a quarter of an hour before the 'Namur' and 'Defiance' came up to help her, and after an hour's fighting had her maintopmast shot away, her yards shot through and five feet of water in the hold.'

The British main body closed about 5pm. Now the French were outshot, but they fought for another hour before surrendering. Richmond describes the tactics used thus (vol. III, p.93): *'The chasing tactics of this action consisted in an attempt by the British ships each to disable her opponent, and having done so, to leave her to be finished off by those coming up from astern. When fresh ships came up, or when an opponent dropped out, each ship pressed on to engage the next ahead. The same system will be seen in use in the second great action of this year, and attention is called to it in order to point out the difference in the doctrine of this and a later period as to the tactics of a chasing action. Commanders in the subsequent wars reversed the practice and each ship was ordered as she came up to engage her opponent until she had captured her, the fresh ships coming up from astern passing on to engage those ahead.'*

Two notable sayings were attached to the battle, both attributed to the Honourable Captain Montague of the *Bristol*. When *Bristol* was fighting the *Invincible*, *Pembroke* tried to push in between them and was warned off with "run foul of me, and be d—d; neither you nor any man in the world shall come between me and my enemy". After Invincible was dealt with, Montague called to his crew, "Come, my brave boys, we must have another bird of them." At which *Bristol* took on a heavier enemy ship, the *Diamante*, capturing it after an hour and forty-five minutes.

Both sides fought hard, the first six British ships each receiving two broadsides before they were in a position to engage properly, and then fighting unsupported for about an hour, while the French resisted to the last (except for the *Jason*, which struck very early). When *Diamante* was taken her decks looked like a slaughterhouse.

Anson did not forget the convoy itself, and sent *Falkland*, *Ambuscade*, and *Falcon* in immediate pursuit. They would have to deal with a single escort, the *Eméraude*. Around 7pm *Monmouth, Yarmouth, and Nottingham*, which had not come up in time for the fight, were added to the pursuit.

Counting the vessels of the convoy that the British managed to catch the French lost 18 ships out of 38 — five merchantmen (Beatson says six) and all the escorts. These included the frigates *Dartmouth, Vigilante,* and *Modeste*, which had been detached from the line to help the convoy. The East Indiamen brought in a cargo valued at over £300,000, but since much of it was destined for the war effort in India, the strategic blow was even heavier.

Casualties amounted to 700 on the French side, including La Jonquière, who was wounded by a musket ball passing under both his shoulder blades, and 520 British. The most notable British loss was Captain Thomas Grenville of the *Defiance*; an MP and member of the Grenville political family, he was the brother-in-law of Pitt the Elder. But he

was also a gallant officer. In a twist that ought to be relegated to a novel, he was supposed to be making an independent cruise at the time of the battle but had his orders changed at the last minute. He was given a full-blown service funeral.

[Beatson does not list Eméraude*,* Vigilante*, or* Modeste *among the prizes.]*

Many of the merchantmen were unwilling to continue their journey unsupported, and fled into port. After eight and a half years of war, the British could finally claim a decisive victory at sea. Anson was made a peer of the realm and Warren a Knight of the Bath. In France, despite the success of their Flanders campaign, the stock market fell by more than 10%. The battle also ensured that circumstances in North America and India remained favourable to Britain.

Having disposed of the French, Anson repaired his damaged ships sufficiently to return to England, arriving at St. Helens on 27 May. He reoccupied his seat at the Admiralty, leaving Warren in charge of the Squadron. The latter had all of three days to refit before he was ordered to sea again, to intercept a San Domingo convoy escorted by M. du Bois de la Mothe, estimated at 200 sail. Warren sailed on 14 June with six ships (*St George (90), Devonshire (66), Yarmouth (64), Nottingham (60), Hampshire (50), Ambuscade (40)*, plus *Falcon* sloop and *Pluto* fireship), intending to intercept the convoy off Finisterre. *Princess Louisa* and *Defiance* would reinforce.

[Notice that the 2nd Rate Devonshire has been cut down to 66 guns. This was a trend. Many of the 40-gun frigates were also being refitted as 44s at this time.]

Sir Peter Warren (1703-1752)

Born in Ireland, Warren was a prime example of the sort of man who in the next generation would be forced to make a hard decision over where his loyalties lay. Enlisting as an ordinary seaman at age 13, he was not friendless. To begin with, he and his brother served together. Then too, he was patronized by his uncle, Baron Alymer, who had been an admiral. Thus, by 1727 Warren was a captain. Most of his career, but especially in his early years of command, was spent in American waters, where he became heavily involved in local politics and the acquisition of land, marrying into the Delancey family of New York (his wife was also connected to the Schuylers and Van Cortlandts). So, by the time of the War of Jenkin's Ear, Warren was a wealthy and well-connected American landowner, with vast estates (his property at Greenwich Village alone covered 300 acres). There are many places in the Atlantic states that commemorate Warren in some way or other. And yet, in 1747 he moved his family to England, where he was both serving as commander of the Western Squadron and an MP. Men such as these lived a transatlantic existence.Warren's rise beyond captain came during the war, when he was made Commodore in 1744 and essentially given command of the Eastern Seaboard. He operated in the Caribbean and, as has been seen, became Governor of Louisbourg. The capture of that place earned him a knighthood and promotion to Rear Admiral of the Blue. After being given command of the Western Squadron he was promoted to Vice Admiral of the Red after the Second Battle of Finisterre in October of 1747. An excellent leader of men, he might have risen higher but he died of fever in Dublin in 1752.

Sir Peter Warren c.1751 (the background shows the taking of Louisbourg).

Jacques-Pierre de Taffanel de la Jonquière, Marquis de la Jonquière (1685-1752)

David Hughes has this to say of Jonquière (taken from the present author's Mistral commentary):

… born of middle-class parents, who joined the navy in 1697 [age 12] and by consummate service was promoted to *Capitain de Vaisseau* in 1731, at the age of 46. There he became part of the group regarded as the core of the Navy, professional ship-captains often used to nurse less qualified aristocratic seniors. La Jonquière was particularly respected and chosen by admirals to captain their flagships — such as the *Saint Esprit* carrying Vice-Admiral D'Antin to the West Indies in 1740 and *Le Terrible* with Court de la Bruyère at the Battle of Toulon. In the Royal Navy his age would have prohibited him from ever serving as an admiral at sea, but the one saving grace of the French system was that nothing could prohibit a King or his ministers from promoting whoever they chose. Fortunately for La Jonquière, *Le Terrible* had captured a wealthy prize so poverty was no longer an automatic disqualification. Promoted *Chef d'Escadre* in 1746 he immediately made his mark, taking over from the incapable d'Anville on his death, protecting a huge convoy from the British by fighting to the utter end and ending his days in Quebec as a respected Governor-General of New France, with a marquisate to pass on to his descendants.

Jonquière had twelve combats to his credit and participated in no less than twenty-nine campaigns.

La Jonquère

Captain Fox

Meanwhile, there was Captain Fox. His ship, the *Kent (70)*, had been a day late for Anson's original sortie from Plymouth. Following standard procedure he sailed for the normal rendezvous, which was 120 leagues west of the Scilly Isles, in latitude 46° and 47° 30'. The seas there were empty, so he opened his sealed orders, which told him of the secret Belle-Île rendezvous. Arriving there he found that he had just missed Anson again, but he picked up three ships to add to his squadron between the first and third of May. One was the *Eagle*, cruising independently in search of a French 44-gun privateer. The others, *Lyon* and *Hampton Court,* had been left behind by Anson. Also present was *Ambuscade*, but she did not join Fox since her role was to forward latecomers to Anson's location. From the secret rendezvous Fox proceeded to the Cape Ortegal rendezvous (5 May). However, he did not find Anson and missed the battle, only being informed of it on 30 May. So, he sent word to England that he would cruise where he was until receiving new orders.

There were other ships on independent cruises. A squadron of six ships detached from Anson's command (*Hector, Dolphin, Salisbury, Syren, Inverness, Amazon*) had been cruising off the Île d'Yeu (halfway between Quiberon and La Rochelle); *Hector* and *Dolphin* joined Fox on 13 June. It does not seem they had specific orders to do so (similarly, Inverness had been working independently after being left behind, but joined with the others at some point). A few days later Fox also picked up *Chester* and the *Pluto* fireship.

By 26 June Fox was running low on water and decided to head home. Then, at 4am on 30 June he came across the prize of a lifetime — de la Mothe's convoy; 134 sail physically counted, including three escorts (*Magnamie, Alcide, Arc-en-Ceil*). Fox gave the signals to clear for action and then to chase.

It took several hours to close. Historians assume that the British ships were foul after a long cruise, which was undoubtably true, but why were the French ships not in the same condition after crossing the Atlantic?

At 8am British passed through a rising fog bank in which they lost sight of each other as well as the convoy, but broke into the clear around 11am, to find the escort forming line of battle. The French at first 'lay to' — that is maintained their position — but when la Motte saw he was outnumbered they made sail. By 12pm the squadrons were five miles apart, the French escorts leading the British, with the wind from the NNE favouring them. The chase lasted throughout the afternoon, 'the British under all possible sail, keeping their wind, the French under topsails and foresail, and steering about a point free' in Richmond's words (vol. III p. 97).

Around 5pm the French shook out more sail and turned more into the wind, while the convoy began to scatter, the rear half turning northwest, but the remainder carrying on their eastward course, beyond the escorts. This situation continued until dark. Fox continued the chase as best he could, so that by first light the rear of the convoy was still visible, about four leagues away, NE by North. The escort, however, had vanished. Fox believed they had gone northwest and sent the *Eagle* to investigate. The whole day was spent closing with the convoy elements. One prize was taken, then things escalated. On 3 July the British, now deep within the vast and scattered convoy, took thirteen vessels. Unfortunately, on the morning of 4 July a strong gale sprang up, enabling 64 of the French to escape and reach port (Brest on 7 July for de la Mothe, and the other western ports within a few days for the rest). Four vessels were taken by Warren, who was in the same vicinity by coincidence, but the weather was too 'thick' for him to tell clearly what was going on and he missed most of the convoy. In total the British captured 48 vessels, valued at £294,486 3s 7d in contemporary money.

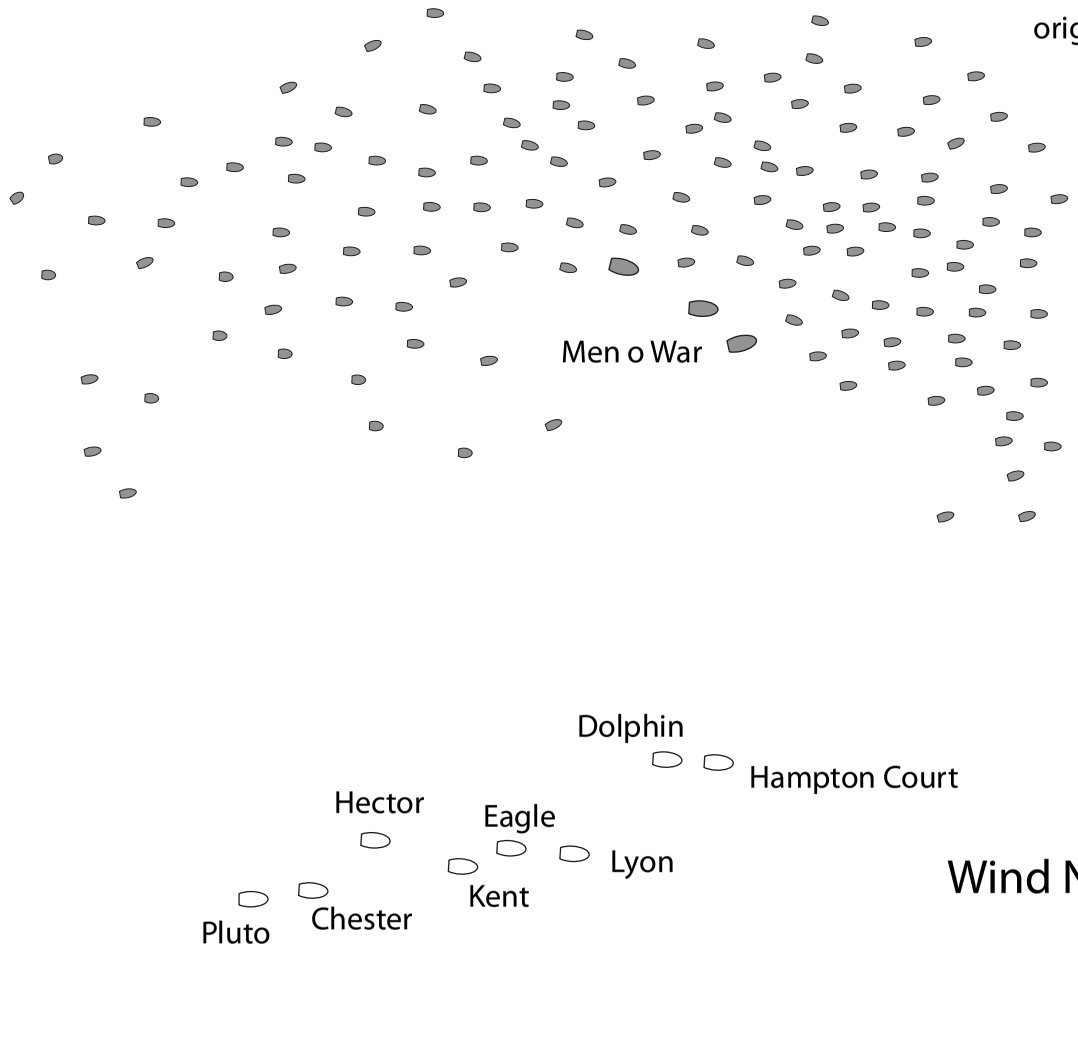
[Richmond breaks the prize money down: £38,810 15s 5d for Mr. Fox, £8,165 1s for each of his captains, £1,049 15s 10d for a lieutenant (enough to be talked about at whist parties but not enough to marry above one's station), £459 5s 8d for a warrant officer (enough to retire and open a pub), £132 12s 10d for a petty officer, and £25 19s for an ordinary seaman (enough to hit every bar in Bristol more than once).]

Fox & de la Motte

June 20 1747

@Noon

original by Richmond

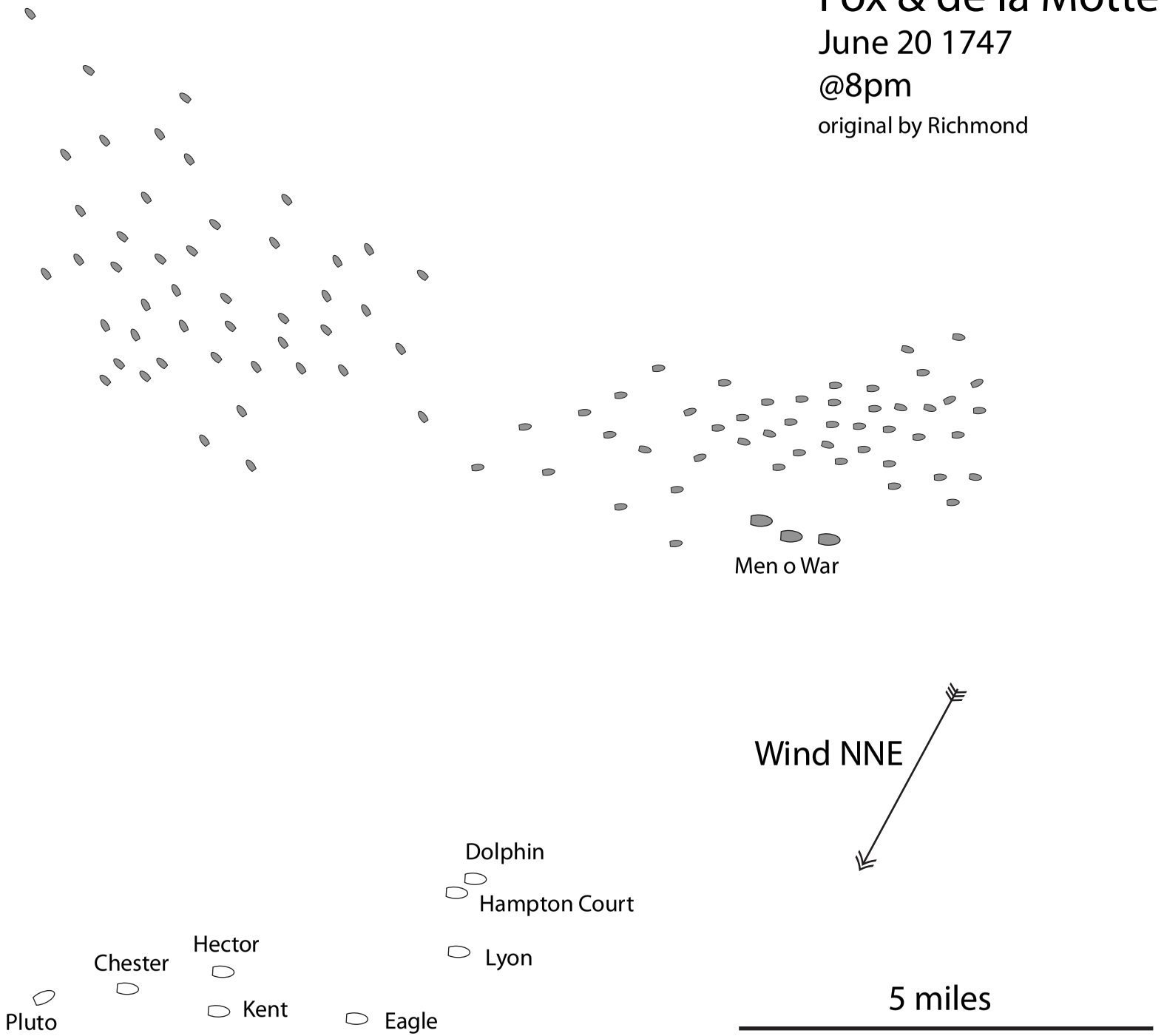


Fox & de la Motte

June 20 1747

@8pm

original by Richmond



Warren and Hawke

Warren's second cruise continued to yield results. On 3 July while headed for Cape Ortegal, he pursued two sets of enemies, one of four vessels and one of six. The four were not the merchantmen mentioned above, they turned out to be his own reinforcements: *Prince Frederick, Bristol, Centurion*, and a Portuguese brig they were interrogating. The six were French, and Warren followed them into a bay on the windward side of the island of Sisarga. The French had always regarded this as a safe anchorage, but Warren sent his ships in, forcing the French to ground their vessels and flee. They themselves burnt a brig, and the escort *Étoile (46)*, which blew up. Next day the British were able to bring away the remaining vessels.

[Richmond places this action on 1 July.]

On 4 July Warren and his squadron met with a British privateer off Cape Finisterre. The privateer had just hounded a small group of Spanish coasters, suspected of carrying naval stores, into the port of Cedeira (about 25 Km NE of El Ferrol). The port turned out to be overflowing with Spanish coasters. Warren sent the *Viper* sloop and *Hunter* dogger to assist the privateer in taking and burning the vessels. To do so they had first to bombard a small fort into submission. On 5 July the ships rejoined Warren with a Spanish privateer and five barks, having burned twenty-eight other vessels. The fort was dismantled.

The captain of the *Viper* was given command of the *Greyhound* frigate as a reward. *Viper* in turn was given to a Lieutenant Hay. Sometime after this action, Hay encountered a homeward bound French South Sea ship, the *Hector (28)*, off Ushant. Hay and most of his officers were killed in the hour and a half fight, in which the *Hector* was captured. Unfortunately she had offloaded most of her cargo in the Canaries. However, part of it was liberated later by the privateers *Kingston, Cumberland,* and *Hardwicke*, when they intercepted a Dutch merchantman carrying French contraband. Very naughty. Another portion of the cargo was liberated by the privateer *Prince of Orange* when she took the *Maria Catherina* of Hamburg.

On 18 July Warren intercepted the outbound Spanish packet, and on the next day drove ashore a French frigate of 36 guns, eight leagues west of Cape Pinas; this the crew set on fire. On 7 August Warren took a 500-ton outbound East Indiaman, the *St. Antonio (16)*. After this success he headed for home, reaching Plymouth on 12 August with ten ships; three more (*Prince Frederick, Centurion, Augusta*) remaining at sea, operating between Belle-Île and Ushant.

The Glorioso

Meanwhile, an independent action had taken place on 25 July. The British escorts for the outbound North America trade (*Warwick (60)* and *Lark (44))* engaged the Spanish captain Don Pedro Messia de la Zeeda at a spot off the Azores. De la Zeeda commanded the *Glorioso (70)*, enroute from Cuba to Spain with £1,300,000 in treasure. Things did not go well for the British. The captain of the *Warwick*, who was junior, blithely closed and fought without support until disabled. It is not clear why *Lark* did not participate; her captain blamed *Warwick's* captain entirely.

This was not the last damage the *Glorioso* was able to inflict, either. On 18 October she was bound for Cádiz when she encountered the privateers *King George, Prince Frederick, Duke*, and *Princess Amelia*. The first two closed and fought for about three hours before being forced to withdraw, much battered. However, they continued to shadow her. Next day, two more British sail appeared, *Dartmouth (50)* and *Russell (80)*. It is not clear if one of the privateers summoned them or if they intercepted by chance.

Dartmouth (Captain Hamilton) engaged the *Glorioso* alone for two and a half hours. Before *Russell* or the privateers could come to her aid, *Dartmouth* blew up. It was up to the *Russell* (Captain Buckle) to exact revenge. *Russell* closed about 1am on 20 October and she and the Spaniard fought together until 6am, when *Glorioso's* main topmast went overboard. She struck.

*[*Russell*, the 80-gunner had a crew of 400.* Glorioso*, the 70-gunner, had a crew of 700.]*

Hawke Takes Command

Apparently it was only after his return from his second tour that Warren understood he had been given complete command of the Western Squadron. Anson would not be returning to sea. However, Warren was suffering from scurvy and had to take shore leave. Not having an officially appointed rear admiral he selected a Captain Edward Hawke, newly promoted to Rear Admiral of the White. The Admiralty agreed to allow Hawke to run the Squadron while Warren recovered. This was in no way illegal, but it was unusual to give such a prestigious command to a new admiral.

So long as Warren remained titular commander, Hawke's orders were the same. The Squadron now consisted of sixteen ships of the line, seven 50s, eight frigates, three sloops, and two fireships. Most were in refit, so Hawke sailed, about 16 August (Beatson says 20 August), with only four ships, to which he would add the three still at sea (*Monmouth (70), Portland (50), Gloucester (50), Windsor (60), Augusta (60), Centurion (54), Grand Turk (20)*).

While cruising on his station about the end of August, Hawke was alerted to the news that the Bourbons were making every effort to ready every available ship for sea. From political contacts, London understood that the enemy intended to break the British stranglehold before it set hard. Even the Cartagena Squadron had readied eight ships. Of course, these might be bound for Cádiz to protect a home bound convoy or posturing to help the separate peace negotiations over Italy, but they could equally be sailing for El Ferrol and a junction with the French or more of their own ships. Hawke suggested and was then ordered to send ships to patrol El Ferrol. London even discussed sending part of his squadron to patrol off Cádiz, where they had enough ships to contain the Bourbons, but not enough (thanks to having to send eight ships of the line and a frigate home for an extensive refit) to simultaneously intercept an enemy home bound convoy. Presumably they expected Hawke would be reinforced fairly quickly, since the six ships actually cruising with him do not seem sufficient for so many tasks.

However, the captain of the *Amazon*, Captain Samuel Faullner, who had been sent to Brest from Plymouth on 17 August and return on 3 September, was of the opinion that there would be no enemy combination. It appeared instead that the Brest Squadron, of which there were six ships of the line at Brest and three at Rochefort, was simply going to escort the latest outbound convoy from La Rochelle. This seemed the more likely because the French were taking on provisions for nine months, meaning they intended a long cruise.

Once again, the British strove to put as many ships at sea as possible. Unfortunately, Warren discovered he was still physically unfit and after sailing the short distance from Portsmouth to St. Helens in the *St. George*, had to resign his command. Hawke was given the whole Squadron, including the various detached patrols in the Channel and the Soundings. His instructions were virtually identical to those that had gone before, except that as a junior admiral he was require to report his position and intentions constantly, and had to maintain a frigate and sloop off each of the ports of Brest, Rochefort, and El Ferrol.

The British ships were sent out as soon as each was made ready: Mostyn took five of the line on 19 September, five of the line and two 50s (under Fox?) left Plymouth soon after, a 60 was sent to El Ferrol with instructions to report to Hawke afterward, and a further 90-gunner, 60, 50, and a 40-gun frigate were readying at Portsmouth. Hawke, of course, desperately needed to refit his current formation, but he would still have a significant force with which to either intercept the outbound French convoy or fight a fleet action against the remains of *La Royale*.

It seemed the French were trying to out-wait the British. They refused to sail. Hawke cruised for eighteen days and despaired of maintaining his station. A ruse was tried. *Grand Turk* was left to observe and Hawke, copying Warren's moves earlier in the year, sailed for Cape Ortegal. The idea was to deliberately get noticed, then slip back north, which he did after three days. He would take up a station farther to the west of Belle-Île, between latitudes 42° 30' and 44°. This fancy footwork garnered no results either, so he sailed back to Cape Ortegal.

On 7 October Fox rendezvoused with him, bringing the latest information, confirmation of a West Indies-bound convoy and an inbound convoy of Spanish galleons. Hawke decided to focus on the French. Who knew when the Spanish would show up, if they ever did? Rather than send his beat-up ships home, he redistributed the water and provisions from the new arrivals. This meant a shorter cruise, but a more powerful squadron. In fact, he still had fourteen ships cruising off the cape when the French appeared. They were sighted by the *Edinburgh* at daybreak on 25 October. It was de l'Étanduère, with eight ships of the line, an East Indiaman of 60 guns, and some frigates. He had put out from the Île de Aix on 6 October.

Edward Hawke, 1st Baron Hawke (1705-1781)

Hawke's fame rests on his activities in the Seven Years War, but he had already achieved much by the end of the War of the Austrian Succession. Like so many others he enlisted as volunteer in 1720. Unlike a number of other captains he had experience serving in almost every corner of the globe. By 1732 he was on the Jamaica station under Ogle, then C-in-C and must have become one of his inner circle, for he was rapidly promoted. However, after promotion to Captain in 1734 he went on half-pay the same year and was not recalled until 1739, when he was sent to command a ship on Warren's station. Though sent to cruise the Caribbean he did not participate in the Porto Bello operation or the attack on Cartagena des Indías. By 1743 he was in the Med, and fought at the Battle of Toulon (1744). Luckily for him, his was the only ship to take a prize, so the court martial that followed the flubbed action did him little hurt. Nevertheless, he was still only a captain, though commanding a 2nd Rate (*Neptune*). As senior captain he was promoted to rear admiral in July of 1747 and became second in command of the Western Squadron in August, under Warren; he replaced the latter when Warren fell ill.

Despite being the hero of Second Finisterre, Hawke failed to advance and at the peace was sidelined. He became MP for Portsmouth, holding that seat for thirty years. Anson, now First Sea Lord, and he shared a similar vision for the navy but did not get on personally. This, however, does not seem to be the reason why Hawke got no preferment for Anson tried several times to get him on the Admiralty Board. Hawke did make Vice Admiral in 1748 and also served as Port Admiral of Portsmouth.

During the Seven Years War Hawke's name was recalled to the public imagination when he won the Battle of Quiberon

Bay (1759), where he engaged with the equally famous Conflans. Both before and after the battle he served mainly as commander of the Western Squadron, which had been swiftly reintroduced thanks to Anson, though in 1756 he was dispatched to relieve Minorca and replace Admiral Byng; he also blockaded Rochefort (1757) and Brest (1758), and occupied Belle Isle (1761). (After first having opposed the operation in an open letter, to the annoyance of the P.M.; during the Brest blockade also, he displayed his independence by returning to base in a huff, for which he was reprimanded.) This was his last operation. He was given the rank of Rear-Admiral of Great Britain in 1763. This was an honorary rank, like Vice Admiral of the same, which he also attained, in 1765. But in 1766 he was recalled and made First Lord of the Admiralty, and finally promoted to Admiral of the Fleet in 1768. It was Hawke, who in that year appointed Captain Cook to make the first of his Royal Geographic Society voyages (out of gratitude Cook named several discoveries after him.

Second Battle of Cape Finisterre (6 October 1747)

Hawke's squadron was conducting a sweep in no particular order, with *Edinburgh* in advance of the rest. She signalled 'seven sail to the southwest'. This was at 7am, in latitude 47° 49' and longitude 1° 2' West, off Cape Finisterre. Hawke ordered General Chase with the wind at SSE, and after an hour they could see the convoy, though it was hard to distinguish sails since they were close together. By 10am they were within 7,500 metres. Some large ships could be seen. The signal was changed to Form Line of Battle Ahead. The *Princess Louisa* signalled there were eleven enemy ships of the line, but the *Kent* saw twelve. As always, forming line of battle took forever. Hawke had been at sea so long that most of his ships were fouled and slow. The convoy was speeding (relatively speaking) west. It was now about 2pm.

The squadrons according to Richmond:

British

Devonshire (66) — flag
Kent (64)
Edinburgh (70)
Yarmouth (64)
Monmouth (70)
Princess Louisa (60)
Windsor (60)
Lyon (60)
Tilbury (60)
Nottingham (60)
Defiance (60)
Eagle (60)
Gloucester (50)
Portland (50)
Hector (44)

French

Tonnant (80) — flag
Intrépide (74)
Terrible (74)
Monarque (74)
Neptune (58)
Trident (64)
Fougueux (64)
Severne (50)
Content (60) — East Indiaman; with the convoy

The French, under topsails and foresails only, were close hauled; the convoy was steering 'four points from the wind', which was still SSE. L'Étanduère was sailing slowly because he initially thought the lumbering British were some of his own convoy who had become separated. When he saw his mistake he ordered the convoy to make its best way to safety, dispatching his frigates and the Indiaman (the *Contente*) for its protection. This meant he would be outnumbered. But, his squadron's attitude allowed it to gain the weather gauge and he also ordered Line of Battle Ahead, *Intrepide*, *Trident*, and *Terrible* in the van, *Tonnant* (flag) and *Monarque* the center, *Severne*, *Fougueux*, and Neptune the rear. This was a difficult manoeuvre to pull off because he also had to maintain gaps for the convoy to escape through. He then began to steer gingerly along, keeping himself between the British and the convoy, while also keeping the weather gauge.

His own squadron still forming, Hawke, seeing the French making a screen, reverted to General Chase. He also called in the *Defiance* and *Princess Louisa* for some verbal orders, which have not been recorded. Once again the battle was a stern chase in which the British picked whatever ship they liked to engage with as they came up, and again, as they continued through the screen, picked new targets and let the rear ships finish off the damaged Frenchmen. Although most of Hawke's squadron was forced to engage to leeward and suffer multiple shots, some were able to come to windward, so that the rear French ships were attacked on two sides. In some cases three British ships simultaneously attacked a single French ship. Richmond makes it clear that although the method of attacking one ship and passing on to the next was a deliberate tactic, this 'envelopment' was not, but simply arose from circumstance. Most of the British ships threw less metal, but there were twice as many of them. Nonetheless the French resisted for several hours.

Richmond's account does not need rewriting and is given here in full (vol. III pp. 107-111):

The 'Lyon' was the first British ship in action. Passing to leeward of the 'Neptune' she ran the whole length of the French line. She received so many shot between wind and water in the early stages of the action that she had to haul out of line to stop her leaks; but this done, she came into action again as close as she was able. She reached the head of the line after four hours' fighting and then went about in order to gain the wind, double on the enemy, and repeat her attack on the other side. Close astern of the 'Lyon' came the 'Princess Louisa.' She also engaged the 'Neptune' to windward, seconded by the ' Monmouth,' which engaged the Frenchman on the other side. So soon as the

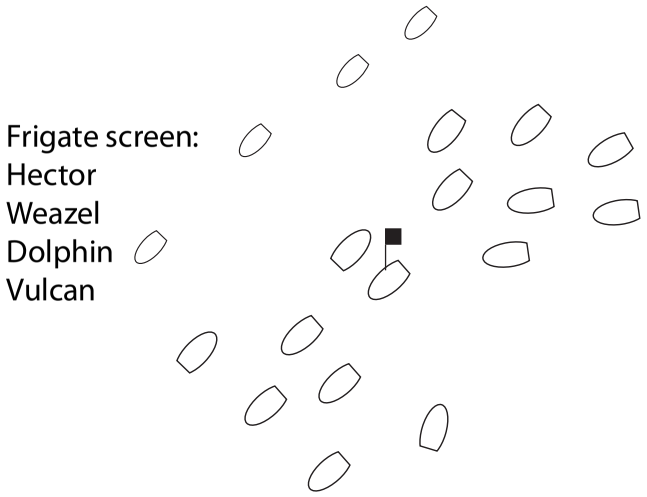
Hawke & de ‘Étanduère

14 October 1747 @10 am

original by Richmond

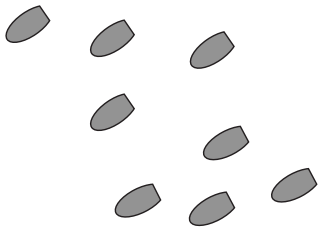
French

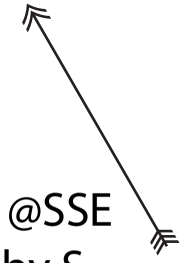
British (flag)



British ships shown heading in the ‘wrong’ direction are forming for Line of Battle Ahead after beginning the chase in line abreast.

Convoy standing away under press of sail to W by S & WSW



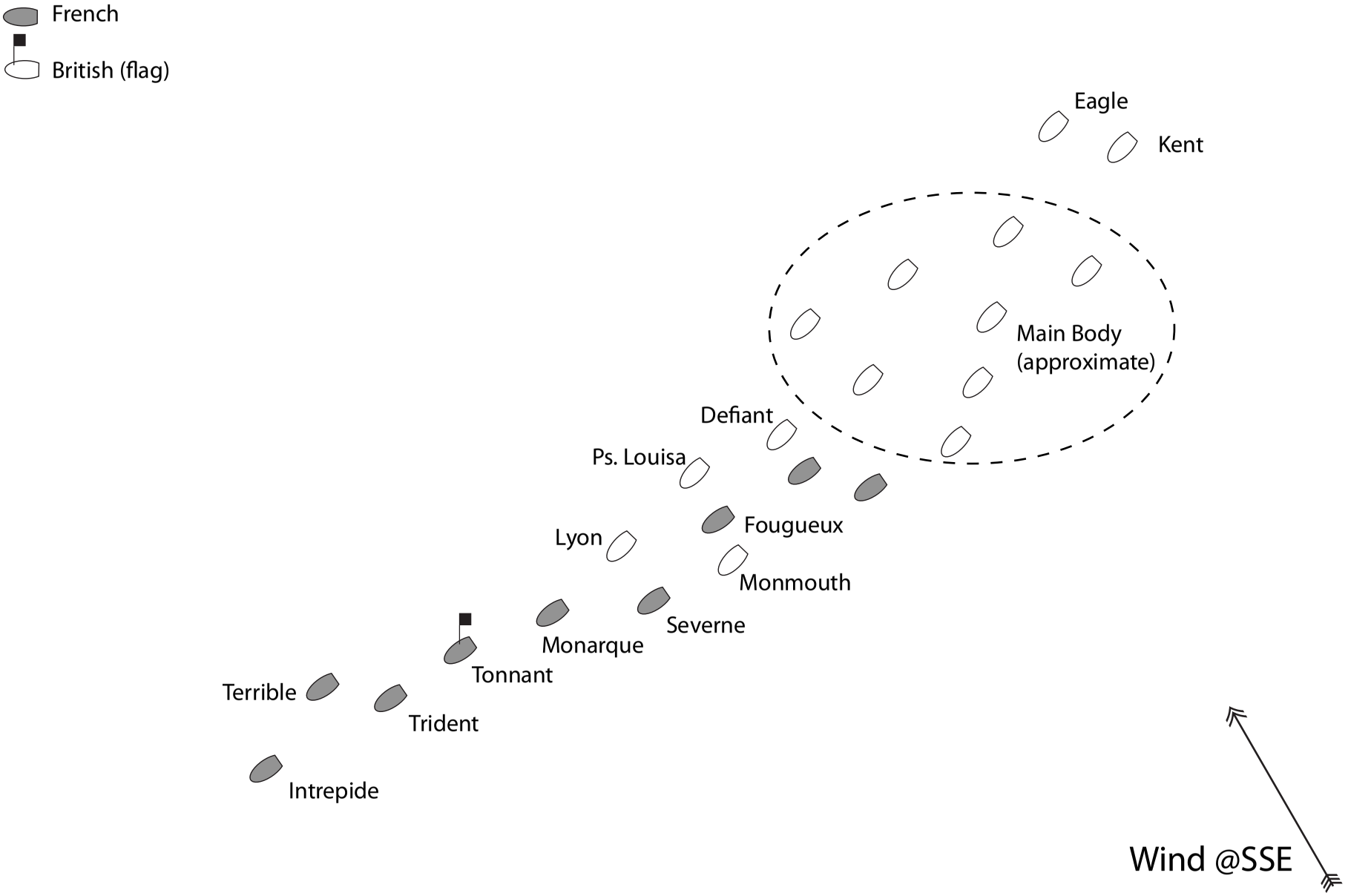


Wind @SSE to SE by S

Hawke & de ‘Étanduère

14 October 1747 @11.45 am

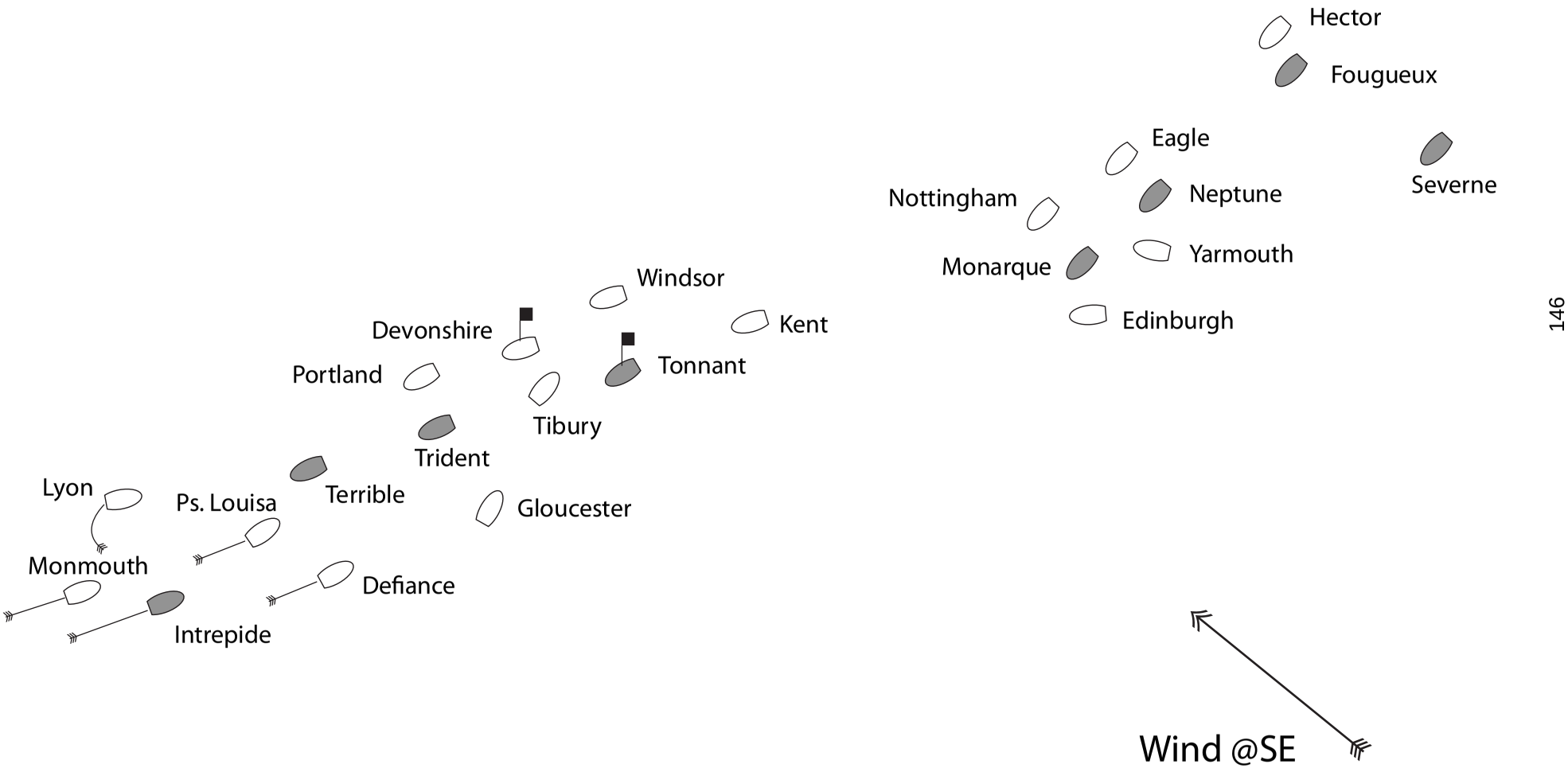
original by Richmond



Hawke & de ‘Étanduère

14 October 1747 @3:30 pm

original by Richmond



other British ships began to arrive the ' Princess Louisa ' made sail to give them room, and, like the 'Lyon,' passed along the line, tacked and got to windward, and placing herself on the weather bow of the leading ship the ' Terrible ' engaged her for about an hour, when the arrival of Hawke in the ' Devonshire ' upon her lee quarter forced the French ship to strike.

[Richmond notes the Terrible came into the lead because the Intrépide tacked simultaneously with the Lyon.]

The 'Defiance' followed in the same manner, passing along the French line to leeward and engaging within pistol shot every ship, except the 'Severne' 50, which was too far to windward. Like the others, she tacked and doubled when she reached the head of the line.

The order in which the remaining ships came into action is uncertain. They did not all strike the rear ships. The 'Hector,' a 44-gun frigate, cut in abreast the 'Fougueux' 64, the 'Portland' 50, abreast the 'Monarque,' 74, the 'Yarmouth' and 'Devonshire,' close together, abreast the 'Severne' a 50-gun ship which could make but a short resistance to the broadsides of the two British 64s. The 'Edinburgh' cut through between the 'Fougueux' and 'Severne,' engaging the two rear ships to leeward, the 'Severne' and 'Monarque' to windward as she passed between them. The 'Eagle' and 'Kent,' which were the two rear ships of the British squadron, came up close together, the 'Eagle' a little to windward of the ' Kent' and slightly abaft her beam. Captain Fox first intended to run to leeward of the enemy, slipping in ahead of the 'Eagle' but some of his officers saying, "if we edge away we must be foul of the Eagle and she must fire into us," he luffed and manned his lee guns, giving orders to them to fire as soon as they would bear, at the same time backing his mizen topsail to let the 'Eagle draw up to his bow. Hawke, seeing the 'Kent's' topsail aback, at once threw out her signal, and Fox made sail again, fetched the 'Neptune' bore up and passed under her stern and raked her, then stretched on to the 'Fougueux' which was at the moment disengaged, raked her and shot along her lee side and there engaged her for three-quarters of an hour. The 'Hector' at the same time placed herself on the 'Fougueux's' lee quarter and fired six or seven broadsides into her, when she struck. Fox then passed on to the 'Neptune' which in the interval had drawn ahead of the 'Fougueux' and resumed his action with her, broadside to broadside.*

[Fox apparently had trouble with his sails because some of the tackle had to be removed to give room to a gun crew. It took about 8-10 minutes to fix things.]

By about 1.30, after two hours of fighting, the resistance of the rear ships of the French line shewed evidence of weakening; the 'Severne' and 'Fougueux' had surrendered, the 'Neptune' and 'Monarque' were so shattered that they had no hope of keeping up with the rest of the squadron. Yet so stubborn was their defence that it was not until half past three, when having received the fire of nearly all the British ships, their masts gone and their decks choked with wounded and dead, they surrendered, the 'Neptune' to the 'Eagle' and ' Yarmouth,' the ' Monarque' to the 'Nottingham' and 'Edinburgh.'

At about 2.30 the 'Eagle' had had her wheel, tiller ropes, bowlines and most of her rigging shot away. These damages threw her out of control and caused her to fall on board the 'Devonshire,' then coming up from engaging the 'Severne,' and to carry away her jibboom and spritsail yard, forcing Hawke to bear up to clear himself. So soon as he was clear of the 'Eagle' Hawke stood for the French flagship, a fine 8o-gun ship, ran alongside her to leeward and engaged. But at the first broadside the breechings of the 'Devonshire's' lower deck guns carried away — there was a 6 to 7 knot breeze blowing and the ships being on a wind lay along considerably — and Hawke was obliged to shoot ahead to repair breechings. The 'Kent' at this moment was leaving the surrendered 'Fougueux,' and Hawke made her signal, intending her to engage the 'Tonnant.' This Fox did, passing under the French flagship's stern and engaging her for some time, during which he shot away her main and mizen topmasts so reducing her sail that the 'Kent' shot ahead. Fox thereupon hauled up his foresail and squared his foreyard to back alongside her. At the same time the 'Tilbury,' which had completed the circuit of the van, came up and engaged the 'Tonnant' to windward, by so doing covering the 'Devonshire' while she repaired her damages.

Hawke, seeing the 'Kent' was ahead of the 'Tonnant,' signalled to her to make sail ahead and engage the 'Trident.' Such, at least, was his intention, but his actual signal was only the ' Kent's ' number. How this was to be interpreted was the question. "Our signal was seen out on board the Admiral," wrote Fox in his Journal, "which my officers believed and insisted on was to make sail up to close him, as no ship was then near him and the ship I had just been engaged with ['Tonnant'] disabled, and four ships astern coming up, made me readily agree to the opinions of my officers and accordingly we made sail after him and hauled aboard the fore and main tacks." For this conduct, arising from a misinterpretation of the signal, and for backing his mizen topsail at the beginning of the action, Fox was tried by court martial and found guilty of misconduct, due, the court agreed, not in any way to want of courage, "but seems to proceed from his listening to the persuasions of the first lieutenant and master and giving weight to them." Keppel afterwards declared that Fox was in no way to blame, but was the victim of those officers "two damned bad fellows" who were bent on ruining him.

[Fox remained on the Captains List and died as a superannuated Rear Admiral in 1763.]

When his new breechings were rove, Hawke again made sail and drew up to the 'Trident,' which struck to him about 5 o'clock. At the same time the French Admiral, badly disabled aloft, but not much damaged below as her thick sides had kept out the light shot of the British guns, bore up and stood away before the wind. The 'Intrepide,' being the leading ship and somewhat to windward, had suffered least of the French squadron, had returned through the British ships in a most admirable manner in order to support the Admiral, and now, when the flagship bore up, she covered her retreat. Seeing the two French ships making away, Hawke, who had passed on from the 'Trident' to the 'Terrible' and was about to engage her, signalled to the 'Lyon,' 'Tilbury' and 'Kent' to follow them; but the signal does

not appear to have been seen. Rodney, however, who was coming up in the 'Eagle' from the surrendered 'Neptune,' bore away after them without orders, followed in close succession by the 'Yarmouth' and'Nottingham.' He overhauled the two French ships about 7, and engaged them single-handed for half an hour before he was joined by the two other British ships. But both 'Yarmouth' and 'Nottingham' being disabled, the chase was abandoned and the two French survivors reached Brest in safety.

When dark fell, all the French ships except the flagship and her second had surrendered. The British squadron was greatly scattered. Hawke therefore brought to and set about repairing damages, which were considerable. A council of war was called next morning to discuss whether the two French ships should be pursued, and it was agreed that "four ships, the least of them of 60 guns, could only be sufficient to go in quest of the two French ships, the Tonnant, 80, and Intrepide, 74, which had escaped," but that none of the British ships were fit to go ; by the time they could be made ready it would be too late, as the enemy would have made good his escape.

The convoy itself also escaped, so Hawke dispatched the *Weazel* sloop to the Leeward Islands with a warning. The French would be attacked at the other end of their journey, but managed to salvage 85% of the convoy, enabling Martinique and Hispaniola, which had been in dire straits — this was why the convoy was risked in the first place — to survive the British blockade until war's end. However, the losses sent insurance rates through the roof. Few owners could now be found who were willing to ship to the West Indies. L'Étanduère's commanded the last of the great French convoys.

The British ship *Hampshire* captured one of the frigate escorts, *Castor (28)* which was returning to Brest. They spent several days jerry-rigging the captured ships (all had been dismasted), before reaching Portsmouth on 11 November. L'Étanduère's ships, other than the *Neptune*, were added to the British order of battle.

Casualties for the French amounted to 800 men. The British lost 154 killed, 558 wounded. L'Étanduère was badly wounded. The most notable British loss was Captain Saumarez (*Nottingham*), killed in the exchange with the partially disabled *Tonnant*. Due to the confusion this caused, *Intrepide* was able to take *Tonnant* in tow. Saumarez was one of Anson's lieutenants in his circumnavigation, and has his own monument at Westminster Abbey. Beatson notes that twelve of the fourteen British captains participating in this action rose to high rank, two becoming Commissioners of Chatham and ten becoming Admirals. Hawke was awarded the Order of the Bath.

Being cut off from her colonies did not mean France herself was going to starve. The colonies provided luxury goods, not staples. But it did mean her armies would go unpaid. Coupling this fact with a failed harvest, it meant the French were now seeking peace. Fortunately, they had the means to bargain, having yet again defeated the Coalition, at Laffeld, and invaded Holland, storming the great fortress of Bergen op Zoom.

The Low Countries

Since the demise of B.P.C. not much has been said about Flanders, or Holland, or the North Sea… or the Channel for that matter. All these zones were infested with privateers, primarily operating out of Dunkirk, Calais, and St. Malo. The British had their own operating out of the Channel Islands and the mainland ports, but most of their efforts were in the West Indies. By this point in the war a dent had been put in Bourbon privateering efforts but they were never eradicated. Richmond provides a list for 1747 which names twenty-five enemy privateers captured in home waters. A few were Spanish, or rather, Basque. The most notorious was the *Grand Bayone (24)* of Bilbao, responsible for taking no less than 120 prizes during the war. The ships making the captures appear to be mainly 50-gunners and up, with a few frigates and the odd sloop. *The Hampton Court (70)* made three separate captures.

Still, though escorts were necessary even in home waters, it was possible to use small vessels, in ones and twos, rather than full squadrons. Naval participation in the land campaigns was minimal. The Royal Navy escorted troop convoys — first to Britain to put down the Rising, and then to return men to the Continent — and ran supplies along the coast. Shore bombardment in support of the various fortified towns (mostly now in French hands anyway) was extremely dangerous thanks to the many sandbanks lining the Flanders coast, while all the battles took place inland.

The Dutch provided their twenty (or ten… or five, depending on how the mood took them) ships but otherwise remained passive, using their navy to escort their own traders. These were at risk from privateers but not from *La Royale*, which had no presence in the North Sea and was inclined to let the Dutch alone since they were still buying naval stores from them. Until 1747 the latter, though they participated in the war both on land and sea, did so as auxiliaries of the British and Austrians. This allowed them to partake as much or as little as they liked in the war. But it also irked the French, who wanted them to get off the fence as much as the British did. Thus, on 28 April 1747, the Dutch were handed a note which told them they were now at war with France.

The land campaign went swimmingly. The French already controlled most of the Austrian Netherlands. Two corps under *maréchal* de Saxe, those of Löwendahl and de Contades, were directed to occupy Dutch Flanders — that part of the Netherlands south of the Scheldt River — plus the islands of Zeeland. There was a string of forts lining the shore all the way from Antwerp to the sea that were the immediate objectives. Phase two was to be the occupation of Walcheren. This island was the key to controlling the Scheldt. It also incorporated the significant port town of Flushing (Vlissingen), which the British were using as a supply base. Controlling the island would also allow the French to dominate the main Dutch naval base of Helvoetsluys, just to the north.

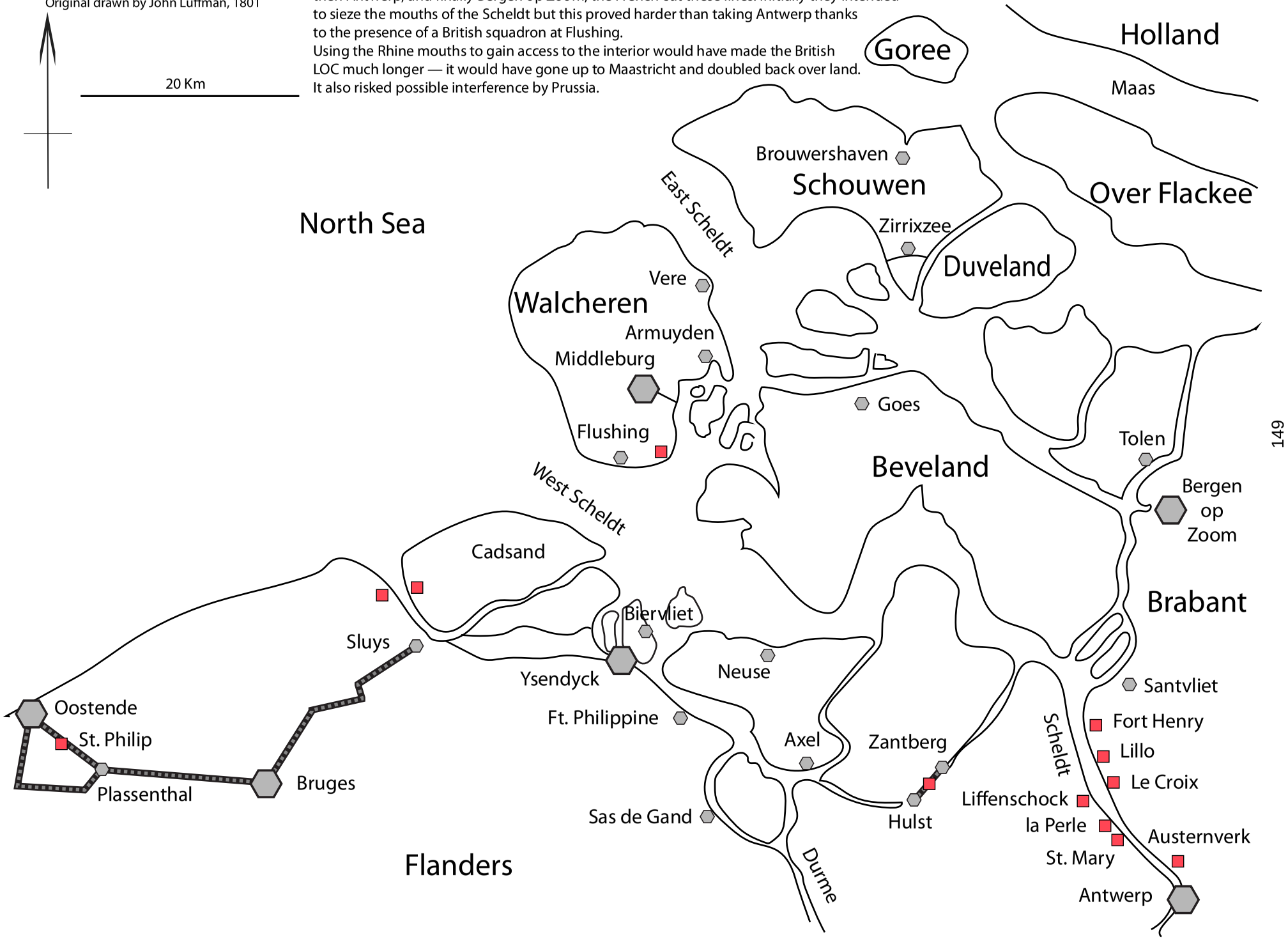
The island was so significant to British communications with the Continent, both military and civil, that command of the surrounding waters was entrusted to a Britisher, Commodore Matthew Mitchell (from 1746). He led a flotilla

Map of the Scheldt

Original drawn by John Luffman, 1801

20 Km

Notes: the British lines of communication with the Coalition forces in the Low Countires first used Oosetende and the associated canal network, then the Scheldt. By taking Oostende, then Antwerp, and finally Bergen op Zoom, the French cut these lines. Initially they intended to sieze the mouths of the Scheldt but this proved harder than taking Antwerp thanks to the presence of a British squadron at Flushing.
Using the Rhine mouths to gain access to the interior would have made the British LOC much longer — it would have gone up to Maastricht and doubled back over land. It also risked possible interference by Prussia.



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of small vessels based out of Flushing. Immediately after the declaration of war the Dutch were in a panic, not knowing whether to capitulate or not, but they did ask Mitchell to take action, so he rounded up all the armed vessels he could find, giving him about twenty in all, and sent them up the Scheldt as far as they could navigate.

The weakness of the Dutch system of government now manifested itself. The province of Zeeland had its own navy, but nothing had been done to prepare it, although its commander was willing to fully cooperate with Mitchell. The neighbouring province of Holland, which controlled Helvoetsluys, considered the French juggernaut to be Zeeland's problem and did not stir.

The French had their own river flotilla of *schuyts* and armed boats, commanded by a M. de Lage, which they brought along the Flemish canals while the Army invested the various forts. The defences can be loosely broken down into those west or east of the Terneuzen River. Those to the west fell quickly, Cadzand, at the mouth of the Scheldt, being the first. East of the river the key fortress was the town of Hulst, which contained three British battalions under General Fuller.

[Schuyt: a bluff-bowed boat fitted with leeboards, used chiefly on canals and for coasting, sometimes square-rigged but usually sloop-rigged. They feature in nearly every Dutch painting; if there is no windmill, there will be a schuyt, or a field of tulips. A really first class Dutch painting will have windmills, tulips, and *schuyts.]*

Hulst did not stand long. The British suspected the Dutch governor of selling out. Fuller evacuated successfully to Walcheren, thank's to Mitchell's flotilla. Fortunately the ring of forts between Hulst and Antwerp continued to hold for some time, allowing the Dutch to begin assembling a flotilla of their own. Soon there were 57 armed craft operating on the Scheldt, twenty British and thirty-seven Dutch, ranging from 24 guns down to 6. While the Antwerp forts held these could contain the French watercraft, but once the French were able to erect batteries on the shore they had to pull back.

The French had begun loading men and equipment for the short ferry ride across to Walcheren as soon as the forts west of the Terneuzen were in their hands. 4,500 men were collected at Cadzand and Sluys. But Mitchell's command of the Scheldt estuary prevented any movement by water. Similarly, a corps of 22,500 men collected at the mouth of the Terneuzen and destined for South Beveland were prevented from embarking. The French waited until June, then Löwendahl decided they would have to walk and marched off to Bergen op Zoom instead. This place was taken after a dramatic siege that consumed the rest of the campaigning season; its loss opened up the central and northern provinces to the French and also served as a great propaganda victory, but the navies had little to do. Mitchell supplied some bomb vessels and sloops, and landed some gunners, but that was all.

Minor Actions

Beatson's list of minor actions in 1747 is quite lengthy. The ones with unspecified dates which probably occurred in European waters include the following.

The taking of the St. Malo privateer *Terragone (24)* by the *Grand Turk*. In company with *Amazon*, *Grand Turk* had a successful career this year, also taking the privateers *Loup*, *Comte de Löwendahl*, and the *Neptune*, a merchantman coming from Martinique. At year's end the pair also took the privateers *Grand San Juan* of San Sebastian and *Thetis* of Bayonne.

The taking of the St. Malo privateer *Tyger (26)* by the *Falkland*.

The taking of the Spanish privateer *Conqerant (20)* and its companions, a pair of French privateers, of 20 and 26 guns, by the *Tiger* and *Tigress* privateers of Bristol.

The taking of a pair of outbound Spanish galleons by the privateer *Royal Family*. One, *La Nympha*, was wrecked on the Sussex coast, but the treasure, valued at £180,000, was saved.

The taking on separate occasions by the *Gloucester* of the St. Malo privateer *Two Crowns (24)* and the privateer *St. Clair (22)*. Assisted by the *Falcon* sloop, *Gloucester* also took the Bayonne privateer *Lightning (24)*.

[The loss of the Two Crowns *to the* Gloucester *is also cited for 1748, so it may have occurred at the change of the year.]*

The taking of the East Indiaman *Bellona (36)* by *Edinburgh*, *Eagle*, and *Nottingham*. *Bellona* was bought for the Royal Navy, and on 29 August, three leagues west of Ushant, fought an action with the outbound French East Indiaman *Duc de Chartres (30)*, taking the ship after two and a half hours. The Frenchman was carrying vital military stores for the French colony in India.

The taking of the St. Malo privateer *Mary Magdalene (26)* by the *Anson*. This ship was carrying hostages.

Off Cape Clear, *South Sea Castle* and *Solebay* took the prizes *Lewis*, *Prophet Royal*, the Bayonne privateer *Alexander (20)*, and a Liverpool brig which the enemy had captured. The *Lewis* had an interesting career. A snow, she had been enroute from Ireland to the Caribbean when captured by a French privateer, then rescued by a British privateer, then captured by a Spanish privateer.

The taking of the *Superbe (36*) by the *Surprize* and *Jamaica* sloop. Although this *Superbe* was not the warship of the same name, the contest was still an unequal one, lasting seven hours. Out of St. Malo and bound for the South Sea, *Superbe* was carrying £70,000 in cargo.

Maidstone made several captures — the *Revenge (22)* privateer, and some West Indies ships. However, in August she struck a rock off the southwest coast of Brittany while pursuing another privateer, and sank. The crew got to shore and were made prisoners.

There was an action in the North Sea, also. *Flamborough* and *Rose* captured a pair of French privateers, *Louis XV*

and *St. David,* and, on another occasion, two more, the latter carrying hostages and prisoners of war.

[When a ship was taken as a prize and could not be crewed by the captors, hostages were taken to ensure payment of a ransom.]

After the taking of the *Castor* by the *Hampshire* shortly after the major engagement of 25 October, the latter also took the Bayonne privateer *Heureux (16)*. Then, with *Bridgewater*, she took the Granville privateer *Tourterelle (14)*. *Bridgewater* alone also took a Bayonne privateer, the *Jason (16)*.

French privateers made their own attempts to take on armed vessels. On 13 June, off Yarmouth, the *Fortune* sloop was chased by no less than five of them (*Charron (10), Subtile (8), King David (4), Fly (4), St. Louis (4)*). But, *Fortune* turned the tables, gaining the weather gauge and bearing down on the small squadron. The French scattered. *Fortune* pursed the *Charron* for nine hours before taking her. *Fortune's* commander, Captain Jekyl, was given command of the *Lion* as a reward.

On 23 September there was a fight between the frigates *Amazon (26)* and *Renommeé (32)* lasting several hours. Both ships suffered severe damage to masts and rigging, and suffered heavy casualties. *Renommée* escaped in the night but had the misfortune to meet the *Dover* next day and struck after a short engagement. *Renommée* was carrying M. de Conflans to his post as Governor of San Domingo. The ship was bought for the Navy. *Dover* also, at a later date, took the St. Malo privateer *Jean Frederic (22)*.

On 30 October *Centurion*, while escorting homebound traffic off Portugal, sighted seven French sail belonging to the convoy which Hawke had scattered on 25 October, and took three of them. On 31 October *Centurion* sighted eight more and took half of them. On 10 November she recaptured a British ship being taken to Morlaix.

Summary

1747 was the year the naval war turned decisively in Britain's favour. On land, the French were battle after battle, but this could now be balanced against her losses in Trade and the threat to her colonies.

Net gain for the British in prizes was 96, or 647 to 551, the French losing 413 vessels in Europe and the Spanish 36; In American waters the numbers were 143 French and 55 Spanish. The numbers do include naval vessels but do not include a large number of barks taken by the British — something like 50. Most British losses to the Spanish were in the Caribbean, while those to the French were roughly equal between European waters and elsewhere in the world.

Richmond notes that the Bourbons could do nothing but continue their convoy system, which lacked two key components: the hunter-killer element that the British would use in later wars, and a ubiquitous scouting system to give advance warning. Without it, the French sailed blind, relying entirely on evasion. Since the British did a lot of scouting, they were able to gang up on the convoys without fear of reprisal. It had, however, taken until 1747 to create the right conditions for this.

1748 —FINIS

L'Océan se demande, en ses grottes profondes,
Où sont tes pavillons qui flottaient sur ses ondes.

[Voltaire, commenting on the state of La Royale *after the War of the Spanish Succession.]*

1748 was the final year of the war. Amid general war-weariness serious peace negotiations had already. Especially, the capture of the British-Huguenot general Sir John Ligonier at the Battle of Laffeld gave King Louis a backchannel through which he could indicate his willingness to come to terms. Talks resumed with even greater urgency in the spring of 1748, to the point that the campaigning season was curtailed. The actual treaty signing did not occur until October, which allowed operations to continue in various corners of the world, particularly the East and West Indies. However, in European wars, as on land, operations were abruptly terminated in May.

In the West Indies, with poetic inevitably, the last fight would take place between Britain and Spain — an attempt by the British to take Santiago de Cuba, in hopes of acquiring a base they could hold at the peace or exchange for concessions, followed by (at long last) a fleet engagement.

In the Med, the Riviera was under tight blockade. This influenced a major siege operation against the Genoese and their French allies but also secured the remaining warships at Toulon (ten plus three in ordinary) and shipping into and out of Marseilles. The Strait of Gibraltar and Cádiz were also closely watched. The Spanish at Cartagena could still get out (though they had little reason to do so), and in fact some French ships also escaped, but they were forced to run multiple gauntlets and the war ended before they could accomplish anything.

Strangling the French

Thanks to the convoy actions of 1747, both in European waters and in the Caribbean, *La Royale* was no longer an effective instrument of French power. Too many capital ships had been lost. Those that remained were on point-defence duty, undergoing badly needed repairs, or lacked crews. Britain was never going to starve the Bourbons into submission with a naval blockade, but she could cripple their trade and put a major dent in their finances. In time of peace France could rely on a vast land-based trade network with Germany and beyond, but just now she was at war with all those people. Overseas trade and domestic trade were the only sources left, and domestic trade had been broken by the war and a catastrophic harvest. This was even more true for Spain, who had been labouring under similar penalties even before war broke out, but she did make one more convoy run, successfully managing to exasperate the British.

The Continental merchant community found itself in a catch-22 situation: without escorts they could not sail in convoy, and unless they sailed in convoy they could not get insurance, unless they paid massive premiums that made their ventures pointless. Interestingly, most Bourbon shipping took out insurance with Lloyds of London. The fact, though everyone was well aware of it, seems not to have

been appreciated by the British military or government for some time, but during the Parliamentary session over the winter of 1747-48 legislation was passed to prevent such an anomaly occurring again. In future, it was hoped that an enemy's inability to reliably insure his trade would more quickly cripple his economy.

Perhaps most importantly, the British *knew* the enemy fleets were crippled. Now that they no longer had to fear a combined fleet action, they were able to spread their ships out to cover all the trade routes. Unlike a blockade against a battle fleet, which required close watch on all the ports, there were only three critical locations that needed to be watched to stop trade: Ushant, Cape Finisterre and the approaches to Cádiz. The first two could be covered by one squadron patrolling the arc of the Bay of Biscay; Cádiz could be covered by another.

Cruising began in January, though the Western Squadron as a whole was only ready for work at the end of that month. Admiral Warren was placed in command of twenty-seven ships of the line and twelve frigates, plus six Dutch ships under *Admiraal* Scryver. Meanwhile, Hawke (sailed January 16) was cruising off Belle-Île while Mostyn cruised between Cape Clear and Ushant. Orders were issued on 22 January for the full Western Squadron to sail as soon as possible, the rendezvous being 80 leagues west of Bell-Île, between latitudes 46° 30' and 47° 30'.

Warren's orders were the same as 1747 with the addition of a few very specific instructions. two ships of the line and a frigate had to cruise between 45°-43° latitude to intercept ships arriving off Cape Finisterre. two ships of the line had to cover latitudes 43°-41° 30'. four or more of the line and a frigate were to cruise from Cape St. Vincent Cape to Cantin (on the Moroccan coast about 500 Km south of Cape St. Vincent) to intercept the Cádiz route. A 50-gunner and a 40-gunner plus two 24s were to continue covering the Cape Clear zone. The Dutch were specifically ordered to cruise only north of Cape Finisterre — to avoid complications, as they were not at war with Spain.

Richmond gives the following breakdown for January (these are only the ships in Warren's command):

Hawke: *Kent (70), Culloden (74), Anson (60), Augusta (60), Nottingham (60), Centurion (50), Tavistock (50), Gloucester (50), Portland (50), Rainbow (40), Romney (40), Surprise (24), Amazon (24)*

Mostyn: *Hampton Court (64), Prince Frederick (64), Salisbury (50), Falkland (50)*

Cruising the Soundings: *Shoreham (24), Falcon & Viper* sloops

Off Cape Clear 50-60 leagues west of the Soundings: *Anglesea (40), Bridgewater (24), Solebay (24)*

Fitting at Portsmouth: *Invincible (74), Intrepide (74), Devonshire (66)(flag), Yarmouth (70), Defiance (60), Scarborough (24), Vulcan & Dolphin* fireships

Fitting at Plymouth: *Edinburgh (70), Monmouth (70), Princess Louisa (60), Windsor (60), Eagle (60), Advice (50), Bellona (30), Ranger (30)*

Fitting at Chatham: *Assistance (50)*

FItting at Deptford: *Tyger (60), St. Albans (60), Queenborough (24)*

Admiral Scryver: *Haarlem (76), De Burgh van Leyden (52), Leeuwenhorst (52), Assendelft (52), Maarsen (44), Middleburg (42)*

In addition to these ships and the unsung ones on routine patrol in home waters, Boscawen had been sent with a powerful squadron (ten royal ships and fourteen Indiamen) to restore the situation in India, where the EIC's trading post at Madras (Chennai) had been taken by the French. He had departed on 4 November 1747.

A few changes in command were made. At the highest level the Duke of Bedford was made Secretary of State, his place taken as First Lord of the Admiralty by the Earl of Sandwich, in turn giving his seat on the Board to the Honourable John Stanhope. The Honourable Commodore Townsend replaced Mitchell at the Flushing base. Otherwise the commanders remained about the same: Warren, Hawke, and Chambers commanding components of the Western Squadron, Byng in the Med, Pocock in the Leewards, Knowles back at Jamaica.

Effectively, Warren had sixteen capital ships to cruise Biscay, with nine reliefs. Opposing him were, it was estimated, four ships of the line at Brest, two at Rochefort, six at Cádiz, and between six and eight at Cartagena. As always, the British sent their ships out in small batches as they became ready. Warren himself put to sea on 5 February, with nine ships, six of them Dutch. Enroute to the rendezvous they captured a French privateer from whom they learned the Cádiz Squadron now numbered eight ships. There were also a number of large merchantmen in that port; apparently the Spanish were going to run a convoy on 10 February, which happened to be the day after the privateer was taken.

Warren had directed that the stations farthest away be covered first. The Cape Cantin-St. Vincent zone was to be covered by Captain Cotes, out of Plymouth. Initially given five ships, when it became known before sailing that there were at least six ships at Cádiz he was reinforced by two vessels, with the promise of upgrading his squadron to eight ships of the line. On paper, Cotes command consisted of: *Edinburgh, Princess Louisa, Windsor*, *Eagle*, and a frigate, plus 'the two 60-gun ships first made ready'. In reality, he sailed with only four ships (*Edinburgh (70), Eagle (60), Windsor (60),* and *Princess Louisa (60)*, plus *Inverness* sloop). He would use Lisbon and Lagos to replenish.

Warren decided to reinforce him further. On 10 February Hawke turned up at the rendezvous with *Kent, Centurion, Augusta, Anson,* and *Tavistock*. Swapping *Centurion* and *Augusta* for *Yarmouth* and *Defiance*, he was immediately sent to aid Cotes; should the Spanish have left port, he would go to Lisbon to escort the Portugal trade home.

[Beatson says that Cotes was ordered to reinforce Warren, not the other way around.]

First blood of the season went to Hawke. In a rather desperate response to Boscawen's East Indies expedition

the French fitted out four ships at Brest (*Magnanime, Alcide, Arc-en-Ciel,* and *Duke of Cumberland* privateer) and three at Toulon (*Conquérant, Content, Oriflamme*) to sail for Mauritius. The Brest Squadron, commanded by the *marquis* d'Albert du Chesne put out on 12 January and ran into a storm. *Arc-en-Ceil* was forced to return for repairs. *Cumberland* made Coruña. *Alcide* reached Mauritius. That left *Magnanime*. On 31 January she was spotted by Hawke's squadron. *Nottingham* was ordered to pursue and caught up about 10am. *Portland* was signalled to reinforce when it became clear the enemy vessel was large, and she was able to rake *Magnanime* several times while *Nottingham* engaged her broadside on. The fight lasted for six hours. The French lost 45 killed and 105 wounded out of a complement of 686. *Nottingham* lost 16 killed and 18 wounded; *Portland* 4 wounded. Captured, *Magnanime* was taken into British service.

[Richmond says Nottingham's *captain was Saumarez, but he had been killed the previous year; the captain was Harland.]*

Hawke could not locate Cotes, but met *Jersey* and *Colchester* of the Mediterranean Squadron guarding the Straits. Their intelligence put the number of Spanish in the area at nine ships, with fifteen merchantmen; apparently they were still at Cádiz. Therefore, Hawke took up the cruise. A month went by. No Cotes, no convoy.

Then, the *Prince Henry*, coming from Lisbon, passed by and Hawke learned the Spanish were rumoured to be sailing on 7 March. Unfortunately, Hawke's time ran out. His crews suffering from scurvy, he sailed for Lagos on 28 March. Refreshed, he sailed for Lisbon to pick up his own convoy to escort it home. And here was Cotes. The latter reported the Spanish had really sailed away long ago. He had engaged them, but was unable to accomplish much. It had happened in the following manner.

A few days after Cotes arrived off Cape Cantin his squadron was about 60 leagues northwest of the cape, in loose formation. At first light on 7 March, the *Eagle* sighted the Spanish to the northwest. Cotes tacked, cleared for action, and pursued. A couple of hours later the *Eagle* and *Inverness* took a couple of small vessels. This was indeed the expected convoy. The *Eagle* also saw the escort — nine ships of the line: *Soberbio (66), León (70), Coloredo (74), Oríente (64), Brillante (66), Pastora (64), San Francisco-Xavier (52), Galgo (36), Rosario* sloop.

[Richmond gives the Rosario *60 guns. There were two* Nuest' Señora del Rosario *60-gunners. One was at Havana at this time, usually listed under her alternate name* Nueva España*. She served in the West Indies throughout the war. The other was on the Manila-Acapulco run. There was also a* Rosario *merchantman apparently hired by the Spanish Government, but there are no service details and 60 guns seems excessive for a merchantman. Marking it as the sloop named* Rosario*, which was at Cádiz at the time, fits in with the discrepancy between 8 and 9 'ships of war'. It might not be counted by the spies at Cádiz but would be counted when part of the escort.]*

The Spanish escort made no fight, instead using their much larger ships as a wooden wall. The bulk of the convoy was to windward. One of the escort shepherded the bulk of the merchantmen (29-30) into the west, while the others formed a line of battle to screen them. The British snapped up the few stragglers to leeward. Cotes took five vessels. *Eagle* and *Windsor* pursued the convoy, the Spanish making no attempt to attack them, but interposing their ships to prevent them from catching up. Breaking off the action, Cotes made for Lisbon.

Expedition to Canada?

The British had some intelligence that the French were planning yet another attempt on Acadia and Louisbourg, but since it was bound to be feeble, convoy hunting retained the highest priority.

Warren had spent a fruitless month off Bell-Île, until warned by the *Assurance* of French activity at Coruña. It appeared there were four ships of the line fitting out in expectation of escorting twenty transports bound for Canada. Warren dispatched his ships south in mid March. Unfortunately Warren himself had had to return to Spithead (4 April), having suffered rudder damage. He brought with him four of the Dutch ships in even worse shape and three more British. London passed along the latest intelligence. Canada was indeed on Versailles' mind. Twelve armed transports were preparing at Brest, Rochefort, and Marseilles; they had been assigned three escorts from Brest. The rendezvous was El Ferrol. It also seemed that some ships of the convoy Cotes engaged were destined for that port, rather than the West Indies.

Warren therefore sent Mostyn with six ships (*Hampton Court, Tyger, St Albans, Intrepide, Salisbury, Assistance*) to watch Brest. Hawke and Cotes were alerted; the former ordered to Finisterre and the latter to Cádiz. Their orders were received about 23 April. Another small squadron was already at Brest, under Captain Harland.

Meanwhile, Warren put to sea again in 16 April, bound for Finisterre, with his original ships plus three more (*Gloucester, Amazon, Falcon*). On 17 April he observed Brest. Only one enemy ship was seen in the port, and there was no sign of Mostyn (who had been given a rendezvous point in case he could not find Harland). Warren waited until 22 April for Mostyn, then made for Finisterre, casting a wide net through the Bay of Biscay.

In the second week of May, while he was still enroute, London informed Warren that, according to the consul at Oporto, Coruña was expecting six French ships of the line plus six of the escort Cotes had encountered, which had left their charges in the Canaries and were now bound for El Ferrol. There were already two Spanish ships at El Ferrol. Three or four French ships were coming from Brest. It was also reported that the French had acquired the loan of no less than twelve Swedish ships. Though hardly creditable, this would give the Bourbons about thirty men-o-war.

By now Mostyn and Harland had appeared, with six ships (*Hampton Court, Tyger, St Albans, Intrepide, Augusta, Assistance*). This gave Warren fourteen capital ships. He sent *Portland*, *Scarborough*, and *Falmouth* (a packet) to watch Coruña and El Ferrol and picked up the pace, meeting Hawke (*Kent, Anson, Tavistock, Amazon*) on 12 May. The latter had better information. The six Spanish escorts had gone to Cádiz. Cotes was on his way there to

deal with three French ships newly arrived from the Toulon Squadron. The ports in northwest Spain were in fact devoid of major ships and transports. This meant that the threat was now in the direction of Brest. Back Warren sailed to Ushant. He had barely arrived on station when a dispatch from the Admiralty informed him England was no longer at war with France and he should return to the coast of Spain.

To be pedantic, the war was still on, but the letter (dated 7 May) stated that all hostilities were to cease pending a final treaty negotiation. But Spain, so far as it was known, was not yet a party to the treaty, despite the fact that she was desperate for peace. The ships *Salisbury, Bristol, Romney, Intrepide,* and *Assurance* were dispatched to reinforce Cotes. Warren took the rest of his capital ships to the Canaries and dispersed his frigates and smaller vessels around Finisterre, El Ferrol, and the Bayona (Baiona) Islands at the mouth of Vigo Bay.

Palma in the Canaries was raised 5 June and Warren cruised for a month, with no results. Orders to cease hostilities with Spain, dated 1 July, came about the middle of that month and Warren arrived in England on 23 July. The war was over. Except in other parts of the world, where the news took longer to arrive.

Home Waters and Privateering

Before hostilities ceased a number of minor actions occurred:

The taking of that most notorious St. Malo privateer, *Grand Biche (22)* by the *Bellona* — herself a prize vessel. The Frenchman had eluded capture for almost the entire war.

The taking of the Bayonne privateer *Neptune (20)* by the *Advice*. Beatson takes the time to note that this vessel exchanged broadsides with the *Advice*, hinting that in most cases privateers simply surrendered when caught.

The taking of the Bayonne privateer *Tyger (16)* by the *Triton*.

The taking of the Bayonne privateer *Tygress (22)* by the *Thetis*, along with a captured British vessel.

The taking of the Bayonne privateer *Leopard (22)* by of all ships… the *Leopard*, RN.

The taking of the Granville privateer *Comte de Noaïlles (22)* by the *Rainbow*.

The taking of a 28-gun French privateer by the *Monmouth*, followed by the taking of the Bordeaux privateer *Rostan* (22). The latter, in Beatson's words (pp.409-410) 'had the temerity to fire a broadside into the *Monmouth*, when she came up alongside, and instantly struck her colours'. In reprisal for the casualties, *Monmouth* returned the broadside. The ship sank while the crew were being transferred.

The taking of the royal sloop *Le Palme* by the *Surprize*.

A number of notable merchant captures were also made:

The taking of the East Indiaman *Gerardus,* out of Lorient and bound for India, by the *Romney*.

The taking of the East Indiaman *Jason (30),* out of Lorient and bound for India, by the *Salisbury*.

The taking of a Spanish and a French register ship, on separate occasions. The Spaniard, the *Theresa*, homebound from Habana, was taken near Cádiz by the Bristol privateer *Tyger*. She was carrying $60,000 in specie. The Frenchman, the *Union*, also near Cádiz and coming from La Habana, by the *Bristol*. She carried $360,000 in monies as well as various raw materials. Two more Spanish register ships were taken, one by Rhode Islanders (presumably in American waters) and another by the *Port Mahon*.

The Guernsey privateer *Prince George (8)* took the *Victoire* of Bordeaux after a brief fight.

The most significant naval operation in the North Sea was the escorting of King George to the Continent. This did not have a bearing on the peace talks; he merely wished to visit Hanover. Townsend's small command at Flushing does not seem to have done much of anything. The French, confident of the talks, scarcely bothered to prepare for a summer campaign.

In all, the British lost 492 vessels worldwide this year, and the Bourbons 569. Considering that hostilities ceased halfway through, these losses are significant. British ships taken in European waters amounted to roughly a third of their total, while Bourbon losses were more evenly distributed. Beatson lists the British prizes taken from France as including one ship of the line, forty-four privateers, three East Indiamen, sixty-one ships in the 'Turkey trade', and 166 West Indies ships. Ships taken from Spain included one of the line (plus another burnt), thirty register ships, and twenty privateers. The Bourbons succeeded in taking one East Indiaman and a number of other valuable cargos, plus the *Achilles* sloop (Jamaica station). The only ship the British lost to weather in the Atlantic was the *Savage* sloop, which broke up on the rocks off the Lizard with the loss of all hands.

The full total of prizes taken during the war, in all theatres was as follows:

The Spanish lost 1,249 ships and captured 1,360.

The French lost 2,185 ships and captured 1,878.

Because the Spanish ships tended to be very valuable, the monetary balance is estimated (Beatson) at £2,000,000 in Britain's favour.

In Beatson's opinion this was the 'only' gain for Britain, since it was agreed that all captured territories would be returned. But of course, Spain had been weakened and France's navy was wrecked, while Britain's had been considerably augmented, both physically and psychologically. The next war would occur soon enough that the lessons of this one would not be lost.

APPENDIX: MINOR POWER NAVIES

Holland

The Dutch Navy was divided up among five different admiralties: Amsterdam, Friesland, Noorderkwartier, Zealand, and the Maze. In addition to the ships listed below the Dutch routinely hired armed merchantmen.

There was also the *VOC* or Dutch East India Company, but almost no information could be found about its vessels. Either the records are missing, or there was very little trade with Europe during the war. The company was heavily in debt during this period. It may be that the *VOC* had been reduced to selling between regional markets in the Indian Ocean. Their Amsterdam office records name only two vessels, and one is an *uitlegger*: *Beschermer (44)* with a listing only for 1744, and *Drie Gezusters (12)* in service from 1747-1748 (probably the Company's private contribution to the war effort). The Zealand office names one ship for 1743: *Schellag (??)*.

The Dutch had no First Rate ships and only one Second Rate, the *Middleburg (90)*, under the Admiralty of Zealand.

3rd Rates

Admiralty of Amsterdam

Loosdrecht (64) — broken up in 1739
Boetzelaar (64) — broken up in 1739
Leiden (74)
Purmer (64)
Gelderland (74)
Roosendaal (64)
Zoeterwoude (64)
Gouda (74)
Heemstede (64)
Provincie van Utrecht (64)
Vrijheid (74) — broken up in 1742
Haarlem (74)
Damiaten (64) — commissioned in 1741
Barbestein (64) — commissioned in 1746
Batavia (64) — commissioned in 1746
Eendracht (64) — commissioned in 1747

Admiralty of Friesland

Goes (64)
Zierikzee (64)

Admiralty of the Maze

Maas (74)
Starrenburg (64) — sold in 1742
Rotterdam (66) — commissioned in 1741
Prins Willem (70) — commissioned in 1748

Admiralty of the Noorderkwartier

Kasteel van Egmont (64) — sold in 1740

Admiralty of Zealand

Nassau (64)
Tholen (64)
Zuid Beveland (64) — commissioned in 1747

4th Rate Ships

4th Rates came in two varieties, 'ships' and frigates. The former were similar to the obsolescent British 4th Rates; the frigates were more modern.

Admiralty of Amsterdam

Edam (44) — broken up in 1739
Ter Meer (52) — sold in 1741
Polanen (52) — broken up in 1747
Damiaten (52) — broken up in 1740
Valkenburg (52) — broken up in 1739
Beemsterlust (52) — broken up in 1741
Brederode (52)
Boekenrode (52)
Moriaanshoofd (52) — sold in 1739
Watervliet (52)
Assendelft (52)
Burcht van Leiden (52) — commissioned in 1740
Edam (52) — commissioned and sold in 1741
Leeuwenhorst (52) — commissioned in 1742
Edam (52) #2— commissioned in 1742

Admiralty of Friesland

Prins Friso (50)
Friesland (50) — commissioned in 1740

Admiralty of the Maze

Twickel (56)
Delft (56)
Dordrecht (54) — commissioned in 1739
Beschermer (52) — served from 1741-1744
Schiedam (56) — commissioned in 1745
Prinses Carolina (52) — commissioned in 1748

Admiralty of the Noorderkwartier

Huls Te Neck (52) — sold in 1740
Kasteel van Medemblik (60)
Beekvliet (50)
Ramhorst (52)

Admiralty of Zealand

Oranjegalei (40) — out of commission in 1739
Vlissingen (58)
Veere (54) — commissioned in 1746

4th Rate Frigates

Admiralty of Amsterdam

Burgvliet (44) — broken up in 1740
Pallas (44) — broken up in 1740
Meervliet (44)
Noordwijk op Zee (44)— broken up in 1747
Westerdijkshorn (44)
Hilverbeek (44)
Leiderdorp (44)
Gouderak (44)
Middleburg (44)
Tellingen (44)
Maarsen (44) — commissioned in 1739
Waterland (44) — commissioned in 1746

Admiralty of the Maze

Oud Teylingen (46)
Gorinchem (46)
Rossum (44)
Beschermer (44)

Admiralty of the Noorderkwartier

Vredenhof (44) — condemned in 1747

5th Rate Ships

Admiralty of Amsterdam

Maarsen (38) — sold in 1741
Langeveld (38)
Wageningen (36) — decommissioned in 1748

5th Rate Frigates

Admiralty of Amsterdam

Hof Sint Janskerken (40)
Haarlemmerhout (36) — commissioned in 1748

6th Rate Ships

Admiralty of Amsterdam

Windhond (24)
Spiegelbos (22)
Zeepard (22)
Arend (22) — commissioned in 1741
Draak (24) — commissioned in 1748

Admiralty of the Maze
small ships only commissioned for the fighting on the Scheldt in 1747

Nieuwenhoven (20) (uitlegger)
Stadt Briel (20) (uitlegger)
Welvaaren van het Land (22) (corvette)

Admiralty of Zealand

Prins van Denmarque (26) (uitlegger) — 1747 only

6th Rate Frigates

Admiralty of Amsterdam

Hartenkamp (22)
Windhond #2 (22) — decommissioned in 1748
Dolfijn (22)
Valkenburg (22) — commissioned in 1742
Raaf (22) — commissioned in 1742

Besides these there are nearly 100 small vessels whose names are recorded. Perhaps 80% were commissioned for use only after France invaded Holland in 1747. They included corvettes, yachts, 'ships', and *schuyts*, but the greater proportion were *uitleggers*.

Portugal

The Portuguese Navy would certainly have been an object of desire for either side. A total of six 2nd Rates saw service during the war, though only one served continuously; five 3rd Rates (again, only one served continuously), and thirteen 4th Rates. Information about lesser vessels is hard to come by. At least one 2nd Rate and two 4th Rates were built at the Brazilian shipyards of Bahia and presumably served in South America.

Two-decker 2nd Rates

Bahia (70) to 1740
NS da Conceicao (74) to 1745
NS da Vitoria (74) to 1746
NS da Esperanca (70) to 1742
NS da Gloria (74)
NS da Necessidades (70) from Feb 1747

3rd Rates (two-deckers)

NS da Boa Viagem (60)
NS da Arrabida (62) to 1744
NS da Oliveira de Guimaraes (60) to 1747
NS Madre de Deus e Santo Antonio (64) from 1740
NS da Nazare (60) from June 44

4th Rates (also two-deckers)

NS da Nazere (50) to 1741
NS do Rosario (50) to 1740
NS da Lampadosa (50)
NS do Bom Sucesso (50) to 1745
NS do Monte do Carmo (46) to 1747
NS da Penha de Franca (56) from 1739
NS do Nazare launched & wrecked in 1740
NS da Conceicao e Sao Joao Baptista (40) to 1745
Sao Joao Baptista (41) from 1747
Sao Francisco Xavier e Todo o Bem (50) from 1741
NS da Piedade (?) from 1742
NS da Misericordia (50) from 1744
NS da Caridade e Sao Francisco de Paula (54) from 1744

[NS = Nossa Senhora]

What this list does not cover are the powerful ships of the Portuguese merchant marine. Portugal did not have an East India Company *per se*, and she no longer had the presence in East Asia that she once did. Besides, even in her heyday, the bulk of her East Indiamen were based in and served around the Indian Ocean. Curiously, though she formed several companies for the Brazilian trade in the 17th and 18th Centuries, none was in existence during the war. This suggests that the trade was carried on by independent merchants and small trading houses. Some, no doubt, would have been wealthy enough to fit out ships in the class of an East Indiaman, and doubtless those would have been pressed into service by the Crown. But, the lack of any powerful Trade Interest at Court and the question of how independent Traders could be adequately protected provides additional reasons why Dom Juan was not interested in going to war.

Denmark

As of 1743 the Danes' effective navy, based at Copenhagen and at that time fitting out to assist the Swedes in their fight with Russia (whether the Swedes wanted help or not), consisted of twelve ships of the line and six frigates, with six more ships of the line in reserve (commissioned in September of that year):

Norske Løve (70)
Dannebroge (70)
Prinsesse Charlotte Amalia (60)
Jylland (70)
Prinsesse Louise (60)
Markgrevinde Sophia Christina (60)
Tre Løver (60)
Prineesse Sophia Hedvig (60)
Oldenborg (60)
Slesvig (50)
Ditmarschen (50)
Delmenhorst (50)

Plus:

Christianus Sextus (90)
Justitia (86)
Elephant (70)
Nordstjern (72)
Svanen (60)
Fyen (50)

It should also be noted that the usually Danes kept a small squadron patrolling between Norway and Iceland.

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Tunstall, Brian. **Naval Warfare in the Age of Sail, The Evolution of Fighting Tactics, 1650-1815**. Annapolis, 1990. There have been a large number of books (usually large, highly illustrated and very expensive) about sailing warfare, especially its tactics. This is probably the best. Like most books of this type it concentrates on the Royal Navy and its Fighting Instructions, often to the exclusion of all other navies.

Willis, Sam. **Fighting at Sea in the Eighteenth Century**. Rochester & Woodbridge, 2008. This has the benefit of covering the entire century in a balanced manner and adds much instructive detail on winds and waves, on both sailing and fighting a ship, and on the factors that governed fleet actions. A most valuable source.

Period History

There is a huge difference in the amount of material available on the three navies. The Royal Navy is by far the better documented in English and one work is indispensable. This is:

Browning, Reed. **The War of the Austrian Succession**. St. Martin's Press. New York, 1995.

Cassell's Illustrate History of England. Vol. IV. This is an old work but well written and detailed. A source for British politics. Perhaps a slight Whig bias.

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Richmond, Rear Admiral H.W. **The Navy in the War of 1739-48**. Cambridge, 1920. Three volumes. Available online in several formats. The only weaknesses of this masterpiece are that Admiral Richmond, when writing in 1914 had a natural tendency to emphasise the significance and success of the Royal Navy, but also being unable to document the activities of the two Bourbon navies with the same detail. Professor Harding has corrected some of the conclusions made by Richmond. In the first work listed below he concentrates on the West Indies campaign, amending the view that the army was invariably the villain and the navy the hero. In the second he studies the wars from the point of view of the British political leadership, drawing attention to the problems experienced in finding competent admirals who could work with each other. He also evaluates the great weakness of the Royal Navy in the war, its inability to overcome vested interests and obtain sufficient seamen.

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There are also articles in the *Revue maritime et coloniale*, available by searching www.gallica.fr:

- Henri Laurent Rivière. **La marine française sous le règne de Louis XV**. 1859.
- Chabaud-Arnault. **Études historiques sur la marine militaire de France**.

Two much older general histories (both in French) can be obtained from Google Books or http://babel.hathitrust.org. The sections on the 1740-1748 period offer an interesting contrast to the British versions of the naval history of the war:

- Lapeyrouse Bonfils, Compte de. **Histoire de la Marine Française**. Paris 1845. Bonfils has been described as 'unreliable'.
- Guerin, Léon. **Histoire Maritime de France. Vol. IV**. Paris 1844. A good source, but not detailed, given it covers all of French maritime history.

Two very early French sources are: *Les hommes illustres de la marine françoise, leurs actions mémorables et leurs portraits* by A.N.B. Graincourt (1780) and *Recueil historique et chronologique de faits mémorables, pour server à l'Histoire générale de la Marine* by Louis Domairon (1781). These were not used in the present commentary but are mentioned for those who may be interested.

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Crespo, Jorge Cerdá. **La guerra de la oreja de Jenkins: un conflicto colonial (1739-1748)**. Universidad de Alicante. This is the best Spanish source. His book is out of print, but his doctoral thesis is available online.

Ships

For information on orders of battle and the ships themselves, Jan Glete's *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500—1860,* is the preeminent source, but *extremely* expensive.

Stephen Manley issued a comprehensive naval OOB for the War of the Austrian Succession, suitable for 'wargamers', but his accuracy is very questionable. Better works include:

Gardiner, Robert (Ed). **The Line of Battle**. London, 1992.

Winfield, Rif. **British Warships in the Age of Sail, Volume 2, 1714-1792**. Barnsley, 2007. This describes the building and rebuilding of every single ship, from large to small, adding details on where and when they operated.

Caruana, Adrian B. **The History of English Sea Ordnance 1523-1875 Vol II**. Rotherfield, 1997. This details the actual (as opposed to theoretical) assignment of guns to various ships.

There is far less on the other navies, but most fortunately one internet site exists that documents in great detail the sailing warships of all nations. It also covers battles, officers, flags and shipbuilding!

http://threedecks.org/index.php

A Spanish site of similar quality is:

http://www.todoababor.es/listado/index.htm

The cover illustration shows the Spanish 70-gun Glorioso *successfully defeating yet another attempt by the British to capture her.* Glorioso *was attacked twice during the spring of 1747 while carrying a valuable cargo of silver but reached port safely. In the fall of the same year she was attacked twice again, only striking her colours when her masts went overboard after five hours of combat.*

Commentary by Ian Weir with assistance from David Hughes.