

**Bringing Forward Shipping for Government
Service: The Indispensable Role of the
Transport Service, 1793 to
1815.**

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Greenwich for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

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DECLARATION

“I certify that this work has not been accepted in substance for any degree, and is not concurrently being submitted for any degree other than that of Doctor of Philosophy being studied at the University of Greenwich. I also declare that this work is the result of my own investigations except where otherwise identified by references and that I have not plagiarised the work of others.”

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Bob Sutcliffe – May 2013

ABSTRACT.

The Transport Board's very significant and effective role in the preparation of all the major military expeditions and in the ultimate defeat of Bonaparte has been largely ignored by historians.

The Board has hitherto been perceived as a subsidiary board of the Admiralty. However it was responsible to the Treasury and its main task was to transport and support the army overseas, on the instructions of the Secretary of State for War. The government depended upon the availability of merchant ships for this purpose. Yet less than 10 per cent of the registered merchant ships were suitable to be used as troop ships. At peaks of demand, in 1805, 1808 and 1814, the Transport Board chartered 30 to 39 per cent of this shipping. This had a significant impact international trade, on freight rates and the domestic price of commodities, particularly coal. There is strong evidence that between 1793 and 1805 government contracts sustained the British merchant shipping fleet by replacing the trade, previously conducted with European ports that were then controlled by the enemy. Without this support those ships would have been laid up.

The government's requirement to reduce the costs of war generally encouraged early termination of transports' contracts, rather than retaining them for the next big expedition. This occurred particularly between 1807 and 1809. That and the restricted use of naval vessels to convey troops hindered the speedy preparation of exceptionally large expeditions.

The study suggests that some of the proposed expeditions were just too big to be managed effectively. Despite the Transport Board's direct communications with the Secretary of State it was not consulted for advice during the planning of expeditions and consequently the

impact of seasonality was ignored and preparation times underestimated. There were inevitably delays in the preparations of expeditions but this thesis demonstrates that the times taken to prepare for major expeditions was between 10 to 16 weeks, not excessive even by today's standards.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Author's database –A database created from the Transport Office Ship's ledgers TNA, ADM 108 / 148 to 154.

BL – British Library

Commission on Fees (5th) – *Reports of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments which have lately been received in the Several Public Offices.* 1802-3, 111, 249.

Commission on Fees (6th) – *Reports of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments which have lately been received in the Several Public Offices.* 1803-4, 11, 1.

Commission on Fees (8th) – *Reports of the Commissioners appointed to Inquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments which have lately been received in the Several Public Offices.* 1803-4, 11, 637.

Commission for Revision (9th) – *Ninth Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy (1807).* 73e of 1809, XXV, 354.

Commission for Revision (13th) – *Thirteenth Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy (1809).* 73e of 1809, XXV, 530.

Committee on Finance (18th) – *Eighteenth Report from the Select Committee on Finance (1798).* 119, 191, 206

Committee on Finance (31st) – *Thirty First Report from the Select Committee on Finance (1798).* 113, 03, 74.

Condon, Transport Service – Condon, Mary Ellen, 'The Administration of the Transport Service during the War against Revolutionary France 1793 – 1802' (Unpublished University of London PhD thesis, 1968)

Castlereagh Correspondence – Second Marquess of Londonderry. *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh* Vols VI, VII, VIII (London, 1851)

Dalley Evidence - House of Lords Sessional Papers 1802 / 3, 174, IV. 327, Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry into the Sixpenny Office, Appendix 7 –Examination of John Dalley.

HoCPP - House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (found on www.Chadwyck.co.uk)

HM - His Majesty King George III

Melville Speech - *Substance of the speech of Viscount Lord Melville in the House of Peers, Monday 21 May 1810 on the subject of Troop Ships.* (London,1810)

NMM – National Maritime Museum

Scheldt Inquiry – HoCPP, 1810, 12, VIII.1, Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee of the Whole House, appointed to consider the policy and conduct of the late expedition to the Scheldt.

(Session 23, Jan – Jun 1810)

TB - The Transport Board

The Board- The Transport Board

TNA – The National Archives

VB – Victualling Board

Wars – The Revolutionary War of 1793 to 1801 and the Napoleonic War 1803 to 1815.

Introduction

‘Britain’s overseas achievements reflected the marriage between key maritime resources and the state’s bureaucracy’.¹

The Emergence of the Transport Board, 1794

Merchant ships, hundreds of them, were essential to support the government’s naval and military operations during the Anglo-French wars of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. The vitally important shipment of troops, war materials, supplies and provisions was generally undertaken by merchant ships. However, with some recent exceptions their role has been overlooked by naval and military historians. There were rarely enough transports readily available, for service at short notice, in large numbers. Even so, rather than resorting to requisition, the government competed with the demands of trade by chartering ships on the open market where the availability of shipping was already restricted by the shortage of seamen. Throughout the wars there were never enough seamen to man the navy and meet the expanding demands of the merchant fleet².

This study will demonstrate how merchant ships played an indispensable role in the ultimate victory over the French during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. It will examine the role of the transport service, particularly between 1805 and 1809, when a significant number of large military forces were transported overseas to mount critical expeditions and it will examine how the Transport Board engaged in the shipping market to secure transports. This will be achieved by considering how transports were procured and, by interpreting the output of a database of over 2000 charter contracts to determine when and in

¹ Roger Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy. Resources, Logistics and the State, 1755 to 1815*. (Cambridge, 2011), 321.

² For further consideration of the shortage of seamen see N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*. (London, 2004), 443 to 453 and Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy*, 223 to 270.

what quantities and under what terms transports were brought forward. It will also show that the transport demands were far more considerable than has previously been perceived and will assess the availability of shipping to support the combined demands of both government and trade. It will demonstrate that the transport service supported the British shipping industry during the earlier part of the wars when its ships were prohibited from sailing into enemy controlled ports. That trade was lost to licenced foreign ships. Every government administration was very aware of the importance of restraining the costs of war and demonstrated determination to minimise the costs of the transport service as much as possible, the thesis will explore the impact of this on operational efficiency. It will also question the Admiralty's decision to resist the use of naval vessels as troop transports. The preparation for major expeditions required co-ordinated activity from many departments of state, in consequence delays invariably occurred, the causes of delays will be illustrated but the research has demonstrated that the preparation of transports rarely consumed time beyond that which might reasonably have been contemplated. Yet expedition convoys were often forced to sail in wintery weather conditions, sometimes with alarming consequences. This raises the question of whether there were practical limitations on the size of expeditions, in terms of manpower, supplies and transport that the various services could deal with effectively. This is particularly relevant when considering the provision of horse transports for cavalry regiments, horses and artillery equipment and for the commissariat transport facilities, horse, mules and wagons. Finally the thesis will judge that Prime Minister Pitt's decision, in 1794, to establish one board to consolidate the transport service yielded significant benefits and avoided a potentially serious breakdown in the service when demand was at a peak between 1807 and 1809. It will conclude that placing it under the Treasury rather than the Admiralty did not disadvantage the service.

By 1792 Britain had the largest merchant fleet in the world.³ Its growth had been supported by the protectionist policies of succeeding governments throughout the eighteenth century anxious to protect its international trade that was essential to the economic survival of the nation. During the wars this trade provided markets for the output of the burgeoning industrial revolution and to support the increasing national debt which expanded from £273m in 1792 to £792m in 1816⁴. It also secured the country's survival when the corn harvests failed as in 1795, between 1799 and 1801 and between 1805 and 1813. Equally importantly it contributed a vital element of the navy's operational effectiveness due to its strong dependence on imported supplies of iron, timber, flax and hemp.

During the period 1792 to 1815 imports rose by 83 per cent and exports grew by 172 per cent. This expansion in trade, combined with the shipping demands of the government to support the war effort, fuelled the growth of the merchant shipping fleet. The number of registered ships increased during the period from 16,079 ships of 1,540,145 tons in 1792 to 25,864 ships of 2,783,000 tons in 1815 representing an 80 per cent growth in tonnage.⁵ This rate of growth fuelled by wartime demand was unsustainable; there was a significant overcapacity when peace was finally declared in 1815 and the government no longer needed to charter significant amounts of shipping.

Britain's geographic location dictated that it was impossible to win wars without the ability to dominate the oceans to secure the trade routes and, equally importantly, to allow the safe transport of thousands of troops, horses and wagons to foreign shores, together with the thousands of tons of materials and supplies required to support them. Once there, the magazines needed constant replenishment with weapons, ammunition, uniforms, boots, arms,

³ B.R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), 217. Michael Duffy *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower. The British Expeditions to the West Indies against Revolutionary France* (Oxford, 1987), 387.

⁴ Glyn Davies, *A History of Money* (Cardiff, 2002), 172.

⁵ Inclusive of ships registered in England, Scotland, Ireland, Plantations in America and the West Indies, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. Only ships over 15 tons were registered. For a table of the number and tonnage of ships registered between 1799 and 1817 see appendices.

camping equipment, forage and food. Warships on station and blockade needed regular supplies of food and water. The navy achieved domination of the oceans and merchant shipping played an indispensable role in the expanding trade activities and supplying the logistics for transporting armies and keeping them supplied with materials and provisions. Similarly, in earlier wars the government had relied significantly on the merchant marine and David Syrett states boldly that ‘By any standards, the achievements of the transport service during the American war of 1776 to 1783 rank among the greatest military and administrative feats of the eighteenth century’.⁶ Certainly in terms of the scale and complexity of the logistics he was absolutely correct, but in terms of managing the process of chartering and utilising transports Syrett glosses over some real weaknesses. Charles Middleton (later Lord Barham), Comptroller of the Navy Board 1778 to 1790, was very critical of the way the government brought forward merchant shipping during the American War. The crux of the matter was that, during the American Revolutionary War, merchant ships were hired independently by the three Boards responsible for the Navy, Victualling and Ordnance, often in competition. This competition impacted the freight rates but more importantly the availability of shipping. Prior to 1779 the problem was further exacerbated because the Treasury also hired vessels for transporting troops, until the Navy Board took over this role.⁷ Middleton wanted the Navy Board to assume responsibility for controlling all hiring of shipping because he thought that this was the only way to have ‘a rational policy for the procurement of shipping for government service.’⁸ He was also, no doubt, mindful of the opportunity to expand both his and the Navy Board’s influence. He continued to voice his views on this matter and his influence on the 1788 Parliamentary Commission appointed to ‘Inquire into the Fees, Gratuities Perquisites and Emoluments which have been lately

⁶ David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War 1775 – 83* (London, 1970). 248.

⁷ Although for the transportation of troops and baggage coastwise, the requisite ships were usually engaged under the direction of the Colonels of the corps.

⁸ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, 23. Citing The Shelburne Papers – Middleton to Shelburne 28 Jun 1782.

received in the several Public Offices' becomes obvious when his views are compared with the published recommendations.

The Commissioners commented on issues relating to transports in their fifth report on the Commissioners of the Navy, in their sixth report on Dockyards and in the eighth report on the Victualling Office. In the sixth report they determined that 'the practice of purchasing or hiring ships and vessels, when required for public service, by different Boards, has been found by experience very expensive, inconvenient and detrimental to the other services carried out in the dockyards'.⁹

One of the criticisms of the Commissioners was that, despite the immense care taken to ensure that the ships taken up were fit for service, lack of seafarer's skills on the various Boards, combined with the competition between the Boards for tonnage, had led to the hire of some vessels that were unfit for service. They agreed with Middleton's proposal that the Navy Board should manage the process.¹⁰ They also highlighted that some dockyard officers spent over 200 days a year on transport activities which severely impeded the performance of their main tasks.¹¹ These officials were involved in surveying, measuring, valuing and reporting upon all ships tendered as transports. It was a very complex process which generally took at least a week when the tides were favourable and often much longer if they were not.¹²

The survey was instigated by an order from the Navy Board, to the Agent and dock yard officials, to examine potential transports. Usually this occurred on the river Thames. A small armada of boats were involved; the Board's Agent at Deptford accompanied the dockyard's Master Attendant and Clerk of Survey attended in one boat, the Master Shipwright's assistant was in another and the Foreman Afloat with the ship's agent in the

⁹ Commission on Fees, (6th), 305.

¹⁰ Commission on Fees, (5th), 103.

¹¹ Commission on Fees, (6th), 139.

¹² Commission for Revision, (9th), 14.

third boat. If a ship was found to be fit for the service, the Master was directed to put her into dock or on the ways so that her bottom might be inspected and her dimensions taken. When she was ready for the second examination, the same officers and the Agent were again involved. If approved the Master was ordered to take provisions and stores on board and proceed to Deptford. There, the same officers with the addition of the Master Mast Maker, Foreman of the Riggers, Clerk of the Surveys, Clerk of the Master Sail-maker and some of his people, the Master Joiner for marking out the cabins and the Clerk of the Cheque for mustering the crew were involved in the third inspection. After the calculation of the value of the ship and stores had been made in the Clerk of the Survey's office, the Navy Board was advised that she was ready to enter into pay and the Agent commenced the fitting out to hasten her departure for the service to which she was appointed.¹³

Finally, in the Eighth report on the Victualling Office, the Commissioners exposed abuses promulgated by the Hoy Taker who was the official who supervised all the shipping for the Victualling Board. He had received payment to favour some owners with charters and had also had an interest in some of the ships hired. They recommended that the duties of the Hoy Taker should be restricted to 'the hiring, superintendence and employment of lighters, barges and small craft on the River Thames and to the loading or unloading vessels employed in the conveyance of provisions or victualling stores'.¹⁴ The Commissioners also referred, in the Eighth report, to practices which in their view led to the government overpaying for transport services. Firstly the victualling office had generally hired 'on freight' which tended to be more expensive than ships hired by the month that could usually carry a greater tonnage of supplies.¹⁵ They noted that the Commissioners for Stating the Public Accounts, in their

13 Commission for Revision, (9th), 14.

14 Commission on Fees, (8th), 210.

¹⁵ Hire 'on freight' - by this method payment was based on the weight of the supplies to be shipped rather than on the tonnage of the vessel.

Twelfth Report dated 1784, had made similar comments in respect of the Ordnance Board.¹⁶ Secondly ships had been overvalued, causing the government to be defrauded when overvalued ships were subsequently captured by the enemy and the owners reimbursed at the inflated rate. They did suggest that it might be more economical to pay an increased hire rate if the owner agreed to bear the responsibility for any loss but there is no indication that this suggestion was considered further. They also restated the view that competition between boards had caused the greatest detriment and loss by inflating prices and by distracting tonnage urgently need for an important service by one board onto ‘trifling’ tasks elsewhere.¹⁷ In summary these Commissioners concluded, as had those of earlier reports, that if the Navy Board was responsible for the service these abuses would not arise.¹⁸

Despite the author’s earlier criticism of Syrett’s analysis of the transport arrangements in the American war it is important to emphasise that he did reach one very significant conclusion. He identified a failing that was even more fundamental than those identified by the various commissions. This was the severe lack of understanding by ministers and the senior military officers about the nature and timescales of the logistics of transporting men and materials overseas. He deduced that this led to significant operational disasters, and additional cost, due the failure to anticipate transport demands, the failure to deploy the tonnage in service effectively and to institute a rational transport procurement policy.¹⁹ This thesis will determine whether these circumstances applied during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Despite much lobbying by Middleton, supported by the Treasury, it was not until two years into the war that Prime Minister William Pitt finally ordered the consolidation of the

¹⁶ Report of the Commissioners appointed to examine, take and state The Public Accounts of the Kingdom. Twelfth Report relative to passing the accounts of the Treasurer of Ordnance, in the Office of the Auditor of the Impress, 11-12,1784,43.

¹⁷ Commission on Fees, (8th), 210.

¹⁸ Commission on Fees, (8th), 210.

¹⁹ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, 246.

transport service. However, it was not to be under the Navy Board, as the various commissions had recommended.²⁰ Instead, by an Order-in-Council dated 4 July 1794, he established a Transport Board reporting to the Treasury.²¹ There had previously been such a Board between 1690 and 1724, initially established after delays in raising, fitting and provisioning shipping to convey troops to Ireland.²² It is not clear why the establishment of the Board was delayed beyond the outbreak of hostilities, or what precipitated its introduction. It might have been motivated by the difficulty of procuring transports to convey troops to the West Indies which the Navy Board experienced in May 1794. By that time the West Indies campaign was well underway and the various Boards had already chartered a large number of ships to convey troops and supplies. When the Navy Board received yet another order for transports they were forced to advise Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War:

‘The trade to the Baltic has carried away all those [ships] which might have been had for the service in the previous month, and very few are expected from the East Country for more than five or six weeks. The speculation to the newly acquired islands in the West Indies has employed a considerable number of ships, which is another cause of the present scarcity’.²³

This, together with strong support within the Treasury, that viewed this as an important cost saving proposal, may have brought the matter to a head.²⁴

It was envisaged that the role of the Board would be to hire and appropriate ships and vessels for the conveyance of troops, baggage, victualling and ordnance supplies, barrack building materials, naval and military stores of all kinds and also of convicts and stores to New South Wales. It was also to undertake a variety of miscellaneous services such as the provision of stores for the military department in Canada, including the purchase of annual

²⁰ See Condon, *Transport Service*, 32-40, 48, for the background to Middleton’s lobbying.

²¹ Commission for Revision, (9th), 11.

²² Commission for Revision, (9th), 11.

²³ TNA, HO, 28/63 Captain Andrew Snape Hamond, Navy Office to the Admiralty, 12 May 1794.

²⁴ George Rose, *Observations respecting the Public Expenditure and the Influence of the Crown* (London, 1810), 32.

presents for the Indians, and to procure clothing, ironmongery and all sorts of stores for foreign stations including New South Wales, The West Indies and The Cape of Good Hope.²⁵

The Transport Board's initial establishment consisted of three Commissioners including one sea Commissioner (pay £800 per annum plus sum of £200 each in lieu of gratuities, house rent, coal and candles). Then there was a secretary (pay £400) supported by three clerks (pay £150, £120, £80), a shipwright agent (pay £200), a messenger and his assistant (pay £50 and £30) and a 'necessary woman' (pay £20). A number of experienced transport agents were inherited from the Navy Board.²⁶

The new Board was operationally responsible to the Treasury and was one element in a complex administration system which involved the Secretaries of State, the Treasury, the War office, the Admiralty, the Navy Board, the Ordnance Board and the Victualling Board. The creation of the new Board inevitably ruffled some feathers within the boards that were forced to concede status and responsibility. Even the Admiralty was bypassed. Whereas previously the Secretary of State had communicated with the Admiralty regarding cabinet discussions concerning the needs for transports, under the new regime he began to communicate directly with the Transport Office bypassing the Admiralty that was then advised of relevant matters by the Transport Office.²⁷ Admiralty officials must have found this irksome.

Captain Hugh Christian, the inaugural Chairman and sea Commissioner, together with the other Commissioners and clerks established the first office in Dorset Court, Cannon Row, London. However, Christian was promoted to Rear Admiral of the Blue in June 1795 after only a year as chairman. He was sent to sea to command what was to become a much delayed expedition taking General Sir Ralph Abercromby's force to the West Indies.²⁸ The second

²⁵ Commission for Revision (9th), 14.

²⁶ HoCPP 1795-96 Vol 100,197.

²⁷ Condon, Transport Board, 69-84.

²⁸ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 166.

Chairman of the Board was an obscure naval officer of Irish decent, Captain Rupert George. He was appointed in August 1795. He served throughout seven administrations until all the activities of the Board were devolved to other boards after the end of the war. Why he was selected for the role is unclear, however it may have been due to the patronage of Sir Samuel Hood with whom he had served on the American station in the latter stages of the American war and who was a Lord of the Admiralty from 1788 to 1795.²⁹ George remained Chairman for almost twenty two years. This must rank amongst the longer civil service tenures of the period. He was obviously very competent, but little is known of his life.³⁰ In 1800 he declined promotion to flag rank, so that he could remain with the Board.³¹ He was knighted in 1806 and created a baronet in 1809.

Numerous benefits arose from merging the responsibility for taking up shipping into the newly the established Transport Board. The Board itself spelled out those benefits in a memorandum in 1801.³² Amongst the contracts inherited by the new Board one contract in particular attracted attention. It was for conveying troops between England and Ireland. It had been in existence for forty years with the same family. It was terminated almost immediately on the grounds of excessive cost. The Board estimated the saving to 1801 as being over £80,000.³³ Price competition was eliminated immediately and efficiencies were gained as ships were transferred from one service to another. Indeed, the Board claimed considerable savings by avoiding previous situations whereby transports had remained unemployed or 'skulked' in duty for several months. Based on a saving of one ship for each board that previously hired transports the Transport Board claimed a saving of £8,000 per year.³⁴ There

²⁹ His first son was called Samuel Hood, possibly in honour of Sir Samuel Hood, demonstrating, perhaps an obligation.

³⁰ No personal records of Sir Rupert George have yet been identified.

³¹ A. Aspinall, (ed) *The Later Correspondence of George III* (Cambridge, 1966-7) Earl Spencer to HM King George 31 Dec 1800.

³² TNA, WO, 1 / 801, A Short Statement of the advantages derived to Government from the Institution of the Transport Office prepared by the Commissioners of the TB. 4 Nov 1801.

³³ TNA, WO, 1 / 801 TB, A Short Statement of the advantages. 4 Nov 1801.

³⁴ TNA, WO, 1 / 801 Short Statement of the advantages. 4 Nov 1801.

is another example of the improved utilization of shipping. In 1805 the Ordnance Board required fifteen hundred tons of sulphur to be brought from Sicily to England. The cost of sending the necessary ships ‘on freight’ from England would have been eight pounds per ton, instead, several transports which were under orders to return to England from Malta were diverted to receive the sulphur saving £12,000.³⁵ The Board also claimed that the considerable attention its professional seamen were able to focus on the hiring of transports had greatly improved the quality of the ships hired. The new Board had acted quickly to avoid the abuse that had been perpetrated in the American war by the Victualling Board’s Hoy Taker. It issued an early order, which was incorporated into the Transport Agent’s Standing Instructions, that no person belonging to the Transport Board should have any vested interest in any vessel employed.³⁶

The Transport Board’s additional tasks.

In September 1795 the Transport Office was instructed to take over the duties of care and custody of prisoners of war ‘in health’ which had previously been conducted by the Sick and Hurt Board.³⁷ Two additional Commissioners were appointed to the Board. In October the Transport Board proposed that they did not take over these responsibilities until the new year ‘due to other pressures of work’ and the Admiralty acquiesced.³⁸ By 28 January 1796 it was clear that the additional work load would require extra clerks and the Transport Office requested that four clerks be transferred from the Sick and Hurt Board.³⁹

Ten years later, in a letter to the King dated November 1805, Lord Barham explained the logic of the proposal to consolidate the Board of Sick and Wounded Seamen

³⁵ Commission for Revision, (9th), 78.

³⁶ Commission for Revision, (9th), 52.

³⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/3730/301, Patent dated 30 Sept 1795, signed by the Duke of York.

³⁸ TNA, ADM, 1/3730/312, TB to the Admiralty, 3 Oct 1795.

³⁹ TNA, ADM, 1/3730/312, TB to the Admiralty, 3 Oct 1795.

with that of the Transport Board.⁴⁰ He explained that the proposal had the full support of the Chancellor of the Exchequer because the deplorable state of business in the department of the board for Sick and Wounded Seamen had long been known. The transfer of responsibility for prisoners of war in 1796 from that department had, in effect, only been a partial remedy. The increase of arrears in this 'inferior department' had by 1805 accumulated to two and a half million pounds, of which one and a half million had accumulated since 1793, indeed some 163 accounts had arrears dating from before January 1776. Consequently, in February 1806, all of the remaining business of the Sick and Hurt Board was transferred to the Transport Board. The senior physician of the former Board was appointed as a Commissioner of the Transport Board in lieu of a post for a civil member's. Barham explained that 'By this method the extended business will be placed under the management of a Board accustomed to the investigation of accounts where not a single instance of arrear has occurred since their establishment.'⁴¹

However the Board was about to face a very challenging period with significant increases in activity in all three departments, more transports were going to be needed to support military campaigns; at a time of greater competition from trade and there was an unprecedented number of prisoners of war and of seamen requiring medical care. The Board also managed prison camps in Portsmouth, Plymouth, Yarmouth, Greenock, Stapleton (near Bristol), Norman Cross (near Stilton), Dartmoor and Greenlaw (near Edinburgh) and a number overseas together with 21 prison ships housing over 11,000 prisoners at Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth and prisoners of war on parole in sixteen towns in England and

⁴⁰ Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III*, Letter from Lord Barham to the King dated 4 Nov 1805, doc no. 3149.

⁴¹ Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III*, Letter from Lord Barham to the King dated 4 Nov 1805, doc no. 3149.

Scotland.⁴² In March 1807 there were 23,699 French and 2,937 Spanish prisoners at home and 2,840 French and 815 Spanish prisoners in the West Indies, Malta and Halifax.⁴³

Negotiating and organising prisoner exchanges was particularly time consuming.⁴⁴ By 1810 the number of French prisoners at home had increased to 44,583.⁴⁵ The Board also managed the naval hospitals and was responsible for the appointment and discipline of all naval ship surgeons and supplying ships medical stores.

In 1810 George Rose, Senior Secretary at the Treasury 1783 to 1801 published his *Observations Respecting the Public Expenditure and The Influence of the Crown*.⁴⁶ In this he enumerates an annual saving to the Treasury of £213,600 achieved by transferring these Sick and Hurt services to the management of the Transport Board. This had mainly arisen from that Board's decision to reduce the price of rations for prisoners of war in 1796 from 8¾d to 6½d per day.⁴⁷

After the end of the war, in early 1817 the responsibilities of the Transport Board, excluding the medical services which were transferred to the Victualling Board, were devolved to the Navy Board to reduce costs. By then the Board had increased its establishment, including the sick and wounded division and the prisoners of war division, to five Commissioners, a secretary, an accountant and an inspector of hospitals with seventy four clerks, the annual salary bill amounted to £25,849 per annum.⁴⁸

⁴² Commission for Revision, (9th), 22 -23. In the two or three years preceding the Peace of Amiens there were between thirty and thirty four thousand prisoners at home and abroad despite constant prisoner exchanges however in the Napoleonic war the French government had rejected the overtures for prisoner exchanges and only three thousand French prisoners had been returned.

⁴³ Commission for Revision, (9th), 25.

⁴⁴ Commission for Revision, (9th), 25.

⁴⁵ HoCPP. 1810-11, 236, XI.115, 1, An Account of the Number of French Prisoners of War in England. Transport Office, 14 Jun 1811. This total includes 2,710 on parole.

⁴⁶ Rose, George, *Observations Respecting Public Expenditure*, 31-32.

⁴⁷ Rose, George, *Observations Respecting Public Expenditure*, 31-32, this was achieved 'with no detriment to the prisoner's health, despite the increased cost of provisions, by the substitution of salt fish for the same quantity of beef, and also by the closure of some prisoner of war depots'.

⁴⁸ TNA, ADM, 1/3171, TB to the Admiralty, 28 Jan 1796.

The Board was not without critics in other offices of state, the army, the navy and the ordnance board. It was frequently blamed for delays but it was generally able to deflect responsibility to others or to circumstances beyond its control. However, it is crucial that there is an understanding of why delays occurred in the procurement process and this thesis will consider this problem.

Sources and Historiography.

There are full rarely interrupted runs of correspondence, reports, minutes and ships registers in the National Archives.⁴⁹ This includes a wealth of correspondence with the department of the Secretary of State for War particularly during the tenure of Henry Dundas, Pitt's Secretary of State for War 1794 to 1801 and Lord Castlereagh, who was Secretary of State for War on two occasions, firstly from July 1805 to January 1806 in the Ministry of all the Talents and then from March 1807 to September 1809 during the Portland administration. The thesis will demonstrate how both Secretaries of State became deeply immersed in the detail of ship movements. A primary source of information on the establishment and administration of the Board are the *Ninth and the Thirteenth Reports of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy* published in 1807 together with their detailed appendices and the *Eighteenth and Thirty First Report from the Select Committee on Finance (1798)*.

Despite this wealth of information, and partially because of it, the full history of the Transport Board 1794 to 1817 has not yet been told. Mary Ellen Condon analysed, in some detail, the organisation of the Board, the use of transports in the Revolutionary war and the improvement of transport arrangements compared with the American war. Her unpublished University of London PhD thesis of 1968 *The Administration of the Transport Service during the War against Revolutionary France, 1793 – 1802* and subsequent articles included an excellent review of the use of transports in the Flanders, West Indies, Helder and Egyptian

⁴⁹ Unfortunately there is a gap in the run of TB Minutes between January 1806 and October 1808 at TNA. Otherwise there are very few gaps during the whole period. These minutes would no doubt have thrown considerably more light on the TB operations during what was a particularly important time in its history including its role in the Copenhagen and Peninsula expeditions.

campaigns of that war.⁵⁰ However, whilst Condon provided a detailed analysis of the function and operation of the Transport Board, she did not consider some of the wider issues of the government's wartime administrative structure. She presented the Board as subservient only to the Admiralty. None of the Board's relationships with the Army or Ordnance are explored, and in common with theses of pre-computer years, tonnage and finances are few and perfunctory. Nor did Condon explore the impact of government shipping upon trade and the merchant shipping industry or the debate about the use of naval ships as troop ships rather than merchant ships. Therefore, as Condon focused on the Transport Board's activities prior to 1802, this thesis will concentrate on a comprehensive view of the Board's operations between 1794 and 1815, and, in particular, on its operations during the later Napoleonic war up to the post Walcheren period at the end of 1809. David Syrett's *Shipping and the American War* and *Shipping and Military Power in the Seven Years War: The Sails of Victory* are considered to be the seminal works on the transport service. These give a detailed review of the successes and failures of the service during earlier wars and provide an excellent platform from which to measure the development of the transport services in the later wars.⁵¹ Computer technology, which was not available to Condon and Syrett, has made it possible for the author to create a large database of transport ships. This has facilitated detailed analysis and the preparation of comparative tables, providing the ability to develop new conclusions. In addition, internet search capability has assisted the location of primary sources that would have been more challenging for the historians who have previously researched this subject.

As mentioned earlier the role of merchant transports has been overlooked although there have been some recent notable exceptions, Duffy in *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*; Mackesy, in *War in the Mediterranean 1803 to 1810*; Morriss in three publications; *Naval Power and British Culture 1760 – 1850*, *Public Trust and Government Ideology*,

⁵⁰ Condon, Transport Service.

⁵¹ Syrett, David. *Shipping and the American War* and *Shipping and the American War and Shipping and Military Power in the Seven Years War: The Sails of Victory* (Exeter, 2008).

‘Colonization, Conquest and the supply of Food and Transport: The reorganization of logistics management 1780 -1795’ and *The Foundation of British Maritime Ascendancy: Resources, Logistics and the State, 1755-1815*; ⁵² Hall in *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War* and in *Wellington’s Navy* and Ville in *English Shipowning during the Industrial Revolution*⁵³ The role of transports and the Transport Board have also featured in recent PhDs, in James Davey’s *The Transformation of British Naval Strategy 1808 -1812: Seapower and Supply in Northern Europe*, in which he writes of the procurement of transport tonnage and of the role of transports in the Baltic, and in Gareth Cole’s *Arming the Navy, 1793 – 1815: the Office of Ordnance and the State*.⁵⁴ Significantly in all these instances references to the Transport Board and transports are incidental to the principal subject matter and clear importance of the role of the transports and the Transport Board has not been reflected in these works because it was not the main focus of the research. There are volumes of publications on the political and economic events of the period and on specific subjects referred to in this thesis such as the various trade protection measures; the Navigation Acts, the Continental System and the Licence Trade and the major military campaigns of the period.⁵⁵

Despite an abundance of Parliamentary Papers and newspaper archives relating to merchant shipping the history of the merchant fleet in the period 1790 to 1820 has received relatively little focus by historians. This is possibly due to the absence of surviving shipping company records and maybe the destruction of considerable volumes of records in the

⁵² Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*. Piers Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean 1803 – 1810* (Cambridge, Mass, 1957). Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture 1760 – 1850, Public Trust and Government Ideology* (Aldershot, 2004). Morriss, ‘Colonization, Conquest and the supply of Food and Transport: The reorganization of logistics management 1780 -1795’ in *War in History* (2007) V 14, 310 -324. Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy*.

⁵³ C.D. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War* (Manchester, 1992) *Wellington’s Navy, Seapower and the Peninsular War 1807-1814* (London, 2004).

Simon Ville, *English Shipowning during the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, 1987).

⁵⁴ James Davey, *The Transformation of British Naval Strategy 1808 -1812: Seapower and Supply in Northern Europe* Unpublished PhD, (Greenwich University, 2010). Gareth Cole, *Arming the Navy, 1793 – 1815: The Office of Ordnance and the State* (London, 2012).

⁵⁵ Sarah Palmer, *Politics, shipping and the repeal of the navigation laws*. (Manchester, 1990).

various Custom House fires, most notably that of 1814. Ralph Davis's seminal work *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry* ends just before the start of the period while Hope devotes only one chapter to the whole period in *A New History of British Shipping*.⁵⁶ Probably one of the more comprehensive studies of the period was *The Trade Winds*⁵⁷ edited by Northcote Parkinson, also published in 1948. All of these historians, including Creswell in his paper 'British Shipping at the end of the Eighteenth Century'⁵⁸ explain the difficulty of defining the number and tonnage of British shipping involved in the overseas trade. These ships formed the pool from which transports were generally hired and the thesis will consider this issue. More recently Richard Woodman has published a comprehensive five volume history of the merchant shipping fleet, the second volume relates to this period.⁵⁹

Methodology.

To determine the extent of the government's requirement for transports the author has analysed the Transport Board's ships ledgers that give the details of all charters by the Board from its inception to its termination.⁶⁰ From these a database has been created recording the details of each charter. The database includes over two thousand individual charters and for each the following details are recorded: The name and tonnage of each ship and whether wood sheathed or coppered. The date of the Charter Party, of entry into pay and of discharge, the identity of the ship's broker or managing agent and master, the hire rate(s) and period of hire in months and days and the total hire charge. Also recorded are details of all mulcts (deductions) and allowances, details of each bill of payment and appropriate interest. The

⁵⁶ Ralph Davies, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the 17th and 18th Centuries*. (Newton Abbott, 1962). Ronald Hope, 'War and Expansion 1775 – 1815' in *A New History of British Shipping*, (London, 1990), 235 – 263.

⁵⁷ Northcote Parkinson, (ed) *The Trade Winds: A Study of British Overseas Trade during the French Wars 1793 -1815*. (Leicester, 1948).

⁵⁸ J. Creswell, 'British Shipping at the end of the Eighteenth Century' in *Mariner's Mirror* XXV, 2 Apr 1939.

⁵⁹ Richard Woodward, *A History of the British Merchant History Vol 2 Britannia's Realm* (Stroud, 2009).

⁶⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/148-153.

out-put from this database has enabled the author to perform the statistical analysis which forms the basis of this thesis.

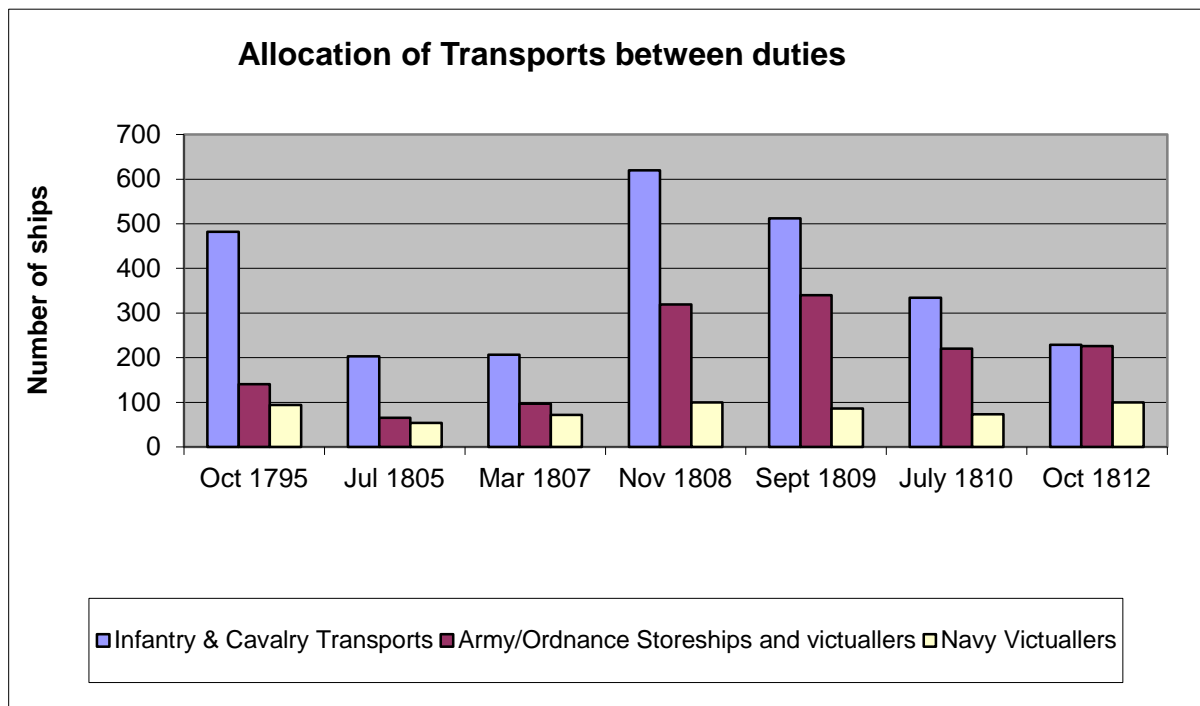
In addition the author has examined the minutes and correspondence relating to the Board at the National Archives and National Maritime Museum and the relevant records of the Customs Office and the Board of Trade for material on the merchant shipping industry together with the numerous Parliamentary Papers that were prepared on trade, shipping, military expeditions and transports. Together, these sources have provided a wealth of information that has enabled the author to take a much broader view, than has previously been achieved. They have facilitated judgements on; the operational effectiveness of the Transport Board, the role of the Board in relation to the other government administrative Boards, of its relationship with government ministers and its significant role in the preparation of large expeditions.

Chapter one

Bringing Forward Merchant Shipping for Government Service: 1793 to 1815.

The significance and importance of the role of merchant shipping during the wars between 1793 and 1815 has not yet been fully recognized. The primary task of the Transport Board was the delivery of the army and its support system to foreign shores and then to ensure that the supply lines were maintained. The victualling of naval fleets, though equally important, was a much smaller part of the role see chart 1.1. These tasks were fulfilled, with great skill and courage, often in very challenging conditions and frequently at a high personal cost, by the seamen of the merchant fleet.

Chart:1.1.



Source: Author's Database.

Chart 1.1 confirms that transports were predominately used as troop ships in 1795, mainly in the West Indies and again in 1808/9, this time for the Peninsular and Walcheren campaigns. Between 1810 and 1812 a higher proportion of transports were used as store ships and victuallers to support Wellington's army in the Peninsula and

also supplying naval forces which were blockading the eastern coast of America at the beginning of the war with the United States of 1812.

The transport procurement process.

Ships' brokers played a very important role in the procurement of transports. All the charters inherited from the other boards in 1793 / 4 were chartered through one broker, George Brown, who had been the principal broker in the American war. The arrangement made supposedly on the basis of security but it must have been very convenient for overburdened officers, in the various boards, who often lacked maritime knowledge to have one person to rely on.¹ Brown's monopoly meant that he had a very significant influence on the price and, more importantly, on whose ships were hired. Although there is no evidence of malpractice, this cannot have been a particularly healthy situation. The new Transport Board increased the number of brokers and eventually traded with over three hundred brokers and self managing owners.² The Board believed that the use of a range of brokers enabled it to assert more control over prices and the ability to raise large numbers of ships quickly. Even so the majority of the ships were supplied by a limited number of brokers: George Brown, Joseph Dowson & Son, James John and Thomas Dawson, James Duncan and Herring & Richardson.

Brokers were remunerated out of the proceeds of hire received by the ship's owner. Such commission would increase 'according to the increased price at which he contracts to let the vessels to the government'.³ During his appearance before the Committee on Finance in 1798, Transport Board Commissioner John Schank was asked if there would be a cost saving if the government employed its own broker, on a

¹ Condon, Transport Service, 56.

² Condon, Transport Service, 25.

³ Committee on Finance (31st), 503, the further examination of Mr Schank, 7 May 1798.

fixed salary, to deal directly with ship-owners. It was envisaged that he would hire transports directly, thus bypassing the traditional ship brokers. Schank believed that ‘this would be attended by great advantage to the government’. His reasoning was that such an agent would only be influenced by the public interest rather than by the ship owners and that he would have no conflicts of interest.⁴ The Treasury subsequently wrote to the Board to obtain its collective view on this matter. The Transport Board described this proposal as ‘highly inexpedient, if not generally impracticable, to deviate from the long established mode of employing known and approved brokers, by substituting an agent of our own to perform that service’. Its main criteria for rejecting this proposal was that such an agent would not have sufficient contacts and knowledge of the market-place and owners, both in London and at out-ports. The Board anticipated that a government agent going out into the market to procure shipping was highly likely ‘to immediately raise the price’.⁵ To support this argument the Board recounted the situation in 1796 when Dundas had requested it to find a certain quantity of tonnage of coppered shipping and to take it up by public advertising and tender. It was the Board’s view that ship-owners, knowing the quantity required and the availability of that type of shipping, submitted very high tenders that the Board did not feel should be accepted. On that occasion it was overruled by Secretary of State Henry Dundas because of the pressing nature of the service. The Board’s preferred option was generally not to divulge the full amount of the tonnage required and to continue to use men of integrity with knowledge of the availability of shipping to procure tonnage ‘little by little’ to avoid pushing up the price. Contrary to Schank’s view the Board believed that an agent of the Government

⁴ Committee on Finance (31st), 503, The further examination of Mr Schank, 7 May 1798.

⁵ HoCPP, Further Proceedings on the Committee on Finance (18th), 1715-1800, 114, 23.

would be more exposed to undue influence from ship-owners than the existing brokers who were very familiar with the market.⁶ The proposal was not adopted.

Transports were generally hired on the instructions of the Secretary of State for War. Tonnage demands, for major campaigns, were usually expressed in terms of the size of the force to be transported as illustrated by this instruction from Lord Castlereagh, Secretary of State for War in April 1807 requiring ships for the Copenhagen expedition 'Immediately hire 16,000 tons for infantry, 10,000 tons fitted for horses and 10,000 tons as Ordnance transport and victuallers'. He described the service as 'being of a pressing nature'.⁷ The proposed use of the vessels was important. It determined the size of the vessel and the fittings required, infantry transports required cabins and beds, horse ships required stalls, ordnance ships required magazine racking and victuallers tended to be smaller vessels. Requests for such large tonnages were the exception, more frequently they were for a small number of ships for a specific purpose.

Procurement was usually by open competitive tender advertised at Lloyds Coffee House and in the waiting room of the Transport Office, where the ship owners and brokers congregated. When significant tonnages were required the Board was forced to resort to advertising in newspapers. This had obvious disadvantages because it applied pressure to the hire rate by promoting the government's requirements and it gave publicity to the preparations, alerting the enemy to its plans. Occasionally the Board made direct contact with brokers to request submission of tenders. There is no indication of overt preference but there is no doubt that the brokers named above were the preferred suppliers. This was probably based on their reputations for supplying good quality ships and for trading honourably. However, those who failed to live up

⁶ HoCPP, Further Proceedings on the Committee on Finance (18th), 1715-1800, 114, 24.

⁷ TNA, WO, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB, 8 Apr 1807.

to those standards were dealt with harshly as Mr. Herring, of Herring and Richardson, discovered in 1807. He was accused by the Board of price fixing. After being advised of the government's precise requirements, he attempted to persuade ship-owners to decline the Board's approaches for shipping at the going rate of 15/- per ton by indicating that he would be able to arrange the same charters at 20/- per ton. In consequence some owners declined to offer their ships on the lower terms. The Board believed that Herring was guilty of 'retarding the service, and increasing the public expense'. He and his firm were struck off the list of approved brokers.⁸

Tenders had to be presented on the Transport Board's prescribed form, accompanied by the ship's customs registration document. If the tender was accepted a note was sent to the agent at Deptford instructing him to proceed with the survey. There was also a standard form for the survey which required details of the ships registered tonnage, together with her class, height between decks and nature of sheathing either wood, copper or unsheathed and when and where she was built. If the ship was found to be suitable for service a sea commissioner of the Board would often visit to conduct his own survey. Rupert George, the Chairman, frequently visited Deptford and other ports to examine vessels.⁹ When the ship was approved the owner was required to fit her for service in line with a detailed schedule of stores and then deliver the ship to Deptford. The tender request specified the time allowed to deliver the fully provisioned ship to Deptford, failure to achieve this deadline could result in a fine of one hundred pounds or alternatively the ship could be rejected but this rarely happened. On arrival there, appropriately provisioned, it was entered into pay.

Ships accepted for service were valued by the officers of the Board at Deptford where the Agent, who was a naval officer, estimated the value of the

⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/21, TB to Castlereagh, 15 May 1807.

⁹ TNA, ADM 108/74, TB Minute, 3 Feb 1803, 'Commissioner George will inspect the *Lady Andover* of 229 tons tomorrow'.

rigging, cables, sails, anchors and other articles of equipment together with the boatswain and gunner's stores. In doing so he considered the state of wear and tear judging whether each item was a quarter, half or three quarter worn. To value each article he needed to be aware of the current prices. These changed significantly over the period. Prices increased on average by about 20 per cent between 1795 and 1800 and 38 per cent between 1795 and 1806. Naturally the cost of some items increased more than others, the increase in the cost of masts and spars reflected the timber shortages and the higher price of bread in 1800 reflected the corn shortages of the time.¹⁰ Similarly the Shipwright valued the hull, mast, yards and pumps. The completed valuation form was sworn on oath by the officers and sent to the Board's accountant. The owners were not advised of the outcome of the valuation unless the ship was ultimately lost or damaged by the enemy and the Board had accepted liability. After the valuation was completed the charter party was prepared. The charter party was the contract that set out the obligations of the owners, master and government.

Transports for troops were generally fitted with cabins and beds in the River under the direction of the Agents for Transports. The ship's owners were responsible

¹⁰ Commission for Revision, (9th), 370.

| Transport Office – 4 February 1807 | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|------|----|---|------|----|----|------|----|---|
| An Account of the Average Prices of the Undermentioned Articles in 1795, 1800 and 1806 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Articles | Measure | 1795 | | | 1800 | | | 1806 | | |
| | | £ | S | d | £ | S | D | £ | s | d |
| Seamen's wages | Per month | 4 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 11 | 8 |
| Cordage | Per cwt | 2 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 16 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Canvas No 1.2 &.3. | Per yard | | 1 | 5 | | 1 | 8½ | | 1 | 9 |
| Masts and Spars | Per load | 13 | 10 | 0 | 16 | 10 | 0 | 22 | 10 | 0 |
| Bread | Per cwt | 1 | 10 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 6 |
| Beef | Per tierce | 5 | 11 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Pork | Per barrel | 3 | 19 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| Insurance per annum | Per cwt | 9 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 9 | 4 | 8 |
| Value of shipping | Per ton | 9 | 6 | 8 | 11 | 13 | 4 | 14 | 0 | 0 |
| NB between the years 1795 and 1800 there appears on aggregate to be an advance of about 20 per cent and between 1795 and 1806 an advance of about 38 per cent | | | | | | | | | | |
| Source: Commission for Revision, (9 th), 370. | | | | | | | | | | |

for feeding the ship's crew but if passengers or troops were to be embarked then the Transport Board applied to the Victualling Board for the appropriate provisions. If the transports were for provisions or ordnance stores they were temporarily transferred to the appropriate board whose agents were responsible for the loading and stowage of the stores. When this was completed the ships became the Agent for Transport's responsibility again, he advised the Board to request the Admiralty to allocate convoy protection. When this was arranged, the Agent ordered the transports to the convoy rendezvous point to await the convoy escort. Sometimes they were there for many weeks before the whole convoy was assembled and ready to sail, much to the frustration, not to mention health risks, of the crews and troops on board. If there were horses aboard such delays caused them much distress.

Types of hire

Transports were principally hired by one of three methods. Firstly, regular transports were hired on six month contracts called charter parties. The owners were paid an agreed rate per ton per month calculated on the ships tonnage. Although wood sheathed vessels were preferred, in the early stages of the Revolutionary war limited availability meant that unsheathed ships had to be chartered. Sheathing, and in particular copper sheathing enhanced the ship's sailing capabilities by inhibiting hull fouling, more importantly it protected the ships against the shipworm which was particularly prevalent in the West Indies. Naval vessels had first been coppered in large numbers in 1779 but the iron bolts initially used to secure the copper sheets created electrolysis which caused corrosion of underwater ironwork such as the rudder irons and the heavy bolts which fastened together the keel, stem and sternpost.¹¹ Some years later when the iron bolts had been replaced by bolts made of a copper alloy this

¹¹ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 344.

problem was resolved.¹² Coppering had the advantage of lightness and durability but the disadvantage was cost. In 1797 the cost of coppering a 300 ton merchant ship was £629 compared with £158 for wood sheathing.¹³ Coppered ships were first chartered in small numbers from 1798, by 1804 copper sheathed vessels were preferred although wood sheathed were still taken when the demand was high. From 1808 only coppered ships were chartered as regular transports and by the end of that year all the wood sheathed regular transports in service had been coppered.¹⁴

The second method of chartering transports was also by the month for a shorter term, generally three months they were known as three month ships. They were hired for a specific purpose and were usually restricted to services in European waters, although many were sent out to the West Indies between 1793 and 1795 due to the shortage of regular transports. Again, the owners were paid an agreed rate per ton per month calculated on the ships tonnage, if availability was tight the rate was often higher than that of a regular transport because they were not protected against capture and had to rely on their insurance cover. These ships were not required to be sheathed.¹⁵ Thirdly, some transports were chartered ‘on freight’ for specific voyages, when space on ships was chartered rather than the whole ship, at a rate per ton of freight or rate per passenger.¹⁶

Regular transports

Generally, regular transports formed the most significant element of the fleet chartered on monthly pay, as can be seen from chart 1.2. Regular transports were used to convey provisions and stores to the Navy’s fleets, to supply the army based

¹² Roger Knight, ‘The Introduction of Copper Sheathing into the Royal Navy, 1779 – 1786 in *Mariner’s Mirror*, LIX (1973), 299 – 309.

¹³ Condon, *Transport Service*, 73.

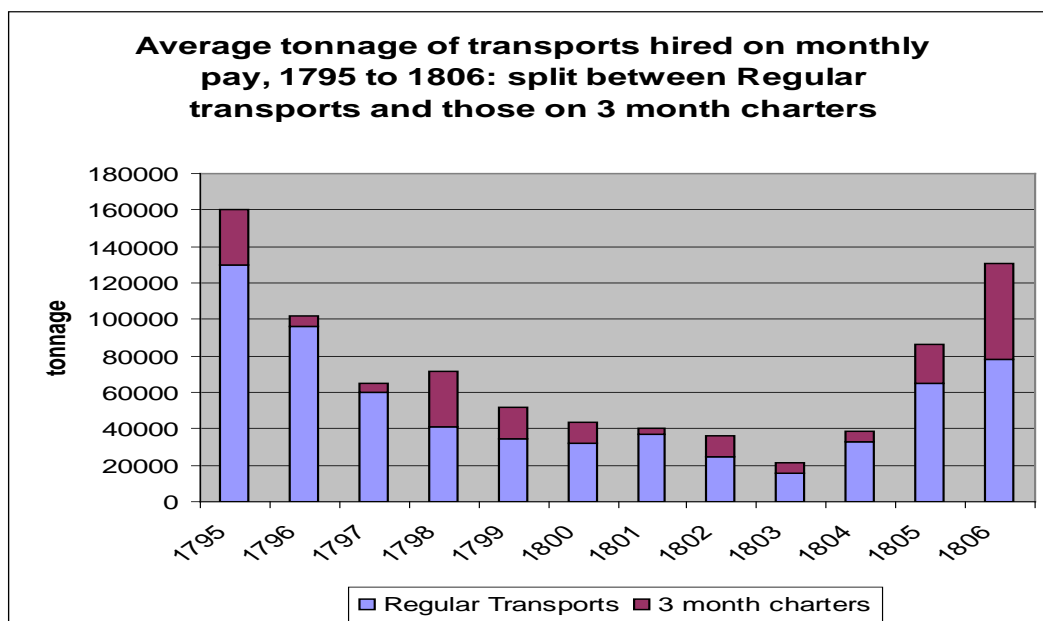
¹⁴ Commission for Revision, (9th), 76.

¹⁵ Commission for Revision, (9th), 76.

¹⁶ Commission for Revision, (9th), 76.

overseas with stores and to transport troops, horses and ordnance to various theatres of war. They were frequently detained overseas under the control of the local naval commander.¹⁷

Chart: 1. 2.



Source: Total average tonnages from Commission for Revision, (9th), 416. Average tonnage of Regular transports derived from the Author's Data Base.

The charter parties for regular transports stipulated that the ship had to be armed with six guns which together with gunpowder were supplied by the ordnance board. The ships received an allowance for additional gunpowder used for legitimate reasons. Ships intended to convey troops had, initially, to be not less than five feet six inches between decks. This applied even when ships were hired to carry stores, in case they might be required to carry troops at a later date. However, this stipulation had to be relaxed because of lack of vessels meeting this requirement. From September 1794 the height of five feet between decks became the standard measure.¹⁸

Two tons per man were prescribed for all troop carrying ships bound to any port beyond Cape Finisterre and one and a half tons for very short or coasting voyages.

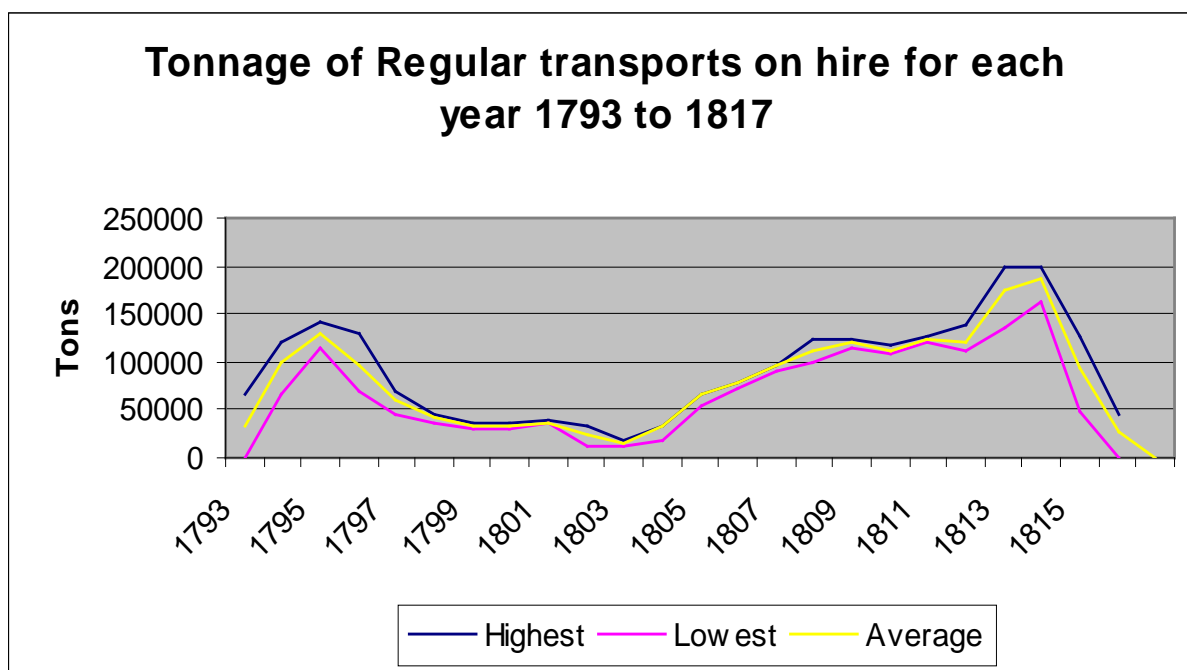
Chart 1.3 shows the average tonnage of the regular transport fleet as well as the

¹⁷ Commission for Revision, (9th), 42.

¹⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/31, Transport Board Minutes, 18 Sep 1794.

highest and lowest tonnages within each year. It demonstrates that, in terms of regular transports the peak of activity in 1795 was not achieved again until 1808 and this was significantly surpassed in 1814.

Chart:1.3.



Source: Author's 'Database compiled from TNA, ADM 108 / 148 to 154 Ship,s ledgers.

In 1794 the Board inherited 391 regular transports of 108,012 tons which had already been taken up by the Navy, Victualling and Ordnance Boards. The number of regular transports hired from the start of the war rose dramatically and peaked at almost 140,000 tons in October 1795 when ships were being procured for the ill-fated Christian convoy of troops for Abercromby's campaign in the West Indies and, a few months earlier the Vendee adventure. From the peak there was a major reduction in 1796 when 304 ships of 74,000 tons of shipping were discharged as demonstrated in chart 1.4. The simultaneous discharge of a large number of transports placed considerable strains on the administrative procedures of the Board and those of the Victualling and Ordnance boards that had to receive back and account for vast quantities of unused stores and supplies very quickly to avoid demurrage charges. There was a further reduction of 30,000 tons in 1797 and by December 1799 the

tonnage had been reduced gradually to 30,814 tons despite the desperate need for transports for the Anglo-Russian Helder expedition which landed in Holland on 27 August 1799 for which a large number of three month ships had been hired.¹⁹

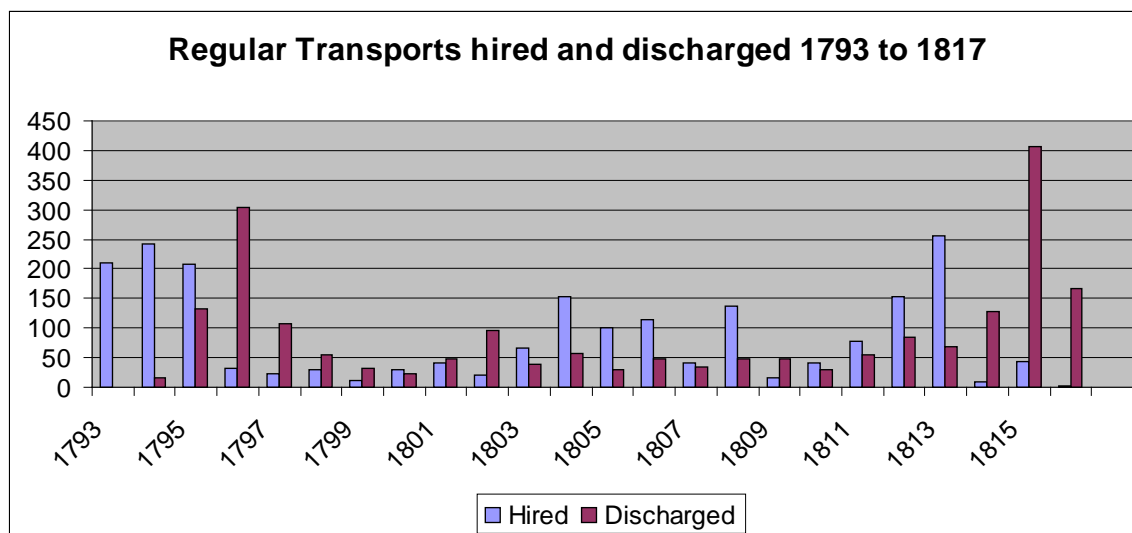
The tonnage rose slightly in 1800 and 1801 in response to an instruction from Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, for additional transports to support Abercromby's Mediterranean campaign to Malta and then Egypt. The Peace of Amiens in 1802 eased the demand, by December 1802 the regular transport fleet reduced to 35 ships of 13,000 tons. This reduction was reversed in May 1803 when war was declared again. Large numbers of transports were hired in 1805, and the years that followed, to support the military operations in northern Europe then the Mediterranean, the Peninsula, the Baltic and the North Sea. In 1800/1 transports supported the capture of the Cape of Good Hope (10 Jan) and regular transports were sent to South America to support the invasion of Buenos Ayres. The majority of the additional ships raised in 1808 /9 for the Peninsula and Walcheren expeditions were three month ships however in 1808 15,000 tons of regular transports were sent out to the West Indies to support the capture of Martinique (24 Feb 1809) and the surrender of Guadeloupe (6 Feb 1810). Tonnage increased still further in 1812 / 1813 to support the broad range of military activities in North America, the Peninsula, the Mediterranean and northern Europe peaking in the last quarter of 1813 at two hundred thousand tons, some 60,000 tons higher than the peak in the earlier war which supported the West Indies expeditions although during that campaign there had also been considerable reliance on 'on freight' transports, merchant ships involved in the West Indies trade returning there in ballast or with unused storage capacity.

There was a steady reduction in 1814 and then 406 ships of 127,354 tons were discharged in 1815, again placing considerable strain on the dockyards and on the

¹⁹ Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM, 108 / 148 to 154, Ship's Ledgers.

administrative system to allow the ships to be paid off quickly. When the Transport Board's responsibilities were finally handed over to the Navy Board in January 1817 the fleet had been reduced to 52 ships of 16,515 tons.²⁰

Chart:1. 4.



Source: Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM 108 / 148 to 154 Ship's ledgers.

Fifty-nine per cent of regular transports were in the range 220 to 400 tons, generally sheathed demonstrated in Chart 1.5, only 27 per cent of regular transports were less than 220 tons. After 1808 only coppered ships were employed as regular transports. Those ships chartered which were over 500 tons were usually East India Company ships, Very few of these ships taken up as regular transports.

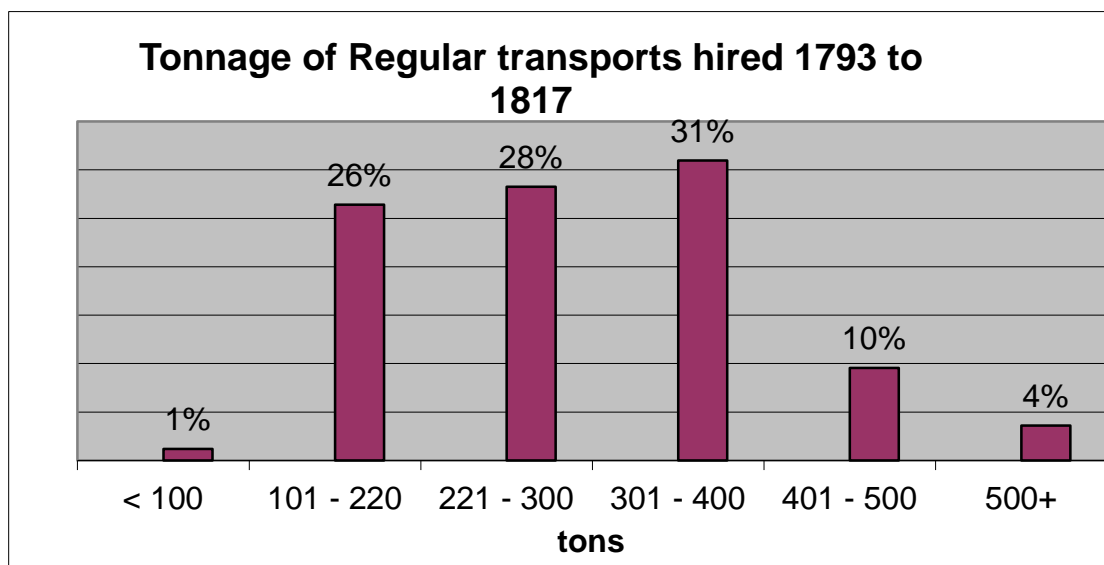
In addition to the Master, the number of men and boys employed was always defined according to tonnage at the rate of five men and one boy to each 100 tons and for the fraction of 100 tons at the rate of one man per twenty tons.²¹ This was twice the number used in coasting vessels. Owners and Masters often tried to get away with using fewer men than was stipulated. However the ships were frequently mustered by the Agents for Transports in an attempt to stop this practice. Sometimes transports were temporarily undermanned because of losses through death, desertion or

²⁰ Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM, 108 / 148 to 154, Ship's Ledgers.

²¹ TNA, ADM,1/3733, TB to the Admiralty, 11 Jan 1797.

impressments but this received very little sympathy from the agents.²² Ships were mulcted if they did not have a full muster.²³

Chart: 1. 5.



Source: Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM, 108 / 148 to 154, Ships Ledgers.

Three month ships and 'on freight' charters.

Ships on three month charters were invariably used when a large number were required, at short notice, for specific operations.²⁴

Chart: 1. 6



Source: Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM, 108 / 148 to 154, Ships Ledgers.

²² Ville, *English Shipowning During The Industrial Revolution*, 96-97.

²³ Mulct – to suffer a financial penalty.

²⁴ TNA, ADM 1 / 3730 to 3765, Abstracts of all ships employed in the Transport Service. From abstracts submitted on a monthly basis to the Admiralty, although few have survived, it is possible to determine the extent of three monthly hires at certain specific times throughout the war.

Almost 150 three month ships were hired, as can be seen from chart 1.6. for the West Indies campaigns of 1793 to 1796. In June 1800 there was a demand from Henry Dundas, Secretary for War, for 30,000 tons of transports which were urgently required to support proposed to support diversionary operations against the French coasts in support of its Austrian ally, at the same time Dundas was planning attacks on the Spanish naval bases and on Spanish territories. The majority of this demand was supplied by taking up three months transports.²⁵ Again in 1805 three month transports were chartered in large numbers to ship troops to northern Germany and out to the Mediterranean. These ships were discharged in 1806 when William Windham became Secretary of State for War, in the Ministry of the Talents. He immediately ordered the reduction of the transport fleet. When Lord Castlereagh was reappointed Secretary of State for War he invested in the hire of large numbers of transports, this extended through to 1813 to support the Peninsula campaigns of 1808 and 1810, Walcheren in 1809 and then the American war in 1812 / 13.

The Board used vessels ‘on freight’ to transport troops or stores ‘which can be delivered upon arrival of the ships at foreign ports’ believing that it was cheaper than sending regular transports only for them to return empty. Owners of ships hired ‘on freight’ had to find their own return cargo. If there was a chance or expectation that the ships would be detained overseas then regular transports were used.²⁶ There were usually between thirty and fifty ships chartered ‘on freight’ at any one time.²⁷ However, the highest use of ‘on freight’ transports was for carrying troops during the West Indies campaign at the rate of £6 to £7 per man. In 1795 / 6 there was over 50,000 tons of ships chartered ‘on freight’ accounting for 24 per cent and 35 per cent of the total of all tonnage chartered in those years.²⁸ A significant number of East

²⁵ TNA, WO, 6/156/266, Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War to the TB, 7 Jun 1800.

²⁶ HoCPP, Further Proceedings on the Committee on Finance (18th), 1715-1800, 114, 23.

²⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/3730, Abstract of all ships employed in the transport service.

²⁸ Committee on Finance (31st), 502.

India Company ships were used for this purpose plus other ships that would probably have been registered and based in the West Indies engaged in the West Indies to England trade so there was an attraction for their owners because the ships frequently sailed from England, with only nominal cargoes, to return with full loads.

Table 1.7 shows the changes in the transport fleet from February 1806, when William Windham became Secretary for War, up to October 1806.

| Table: 1.7. Transport Office – 14 October 1806 An abstract showing the state of the Transport Service on 6 February 1806 and the amount of tonnage on monthly pay, discharged and engaged between that period and this date. | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|----------|---------|
| In service on 6 February 1806 | Coppered | Number | Tons |
| | Sheathed | 174 | 56,558 |
| | | 44 | 12,319 |
| | Total Regular transports | 218 | 68,877 |
| | Three month charters | 412 | 88,345 |
| | Total | 630 | 157,222 |
| | Discharged being unfit for service | Coppered | 4 |
| Discharged, having been engaged for the expedition to the Continent in 1805 | Sheathed | 10 | 2,059 |
| | Three months | 377 | 83,179 |
| | Total | 391 | 86,428 |
| Taken up since 6 February 1806 | Coppered | 30 | 10,721 |
| | Sheathed | 17 | 4,625 |
| | Three month | 33 | 7,034 |
| | Total | 80 | 22,380 |
| Now in Service | Coppered | 200 | 66,089 |
| | Sheathed | 51 | 14,885 |
| | 3 month | 68 | 12,200 |
| | Total | 319 | 93,174 |
| Source: TNA, ADM,108/21/22 & TNA,WO,1/803/75, TB to William Windham, Secretary of State for War, 14 Oct 1806. | | | |

The most significant increase occurred between July 1805 and February 1806 when a large number of three months transports were chartered to support Castlereagh's plans to send a 67,000 strong force to travel to north Germany. At the same time he sent 15,000 tons of shipping for infantry, cavalry ships to accommodate 700 horses and riders and 3,000 tons of store ships to the Mediterranean.²⁹ From 506 ships of 130,655

²⁹ TNA, WO, 6/156/321, Castlereagh, Secretary of State for War to the TB, 29 Aug 1805.

tons on 1 September 1805 the numbers increase quickly to 1,028 ships of 261,240 tons by 1 January 1806.³⁰ Following the decision to withdraw from northern Germany, a significant proportion of these ships were discharged but there were still 630 ships on charter on 6 February 1806. The discharges continued, at Windham's instance, so that by October there were only 319 transports in the service.

It is clear that regular transports provided the platform for medium to longer term requirements and that three month hires were only used when significant tonnage was required at short notice, to support major military operations where the service would be of relatively limited duration conveying troops to or from European destinations such as the Baltic, Holland, Spain, Portugal and the Mediterranean.

The charter party

The charter party was the contract that set out the obligations of the owners, master and the government. There were different formats for each type of charter including regular transports, three month ships, ships 'on freight' and transports for conveyance of convicts to New South Wales. The Commission for Revision found that, since the business had been transferred to the Transport Board, the charter party agreement had been 'much improved from time to time in favour of the government by strengthening the obligations of the owner'.³¹ For instance in 1799 the Charter Party for victuallers was revised to oblige such ships to convey a certain number of officers and men. Up to that point ship owners and masters had been very reluctant to do this because of the cost of providing accommodation and the inconvenience of having them on board. As a result the Transport Board had to charter additional ships, at extra cost.³² By custom and practice the Board had always assumed the right to

³⁰ Castlereagh *Correspondence* VI, 97, Memorandum of the late Equipments, Undated.

³¹ Board for Revision (13th), 52.

³² Condon, *Transport Service*, 85.

choose when to discharge or retain transports. When demands for transports were high the Board retained ships beyond the initial charter term; this was often against the owners' interests if there was more rewarding business to be taken up elsewhere.

This practice was challenged in March 1800 by a lawyer acting on behalf of a number of owners who claimed that it was not in accordance with the terms of the charter party. The Board referred the matter to the Attorney and Solicitor General, in whose opinion the wording in the charter party was 'doubtful'. He recommended that a new charter party, which clarified the right of the Board to choose when to discharge transports, be drawn up.³³ This was done and, in order to persuade the owners to accept the new charter party the Board proposed to offer inducements. The pay of wood sheathed transports would be increased to 16 shillings per ton per month from the previous 1 January and that of copper sheathed transport to 17/6d if the owners entering into the new contract. In addition the freight due to 31 December 1799 would be paid up to that time subject to a reserve of six months hire until their accounts could be passed and the balance paid. By this arrangement the freight was to be paid much sooner than the owners were entitled to receive it under the terms of the existing charter party but in future the bills would not bear interest. Up to that point interest had been paid at three per cent for the 90 days. The Board proposed that the owners of transports that did not consent to the new form of charter party would not receive the increased price nor benefit from the revised payment arrangements.³⁴

Invariably, some owners were not happy about this proposal and prevailed upon George Brown, who had formerly been the principal broker to the government, to call a meeting of owners of regular transports to discuss these proposals. The meeting was held at Batson's Coffee House on the 18 March 1800. After what was

³³ TNA,WO,1/801, TB to Henry Dundas, 25 Mar 1800

³⁴ TNA,WO,1/800, Minutes of the meeting of regular transport owners held at Batson's Coffee House, 21 Mar 1800.

probably an explosive meeting they resolved that whilst they were satisfied with the new proposals for payment of freight so that only six months would be in arrear at any one time, having 'maturely considered' the other contract changes they were unanimously of the opinion that the proposal could not be accepted. The owners did not think the offer of 16/- by any means an adequate rate given the increase in cost of 'all kinds of stores and provisions'.

When the Transport Board received this notice it wrote to George Brown to ascertain which owners had attended and the names of the transports in service that they owned, it was suspected that 'this document may express the opinion of a few, instead of the many who have ships in the transport service'.³⁵ The outcome is not clear from the correspondence but in fact all the existing charter parties were terminated at 31 December 1799 and new contracts were issued. However the rates that were finally agreed were 18/- for sheathed and 19/6d for copper sheathed and interest continued to be paid on bills. It would appear that the Board achieved the desired changes to the charter party but at a cost.

Under the terms of the charter party if a ship, by accident or through fault of the owner or master, became incapable of performing the service for which she was engaged, she could either be discharged immediately or, more likely due to the usual shortage of supply, mulcted for the period that she was out of service.³⁶ Then the owner had to arrange for the repairs to be completed at his cost and as quickly as possible to avoid heavy deductions. All accidents and normal maritime disasters were the responsibility of the owner who either insured against the risk or carried it themselves. However if the ship was burnt or sunk by the enemy or, in the case of regular transports only, captured by the enemy through no fault or neglect of the

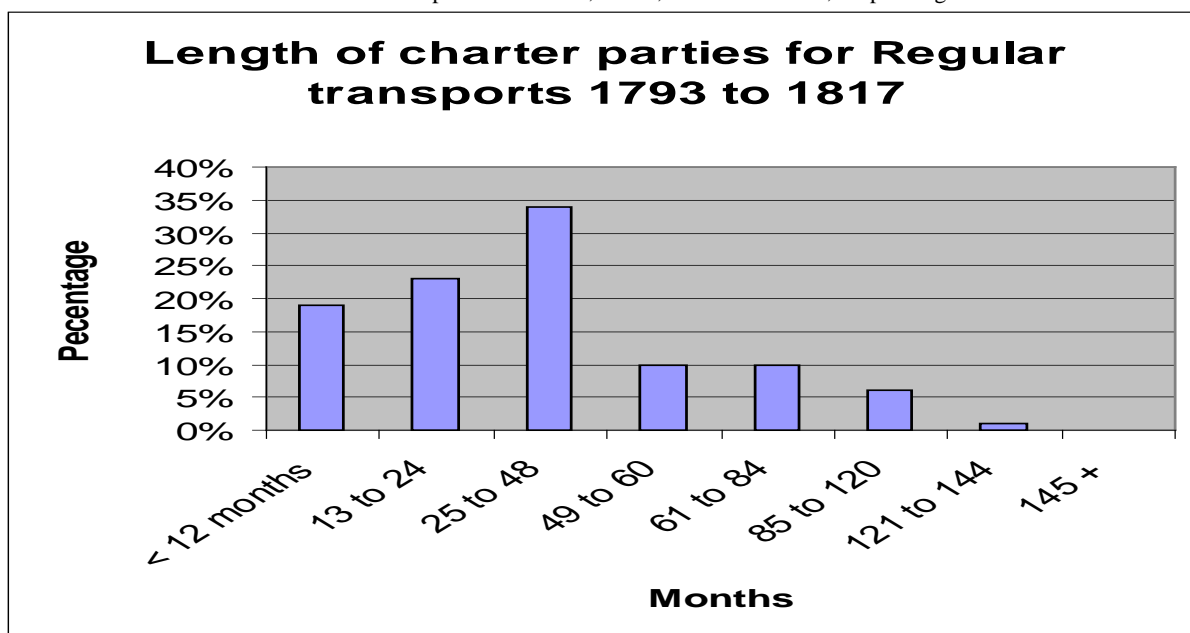
³⁵ TNA, WO, 1/800, Minutes of the meeting of regular transport owners held at Batson's Coffee House, 21 Mar 1800.

³⁶ Board for Revision (9th), 77.

master, then the value was paid less a deduction for wear and tear. Ships chartered for three months were not protected against capture, the owners had to insure against this contingency.³⁷

The charter party provided for advances to be made to the owners during the course of the charter, always retaining six months pay to enable the government to indemnify itself for any claims it may have against them. The ship was finally paid off when discharged on production of: certificates from the victualling office, ordnance office or other public departments that all stores had been duly accounted for and that there were no outstanding charges; certificates evidencing that they had paid all light, port dues and all dues to Greenwich hospital and the ship's log book. Mulcts were deducted from the charter fees due and the net value was paid by thirty days bills of exchange with three per cent interest per annum. Regular transport charter parties inevitably extended beyond the initial six month period, as can be seen from chart 1.8 almost 35 per cent extended to twenty-five to forty-eight months with some exceptionally extending for ten to twelve years as demonstrated in table 1.9 which lists all the individual charters of more than ten years duration.

Chart:1.8. Source: Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM, 108 / 148 to 154, Ships Ledgers



³⁷ Condon Transport Service, 86.

Charts 1.8 and 1.9 highlight one of the positive attractions to ship owners: chartering to the government invariably meant that they were paid for periods when the ship would normally be laid up between sailing seasons. There was a strong likelihood of medium to long term continuous employment once the ship was in service as a regular transport. However when freight rates rose, owners usually found it difficult to extract their ships from the transport service to take alternative freights at higher rates.

| Table: 1. 9. The length of hire of the longer duration charters of regular transports | | | |
|---|---------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Ships Name | Tonnage | Entry into pay | Period of hire in months |
| <i>Ellen</i> | 342 | 08/03/1804 | 145 |
| <i>Oxford</i> | 401 | 04/10/1804 | 140 |
| <i>Amphitrite</i> | 241 | 07/05/1804 | 140 |
| <i>British Queen</i> | 283 | 31/01/1805 | 135 |
| <i>Melpomene</i> | 378 | 27/02/1804 | 134 |
| <i>Duchess of Bedford</i> | 314 | 28/06/1804 | 132 |
| <i>Britannia</i> | 362 | 21/02/1804 | 131 |
| <i>Mercury</i> | 319 | 02/10/1804 | 130 |
| <i>Ibbetsons</i> | 227 | 15/11/1803 | 130 |
| <i>Amity</i> | 323 | 23/02/1804 | 130 |
| <i>Christiana</i> | 249 | 05/05/1804 | 130 |
| <i>Crown</i> | 383 | 12/03/1804 | 129 |
| <i>Prince</i> | 386 | 04/01/1805 | 129 |
| <i>Nestor</i> | 362 | 23/10/1804 | 128 |
| <i>Albion</i> | 332 | 15/10/1804 | 128 |
| <i>John & Robert</i> | 304 | 08/12/1804 | 128 |
| <i>Charlotte</i> | 338 | 04/12/1804 | 128 |
| <i>Juno</i> | 168 | 27/08/1804 | 128 |
| <i>Paragon</i> | 394 | 15/04/1804 | 127 |
| <i>Enterprize</i> | 328 | 16/02/1804 | 127 |
| Source: Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM, 108 / 148 to 154. | | | |

Chart 1.8 and table 1.9 relate to individual charters but many ships were chartered several times as illustrated by the *Barrick*, 300 tons, a wood sheathed ship first chartered, by the Board, in September 1793. She was constantly in service under its Master, Joseph Street, until June 1802. During that time she had been detained for a period in Brest by the French where she had been sent as a cartel to repatriate French prisoners of war. After the peace she was then re-engaged in June 1803 under the Master, Thomas Bailey, until July 1805. She was rehired in May 1806, by this

time she had been coppered and apart from a six month period in 1812 she was chartered up to February 1817 acquiring a new Master in 1812, Thomas Dunn. The combined period of employment in the service was 249 months, which is over 20 years and must certainly be one of a very few ships that were chartered for almost the whole duration of the wars. Owners often applied to have their ships discharged but the request was invariably declined by the Board as in the case of Mr John Byron owner of the *Elizabeth* transport of 165 tons. He requested that the Board would order her to be discharged from the service, because he could not afford to refit her due to the high price of materials. The Board rejected this request and instructed Captain Patton, the Resident Agent of Transports at Portsmouth, to have her defects made good, at the owner's expense, and return the vessel to service as soon as possible. The cost was subsequently offset against the hire charges.³⁸

Registered tonnage

Merchant ship owners faced a dilemma. It was in their interests to under record the tonnage of their ships in relation to the payment of port, light dues and Greenwich Hospital fees, but to exaggerate it when their ships were employed by the Transport Board. Shortly after the establishment of the new Board Lieutenant James Bowen, then the Agent for Transports at Deptford, recommended that the tonnage, as registered with the Customs Office under the 1786 Registration of Shipping Act, should be the only measure used by the Transport Board. This would replace the measured tonnage that had previously been used. He had compared the tonnages of some ships hired in 1793 and estimated that the measured tonnages at which they were taken up, was an average of seven and a half per cent above the tonnage, of the

³⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/82, Mr Robert Chapman, Broker, London to the TB, 1 Apr 1809.

same ships, that was registered at the Customs office.³⁹ This recommendation was accepted by the Board and from mid December 1794 all the ships were taken up at the registered tonnage.⁴⁰ Bowen was destined to have a distinguished career in the transport service. In July 1803 he was appointed Commissioner of the Transport Board and in 1808 / 9 he was the senior Transport Agent at Corunna where his leadership in the evacuation of Sir John Moore's army was highly praised.

In 1807 the Commission for Revision conducted a similar exercise on a sample of seventy two ships taken up before the establishment of the Transport Office. They found that the measured tonnage exceeded the registered tonnage by about three and a half per cent. Using this assumption on the average tonnage taken up on monthly pay from 1793 to 1806 they calculated that the total loss to the Treasury would have been £261,984, if the practice of using measured tonnage had continued throughout that period.⁴¹ After 1794 the Board insisted upon the production of the ship's customs registration prior to her being accepted for service.

Charter rates.

Transports were hired at rates which varied in accordance with the prevailing market conditions but increases were only implemented in agreement with the Treasury. These rates tended to reflect the availability of shipping and the urgency of the government's requirements. Occasionally the Board had to offer longer contracts to obtain ships at the mandated rate by raising the 'certain' (guaranteed) period to twelve months rather than the usual six.⁴² During the earlier American war the hire rates had increased from ten shillings per ton per month to thirteen shillings.⁴³ Freight

³⁹ Commission for Revision, (9th), 73.

⁴⁰ Commission for Revision, (9th), 76.

⁴¹ Commission for Revision, (9th), 60.

⁴² TNA, ADM,108/21/22 and WO,1/803/75, TB to William Windham, Secretary of State for War, 14 Oct 1806

⁴³ Syrett, *Shipping in the American War*, 251 / 2.

rates had been fairly consistent in the intervening years and thirteen shillings was the going rate in 1793. Table 1.10. demonstrate how rates subsequently changed, generally upwards although there were some short periods of rationalisation, as in 1798 and 1804 and again briefly in 1808, when freight prices reduced as a result of reductions in competing trade demand. In 1802, during the period of peace, the rates dropped down to twelve shillings and similarly the rate collapsed at the end of the war in 1815.

| Table: 1.10. Rates of Hire per ton, per month for Regular Transports on six month certain charters and for ship hired for three months | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| Effective date | Regular Transport Sheathed Ships | Regular Transports Coppered Ships | Three month ships |
| | Rate per ton per month | Rate per ton per month | Rate per ton per month |
| 1793 – Mar | 13/- | | |
| 1796 – Apr | 15/- | | |
| 1798 – Jul | 13/- | 15/- | |
| 1799 - Apr | 14/6 | 16/- | |
| 1800 - Jan | 18/- | 19/6 | |
| 1802 | 12/- | | |
| 1803 - Jan | 18/- | 19/6 | |
| 1803 – Sep | 17/- | 20/- | |
| 1804 – Jan | 17/- | 19/- | 17/- to 20/- |
| 1807 - April | 21/- | 25/- | 17/- to 19/- |
| 1808 – 1 Jan | 19/- | 21/- | |
| 1809 – 1 Jan | Only coppered | 25/- | 20/- to 25/- |
| 1809 – 1 Sep | ships hired as | 21/- | 20/- to 25/- |
| 1813 – 1 Jan | Regular transports | 21/- | |
| 1813 – 4 Mar | after 1808 | 25/- | 25/- to 30/- |
| 1815 – 26 Jan | | 21/- | |
| 1815 – 1 Oct | | 19/- | |
| 1816 – 1 Aug | | 15/- | |

Source: Regular Ships, Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM, 108 / 148 to 154, Ship's Ledgers.
Source: Three month ships, HoCPP , Prices Paid for Hire of Transports, Transport Office, 24 Mar 1812

The Board was skilful at using the market to bring forward ships, sometimes resisting the temptation to increase the rate. Rupert George explained to the Scheldt Inquiry in 1810 that 'most undoubtedly you may have all the ships in England if you go to the price: if the price is large enough ships may give up their engagements if that is more advantageous than the regular trade'. However he went on to say that the higher price may well bring forward a few additional ships but the number involved would not justify the great discontent that would be generated amongst existing

transport owners who were receiving a lower rate. Thus raising the rate was not always beneficial.

In early 1796 the Transport Board received numerous letters from ship owners in London, Sunderland, North Shields, South Shields, Whitby and Newcastle describing the increase in costs and requesting a corresponding rise in the rate of hire.⁴⁴ The recent corn shortages had increased the price of biscuits, other maritime costs had increased significantly, up to 25 per cent in some instances, due to shortages and seamen's wages had increased from £2/10/00 per month to £4/05/00. In April that year the Board was forced to concede an increase in the charter rate to 15/- per ton per month. However in the first quarter of 1798 the Board identified a reduction in demand and a weakening of freight rates and so it reduced the rate back to 13/- per ton for new hires but did agree to pay 15/- if owners were prepared to copper their ships.⁴⁵ From 1798 the Board continued to offer owners of coppered ships a higher rate than the rate for wood sheathed vessels. This price difference between the coppered and wood sheathed ships was subsequently justified by 'not only from the scarcity of one compared to the other but their being generally a superior class of vessels, and better adapted for particular services'.⁴⁶ Following the negotiations with owners regarding the implementation of the new charter parties in 1800 the rates were increased to 18/- per month for sheathed ships and 19/6d per month for coppered ships. The rate reduced to pre-war levels during the temporary peace of Amiens but soon increased back to the 1800 levels after the resumption of hostilities.

⁴⁴ Condon, *Transport Service*, 73 & 77.

⁴⁵ Condon, *Transport Service*, 78.

⁴⁶ TNA, ADM,108/20/215, TB to W. Fawkner, Secretary to the Council for Trade and the Foreign Plantations, 19 Jun 1804.

⁴⁶ TNA, ADM,108/21/22 and WO,1/803/75, TB to William Windham, Secretary of State for War, 14 Oct 1806.

⁴⁶ Syrett, *Shipping in the American War*, 251 / 2.

⁴⁶ TNA, ADM,108/20/215, TB to W. Fawkner, 19 Jun 1804.

On 8 April 1807 Castlereagh was again Secretary of State for War, he demanded that the transport service immediately raise 36,000 tons of transports with the least delay ‘the board should consider itself at liberty, if tonnage cannot be raised on cheaper terms, to contract for three month ships at no more than 20/- per ton and six month ships at 25/- per ton.’⁴⁷ These transports were required for the Copenhagen expedition. The Board implemented this increase on 20 April but even so it was compelled to advise Castlereagh, that despite this, increase they had not been able to procure more than a few vessels and, furthermore, the Commissioners did not believe that offering an even higher rate would be more successful because ‘two Commissioners of this board have examined the river and the docks, where they saw very few ships fit for the transport service’.⁴⁸ Price was not the principal factor; there were no ships to be had, because all the suitable ships were engaged in trade at that time of year. Seasonality played an important part in the availability of shipping, because in January 1808, just nine months later the Board was able to reduce the rate for new charters back to 21/- and managed to hold that rate during that year despite the high demands for transports to ship troops to the Baltic and then to Spain. The Board held the rate until January 1809 when it was urgently trying to raise shipping to send out to evacuate troops from Corunna. It raised the rate to 25/- then in April 1809 the Board took advantage of reducing freight rates to implement a mandatory rate reduction to 20/- per ton warning that ‘any owners not accepting this rate will find that their vessels are returned to this country for discharge and are unlikely to be hired again’.⁴⁹ Ironically this was only a month before the Board was instructed to raise significant tonnage for the Walcheren campaign. Raising shipping for the Walcheren campaign proved incredibly challenging, the rate was increased again to 25/- and the

⁴⁷ TNA, WO, 6/156/349, Castlereagh, Secretary of War to the TB, 8 Apr 1807.

⁴⁸ TNA, ADM,108/21/56, TB to Lord Castlereagh, 20 Apr 1807.

⁴⁹ TNA, ADM,108 / 83, TB Minutes, 20 Apr 1809.

Board even contemplated raising it to 30/-. Following the discharge of transports returning from Walcheren the rate was reduced back to 21/-, this rate held until 1813 when there was once again a very heavy demand for transports for various services, particularly to supply the army on the Peninsula. In December 1813, so extreme was the position that the Board was experiencing great difficulty raising a modest 5,000 tons for an extremely urgent conveyance of hay and biscuits to the north coast of Spain. The pressure to make the shipment being applied by Bathurst, the Secretary of State for War was so intense that the Board was persuaded to offer thirty shillings per ton per month for all vessels fit for service that would immediately engage for two months certain. Even so, it was not able to hire sufficient ships; the urgency, of this service, forced the Board to hire neutral vessels 'on freight' as a last resort because the Board was aware that the use of foreign ships was very politically sensitive, for that reason such ships were used very infrequently by the Transport Board.⁵⁰ The 25/- rate continued through to January 1815 when it was reduced to 21/-. As transport demand reduced general freight rates also fell. The charter rate reduced to 19/- in October 1815 and then to 15/- in August 1816.

Consideration of the rates paid to the owners of the *Ellen*, 342 tons which appears on the list of longest charters, table 1.9 illustrates the application of the Board's pricing policies. She was in service for over twelve years; wood sheathed, she was hired at the rate of 17/- per ton per month on 8 March 1804. This rate was increased to 19/- on 1 January 1808 and again on 14 August 1808, after she was coppered, to 21/-, the rate for coppered ships. However she was mulcted £12 for 'excess time in coppering', ten days was the normal allowance for this process. During the remainder of the charter she was also mulcted for excess repair time £52, deficiency of complement £57, stores unaccounted for £88 and pilotage at Lisbon £1.

⁵⁰ TNA, ADM,108/24/53, TB to Earl Bathurst, Secretary of State for War, 3 Dec 1813.

The charter rate increased to 25/- on 1 January 1809 but reduced back down to 21/- on 1 September that year reducing further to 19/- on 1 October 1815. The owners were paid £54,116 for the whole hire period after the deductions. The changes were in line with the rate reviews with the exception of the temporary rise to 25/- from April to December 1807, neither did she benefit from the increased rate of 25/- from March 1813 to January 1815.⁵¹

However rates paid to ships already on hire were not always changed in line with rates for new hires as is evidenced by table 1.11. which illustrates

the spread of rates being paid for regular transports at the time when additional transports were being hired at the rate, approved by the Treasury, of 19/- per ton per month for coppered ships and 17/- per ton per month for wood sheathed

Table:1.11. Transport Office, 12 May 1804.
List of all the Regular tonnage now employed in the Transport Service with rates of pay per ton - Recapitulation.

| | Rate | No. of ships | Tons | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------|-------|-----|-----------|
| Coppered | 25/- | 7 | 2,794 | } | |
| | 23/6 | 2 | 602 | } | |
| | 20/- | 1 | 293 | } | |
| | 19/6 | 1 | 309 | } | |
| | 19/- | 30 | 9,424 | } | |
| | 17/6 | 3 | 1,032 | } | |
| | 17/- | 2 | 309 | } | No Tons |
| | 16/6 | 1 | 242 | } | 47 15,005 |
| Sheathed | 18/- | 7 | 1,793 | } | |
| | 17/- | 23 | 5,773 | } | |
| | 16/6 | 12 | 3,580 | } | |
| | 16/- | 1 | 238 | } | |
| | 15/- | 12 | 1,793 | } | 55 13,177 |
| Defence Ships | Coppered | 15 at 21/- | 6,763 | } | |
| | Sheathed | 4 at 18/- | 1,933 | } | 19 8,696 |
| | | Total | | 121 | 36,878 |

Source: TNA,WO,1/802/75, 12 May 1804 Transport Office Memorandum.

ships. The rates being paid for coppered ships ranged from 16/6d per ton to 25/- per ton with 63 per cent of the charters on the latest approved rate. Similarly the range of prices being paid for the wood sheathed ships ranged from 15/- to 18/- per ton, however, only 42 per cent were at the latest rate.

⁵¹ TNA, ADM, 108/152/72.

At times the Board preferred to hold down prices for additional ships to avoid having to pass on the benefit to existing charterers. When there was further pressure on price early in 1813 the Board advised Earl Bathurst, Secretary for War, that when it increased the rate in April 1812, due to the strong competition from the heavy demand from trade, it had assured the Treasury that the increase was temporary thus it had subsequently reduced the hire of coppered transports from twenty five shillings to twenty shillings per ton per month. It claimed that this reduction had already saved the government £166,615. The Board suspected that the reduction might have ‘occasioned the tardiness of ship owners to offer their ships’ but it was minded not to increase the rate again ‘unless the exigency of the Service renders it indispensably necessary that we should hire a large quantity of additional tonnage without delay’. The Board’s premise was that ‘any increase, if not made general, would occasion much discontent and consequently great inconvenience, and loss to the service’.⁵²

‘On freight’ rates

Individuals, goods and sometimes groups of officers and troops were shipped on commercial voyages ‘on freight’ as a supplement to the ship’s commercial cargo. On other occasions, the whole of the ship’s capacity was used to ship troops at a rate per man. Rates were closely linked to the local market rates and varied depending on the destination. For example in 1797 the following rates were paid: for home services, between 15/- and 20/- per ton of materials, to Lisbon and the Mediterranean, between £1/17/06 to £3, to the West Indies, between £2/15/00 and £3/10/00 per ton of materials and between £5/05/00 and £7 per man. The rates to Canada were Halifax, £2/05/00 to £3 per ton, Quebec, £3 to £3/10/00 and Newfoundland £2/10/00 per ton.⁵³

⁵² TNA, ADM,108/23/97, TB to Earl Bathurst Secretary for War, 19 Feb 1813.

⁵³ Committee on Finance, (31st), 502.

When demand coincided with heavy trade demand ship owners naturally attempted to exploit the position. For instance, in November 1798 Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, gave instructions to provide for the embarkation of the 9th Regiment of Foot consisting of 278 men from Yarmouth to Guernsey and of the 35th Regiment consisting of 244 men from Sunderland to Jersey. When Lieutenant Parke, Agent for Transports, visited Yarmouth to procure the necessary tonnage, he discovered a scarcity of shipping on the east coast. This had already increased the price of coals significantly in the Port of London. The owners raised the rate to £8 per man. However the attempted opportunism backfired. Parke declined the offer as ‘such unparalleled extravagance’. The Board suggested to Dundas that it might be more expedient to march these troops to Portsmouth or Southampton where there was greater certainty of procuring the necessary vessels at less exorbitant rates.⁵⁴

Transports lost, damaged or destroyed whilst in His Majesty’s service.

It is known that numerous transports were lost or destroyed between 1793 and 1815 but records are patchy. Many were three monthly hires, often with troops on board. Of the 284 regular transports were lost, 117 (41 per cent) were considered, by the Transport Board, to be standard marine losses due to adverse weather or Master’s error. These were considered to be the owner’s responsibility with no liability to the government. Only between 90 and 105 (31 to 36 per cent) of regular transports losses were attributed to capture by enemy navies and privateers. The losses were most significant in 1795 / 97 and again in 1813 /14. Other losses included thirty one transports abandoned and burnt during the evacuation from Holland in January 1795

⁵⁴ TNA,WO,1/800, TB to Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, 7 Dec 1798.

and thirteen ships which were used as fire ships in the April 1809 attack on the French at Basque (Aix) Roads.⁵⁵

However, it was not only foreign navies and privateers that masters needed to be wary of, on 1 December 1794 the *Camilla* Transport, 300 tons, carrying 186 French prisoners from the West Indies to Europe, was seized by the prisoners. It was subsequently lost off the coast of France.⁵⁶

Adverse weather conditions accounted for the vast majority of ship losses during the wars, between 1803 and 1815 of the 317 naval ships lost 223 were either wrecked or foundered, the majority on account of hostile natural elements.⁵⁷ There were numerous reports of havoc caused to major shipping convoys by particularly adverse weather conditions, usually convoys that had suffered delays in their preparation. The best known of these was the Abercromby / Christian convoy of troop and supply ships to the West Indies of 1795 which was delayed in departing until November only to be struck by gales which drove the whole fleet back into scattered ports at the end of January, with great loss of life. It finally arrived in the West Indies at the end of the campaigning season.⁵⁸ In December 1805 eight transports carrying troops to Germany were wrecked in a storm, 664 men were drowned, the 1552 who were not were washed up on the enemy coast and taken prisoner.⁵⁹ Major General Sir Arthur Wellesley, then a brigade commander, was on board the sloop *Fury* in the Downs and experienced the severe gales that had caused the dispersal of the transports. He subsequently expressed his views to Castlereagh, Secretary of State for War that 'the season was too far advanced to send a fleet of transports to the war'.⁶⁰ Fifteen transports were lost during the Copenhagen campaign in 1807 with a loss of

⁵⁵ Author's Database.

⁵⁶ TNA, ADM.108/4b/143.

⁵⁷ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 47.

⁵⁸ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 435.

⁵⁹ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 47.

⁶⁰ TNA, PRO, 30/70/4/258, Sir Arthur Wellesley to Castlereagh, 16 Dec 1805.

life of 402 soldiers, sixty horses and fourteen seamen, 620 men and 18 horses were saved from these wrecks.⁶¹ In March 1810 a Transport Board minute records the loss of two further transports, the *Richard*, 321 tons and the *Troy*, 175 tons. The *Richard* had 130 men of the 4th Regiment on Board.⁶² In February 1811 the loss was reported of the *John and Jane*, 241 tons, carrying part of the 2nd battalion of the 11th Regiment for Lisbon. It was run down by HMS *Franchesse*. The *Wellington* 198 tons was

| Table 1.12. Transport Office. 1 July 1816 Return of all lives lost in Transports since 1 January 1814; up to 1 July 1816: stating likewise what lives were preserved. | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| | Persons lost | Persons saved |
| Troops | 1,152 | 1,744 |
| Women | 130 | 119 |
| Children | 139 | 67 |
| Seamen | 281 | 879 |
| Total | 1,702 | 2,809 |

Source: HoCPP, 1816, 530, XIX.233,1.

carrying ordnance stores for Malta when it was run down by the American ship *Intercourse*. Some years later the Transport Office had to advise the Admiralty of the loss of HMS *Hero* and the fleet of 120 ships, including many

transports, in gales on 23 December 1811.⁶³ The full extent of the loss of life in sinking transports is not known however between 1 January 1814 and June 1816 some 1,702 souls were lost whilst 2809 individuals were rescued from ship wrecked transports. See table 1.12.

Valuation of ships captured or destroyed by the enemy.

Losses due to natural maritime causes and sailing errors were not reimbursed, only ships captured or destroyed by the enemy or abandoned on service. This occurred in Holland in 1799. Transports could be damaged or destroyed by the navy during the course of an operation, a fate which befell those merchant ships converted to fireships used in Cochrane's attack on the French fleet at Basque Roads in 1809.

⁶¹ HoCPP. 1808, 10, IX.53,2, Account of Transports employed against Copenhagen, 2 Feb 1808.

⁶² TNA, ADM, 108/21/230, TB to Lord Liverpool, Secretary of State for War, 12 Mar 1810.

⁶³ TNA, ADM,1/3763/84, TB to the Admiralty, 28 Jan 1812.

One element of the process of inspecting ships prior to engagement was the valuation by suitably qualified officers. The masts, rigging and other fittings were valued separately from the hull. This makes it difficult to identify the rate per ton used in the valuation, which presumably changed during the period under review as build costs increased. In the two examples shown below the combined rate per ton is *Hythe* £30 and *Lady Johnstone* £21, both ships were valued within four months of each other but the variation in the initial valuation is, for some unknown reason, very significant. If a ship's loss was to be reimbursed then the original valuation was reduced by a charge for wear and tear incurred during service at a rate of eight shillings per ton per annum, five shillings in respect of the hull, masts and spars and three shillings for the rigging.⁶⁴

In the case of the *Hythe* 148 tons, Master, William Thorp, which was taken into pay on 23 Dec 1812 and was wrecked off Senegal on 23 December 1815; she was

subsequently salvaged

| Table: 1.13. Value paid by the Transport Office for the loss of the <i>Hythe</i> 148 tons wrecked off Senegal 23 December 1815 | | | |
|--|-------|----|----|
| | £ | s | d |
| Original valuation 23 December 1812 at £29/15/09 per ton | 4,409 | 09 | 09 |
| Less wear and tear during hire period of 26 months 1 day at the rate of 8 shillings per ton per annum. | 128 | 16 | 00 |
| Less Net proceeds of sale | 706 | 04 | 06 |
| Net valuation | 3,574 | 09 | 03 |
| Plus Interest | 40 | 04 | 03 |
| Total proceeds | 3,614 | 13 | 06 |
| Source: TNA, ADM, 108/151/184. | | | |

and sold. The charge for wear and tear for the 26 months and 1 day that it was on charter, at the rate of 8/- per ton per annum was £128. This together

with the proceeds of sale of £706 were deducted from the original valuation of £4,409 which gave a net value of £3,574 which was paid, plus interest at 3 per cent, by a thirty day bill see table 1.13 above.

⁶⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/34, TB Minutes, 19 Dec 1794.

The *Lady Johnstone* 437 tons, Master, John Richardson, was taken into pay on 14 September 1812 and captured on 24 November, after only 72 days service. The amount paid was

| Table 1.14. Value paid by the Transport Office for the loss of the <i>Lady Johnstone</i> 437 tons captured 24 November 1812 | | | |
|---|-------|----|----|
| | £ | S | D |
| Original valuation 14 September 1812 at £21/03/02 per ton | 9,247 | 01 | 06 |
| Less wear and tear during hire period of 72 days at the rate of 8 shillings per ton per annum. | 34 | 10 | 10 |
| Net valuation | 9,212 | 10 | 08 |
| Plus Interest | 103 | 09 | 02 |
| Total proceeds | 9,316 | 00 | 00 |
| Source: TNA, ADM, 108/151/135. | | | |

equivalent to the original valuation of £9,247 less wear and tear of £35 for the 72 days that it was on charter, giving a net valuation of just over £9,212 to which interest of £103/09/02 was added and the sum of £9,316 was paid by a thirty day bill, see table 1.14.

Occasionally there were disputes between the ship's owners and the Board about the valuation.⁶⁵ In one instance the Aix Roads fireship owners claimed that the offers made to them were totally inadequate to enable them to replace their vessels on the basis that there were 110 suitable ships on the market for sale but that prices were high because the new ships building in the ports of Whitby, Sunderland and Newcastle, which they considered to be the cheapest shipbuilding ports, were very high at that time.⁶⁶ They complained even though the Board had previously agreed to: pay an additional twenty five percent over the original valuations, pay the freight to the day on which they were destroyed and to pay the wages of the masters from that day until the day of their arrival in London together with the amount of their actual losses in clothes and their expenses to London. The Board considered the additional requests unreasonable and refused to pay more.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 555.

⁶⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/174, Memorial from the owners of the late transports to the TB, 10 Jul 1809.

⁶⁷ TNA, ADM,1/3758, unsigned note attached to the valuations list, 12 Jun 1809. Also in TNA,ADM,108/174.

Allowances and Mulcts

The Board appears to have been very fair in compensating owners for expenses incurred whilst on service. There are numerous examples of such allowances granted to ship owners by the Transport Board for: air scuttles cut in decks on troop ships to encourage the circulation of air to the sleeping decks, candles used and gunpowder expended for signalling, anchors and chain loss caused by others, long boats lost in service, ballast removed, damages in action with privateers, damage sustained alongside naval vessels when transferring water and victuals. The owners of the *Admiral Gambier* were awarded £104 towards the expense of replacing three men who had quit the ship at Quebec to join a naval ship on the American lakes.⁶⁸ The owners of the *Colworth* were awarded £100 for the master's exertions in saving troops from another damaged ship off the coast of Ireland.⁶⁹

If ships were no longer required after they had completed their mission the owners were sometimes offered the opportunity of having them discharged immediately. They were then paid in lieu of the return voyage at the rate of four weeks hire from the West Indies and two weeks hire from the Mediterranean. This allowed the master the opportunity of finding another charter for the return voyage, in effect receiving double pay for that trip.

At the same time the Board was very forceful in recovering costs, incurred by transports, which it considered to be the responsibility of the owners. Mulcts were principally applied in the following circumstances: when a ship, by accident or through fault of the owner or master, became incapable of performing the service for which she was engaged then she would be mulcted during the time of her remaining out of service and until she was reported ready for duty by an Agent of the Board.

⁶⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/152/8.

⁶⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/153/39.

This also extended to delays in sailing. Deficiencies in crew numbers were regularly mulcted as crew fell ill or deserted. Transport crews were frequently pressed into naval ships which caused numerous delays. Another principal cause of mulcts was the master's misconduct, disobedience or negligence. There were fines ranging from £10 for a relatively minor infringement, such as failure to report arrival at a port immediately to the Agent for Transports, to £21 for a more serious matter such as disobeying orders. Possibly the more serious implication was that the ship's charters were more likely to be curtailed as soon as demand allowed.⁷⁰ Probably the most common cause of a mulct was the failure to account for all supplies that had been loaded on board at the start of the charter. In addition any expenses paid by agents on behalf of owners were deducted before the account was finally settled. Such expenses would include: the cost of taking in ballast, light and buoy dues, cost of care of sick seaman on a hospital or hospital ship, customs duty and for damage done to navy ships at sea. Ships' log books were required to be surrendered at the end of each charter, many charters were mulcted between £10 and £100 because the log book had not been surrendered however, in numerous instances, this was reimbursed at a later date when the log book was received at the Transport Office.

Speed of Preparation of transports.

The majority of demands for transports were for a limited number of ships for a specific service, generally these ships were made available quickly and efficiently.⁷¹ Davey found that tonnage was provided to the Victualling Board within an average of ten days from the request for victuallers for the Baltic between 1808 and 1810.

⁷⁰ TNA, ADM 108/32, Transport Board Minute, 6 Oct 1794.

⁷¹ Commission for Revision (9th), 76.

Victualling ships for the Mediterranean in 1800 to 1802 had taken, on average, 7 days.⁷²

| Table: 1. 15. | | | | | | |
|--|------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Transport Office, 14 Aug 1799 | | | | | | |
| List of Commissariat Ships and Victuallers, destined for the Helder expedition. | | | | | | |
| Ships names | Tons | Date of Requisition | Date of Appropriation | Time of sailing | Time of Arrival | Remarks |
| | | | 1799 | | | |
| Commissariat for Bread and Oats | | | | | | |
| <i>Elizabeth</i> | 150 | 20 th July 1799 | 25 July 1799 | 29 th July 1799 from Deptford | 30 th July 1799 In the Downs | From the date of the application to the date of the appropriation, were only five days, and thence to the date of final preparation and sailing to their respective destinations 4 days more. We are advised that these vessels are arrived at the ports according to the dates in the preceding column |
| <i>Jenny</i> | 122 | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | |
| <i>Hope</i> | 87 | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | 4 th Aug 1799 In the Downs | |
| <i>Ranger</i> | 75 | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | 6 th Aug 1799 In the Downs | |
| <i>Brothers</i> | 99 | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | |
| <i>Liberty</i> | 83 | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | 31 st July 1799 Harwich | |
| <i>Manchester</i> | 122 | Ditto | Ditto | Ditto | 31 st July 1799 Faversham | |
| Commissariat for 180 Draft Horses | | | | | | |
| <i>Venus</i> | 239 | 27 th July 1799 | 5 August 1799 | | | Arrived at Blackwall on 5 th August 1799 and from that time under the Commissariat Department. |
| <i>Mercury</i> | 216 | Ditto | Ditto | | | |
| <i>John and Amy</i> | 121 | Ditto | Ditto | | | |
| <i>Penelope</i> | 312 | Ditto | Ditto | | | |
| <i>Squirrel</i> | 264 | Ditto | Ditto | | | |
| <i>Mary</i> | 244 | Ditto | Ditto | | | |
| Commissariat for Wagons | | | | | | |
| <i>Jane</i> | 170 | 27 th July 1799 | 10 Aug 1799 | The 40 wagons were not ready till Saturday 10 th August as appears from Mr Brook Watson's letter of the 8 th inst. The ship is now at Northam , taking in her cargo and was expected to complete on the 12 th August according to Guymer's letter to Capt Patton. By this post (Aug 14 th) it appears that this ship is on her way to the Downs with 36 of the wagons on board, not being able, on account of the unexpected accumulation of baggage, to receive the four left behind. | | |
| Victualling Department | | | | | | |
| <i>Diligence</i> | 100 | 29 th July 1799 | 1 st August 1799 | Laden and proceeding to the Downs | | |
| <i>Jason</i> | 79 | Ditto | Ditto | | | |
| <i>Rebecca</i> | 104 | Ditto | Ditto | Loading their provisions under the orders of the Victualling Board | | |
| <i>John and Eleanor</i> | 80 | Ditto | 2 August 1799 | | | |
| <i>Newcastle Trader</i> | 122 | Ditto | 10 August 1799 | | | |
| Source: TNA, ADM, 108 / 20 . TB to the Secretary of State for War. 14 Aug 1799 | | | | | | |

⁷² Davey, *The Transformation of British Naval Strategy 1808 -1812: Seapower and Supply in Northern Europe*, 275.

The Board's role and that of its agents was pivotal to the success of the preparations for expeditions but once it had procured the appropriate tonnage it had to rely on other boards performing their own tasks efficiently. The Ordnance Board, the Victualling Board and the War department had vital roles and of course the weather played a very significant role. Ships took longer to prepare as the weather deteriorated.

Table 1.15 refers to the state of preparations for the Anglo – Russian expedition into northern Holland known as the Helder expedition in 1799, two weeks before the commencement of the troop landings. The 46,000 strong force was led initially by Lieutenant-General Abercromby and subsequently by the Duke of York.

After initial successes, including the surrender of the Dutch fleet, the progress of the campaign became bogged down by enemy resistance and the force began to experience a shortage of wagons, horses and provisions due to bad weather which was preventing them being landed. In October, rather than face an arduous winter in Holland, the Duke negotiated an armistice to allow the evacuation of the army.⁷³

The table indicates the complexity and the timing of events relating to the preparation of a relatively small part of the operation. The Board received instructions from Henry Dundas to prepare these ships which were required to ship bread and oats, draft horses, wagons and victuals to Holland. The loading of the victuals was the responsibility of the Victualling Board whilst the commissariat was responsible for loading the other items. The ships were requisitioned in three batches on the 20th, 27th and 29th July. The bread ships were handed over for loading on the 25th, loading was completed on 29th. The whole process took nine days. The horse ships were handed over for loading on 5th August, the Board's preparations took nine days and as at the 14th the Transport Board had not been advised about the rate of progress of embarkation. There had been an underestimate of the ship capacity required for the

⁷³ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 463.

wagons and four of the forty wagons had been left behind. The victualling ships were still being loaded, one of them, the *Newcastle Trader* had taken longer to prepare and was not handed over to the Victualling Board until 10 August. It is clear from this table that any perceived delays in respect of these transports were not the responsibility of the Transport Board. It had reacted quickly after receiving the requisitions to prepare the ships for handover to the other boards for loading. In addition to these ships, the force transported to Holland consisted of 71 infantry ships of 18,576 tons with 14,861 men at one and a quarter tons per man, 56 cavalry ships of 12,245 tons with 1,628 horses and men, two hospital ships and the *Weymouth* Armed Transport of 1,425 tons with 1000 men. The total tonnage was 33,051 tons. Another 106 ships of 22,453 tons had been prepared for the expedition, but were not sent to Holland because of the decision to withdraw.⁷⁴

When tonnage was required for major military operations, the considerable amount required invariably meant that it took some time to assemble, prepare and load the shipping required. Ships fully loaded could wait at the assembly points for weeks until the flotilla was complete and the navy took them under convoy orders. Invariably if there were any perceived delays the Secretary of State for War of the day would seek a review of events from the Transport Board. There are numerous such reports scattered throughout the Board's records.

Demurrage

If transports were delayed beyond the periods incorporated into the charter party, when unloading supplies at the end of a charter, in circumstances beyond the control of the master and owner, then demurrage or further costs were paid by the

⁷⁴ TNA,WO,1/800, List of Transports appropriated to the expedition but which did not proceed under Admiral Mitchell, 14 Aug 1799.

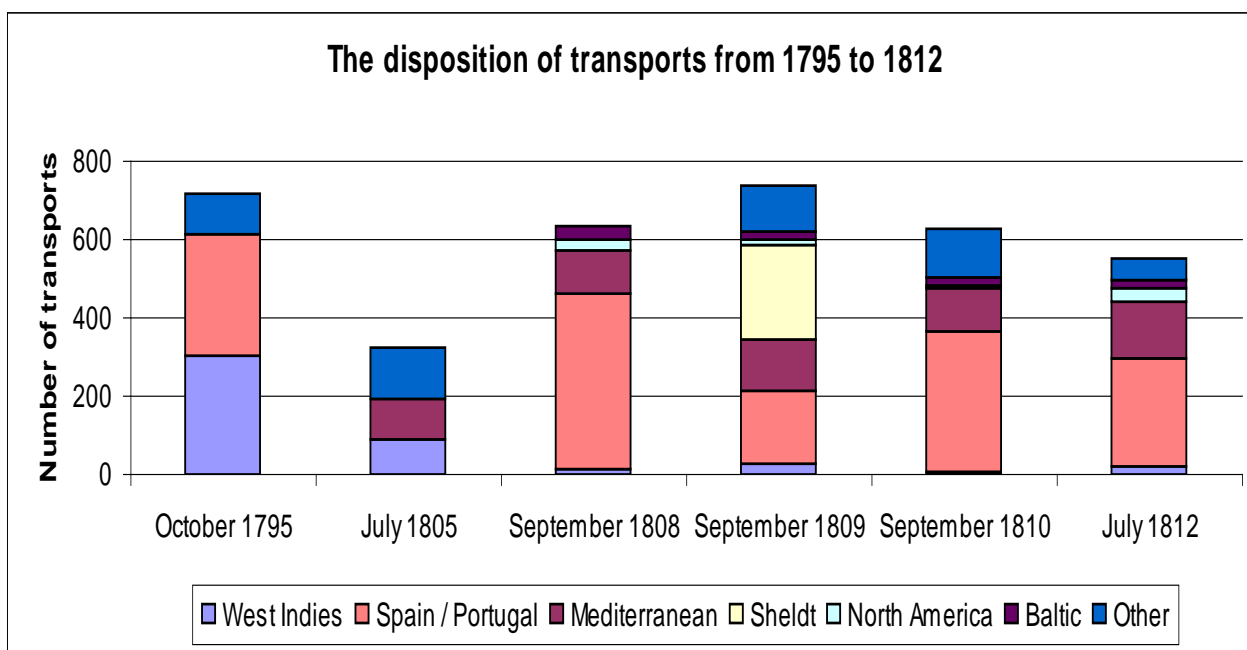
government. One of the primary tasks of the Transport Agents was to ensure that ships designated for discharge were released as quickly as possible. This is illustrated by events reported by Captain Young, Agent for Transports at Deptford in March 1806. He sent a list of transports that had arrived at Deptford and had returned water casks and provisions at the Red House, during that month. His report showed that the ships were paid for five days to report their arrival at the Custom & Excise offices and for unloading all their stores. Due to the large number of ships being discharged at one time delays had occurred for a number of reasons. The warehouses at the Red House were full. This, combined with frequent bad weather, had prevented the dry stores from being offloaded. There was also a shortage of labour to unload the lighters which in turn affected the availability of lighters. The overcrowding in the River just made things worse, ships had to moor some considerable distance from the unloading dock, increasing the time taken by lighters travelling back and forth. Some lighter men had contracts to unload naval supplies, others to unload army supplies and although the provisions were all landed at the Red House, the lighter men would only move those goods that they were contracted for even if there was a mix of supplies on board one vessel. Additionally, lighter men refused to supply more craft until those loaded were cleared; many of which had not been unloaded and were lying at their risk, for a considerable time, without any allowance for demurrage.⁷⁵ As a result none of Young's ships has been unloaded within the five days built into the charter party. Most had taken between one and three weeks longer so Captain Young had been obliged to consent to extend the time allowed when it became clear that the delays were not caused by any neglect of the master or crew. Some of the masters were happy with the delays as they were not anxious to get their ships cleared exactly in

⁷⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/37, William Young, Agent to TB, 24 Mar 1806.

accordance to the charter party because they had no immediate employment for their ships.⁷⁶

The Board received many claims for demurrage but before accepting them they always made further investigation of the facts. The owners of the ship *Fortitude* and several other transports, on passage to Portugal in December 1796, claimed demurrage during the time they were detained at Falmouth, where they arrived under convoy with HMS *Seahorse*. The Board requested the Admiralty to advise if the convoy put in there in under its instructions or in consequence of adverse winds.

Chart: 1.16. Source: Author's Database compiled from TNA, ADM 108 / 148 to 154, Ships Ledgers



Demurrage would be paid for the former but not the latter.⁷⁷

The disposition of the transport fleet

A review of the disposition of the transport fleet, as shown in chart C.1.7, provides a useful synopsis of the course of the wars as they progressed from the West

⁷⁶ TNA, ADM,108/37, William Young, Agent to TB, 24 Mar 1806.

⁷⁷ TNA, ADM,1/3734, TB to the Admiralty,14 Sep 1797.

Indies, in the early stages of the wars, to the Peninsular and northern European theatres later in the period. Duffy suggests that 61,836 officers and troops were transported from Europe to the West Indies between July 1793 and June 1797, at the rate of two shipping tons per man, together with all the appropriate supplies.⁷⁸

The West Indies was not an attractive destination for merchant seamen, who were aware of the possibility of contracting yellow fever, many were very reluctant to sail once they discovered their destination and it took much persuasion and coercion by the local Transport Agents to encourage their departure.⁷⁹ Even at this early stage of the war the challenges of raising vast tonnages were exposed when in 1794 Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, Comptroller of the Navy Board, reported that trade to the Baltic and the 'speculation to the newly acquired islands in the West Indies' had employed what ships might have been available for the service.⁸⁰ By September 1795 there were over three hundred transports involved in the West Indies operations. At the same time there was considerable transport activity in Europe where the transport service was involved in the evacuation of troops from Holland, at Quiberon Bay, where transports were victualling and servicing the naval fleet under Admiral Hawley and in the Mediterranean.⁸¹

In July 1805 there were 322 ships of 88,835 tons in service of which forty five ships were either in or under orders for the West Indies with a further forty six at Cork embarking troops, under the command of Lieutenant General Sir Eyre Coote, also bound for the West Indies. Three army victuallers were at Portsmouth ready to join this expedition. In addition there were one hundred and thirty ships in or under orders for the Mediterranean. The total was made up by eight bomb tenders and sixty nine troop and cavalry ships which had not yet been allocated specific duties, eight ships

⁷⁸ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 184-192.

⁷⁹ TNA, ADM, 108 / 32, Transport Board Minutes. 3 Oct 1794.

⁸⁰ TNA, HO, 28/63 A.S Hamond, Navy Office to Evan Nepean at the Admiralty, 16 May 1794.

⁸¹ TNA, ADM, 1/3730/311, Transport Office, Abstract of all the ships employed in the Transport Service, 3 Oct 1795.

on miscellaneous services and eight defence ships.⁸² Some months later there was a massive build up of three month ships for the proposed campaign in northern Germany.

By September 1809 the number of chartered transports had increased to 738 ships and there were another 200 'coming forward for service'. 242 transports were involved in the Walcheren campaign, 189 ships were employed on the coast of Portugal and 130 ships were in, on passage to or under orders for the Mediterranean. Twenty-two ships had sailed from Portsmouth on 16 August to return Russian troops back to Russia. There were five ships at and on passage to the Cape of Good Hope, three on passage with convicts and stores to New South Wales, twelve in North America, eleven in South America and twenty-six in or bound for the West Indies. There were twenty five in the Baltic, twenty-six on miscellaneous home services and twenty eight victualling the navy blockading squadrons off Rochefort.⁸³

By July 1810 the ships involved in the Walcheren campaign had returned, many of the three months ships had been paid off and the remaining transports had been reallocated to the Peninsula with 118 transports in or on the way to Spain, 242 in or on the way to Portugal. There were still 105 in the Mediterranean. There were nine in North America, eight in the West Indies, 20 in the Baltic and 70 on miscellaneous home service.

In 1812 there were 555 transport ships in the service, the main theatres of operations were off Portugal 137 ships and off Spain 141 ships and in the Mediterranean 142 ships. In addition there were 23 in the Baltic, 50 at home preparing for service, eight off the coast of Africa and at the Cape of Good Hope, 34 in North America, and 20 in the West Indies.

⁸² TNA, ADM 1/3747, Transport Office, Abstract of all tonnage now in the Transport Service, 11 Jul 1805.

⁸³ TNA, ADM, 1/3758, Transport Office, Abstract of all tonnage now employed in the Transport Service, 2 Jul 1810.

Summary

Merchant ships played a paramount role in the defeat of France between 1793 and 1815. There were frequent shortages of ships, yet the Transport Board worked diligently to ensure continuity of supply. This was achieved by dealing fairly with owners and, by maintaining good communications with ships brokers and by continuing to have good market intelligence which facilitated judicious manipulation of the hire rate in line with market conditions. Despite being under considerable pressure from ministers to bring forward ships, the Board only resorted to increasing the hire rate if it was fairly sure that it would bring forward a significant number of additional ships. It had discovered from experience that, when availability was tight, that rate increases did not yield a substantial number of additional ships but did have a detrimental effect. Existing owners would inevitably demand a universal price increase which would add significantly to the Board's cost if granted, or damage goodwill if not.

In earlier wars the Navy Office had devised rigorous, somewhat cumbersome, procedures for bringing forward and managing shipping for government service. The Transport Board adopted many of those practices, revising them where appropriate to improve efficiency. The charter party was refined through experience to ensure that the owners and masters fulfilled their unambiguous obligations and to minimize the cost and risk to the public purse.

Regular transports were the backbone of the fleet but when major military operations were planned large numbers of ships were hired, usually on three month charters. These ships were then discharged as soon as possible. The tonnage hired peaked in 1795 during the West Indies campaigns and then again in 1809 during the Walcheren and again in 1813 when transports were heavily engaged in supporting the

army in the Peninsula. The Transport Board took steps to ensure that it obtained the best ships at the best value to the public service by increasing the number of brokers that it dealt with on a regular basis.

Chapter two.

The competing demands for shipping, 1793 - 1815.

‘I have no doubt that in execution of this service, which is indispensable, you will make every exertion to prevent as much as possible any embarrassment to trade or any increase of charge to the public’.¹

The volume of shipping available to the Transport Board changed month by month and year by year. Whilst the Transport Board was charged with the provision of sufficient shipping to meet government demand at the least cost, the constant dilemma for ship-owners was how to utilise their ships to generate the best return. Economics not patriotism was the principal motivation because military success did not earn the contractors, who supplied services to the military, the gratitude of the public. Victories were bought at a considerable price and hostility emerged towards the perceived beneficiaries of escalating military expenditure including, no doubt shipowners.² Another, more sceptical, historian has suggested that chartering to the government was easy money for ship-owners who considered that investments were better protected by escorting naval vessels than merchant ships in a purely trading convoy. The same critic has suggested that these government charters became the refuge of the less able and enterprising merchant shipping masters, many of whom were of advanced age and deliberately placed in such relatively safe vessels by the owners.³

Ultimately the market determined the availability of shipping for government service but how successful was the Transport Board in engaging with the industry to achieve

¹ TNA, WO, 6/156, Hawkesbury in the absence of Castlereagh, Secretary of State for War to TB, 3 Aug 1805 when presenting instructions to raise 18000 tons fit for distant service, half to be got ready at Cork the other half at Portsmouth victualled for 6 months, also 10,000 tons for home service to be assembled in the Downs.

² Bannerman, Gordon, *Merchants and the Military in Eighteenth Century Britain* (2008, London), 140.

³ Woodman, *Britannia's Realm*, 202.

its goals? When large tonnages of shipping were required for major expeditions, there were invariably insufficient ships immediately available. This chapter will identify why shortages occurred and assess the impact of government demands on the British shipping industry. For example, did the demand push up freight rates? Did it encourage the building of more ships than would be needed in the long term? Did it divert ships from trade, which might have generated additional revenue for the state?

The number and variety of British ships gave the Transport Board an advantage over its rival nations. Britain's merchant shipping fleet was destined to double in the next thirty years. Its main competitors were Holland and France.⁴ Despite the wars there was a rapid expansion in world trade and a corresponding increase in demand for shipping. In 1815 Britain still had the largest fleet; its closest rival, in terms of fleet size, was the United States of America which had overtaken the other nations as early as 1803 as reported to a Committee of the House of Congress in a statement that 'the merchant tonnage of the United States was now inferior to no other country except Great Britain'.⁵ This is evidenced by the changing pattern of shipping entering into US ports. In 1790 355,000 tons of domestic shipping had entered US ports from overseas. By 1801 this had more than doubled to 799,304 tons demonstrating dramatic growth as it took control of its own trade, supported by government protection schemes. These included the imposition of higher duties on goods into US if they were carried in British ships.⁶ By 1812 most of the US trade was carried in its own shipping even though Britain exported more to the US than it imported from there.⁷

⁴ Roger Morriss, *The Foundation of British Maritime Ascendancy* (Cambridge, 2011). 82 - 83.

⁵ Robert Kilmarx, (ed) *America's Maritime Legacy: A history of the US Merchant Marine and Shipbuilding Industry since Colonial Times* (Colorado, 1979), 31.

⁶ Kilmarx, (ed) *America's Maritime Legacy*, 32.

⁷ HoCPP. 18 Feb 1812, 63, X.1,3, An Account of the Official values of Imports from and Exports to The United States of America from 1801 to 1810. This account showed the aggregate Imports from the US £20,105,627 and Exports to the US £65,182,261 for the 10 years 1801 to 1810. This represents a ratio of 3:1 in favour of Exports to the US.

Whilst American shipping expanded, the French merchant fleet fared badly. British naval blockades had severely restricted its movements and growth. Not until 1825 did French foreign trade exceed its 1788 total, nor did its merchant shipping tonnage regain its 1788 level until the 1850s.⁸ The pre-war dominance of the British fleet was principally due to the effective adoption of protectionism, exemplified by the Navigation Acts, by restricting certain trades to British ships and by the imposition of higher rates of duty on some goods carried in foreign vessels and, in certain places, higher port dues.⁹

The British shipping industry had a high public profile. Ship movements received daily coverage in newspapers, and throughout the wars considerable parliamentary time was devoted to trade and shipping matters. There were numerous Acts of Parliament relative to navigation including, but not limited to, the 1794 Act authorising the extension of the employment of foreigners on board British ships up to 75 per cent of the crew.¹⁰ The 1797 Manifest Act mandated the compulsory requirement for a full manifest for each cargo carried on every British ship.¹¹ The 1798 and 1803 Convoy Acts ensured that merchant ships were legally bound to sail in convoy, or forfeit insurance cover or government indemnity if captured.¹² An 1801 Act demanded that ensigns or colours should be borne, at sea, in all merchant ships.¹³

⁸ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 389.

⁹ Sarah Palmer, *Politics, Shipping and the Repeal of the Navigation Laws*, 41-43.

For other commentary on the Navigation Acts see Gary Walton, 'The New Economic History and the Burden of the Navigation Acts', in *The Economic History Review*, Volume XXIV No.4 (1971), HoCPP, 1847, 232,X, 1, *Reports of the Select Committee of the House of Commons to Inquire into the Operation and Policy of the Navigation Laws*.

J. Allen, *The Navigation Laws of Great Britain, Historically and Practically Considered*. (London, 1848).

Lawrence A Harper, *The English Navigation Laws: a Seventeenth-Century Experiment in Social Engineering*, (New York, 1939).

Robert Livingstone Schuyler, *The Fall of the Old Colonial System: a Study in British Free Trade*, (Oxford, 1945).

¹⁰ 1794 Act for the Further Encouragement of British Mariners, 33 Geo. III,c.26.

¹¹ 1797 Manifest Act, 36 Geo. III,c.40.

¹² 1798 Convoy Act, 38 Geo.III. c.76. and the 1803 Convoy Act, 43 Geo. III. c.57.

¹³ 1801 Merchant Shipping Act, 41 Geo. III, c.19.

The British Shipping Register

A significant component of the Navigation Acts was the Registration of Shipping Act of 1786 which defined 'British ships'. To qualify for registration ships had to be British owned and British built, with a deck, and of more than fifteen tons.¹⁴ The British Register of Shipping was compiled from monthly returns submitted to the Registrar of Shipping from Customs Officers at all ports in the British Empire.¹⁵ It included not only ships registered in England, Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Scotland and Ireland, but also ships registered in the North American and West Indian colonies.¹⁶ Whilst the number of seamen normally engaged in sailing each vessel was recorded it is important to observe that these did not reflect the number of men who were actually available at any one time.¹⁷ Sadly the register gives no indication of whether the ships were ocean going or coasters, nor of the trade that they were mainly involved in. So it does not readily indicate the extent of fleet that might have met the Transport Board criteria.¹⁸

As shown in table 2.1 the number of ships on the register increased by 72 per cent between 1790 and 1816 and the tonnage almost doubled suggesting a modest move towards larger vessels as demonstrated in table 3.¹⁹ However, John Dalley, the Assistant Registrar in

¹⁴ 1786 Registration Act, 26 Geo. III. c.60

¹⁵ Palmer, *Politics Shipping and the Repeal of the Navigation Acts*, 42.

'The Registry Laws formed part of the Navigation code. Where a vessel was built, the nationality of the owner, master and crew were all relevant criteria. To qualify as British a ship had to be British built and British owned. British also included colonial'. For further informed commentary on the British register see Nicholas Cox, 'The Records of the Registrar-General of Shipping and Seaman' in *Sources for Maritime History*, (11).

Note that in 1814 there was a major fire at Customs House in London and many of the records were destroyed.

¹⁶ The port of registration was not recorded before 1799.

¹⁷ Paul Van Royan, Jaap Bruijn, Jan Lucassen, (eds) 'Those Emblems of Hell' in *European Sailors and the Marine Labour Market 1570 – 1870* in *Research in Maritime History* 13. The statutory Customs Register is not to be confused with the Lloyds Register which was a voluntary register with details submitted by the ship's owners. Lloyds Register was (and is) a classification society which rates the condition of ships to enable them to obtain insurance.

¹⁸ Several historians have attempted to assess the size of the ocean going fleet and the coasting fleet notably: Ralph Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry* (Newton Abbott, 1962) , 395 - 406
E. Fayle, 'Employment of British Shipping' in Parkinson, N. (ed) *Trade Winds*, 73.
D.E. Robinson, 'Secret of British Power in the Age of Sail; Admiralty Records of the Coasting Fleet' in *American Neptune*, 48, 1988, 5-21.

¹⁹ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 386 'the boom in the West Indian trade..... was one of the prime factors in the increase in merchant tonnage in the war against Revolutionary France'.

the department of the Registrar General of Shipping, provided important evidence that the register needed to be treated with some caution.²⁰ He emphasised that the numbers represented ships registered and did not necessarily reflect the number of ships that were operating at any one time because ships frequently remained on the Register after they ceased to be fit for sea. Also inaccuracies occurred because the returns from out-ports were frequently incorrect due to the loss, capture or destruction of vessels and, due to changes of

Table 2.1 The number of Ships and their tonnage and the number of men who would normally sail in them in 1790, 1799 and 1816, as recorded by the Registrar of Shipping, and a comparison of the growth of tonnage from 1799 to 1816 and the number of enemy ships taken as prizes and registered under British ownership

| | 1790 | | 1799 | | | 1816 | | | Growth of tonnage from 1799 to 1816 | Prize Ships on the Register In 1816 | Prize Ships Tonnage |
|---|----------------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Men | Ships | Tons | Men | | | |
| England | Detail not available | | 11,487 | 1,337,181 | 99,309 | 17,442 | 2,152,968 | 134,060 | 61% | 2,696 | 417,372 |
| Jersey | | 61 | 4,611 | 694 | 77 | 7,992 | 636 | 73% | 32 | 4,217 | |
| Guernsey | | 78 | 6,199 | 803 | 65 | 7,237 | 494 | 18% | 27 | 4,041 | |
| Isle of Man | | 227 | 5,146 | 1,201 | 369 | 9,335 | 2,315 | 81% | 0 | | |
| Plantations in North America & The West Indies | | | | | | | | | 38% | 942 | 102,231 |
| Scotland | | | | 2,996 | 201,743 | 15,982 | 3,775 | 279,643 | 16,859 | | |
| Ireland | | | | 2,031 | 148,110 | 12,413 | 2,958 | 263,536 | 18,775 | 78% | 281 |
| | | | 999 | 49,825 | 4,835 | 1,178 | 63,229 | 5,681 | 27% | 63 | 6,839 |
| Total | 15,015 | 1,460,823 | 17,879 | 1,725,815 | 135,237 | 25,864 | 2,783,940 | 178,820 | 61% | 4,041 | 565,805 |
| Total for England And Scotland | Detail not available | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | 13,518 | 1,485,291 | 111,722 | 20,400 | 2,416,504 | 152,835 | 62% | | |
| Ships in England / Scotland as a % of the total. | | | 75% | 86% | | 79% | 86% | | | | |
| Sources: Author's compilation from Cobbett, <i>Parliamentary Papers</i>, Volumes 1-24 and HoCPP, Annual Trade and Navigation accounts. | | | | | | | | | | TNA,Cust, 36/5 | |

ownership, ships were often registered at the new port without being cancelled at the original

port.²¹ Dalley reinforced the fact that there were insufficient seamen to man all the ships at

²⁰ House of Lords Sessional Papers 1802 / 3,174, 376, Fifth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry into the Sixpenny Office printed 10 Aug 1803, Appendix 7 –Examination of John Dalley.

²¹ Palmer *The Repeal of the Navigation Acts*. 1, the Register was updated in 1827 (and some 13% of the ships recorded were removed) For more detailed consideration of the Registration system see the evidence of W.H. Noss, Registrar of Shipping, to the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Policy and Operation of the Navigation Laws. (HoCPP, 1847 /8).

any one time. He was convinced that the availability of seamen was the principal restriction on the availability of shipping. Nevertheless the register does give a reasonable reflection of the size of the British fleet and the changes from year to year and therefore justifies further consideration.

Merchant ship losses during the period.

One matter which has not yet been clearly resolved is the number of ships lost during the period and the number removed from the register because they were no longer operational: although there have been several estimates of the losses. The Secretary of Lloyd's suggested that over the whole period 1793 to 1815 British merchant losses were about two per cent a year from all causes net of recaptures, but in deep sea trades as much as five or six per cent, half to marine causes and half to enemy action. In the English Channel losses in 1808 were one and a half per cent.²² If losses were at the rate of two per cent per annum during the period from 1800 to 1815 inclusive this would equate to an approximate average of 290 ships per year or 4,640 over the period. This number is comparable to Winfield's assessment that the average number of British merchantmen lost between 1803 and 1814 was 440 per annum of these 67 per cent or 294 ships were English.²³ These estimates can be used to help identify the number of ships removed from the register. From table 2.1 it is clear that the net increase in the number of ships on the register of English

²² Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 559 – 560

²³ R. Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail* (Chatham, 2005) , 291 citing Marcus. *Naval History of Britain* Vol 2, 382 & 404 citing C.B Norman, *Corsairs of France* (1883), 453. The losses quoted are 1803: 222, 1804: 387, 1805: 507, 1806: 519, 1807: 559, 1808: 469, 1809: 571, 1810: 619, 1811: 470, 1812 not known, 1813: 371, 1814: 145. total 4,839 average per year for 11 years 440.

Morriss, *Maritime Ascendancy* ,86 cites P. Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade; Privateering 1793 – 1815* (Aldershot, 1989), 31. – quoting the number of merchant ships lost to enemy privateers between 1793 and 1814 at 11,000 and an annual loss never exceeding 2.5% of all British registered ships. Simon Ville, 'The Incidence of Loss of Merchant Vessels during the French Wars', *M.M.* 68,4,(1982), 450.

shipping from 1799 to 1816 was 5,955.²⁴ The number of ships built in English shipyards between those years was 9,200.²⁵ In addition 2,696 prizes were added to the register. This would have increased the total number of registered ships by 11,896 before taking into account losses due to maritime incidents and enemy activity and to ships removed from the register. Assuming net losses of 290 per year (two per cent), in total 4,640 throughout the period, the number of English ships taken out of service over the period would have been 1,301 representing half a per cent per annum.²⁶

The recapture of ships, previously taken by the enemy, was not uncommon. It is estimated that some ten per cent of all captures were in fact recoveries of ships that had been captured by the enemy.²⁷ At times the rate was much higher.²⁸ Recovery of captured ships was a profitable venture because the Prize Acts provided for salvage on such ships. This was

| Table 2.2 To establish the average tonnage of all monthly paid transports, regular transports and three month ships in 1795, 1807 and 1812 | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|---------|-----------------|--|----------------|---------|-----------------|--|-----------------|---------|-----------------|
| | 3 October 1795 | | | | 7 March 1807 | | | | 13 October 1812 | | |
| | No of ships | Tonnage | Average Tonnage | | No of ships | Tonnage | Average tonnage | | No of ships | Tonnage | Average tonnage |
| Infantry ships | 353 | 107,464 | 304 | | 202 | 66,894 | 331 | | 130 | 43,723 | 336 |
| Cavalry ships | 129 | 32,674 | 253 | | | | | | 90 | 28,889 | 321 |
| Navy Victuallers | 86 | 20,858 | 243 | | 72 | 16,201 | 225 | | 98 | 27,105 | 277 |
| Army Victuallers | 41 | 8,314 | 203 | | 11 | 3,347 | 304 | | 132 | 29,488 | 223 |
| Ordnance / Baggage | 100 | 22,292 | 223 | | 55 | 14,052 | 255 | | 61 | 16,701 | 274 |
| Naval Storeships | 8 | 2,899 | 362 | | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | 717 | 194501 | 271 | | 340 | 100494 | 296 | | 511 | 145906 | 286 |
| Sources | TNA, ADM, 1/3730 | | | | TNA,ADM,1/3751 | | | | TNA, ADM/1/3768 | | |

²⁴ This number is determined by deducting the number of ships registered in England in 1799 as shown in table 2.1 as 11,487 from the number registered in 1816 of 17,442. The difference between the two numbers is 5,955; this represents the net growth in the number of ships registered in England between 1799 and 1816.

²⁵ TNA, Cust 36/5.12, for 1800 to 1813 inclusive 8,225. HoCPP, Accounts Relating to Shipping, 22 Apr 1815 shows number of ships built in England in 1814.

²⁶ Determined from 9,200 ships built and 2,696 prizes less losses 4640 giving net 7,256 compared to the recorded increase of 5,955 the difference being 1,301 attributable to decommissioned ships. NB: Seeking clarity of the number of ships lost and captured during the period and of ships decommissioned is still required but is beyond the scope of this research.

NB: In 1827 the Register was purged of all duplication of ships and of those ships that were no longer in fit for service, some 13% of the registered ships were removed at that time.

²⁷ Richard Hill, *The Prizes of War* (Stroud,1998), 200.

²⁸ Hill, *Prizes of War*. 200. Quoting TNA, ADM, 1/3993 The Admiralty to the Committee at Lloyds. Between 1 Sep 1808 and 1 Mar 1809 of the seventy two ships that had been captured by the enemy, in the approaches to Britain, no less than twenty four had been recaptured.

equal to one eighth of the value of the ship, its stores and cargo when paid to naval re-captors, but one sixth to privateer re-captors.²⁹

The tonnage of registered ships and of transports.

The Transport Board chartered ships of more than 100 tons, but the preference was for ships in excess of 200 tons, thus 80 per cent of all regular transports exceeded 200 tons.³⁰

Table 2.2 shows the average tonnage for all regular and three month transports in 1795, 1807 and 1812. It demonstrates quite clearly that ships over 300 tons were preferred for use as troop transports. It also demonstrates that the average tonnage employed ranged from 271

| Table 2.3 An analysis of the tonnage of ships registered in England in 1790. | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---------------|
| | 30 Sep 1790 No. of ships | % of Total |
| Under 60 tons | 4,347 | 43% |
| 60 to 100 tons | 1,659 | 17% |
| 100 to 220 tons | 2,556 | 25% |
| 220 to 500 tons | 1,360 | 14% |
| Over 500 tons | 129 | 1% |
| Total | 10,051 | |
| Over 100 tons | 4,045 | 40% |
| Under 220 tons | 1,489 | 85% |
| Source: TNA, Cust, 36/5 | | |

tons to 296 tons suggesting that the 80 per cent ratio relating to regular transports could probably be applied equally to three month ships as well as regular transports.

The 1786 Act required all ships of more than 15 tons to be registered. Table 2.3 demonstrates that in 1790 (even in 1829 the weight profile was still very similar) no more than 15 per cent of the ships registered in England were more than 220 tons. The remaining 85 per cent were less than 220 tons which was not appropriate for most of the Transport Board’s requirements. This is a very

significant matter and demonstrates very dramatically the challenge that the Transport Board faced. It sought to charter some 80 per cent of its needs from a pool of 15 per cent of the registered ships; this relatively small proportion of the registered ships accounted for 54 per

²⁹ Hill, *Prizes of War*, 126 and 198.

³⁰ See chapter 1 page 29, chart 1.5 Tonnage of Regular Transports hired 1793 to 1817.

cent of the registered tonnage. However even this does not reflect the full extent of the challenge faced by the Board because it does not take into account ships not manned or withdrawn from service, neither does it account for the overlap of the seasonality of trade with major expeditions.

The picture becomes even more complicated when the impact of war on trade patterns is taken into consideration. Fayle estimated the average tonnage of ships on each trade route in 1792 see table 2.4.³¹ Shipping involved in the Asian trade used the largest ships, mainly East India Company vessels. The tonnage of long distance shipping was generally over 200 tons although the average tonnage of ships for Canada was 147 tons, those bound for Northern and Southern Europe also tended to be in the 100 to 200 tons range.

| Table 2.4 The average tonnage of ships entered and cleared at ports in Great Britain in 1792 showing origination and destination. | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Long Distance Trades | Average Tonnage | Southern Europe & Mediterranean | Average Tonnage | Short Sea trades | Average Tonnage |
| Asia | 707 | Spain, Portugal, Malta, Gibraltar | 126 | Russia, Baltic Scandinavia | 186 |
| West Indies | 233 | Italy & Austria | 143 | Holland & Flanders | 117 |
| United States | 221 | Turkey, Levant, Egypt | 224 | France | 73 |
| British North America | 147 | | | Greenland & Southern Whale fisheries | 270 |
| Africa excluding Egypt | 202 | | | Ireland | 75 |
| | | | | Isle of Man, Channel Islands | 47 |

Source: Fayle, C, Ernest. The Employment of British Shipping in Parkinson, Northcote. *Trade Winds* p 73

It is clear from this that ships of less than one hundred tons were generally restricted to coasting activities and short voyages in ‘Home Waters’ between Britain and France, Ireland and the Channel Islands.

Shipbuilding³²

Paradoxically the Navigation Acts protected British shipbuilders equally as well as it protected ship-owners, given that all ships on the British Register had to be British (or British

³¹ Fayle . ‘The Employment of British Shipping’ in Parkinson (ed), *Trade Winds*, 74.

³² For a more comprehensive review of shipbuilding in the period see Arthur Sayer, W.W. Rostow, and J. Jacobson Anna Schwartz, *The Growth and Fluctuation of the British Economy 1790 -1850* (Oxford, 1953). A. Slaven, ‘The Shipbuilding Industry’ in Roy Church, (ed) *The Dynamics of Victorian Business: Problems and Perspectives to the 1870s* (London, 1980).

colonial) built. This eliminated competition, not between themselves, but from foreign ship builders. It was unlikely that British ship-owners were going to approach a foreign builder if the ship could not then be registered.³³ In consequence British shipbuilding continued through the wars but at a reduced level from the preceding peacetime. The annual average number of ships built in England between 1793 and 1813 was 561 compared to 638 that had been built in the three years from 1788 to 1790. The rate of building had earlier peaked in 1787 when 829 ships were built. It peaked again in 1802 and 1803 after peace had been declared when 790 and 865 ships were built, this 1803 number exceeding the 1787 level. In fact table 2.5 demonstrates the growth in shipbuilding in 1800, 1801 and 1802 compared to the pre-war years of 1790, 1791 and 1792. This indicates that there were 47 per cent more ships built with an 80 per cent growth of tonnage, suggesting that bigger ships were being built in the later years.

Table: 2.5.
Number and Tonnage of Vessels built and Registered in Great Britain (including Scotland) for the three years 1790, 1791, 1792 compared to the three years 1800, 1801, 1802, showing the growth in the average of the latter period over the former.

| Years | Ships | Tonnage | Years | Ships | Tonnage | Growth Ships | Growth Tonnage |
|---------|-------|---------|---------|-------|---------|--------------|----------------|
| 1790 | 577 | 57,137 | 1800 | 845 | 115,349 | | |
| 1791 | 624 | 58,760 | 1801 | 918 | 110,206 | | |
| 1792 | 655 | 66,951 | 1802 | 967 | 104,789 | | |
| Total | 1,856 | 182,848 | Total | 2,730 | 330,344 | | |
| Average | 618 | 60,949 | Average | 910 | 110,114 | +47% | +80% |

Source: HoCPP, An Account of the number and tonnage of vessels built and registered in Great Britain, Assistant Register General of Shipping, 3 Mar 1803

When war restarted the level of shipbuilding again reduced. The lowest level of building was in 1809 when only 417 ships were built.³⁴ Ville suggests that in 1776 around 40 per cent of English tonnage was launched in the north east where low construction costs and

³³ Palmer, *Repeal of the Navigation Laws*, 47.

³⁴ The principal shipbuilding centres and the number of ships built are demonstrated in the appendices. Also see Morriss, *Maritime Ascendancy*, 85. for a table of 'Merchant ships built and first registered in Britain and the British Empire, 1787 -1818'.

sound design had established the area as a major centre of shipbuilding.³⁵ However, during the wars shipbuilding became more concentrated on the shipyards of Hull, which produced the highest number of ships, the Thames, Yarmouth and the Tyne yards around Newcastle. Between 1800 and 1813 the average tonnage of each ship built in England was only 121 tons, suggesting that a large number of these were coasting vessels although those built along the Thames were larger, averaging about 225 tons.³⁶ Demand for new ships was high. Merchant ship-building capacity had to be shared with the Navy, but it was contained by the restricted availability of materials, principally timber, but probably more so by the availability of shipwrights who were in great demand in the Royal dockyards.³⁷

Indeed Henley and Sons regularly found that its favoured yards had a constantly full order book and so it had to rely generally on the second-hand market and on the ability to buy prize vessels to expand its fleet.³⁸ Shipbuilders did derive a considerable part of their business from the preparation and repair of transports. Messrs Dudman and Son, who had a yard on the Thames, reported that in the years between 1803 and 1812 it built 25 navy ships, 13 merchant ships and repaired and refitted 4 navy ships, 123 transports and 155 merchant ships.³⁹ Another yard reported that it had survived because of the work it had done on repairing and refitting transports.⁴⁰

The demands of trade.

As demonstrated in chart 2.6 imports rose from £19.6m in 1792 to £36m in 1815.

³⁵ Ville, *English Ship-owning during the Industrial Revolution*. 40.

³⁶ Palmer, 'Shipbuilding in Southeast England 1800 – 1913' in Simon Ville(ed), *Shipbuilding in the United Kingdom in the Nineteenth Century: A regional approach* (Newfoundland, 1993),45-74, and Morris, *Maritime Ascendancy*, 138.

³⁷ Morriss, *Maritime Ascendancy*, 165.

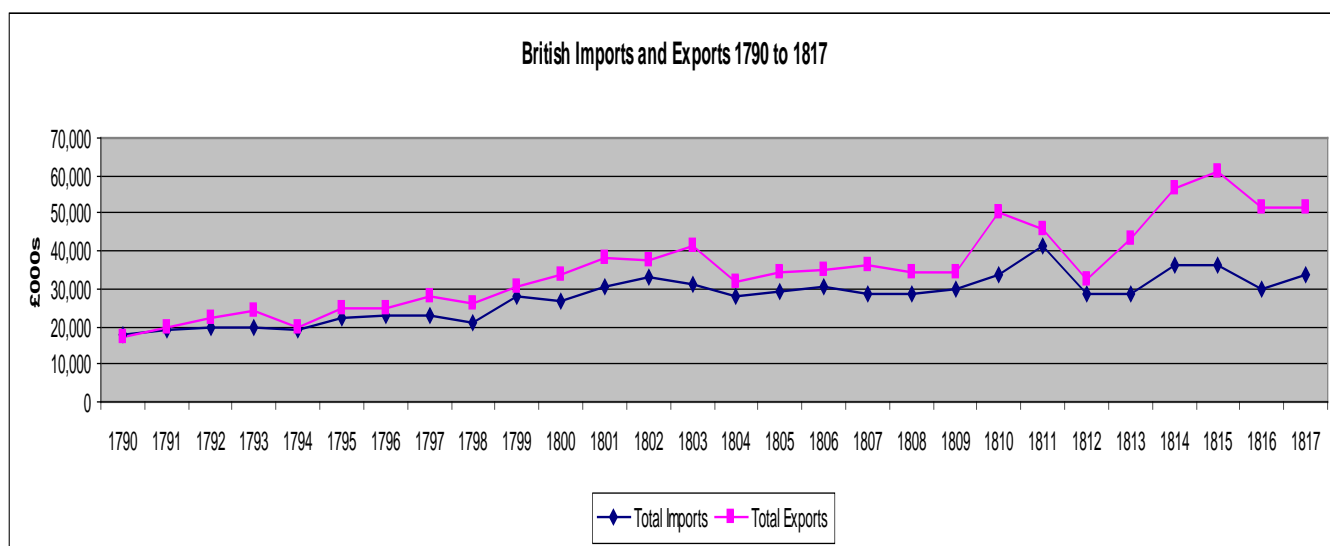
³⁸ Ville, *English Ship-owning*, 44.

³⁹ HoCPP, 1813/14,115, VIII.1, 427. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on petitions relating to East India built shipping, Evidence of Mr Samuel Jordan.

⁴⁰ HoCPP, 1813/14, 115, VIII.1, 371. Minutes of Evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on petitions relating to East India built shipping. Evidence of Mr Cornelius Trussit, Clerk to a Thames shipbuilder, Mr Mestaer, 19 May 1814.

This was an increase of 84 per cent. Imports grew modestly in the early war period and then suffered a slight reduction in 1798 however there was significant growth between 1799 and 1802, when they peaked at almost £33m during the Peace of Amiens.⁴¹

Chart: C. 2.6. Source: Author's compilation from HoCPP, Annual Trade and Navigation Accounts.



Resumption of hostilities caused a reduction but they reached £31.4m in 1806 and peaked again in 1811 at over £41m.⁴² The Navigation Acts and the later Orders-in-Council ensured that a significant proportion of imports were brought in British shipping before being re-exported into Europe. The duties raised were necessary to offset the cost of the war and the subsidies paid to support the allied armies of Russia, Prussia and Austria. The importation of

⁴¹ The values quoted for imports and exports are those known as the ‘official values’ assigned arbitrarily to the specific articles a century before. The advantage attaching to this system is that no fluctuations of price entering as a factor, the values continue to represent from year to year the proportion of trade done. ‘Real values’ deduced from current prices were generally much greater than the ‘official values’.

| Comparison of Official export values with Real export values. | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| £000s | 1805 | 1806 | 1807 | 1808 | 1809 | 1810 |
| Official Exports value | 34,308 | 36,527 | 34,566 | 34,554 | 50,286 | 45,869 |
| Real Exports value | 51,109 | 53,028 | 50,482 | 49,969 | 66,017 | 62,702 |
| % increase from Official Exports to Real Exports | 49% | 45% | 46% | 45% | 31% | 37% |
| HoCPP. 1812, 63, X.1, 5, An Account of the Value of all Imports into and all Exports from Great Britain from 1805 to 1809. 18 Feb 1812. | | | | | | |

See also Ralph Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester, 1979).

⁴² Imports were principally corn, coffee, sugar, tea, tobacco, timber, cotton, iron, flax, hemp and linen yarn and later oils, seeds and nuts for making oil, gums and tallow.

corn was vital, particularly in 1796, 1801 and 1810.⁴³ Domestic harvests had failed so these imports saved the nation from starvation and prevented internal insurrection. Ironically the British grain shortages in 1809 to 1812 provided Bonaparte with an opportunity to generate much needed revenues by waiving the restrictions of his own continental system to allow the export of wheat to Britain.⁴⁴ The economic importance of the Caribbean to British trade grew substantially during the war. In direct trade the West Indies and South America increased their share from less than a fifth to nearly a quarter of British trade. When this is added to their contribution to the re-export of domestic manufactures of cotton cloth and refined sugar and to the African slave trade it became a third of British trade by 1802.⁴⁵ This re-export trade was to play a particularly important role in funding the demands of war, so much so that George III declared in 1779, 'If we lose our sugar islands, it will be impossible to raise money to continue the war'.⁴⁶ Hall notes that although the British colonies helped support her trade and naval power it required extensive naval resources to preserve them from attack.⁴⁷

Exports rose by 172 per cent between 1792 and 1815 as indicated in chart 2.6.

Exports consisted of coal, iron and steel, manufactured cotton, yarn, linen and silk together with re-exports of coffee, sugar, tea, tobacco and raw cotton. Re-exports accounted for 25 per cent of exports in 1792, this increased to 28 per cent in 1815.⁴⁸ The re-export trade in Eastern, Colonial and American goods was amongst the most lucrative and jealously protected branches of British commerce.⁴⁹ In 1805 30.5 per cent of British export trade went to the United States and 37.8 per cent to Europe.⁵⁰ Naturally the nature of trading relationships changed as allies became belligerents and belligerents became allies. Britain's wars with

⁴³ *The Aberdeen Journal* 17 Mar 1800 refers to 'transports in the Mediterranean and America are to be paid a month's allowance from Government extra, discharged from Government Service and permitted to bring home immediately cargoes of wheat'.

⁴⁴ Woodman, *Britannia's Realm*, 188.

⁴⁵ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 380.

⁴⁶ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 385.

⁴⁷ Hall, *British Strategy*. xii.

⁴⁸ Military stores shipped out to supply the army and navy overseas were not included in the export figures.

⁴⁹ Fayle, 'The Employment of British Shipping' in *Trade Winds*, 76.

⁵⁰ Tracy, *Attack on Maritime Trade*, 77.

Spain, between 1796 and 1802 and between 1804 to 1808, had an adverse impact, not just on trade with Spain but also on the Spanish dominated South American trade during those periods.⁵¹

In 1806, Bonaparte instigated the Continental system forbidding the entry of colonial produce from Britain or any of her possessions into all French and allied ports.⁵² The British retaliated with a number of Orders-in-Council which tightened the grip on France's maritime trade which, by that time, was generally being conducted in neutral shipping. Bonaparte issued his Milan Decree in December 1807. This specified that ships going to British ports or paying British dues had effectively lost their nationality and had become British property and were subject to seizure.⁵³ It has been suggested that the Continental system was intended to develop the economy of France, not only at the expense of Britain, but also of French vassal states, and of neutrals.⁵⁴ By 1810, however, Bonaparte had effectively abrogated the Berlin and Milan Decrees by allowing the import of colonial products but at an exceedingly high import duty rate.⁵⁵ In Britain, the galvanizing industrial revolution generated an increase in consumption of raw materials, increasing dependence on overseas sources of supply and corresponding increase in tonnage for imports. It also created an increasing dependence on exports to foreign markets.⁵⁶ Indeed, despite the Continental system, exports to continental Europe doubled from 1808 to 1809 from £11.2m to £23.7m, in the same year exports to America, which had fallen back in 1808, recovered to earlier highs of over £10.5m. The overall increase in the value of exports in 1809 over the

⁵¹ Fayle 'The Employment of British Shipping' in *Trade Winds* 78 - 84

⁵² For further study of the Continental system see: Francois Crouzet, 'The Continental System after Eighty Years' in R. Findley, (ed) *Eli Hecksher, International Trade and Economic History* (Cambridge, Mass, 2006). Francois Crouzet, 'Great Britain's response to the French Revolution and to Napoleon' in Crouzet (ed) *Britain Ascendant, Comparative Studies in Franco-British Economic History* (Cambridge, 1990). A.H. Imlah, 'Real Values of British Foreign Trade 1798 -1853' in *The Journal Of Economic History* 8 (1948). A.H. Imlah, *Economic Elements in Pax Britannica: Studies in British Foreign Trade in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge Mass, 1958). Lance E. Davis, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War* (New York, 2006)

⁵³ Hill, *Prizes of War*. 51.

⁵⁴ Tracy, *War Against Maritime Trade*. 74.

⁵⁵ N. Tracy, *The Naval Chronicle* vol V (London, 1999) 333.

⁵⁶ Fayle, 'Employment of British Shipping' in Parkinson (ed) *Trade Winds*, 25.

previous year was a staggering 45 per cent. This surge coincided with major demands for shipping by the government to support the Peninsular and Walcheren expeditions thus contributed to the difficulties experienced by the Transport Board in that year.

The licenced trade

The expansion of the British fleet would suggest that a significant proportion of this increase in trade would have been carried by British ships. The statistics of ships entrances and clearances to and from British ports tell a different story.

| Table 2.7 | |
|---|--------|
| The number of commercial licenses granted, 1802 – 1811 | |
| 1802 | 68 |
| 1803 | 836 |
| 1804 | 1,141 |
| 1805 | 791 |
| 1806 | 1,620 |
| 1807 | 2,606 |
| 1808 | 4,910 |
| 1809 | 15,226 |
| 1810 | 18,356 |
| 1811 | 7,602 |
| Source: HoCPP, 1812, 69, IX. 343, 1, Papers relating to the License Trade 26 Feb 1812 | |

They show that a significant number of entrances and clearances were in fact licenced foreign ships.

Licencing was an effective part of commercial control instituted by the ‘Orders-in-Councils’. Table 2.7 shows how many licences were issued each year between 1802 and 1811, the majority were issued in 1809 / 10 to support the surge in imports and exports, particularly French wheat. Significantly more

licences were issued to facilitate imports than exports.⁵⁷ In 1810 the ratio was 5:1 in favour of imports. Licenced ships were not used in the British coastal trade; this remained the sole domain of British registered ship.⁵⁸

Table 2.8 demonstrates the number of voyages inwards showing the proportion which was foreign shipping.⁵⁹ Of the 15,507 voyages inwards in 1792; 4,209 were from Ireland, 1,743 from France, 1,318 from Holland and 511 from the United States. After 1792

⁵⁷ Licences were granted under various heads, the numbers included in brackets show the allocation of the 1810 licences in each category. Exports not transferable (2,085), Imports not transferable (5,512), Exports transferable (474), Imports transferable (6,903), Export and Imports transferable (1,803) and Exports and Imports not transferable (1,574).

⁵⁸ HoCPP, 1812, 323, X.69, 2, An account of the tonnage of vessels clearing outwards and entering inwards at the Port of Liverpool during the six years ending 5 Jan 1812, distinguishing each year, and those coastwise and those to foreign parts; and the British from Foreign. 1 Jul 1812. Liverpool Customs Office.

⁵⁹ These tables record the number of voyages, not the number of ships so ships on shorter routes making several voyages in the year would have each voyage counted.⁵⁹

no British ships went into France and after 1794 neither did they venture into Holland, such trade was conducted in foreign bottoms.

| Table:2.8. An account of the number of vessels that have arrived in Great Britain from foreign ports, 1792 – 1815 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1792 | | 1795 | | 1800 | | 1805 | | 1810 | | 1815 | |
| Inwards | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign |
| | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships |
| Total | 13,030 | 2,477 | 9,972 | 2,428 | 10,496 | 5,512 | 11,414 | 4,517 | 13,557 | 6,876 | 16,851 | 4,822 |
| Proportion of the annual total in foreign ships | | 16% | | 20% | | 34% | | 28% | | 34% | | 22% |

Source: Author's compilation from Cobbett *Parliamentary Reports* Volumes 1 -24 , Annual Navigation and Trade Reports.

The number of inward voyages from Denmark and Norway, Sweden, Prussia and Germany continued to increase dramatically but the increases were in foreign ships and, apart from American trade, they accounted for the majority of the foreign ships licensed for inward voyages. Foreign ship-owners exploited the British owner's reluctance to commit shipping to those countries for fear of capture. The proportion of shipping inwards in foreign bottoms increased from 16 per cent in 1792 to 34 per cent in 1800 / 01 and again in 1809 / 10.

| Table: 2.9. An account of the number of vessels that have departed from Great Britain to foreign ports, 1792 – 1815 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 1792 | | 1795 | | 1800 | | 1805 | | 1810 | | 1815 | |
| Outwards | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign | British | Foreign |
| | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships | Ships |
| Total | 13,888 | 1,137 | 10,032 | 2,281 | 11,867 | 4,893 | 11,603 | 3,930 | 13,090 | 6,641 | 17,981 | 4,285 |

Source: Compilation from Cobbett, *Parliamentary Reports*, Volumes 1 -24, Annual Navigation and Trade Reports.

Table 2.9 might suggest that the number of foreign ships carrying British exports also increased. The voyages out from British ports in 1792 were 15,025 of which seven and a half per cent were foreign ships, in 1795 there were 12,313 and 18 per cent, in 1800; 16,760 and 29 per cent, in 1805; 15,533 and 25 per cent, in 1810; 19,338 and 33 per cent and in 1815;

22,266 and 19 per cent. However it is important to note that 50 to 60 per cent of foreign ships voyaging out from English ports during the period 1802 to 1811 left 'in ballast' without a cargo. In 1806 and 1807 and again in 1811 almost all the foreign vessels left 'in ballast'. This demonstrates clearly that most licences were granted to facilitate imports.⁶⁰ Less than 10 per cent of British shipping departed from English ports without cargoes but about 30 to 40 per cent arrived back from overseas, 'in ballast'. This suggests that they had made shipments to foreign ports but had been unable to find cargoes for the return voyages.

Naturally the use of neutral shipping caused resentment amongst British ship-owners. In June 1804 the government's position was attacked by William Fawkner, of the Committee of the Council for Trade and Foreign Plantations. He complained to the Transport Board that as a result of the practice of permitting neutral vessels to import goods into 'this kingdom', a great number of British ships were lying unemployed.⁶¹ Later in the war shipowners adopted a more pragmatic view that even if the French decrees had been revoked British ships would not venture into French held ports for fear of capture.⁶² In 1811 the merchants and ship-owners of Hull presented a petition to the Board of Trade protesting about the continued issue of licences to foreign shipping, particularly for the trade between the United Kingdom and the Baltic States, upon which Hull had previously depended heavily. They complained that foreign owners were able to demand up to three times the freight rates paid to English owners, that the trade was allowing seamen from hostile nations to obtain an 'accurate knowledge of our coasts and the principal ports' and that foreign masters were 'fraudulently surrendering their cargoes to the Danes' thus significantly increasing insurance rates. They admitted that despite this licenced trade British shipping had been 'generally employed in other directions'. They

⁶⁰ HoCPP, 1812,321, X.63, 1, Office of the Registrar General of Shipping 3 Jul 1812. NB This refers to English ports only, the Reports for Scotland do not specify with cargo or in ballast.

⁶¹ TNA, ADM.108.20, TB to W. Fawkner.19 Jun 1804.

⁶² HoCPP, 1812, 210, III.1, 574. Minutes of evidence taken before Committee of the Whole House, to consider of the several petitions which have been presented to the House, in this session of Parliament, relating to Orders in Council.

claimed that if the Baltic trade had been available then it would have encouraged more shipbuilding. Unrealistically the petition called for an end of the granting of licences and halt to all ‘commercial intercourse’ with countries where the British flag was excluded, until they allowed British shipping into their ports once again. The petitioners believed that Russia, Prussia and Sweden were far more dependent upon the trade with England than England was on its trade with them, yet, if continued trade was still desirable then those states should be encouraged to ship goods to intermediate depots from whence they could be transferred to British shipping.⁶³

It is not surprising that the licensing rules were circumvented by foreign owners who carried false documentation or registered their vessels under a neutralized flag, particularly the Prussian flag. The practice was well known, it is estimated that in 1806 there were some three thousand sail belonging to merchants of Holland, France and Spain navigating under the Prussian flag. By these means France was able to obtain naval stores despite British blockades.⁶⁴ Even British owners took advantages of this devious practice, 50 of the 55 foreign ships licenced to import cargoes from America to Great Britain between 1 Jul 1810 and 8 Apr 1812, were British owned but they were registered and sailed under foreign flags, mainly Prussian (12) and Russian (20).⁶⁵

The Transport Board rarely used foreign ships. In 1804 in a response to the Council for Trade and Foreign Plantations the Board confirmed that ‘no neutral vessels are or have been employed in HM’s Transport service’.⁶⁶ In 1809, in extreme circumstances, the Board did obtain the authority of the Secretary of State to hire ships ‘not having British Registers,

⁶³ HoCPP, 1812, 83, IX.345, 63. Papers relating to the Licence Trade 26 Feb 1812 quoting a letter from the Merchants and Ship-owners of Kingston upon Hill to the Board of Trade, 4 Apr 1811.

⁶⁴ Capt A.T.Mahan, *The Influence of Seapower upon the French Revolution and the Empire*. (Boston, 1892), 310

⁶⁵ HoCPP, 1812, 83, IX.345, 63, An account of all licenses granted for importing cargoes from any port in the continent or islands of North America, into any port of Great Britain or Ireland, in foreign ships, since the 1st Jul 1810; specifying the description of the ships and cargoes for which such licenses were granted; the ports from which and into which such importations were allowed; and whether any, and what provisions were inserted in such licenses, as to the ships being navigated by British or foreign seamen. 9 Apr 1812.

⁶⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/20 TB to Council for Trade and Foreign Plantations, 19 Jun 1804.

provided they be furnished with Licences to sail under the British flag’⁶⁷ In 1810 it reported that it had six foreign owned ships in service. In December 1813, the Transport Board advised Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State for War, that despite increasing the hire rate to thirty shillings per ton per month, it was still unable to provide all the store ships which the Board had been requested to procure. The Transport Board understood that a great part, if not the whole, of that quantity might be speedily procured using neutral vessels that were in the river Thames, but to overcome objections from ship-owners it was proposed to employ such vessels ‘on freight’ only.⁶⁸

The effectiveness of trade protection.

Britain, France and the United States all used trade protection laws to strengthen their own grip on the movement of goods and to contain, where possible, the market for its enemy’s products. Britain moved early in the war to direct naval commanders to detain all vessels loaded with flour or grain bound for French ports in June 1793.⁶⁹ The right to stop and search neutral vessels for cargo belonging to the enemy or contraband goods destined for him had been recognised by numerous treaties of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁷⁰ In Britain the 1793 An Act for the Encouragement of Seamen, essentially a Prize Act, established the guidelines but it was a process that was fraught with difficulties for the boarding officer. He invariably had to deal with masters and crews who professed little knowledge of English and ships’ papers and manifests, genuine or otherwise, in a foreign language.⁷¹ In addition the guidelines changed frequently, particularly after 1806 as successive Orders-in-Council were issued to keep abreast with political developments. The

⁶⁷ TNA, ADM,108/21/176. TB to Sir Stephen Cotterell, 3 Jul 1809.

⁶⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/24/53, The TB to Earl Bathurst, 3 Dec 1813.

⁶⁹ Mahan *Influence*. 233.

⁷⁰ Hill, *Prizes of War*, 10.

⁷¹ Hill, *Prizes of War*, 21.

Admiralty was concerned about the burden of decisions resting on the naval captains and issued a printed circular in Feb 1808 redefining guidelines.⁷²

Neither Britain, France or America managed to achieve their objectives by the use of restrictive levers such as: the Continental System; the Orders in Council; the US Non Importation Act, the Non Intercourse Act of 1809 and the Act in 1813 outlawing the use of British passes. They were evaded by the use of neutral shipping and by belligerents sailing under neutral flags. There was widespread use of false papers because passes were relatively simple and easy to forge. There was considerable deception because corrupt officials were prepared to sign false documents regarding cargo and destinations.⁷³ Even Lloyds resorted to publishing deliberately deceptive shipping lists.⁷⁴ In fact both the Continental system and the Orders-in-Council were crude instruments which had unintended consequences. The Russian resistance to implementing the Continental System was one contributory factor to the French attempted invasion of Russia, which ultimately failed. The impact of Britain's Orders-in-Council brought the country into contention with the US.⁷⁵

The success of the Orders-in-Council was ultimately dependent upon the determination of naval captains to stop and detain merchant ships which appeared to be acting contrary to the rules of the day; but while these officers enthusiastically apprehended neutrals for prize money, they were also acutely aware of the consequences of detaining innocent vessels. In such instances they became liable for costs incurred in the legal process and in retribution. This led Earl St Vincent to write 'where one captain makes a fortune by the capture of neutrals, ten are ruined; [no one else] bearing any part of the onus'. However it does appear that an informal mechanism was developed to underwrite such costs when the

⁷² Hill, *Prizes of War*, 49.

⁷³ Crowhurst, *War on Trade*, 35.

⁷⁴ Tracy, *Attack on Maritime Trade*, 73.

⁷⁵ Tracy, *Attack on Trade*. 81. Although Tracy also suggests that the US had an ulterior motive in the desire to achieve the annexation of Canada.

captain had detained a vessel, in good faith, on suspicion that it was not what it seemed.⁷⁶

Blockade was also used to enforce Orders-in-Council. When a blockade was properly in force no vessel of whatever flag, whatever the cargo, could lawfully enter or leave the blockaded port. However the legality in terms of determining prize law depended upon three criteria: had the blockade been notified by proper authority? Was it being effectively enforced? And had an attempt to break it actually been made?

The availability of shipping for government service

Given the number of ships on the British register it would appear that there ought to have been sufficient to satisfy the demand from both trade and the government. For instance, at the peak of demand in September 1808 when the government hired 1,012 ships of 250,917 tons (average 247 tons) there were 22,646 ships of 2,324,829 tons (average 102 tons) on the British register. The demand for transports represented only 4% and 10% of the ships and tonnage respectively

However as described in chart 2.10 this was not the reality because 14 per cent of the registered ships were registered in North America and the West Indies and were unlikely to be available to the Transport Board except as 'on freight' ships. They were used in large numbers as such in 1795. Irish registered ships which accounted for another 6 per cent were not used in great numbers by the Transport Board except for troop movements between England and Ireland accounted for another five per cent of the number of registered ships. This reduced the availability to 80 per cent of the number of ships registered of these. According to John Dalley, Assistant Registrar of Shipping, approximately 29 per cent of the remainder, which were ships registered in England, Scotland and the Channel Islands, where either no longer seaworthy or could not be manned due to the shortage of seamen.

⁷⁶ Hill, *Prizes of War*, 21 and 92. Hill suggests that St Vincent in his letter to Grenville in 1806 was exaggerating but nevertheless making a valid point. He suggests that income from the Droits fund were used by the Admiralty to underwrite these costs.

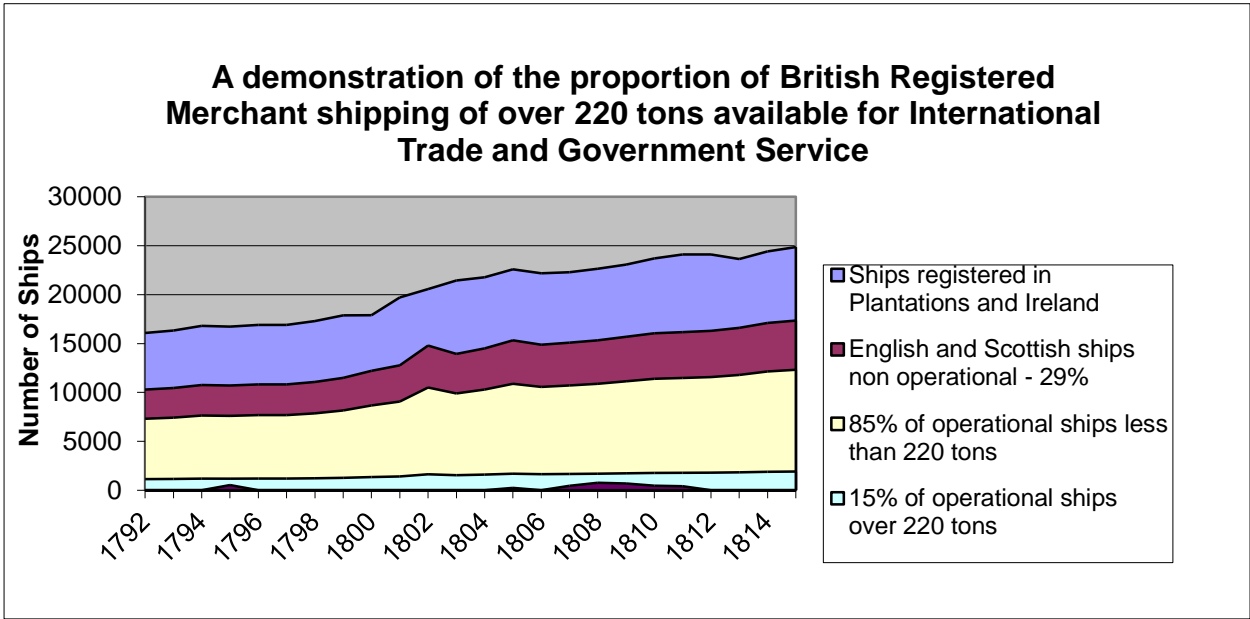
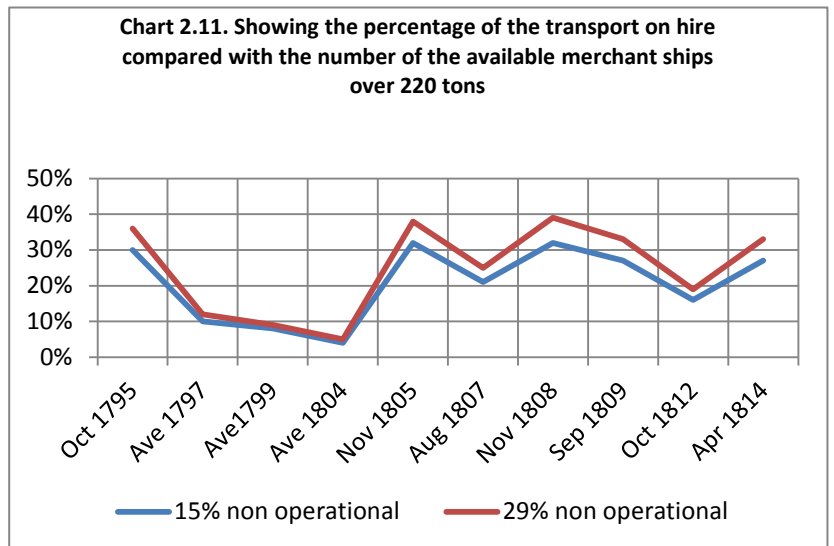


Chart 2.10 Author's compilation based on the number of Ships on the British Shipping Register.

After deducting those ships only 57 per cent of ships on the register were effectively available for coastal and international trade and to satisfy the government's demand.

However, given that 73 per cent of transports hired were over 220 tons (see page 31), those ships on the register under 220

tons should be removed from the available pool thus reducing the 57 per cent mentioned above to 9 per cent (10 per cent if the unseaworthy element was reduced to 15%) of the British registered shipping which was over 220 tons and operational



Source: Authors compilation.

This much reduced pool had to serve international trade and as well as government transport requirements. On this basis the transport demand in November 1808 was equivalent to 39 per

cent, over a third, of that pool (32 per cent if only 15 per cent were non-operational). This is demonstrated in chart 2.11 which reflects the proportion of the pool of operational ships over 220 tons taken up for transport service during the course of the wars. As already alluded to, two scenarios are demonstrated, the higher proportion (represented by the brown line) is based on John Dalley's assumption of 29 per cent of the fleet was non operational the lower proportion (represented by the blue line) assumes that the non-operational ships represented only 15 per cent of ships over 220 tons thus more ships were operational and the pool larger. However varying the proportion of operational ships does not materially impact the outcome.

In summary chart 2.11 demonstrates that at times of peak demand the government was using well over 30 per cent of this fleet of ships over 220 tons possibly peaking at 39% in November 1808 (at 29 per cent non-operational). This considerably higher than has previously been recognised.⁷⁷ There is considerable evidence that the government demand to support major expeditions had a material impact upon the availability of shipping for trade.⁷⁸ In particular at those times the government procured considerable tonnages of colliers mainly for use as horse ships and in 1799 and 1809 and again in 1813 there is evidence that 'the enormous quantity of tonnage already in service is said to render shipping difficult to be obtained for the purpose of trade, and to have already have materially affected the price of

⁷⁷ Clearly the proportion of available appropriate shipping taken up by the Transport Board is somewhat higher than previously estimated. Roger Morriss estimated 5% of available ships and 11% of available tonnage in *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy*, 349. He suggests that this is in agreement with Simon Ville's estimates in *English Shipowning during the Industrial Revolution*, 153. NAM Rodger's estimate in *Command of the Ocean*, 434 was 'one seventh (14%) of the entire British merchant fleet' in relation to the transports used on the West Indies expedition. He appears to have misinterpreted the earlier estimate in Duffy *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 184, where Duffy was relating the estimate of one seventh to 'merchant ships capable of long distance voyages' he too had confined this to the transports used for the West Indies expedition and not to the whole Transport fleet. Each of these estimates assume that all the registered fleet was fully crewed and was still fit for sea service. Clearly that was not the case.

In 1795 many of the troops were shipped 'on freight' in ships in the West Indies trade, many may have been East India Company ships and other ships registered in the West Indies thus outside these considerations. There was also an artificial shortfall caused by the reluctance of shipowners to send their ships there in the knowledge that they would be committed for a long period of time in arduous conditions.

⁷⁸ Hall, *British Strategy*, 43 and Castlereagh *Correspondence* V1. 256. Memorandum respecting the Expense of Transports, 1 Apr 1809.

coals'. Freight rates for other commodities including sugar rose significantly when the government were preparing major campaigns.

However it is significant to observe that during the Revolutionary war this position was not quite as extreme as the later period. Even in 1795 when large numbers of ships were needed for the West Indies expeditions, the government chartered East India Company ships as well as others that were involved in West Indies trade 'on freight'. Many of these ships would have been registered in the West Indies. Trade would not have been disrupted because most of those ships would probably have made those passages 'in ballast' without cargoes. At the same time owners of ships, not normally involved in that trade, had some difficulty persuading their masters and crews to go there for fear of contracting the deadly yellow fever. It also resorted to using ships of less than 220 tons. After 1795 the number of transports taken up was much lower than post 1805. In addition, owners of ships, that before the war had been involved in trade with France and other European ports and even the US trade, found that trade had reduced significantly. For them the government's requirement for transports was a very welcome alternative use of their ships.

According to John Dalley vessels employed in the foreign trade averaged two and a third voyages per year and those employed in the coastal trade about five voyages per year.⁷⁹ Ships employed in the West Indian trade generally made one outward voyage per year, leaving Britain in the autumn to pick up the sugar harvest in the May or June of the next year, arriving home in August or September, in time for some of the cargoes to be transhipped to the Baltic before the ice formed in the Baltic ports. Those on the North American run made two voyages.⁸⁰ In European trades several voyages inwards and outwards, each year, were more common. Even so there were delays in waiting for convoys,

⁷⁹ Dalley Evidence, However Dalley did not clarify whether he excluded ships on voyages to and from Ireland in his assumption. These ships must have made many trips to and from Ireland during the course of a year and would have heavily biased Dalley's estimates.

⁸⁰ R. Hope, *A New History of British Shipping* (London, 1990). 239.

in the resulting slow passages and extended turnaround times in ports caused by a large number of ships arriving at one time. These delays suggest that, about one and a half round voyages a year in the Southern European trades and two in the Baltic and Scandinavian trades, was achievable.⁸¹

Using Dalley's judgement it is possible to assess the impact of the wars on the English and Scottish shipping fleets, this is demonstrated in table 2.12. The starting point is the number of voyages outwards of British ships to foreign ports in 1792 of 13,888, from which those voyages to Ireland and the Channel Islands totalling 6,965 have been removed. The 1,317 voyages to France which ceased at the onset of war have also been deducted because the ships on this run were generally under 100 tons and therefore not particularly suited to Transport Board requirements. If Dalley's estimate of 2.33 voyages per year for each ship is assumed then the remaining number of voyages in 1792 represents 2,406 ships. In 1795 the equivalent number of ships is 1,285 suggesting that 1,121 ships had been displaced by the impact of war, in October that year the Transport Board were hiring 717 ships.⁸² The inference is that the Transport Board hires were effectively using some of the ships that otherwise would not have been employed. The same is true in 1805 where the number of ships displaced by war was 546 and the number of ships hired by the Board in July that year was 322. It is not until the end of 1805 when ships were being procured for the northern Germany expedition that the situation changed and the Transport Board hired more ships than those whose trade had been displaced by war.⁸³ Although the Transport Board did experience some shortages before 1805 they were more likely to be attributable to seasonality, the availability of seamen or the ships not being in the right place than the actual availability of active shipping.

⁸¹ Fayle, 'Employment of British Shipping' in Parkinson (ed) *Trade Winds* . 74.

⁸² The comparative estimation relating to voyages in is in appendix. This also supports this theory.

Shipowners facing a similar situation in earlier wars resorted to applying for Letters of Marque to enable them to engage their ships in privateering. Starkey in his excellent book *Pirates and Privateers* demonstrates that ‘during the 1790’s and 1800’s relatively few private men of war were fitted out’. He illustrates that in the Revolutionary war British privateering was on a much smaller scale than might be imagined. He estimated that the peak monthly activity rates there were on average 27 deepwater privateers operating during the period 1793 to 1815 (plus 42 privateers, smaller vessels, who operated mainly in the English Channel) and during the later Napoleonic war there were on average 10 deepwater privateers and 91 ‘Channel’ privateers.⁸⁴ The number of ships involved in privateering, particularly of the deepwater vessels does not have any material impact upon this assessment.

| Table:2.12 A comparison of the number of ships whose trade was displaced by the impact of the war compared with the demands of the Transport Board. | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|--------|--------|------------|--------|
| | 1792 | 1795 | 1800 | 1805 | 1810 | 1815 |
| Voyages outwards of British ships | 13,888 | 10,032 | 11,867 | 11,603 | 13,090 | 17,981 |
| Exclude to Ireland Channel Islands, Isle of Man | 6,965 | 7031 | 8081 | 7270 | 8000 (Est) | 10752 |
| Exclude to France – ships tended to be less than 100 tons. | 1317 | 7 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 737 |
| Voyages outwards excluding to Ireland / France | 5,606 | 2,994 | 3,781 | 4,333 | 5,090 | 6,492 |
| Number of ships using Dalley's 2.33 voyages p.a. | 2406 | 1285 | 1623 | 1860 | 2185 | 2786 |
| Ships displaced by war 1792 – Actual for the year | | 1121 | 783 | 546 | 221 | -380 |
| Number of ships taken by Transport Board | | 717 | | 322 | 627 | |
| Number of displaced ships still unemployed after Transport Board demand was taken up. | | 404 | | 224 | shortage | |
| Source: Author’s compilation from Cobbett <i>Parliamentary Reports</i> volumes 1 – 24, Annual Trade and Navigation Reports, Summary of Transports employed from this thesis Chapter 1, Commissioners of Naval Enquiry, Fifth Report The Sixpenny Office, appendix 7 and by deduction. | | | | | | |

However the above assessment would seem to indicate that, up to 1805/6, the British shipping industry benefited from the demands from the Transport Board which replaced the loss of trade due to the closing down of access to enemy controlled ports. If the Transport

⁸⁴ David Starkey (ed) *Pirates and Privateers: new perspectives on the war on trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth century*. (Exeter, 1997), 132.

Board had not hired those ships they would almost certainly have been unemployed despite the fact that as some ports closed to British merchant ships then others in Northern Europe opened up. The above table, based upon the recorded inward and outward voyages from British ports does include sailings to newly opened destinations. However, given such apparent spare capacity it might be imagined that charter prices might be reducing. Unfortunately it very likely that manpower availability was being absorbed elsewhere would have meant that some ships did not have crews. On balance charter rates generally held steady during the period 1793 to 1800 despite significant increase in costs, notably in seamen's wages which rose significantly. Overall cost increases were estimated to be 20 per cent between 1795 and 1800 (see note 10 page 24) The Transport did recognise the pressure that shipowners were under in 1796 (see page 42) and agreed to increase the rate from 13 shillings per month per ton which had existed since before 1793 to 15 shillings per month per ton. The Board further increased the hire rate, in 1798, to compensate those owners who copped their ships. The rates did increase in generally in 1800 because of the increased transport demand combined with increased trading demands and additional demands created by the corn shortages. Rates fell back at peace but increased back to the 1800 level when war recommenced in 1803. With excess capacity it would be expected that hire rates would decrease by there were extenuating circumstances which prevented this during the period 1793 to 1805. Therefore there is strong evidence to suggest that the demand for government shipping for military purposes the government probably staved off a damaging downturn in the shipping industry during the Revolutionary War thus deferring it until the end of the Napoleonic War.

However, as alluded to above, throughout both wars there were two further important issues which impacted short term availability of shipping: the availability of seamen and the seasonality of different trades.

The availability of seamen.

Seamen were in short supply. There was strong competition from the Navy particularly in 1801 when the number of men in the navy rose above 130,000 and again from 1807 onwards when the number rose above 130,000 to peak at 147,000 in 1813.⁸⁵ To counter this an Act of 1794 allowed up to three quarters of the crew of a British ship to be foreigners, this had previously been capped at a quarter.⁸⁶ Not all ship owners took advantage of this, in Henley's ships, foreigners never constituted more than about half of the crew, maybe they were considered less suitable but Henley's judgement was that it was unsafe to proceed with an almost entirely foreign crew.⁸⁷ There were never enough seamen to crew all the available merchant ships despite the numerous reasons why seamen preferred the merchant service such as level of pay and regularity of payment, discipline, safety and length of service which were all more favourable than in the Navy as demonstrated in table 2.13.

Ville has been able to extract considerable statistical data on wages of seamen during the wars from his study of the Henley papers. After a period of relative stability in the late 1780s, wages rose steeply following the outbreak of the war in 1793 from their pre-war levels of £2/10 shillings per year. They continued to rise in the next few years, especially during the labour shortage of February and March 1795. Lower wages in 1796 and 1797 reflected the return of many vessels from the campaigns in the West Indies. Campaigns in Malta and Egypt at the end of the 1790s pushed up wages once more, only to be followed by a reversal during the temporary peace. They rose again as the navy recruited to rebuild the fleet after the Peace of Amiens in 1803, whilst another upturn in 1809/10 coinciding with high demand of seamen by trade, government and the Navy. With the return of peace seamen's wages collapsed in response to the reduced demand for shipping'.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 639.

⁸⁶ Hope, *A New History of British Shipping*, 256.

⁸⁷ Ville, *English Shipowning*, 96.

⁸⁸ Ville, *English Shipowning*, 101.

Table: 2.13

A comparison of Seaman's pay in the Navy and in the Merchant Service.

| | | Navy (1) | | | Merchant in Mediterranean trade (2) | | | Merchant in Baltic trade (2) | | | Merchant in Canadian timber trade (2) | | | Merchant in West Indies Trade (2) | | |
|------------------|--------------------|----------|-----------|----------|-------------------------------------|-----------|----------|------------------------------|-----------|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------|----------|
| | | £ | S | d | £ | S | d | £ | s | D | £ | s | D | £ | S | d |
| 1797 rate | Able Seaman | 1 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 15 | 0 | | | | 4 | 5 | 0 |
| 1807 rate | Able Seaman | 1 | 13 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 0 | 4 | 17 | 6 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 10 | 0 |

Sources: Author's compilation from Rodger, *Command of the Ocean, 626*, and Ville, *English Shipowning During the Industrial Revolution, 165 to 167*.

Whilst pay varied from trade to trade and port to port and season to season, it is quite clear from chart 2.8 that whilst the continuity of employment was likely to be less because there were periods of unemployment during winter months, the pay in the merchant service was considerably more than navy pay.⁸⁹ The pay for five months employment in the merchant service would be equivalent to a year's pay in naval service. Thus it becomes clear that a personal protection from impressment, although not always effective, was 'the most precious document any man living in a coastal area could possess'.⁹⁰ To persuade seamen to join the navy the Admiralty paid bounties. It was not unusual for seamen to run from merchant ships and transports to join a naval ship and take advantage of the bounty. This prompted occasional protests from the Board to the Admiralty as in 1803 after five seamen had deserted to join the Navy.⁹¹

Dalley pointed out during the course of his evidence to the Commission of Naval Enquiry that it would have been impossible for all the registered tonnage to be available for use at any one time because of the restricted availability of seamen. When asked to estimate how many seamen were actually employed in the merchant service, he explained that the Registrar did not record that information so he estimated the number based on the Register in September 1801. At that time the number of ships registered in England and Scotland was

⁸⁹ Morriss, *Maritime Ascendancy* .231 – 244 a very detailed review of 'Recruitment into the naval service' and 'The impressment of seamen'.

⁹⁰ Ville, *English Shipowning*, 99.

⁹¹ TNA, ADM.1/3744, TB to the Admiralty 20 Oct 1803.

15,046, these would require 124,478 men to crew them if they were all afloat at the same time. He estimated that there were 37,783 men in the foreign trade, 35,970 in the coasting trade and 14,628 in the fishing industry. This amounted to a total of 88,381 men.⁹² This represented 71 per cent of the number required to man all the ships, indicating that in 1801 there were never more than 71 per cent of the fleet at sea at any one time.⁹³

The seasonality of trade and of military expeditions.

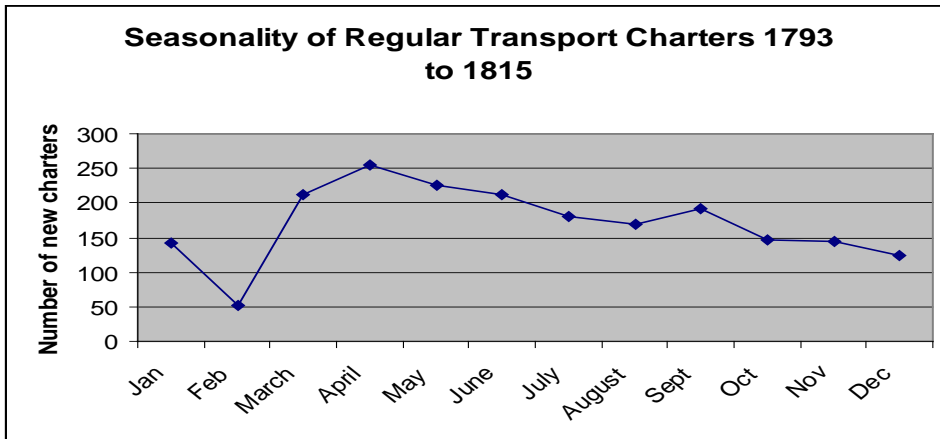
Weather patterns dictated that shipping was a seasonal trade. Invariably the times of greatest demand for trade shipping coincided with the most favourable time for military expeditions, and the consequent demand for transports. Long distance trade voyages were planned to avoid the most serious adverse weather conditions such as winter storms in European waters and hurricanes and typhoons in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Convoys to the West Indies aimed to leave before the end of October and generally set off back to England in April to avoid the summer hurricanes. In European waters April to November were the most favourable months and possibly a little earlier for Baltic passages. Chart 2.14 demonstrates the seasonality of the average monthly demand for regular transports during the wars, clearly illustrating that the highest demand was between March / April and October. Clearly bringing forward and preparing a large number of ships would have been a challenge at any time in the year; but the seasonal demands of trade complicated the situation. Seasonality thus affected the preparation of expeditions. In May 1794, prior to the establishment of the Transport office, the Navy Board experienced great difficulty procuring transports in the River to convey troops to Europe and the West Indies. The Baltic convoy

⁹² Commissioners of Naval Enquiry, Fifth Report into the Sixpenny Office, 214.

⁹³ This fact has led to frequent misinterpretation of the statistics, for example in Woodman, *Britannia's Realm*, 142 'by the Peace of Amiens [the British merchant fleet] was manned by 144,558 seamen and in Morriss R. *Maritime Ascendancy* p 227 where the numbers in the table column headed 'paid 6d duty in the merchant service' are actually from 1799 the numbers of men on the British Shipping Register that would be needed if all the ships were in commission at the same time.

had sailed a month earlier and few ships were expected from the ‘East Country’ for more than five or six weeks. Trade with the recently acquired islands in the West Indies had also employed a considerable number of ships.⁹⁴

Chart 2.14



Source: Author's Database

Although the 1795 Abercromby / Christian West Indies expedition was ordered in May, partially due to delays in raising shipping, it did not sail until 16 November and suffered the ignominy of sailing straight into very strong westerly gales which scattered the convoy and drove them back into port. In 1799 20,000 tons of transports for the Helder expedition was ordered on 28 June, the landing was in August. In June 1800 Dundas instigated the preparation of 30,000 tons of transports for the 1801 Aboukir Bay expedition. In 1805 the major troop convoys for the Mediterranean sailed on 19 April. In April 1807 Castlereagh ordered the Transport Board to assemble 36,000 tons of transports to support the Copenhagen expedition. A few months later, in June 1807 the Board had to advise that ‘the difficulty in procuring transports on the present occasion, has been owing to the unusual scarcity of unemployed shipping at this season of the year’.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ TNA, HO,28/63 Navy Office to the Admiralty 16 May 1794

⁹⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/21/57, TB to W. Fawkener. 8 Jun 1807.

In earlier years the shortages had tended to be experienced at the beginning of the season but from 1807 shortages occurred throughout the season. In April 1808 Castlereagh demanded 34,807 tons for Sir John Moore's expedition to the Baltic. In May 1808 a significant number of transports were ordered to ship troops for Wellesley's campaign in Portugal. In May 1809 Castlereagh instructed the Transport Board to raise shipping for the Walcheren expedition. All these demands coincided with the peak seasonal demands of trade. All were generally required at short notice. The Board was familiar with the seasonality clash of demands for shipping and it should also have been very apparent to ministers yet there are no indications that they did recognise the problem. It would seem that Syrett's observation about this matter from the American War was probably appropriate to the ministers during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.⁹⁶

Discharging chartered shipping.

Several demands for large volumes of shipping followed shortly after instructions, from either the Treasury or the Secretary of State for War, to demobilise a significant portion of the transport fleet to save money. In 1796, following delays in preparing transports bound for St Domingo, Henry Dundas was forced to concede that 'the wish expressed by Mr Pitt and myself for the reduction of transports at home to 6000 tons, appeared to have led to a mistake'.⁹⁷ Again in January 1807, just prior to the instruction to raise shipping for the Copenhagen campaign, the Treasury demanded the discharge of transports. In April 1809 the Board received instructions directing that 8000 tons of 3 months ships be paid off, this was just one month before the instruction to bring forward ships for the Walcheren expedition.⁹⁸ If those ships had been retained it might have speeded up the preparations for the campaign but the demands for short term cost saving was paramount.

⁹⁶ See the Introduction page 7.

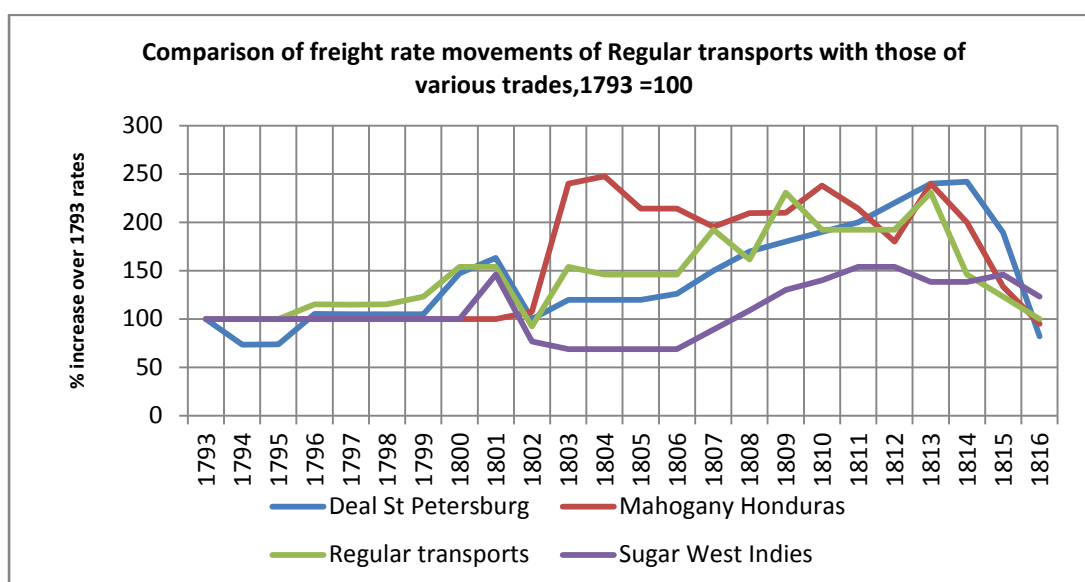
⁹⁷ TNA, WO, 6/156/183. Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, to the TB. 2 Jan 1797.

⁹⁸ TNA, WO, 6/156/477, Castlereagh to TB, 5 Apr 1809.

Freight rates

Adjusting the freight rate was the principal mechanism available to the Transport Board to counteract the competition from trade in times of shortage. Occasionally it resorted to extending the committed term of the charter, instead of moving the rate. However as Knight and Wilcox suggest in relation to the Victualling Board that they were cautious commissioners, so the same might be said of the Transport Board.⁹⁹

Chart 2.15



Source: Compilation from author's Database and for freight rates for other trades, Ville, *English Shipowning*, 169 to 173.

It almost always obtained a number of tenders for hires increased freight rates only under pressure and seized on opportunities to reduce them with alacrity.

To increase competition the Board quickly moved from using only George Brown, the sole broker that it inherited in 1794 from the Navy Board, to using a large number of brokers.

Chart 2.14 compares the movement of the Transport Board hire rates for regular transports with the freight rates in other shipping trades. It demonstrates that the Transport Board

⁹⁹ Rodger Knight and Martin Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet 1793-1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State* (Woodbridge, 2010), 28.

followed the market rather than establishing the going rate until 1806 /7 when its high demands forced the its rate up against most trades except the Honduran mahogany market. At that time the Board's rates were rising faster than in some trades, this probably indicates why the Board was able to charter enormous tonnages of three month transports during that period.

One of the more significant hire rate increases occurred in 1800 when, due to the difficulty of raising ships, Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, authorised an increase in the rate for coppered ships from sixteen shillings per ton per month to nineteen shillings six pence. Later, in April 1807 it was increased from nineteen shillings to twenty five shillings. In June the Transport Board reported that:

'the Commissioners have found much difficulty in procuring a sufficient quantity of shipping for the service for which they have recently been directed to provide;..... they have no doubt, that so great a proportion of the trading tonnage of the country being taken out of its proper course, must have very considerably raised the rates of merchants' freight; but to what extent this has actually taken place, this Board has no means of ascertaining.'¹⁰⁰

After the Walcheren expedition in 1809 the regular transport rate was reduced back to twenty one shillings. The three month rate continue at twenty five shillings and even rose to thirty shillings in 1813 / 1814 by which time the regular rate had moved back to twenty five shillings per ton per month. This explains why the *Alice* a ship owned by Michael Henley and Son was paid at 30/- from February to August 1814 whilst at the same time another of the company's ships the *Polly* was paid at the rate of 25/- throughout 1808 to 1815 despite the various rate movements highlighted above. The *Polly* was a regular transport whilst the *Alice* was a three month transport.¹⁰¹

During the period 1807 to 1813 the Transport Board was paying almost at the top of the freight scale to obtain shipping, reflecting the shortage of shipping for both trade and the

¹⁰⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/21/57, TB to William Faulkner, 8 June 1807.

¹⁰¹ Ville, *English Shipowning*, 128.

higher level demands of the Transport Board for the numerous expeditions of the period, Copenhagen, the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Peninsula, Walcheren and the Peninsula again. However, increasing the hire rate did not always bring forward additional shipping. In 1809 Sir Rupert George told the Scheldt Enquiry Committee, that even significantly raising the price would not have made any difference to the ability to raise ships for the Walcheren expedition. He claimed that the increase would only have brought forward a limited number of ships, due to seasonable availability, and it would have initiated demands for the higher rate from existing transport owners. The ultimate cost would have been greater than the benefits derived.¹⁰²

Ville's study of Henley and Sons led him to conclude that the Board's increasing demands for shipping 'pulled up freight rates'. There is evidence that brokers and ship-owners exploited their position to push up rates by withholding shipping from the Board in anticipation of obtaining higher rates to fulfill demand.¹⁰³ There is no doubt that the government demand for shipping did increase freight rates making British shipping less competitive than its international competition. There was already some concern about British competitiveness. In 1796 the minutes of a Special Committee of the Court of Directors of the East India Company recorded that;

'It is a fact that becomes each day more evident, that unless English ships are obtained for the Indian trade, on nearly as moderate terms as foreign flags can furnish freight then the greater part of that trade will be transferred to the ports of other nations'.¹⁰⁴

The Company proceeded to negotiate price reductions, making a significant saving, with the owners in return for greater security in the tenure of the charter parties. There is further evidence of this lack of competitiveness, according to evidence presented to Parliament, British shipping had experienced a good few years between 1807 and the later part of

¹⁰² HoCPP, 1810, 12. Papers relating to the Walcheren Expedition, Evidence of Sir Rupert George.

¹⁰³ Ville, *English Shipowning*, TB impact on freight rates, 128.

¹⁰⁴ HoCPP, 1715-1800, 106. Resolutions and Proceedings of the Court of Directors of the East India Company from 10 Mar 1796, respecting taking up ships for the Company's Service by fair and open competition.

1810. Due to that unprecedented demand, freight rates had risen significantly and become overpriced, neutral vessels were cheaper and had taken some trade away from British ships. But by 1812 the position had changed, the shipping market was depressed and shipowners attributed this partly to the reduction in the Board's freight rate in 1809.¹⁰⁵ This ignores the fact that the Board could only have reduced the rate because rates in the market were falling, however it does indicate the reliance of some shipowners on the government demand. Unsurprisingly general freight rates fell back even more dramatically when the Board's demands, in concert with the demand for war goods to supply the military and naval forces, reduced in 1802 and again after 1812.

Summary

The volume of shipping available to the Transport Board was changing month by month and year by year. Not all of the shipping registered on the British Shipping Register was readily available to the Board. The ships registered in North America and the West Indies and Ireland were beyond the normal reach of the Board. Dalley estimated that almost a third of the ships registered in England, Scotland and the Channel Islands was not operational, being no longer seaworthy or was unmanned due to the shortage of seamen.¹⁰⁶ More importantly, only 15 per cent was over 220 tons, which was the size favoured by the Transport Board for troop shipping, but which was also in great demand for international trade. This reduced the pool of available ships dramatically and explains why the Transport Board experienced great difficulty in procuring transports for major expeditions, particularly during the Napoleonic war. At peak times that demand was equated to 30 to 39 per cent of the available, suitable ships.

¹⁰⁵ HoCPP, 1812, 210, III.1, 577. Minutes of evidence, taken before the Committee of the Whole House, to whom it was referred, to consider the several petitions which have been presented to the House, in this session of Parliament, relating to the Orders-in-Council, 1812, Evidence of Mr Buckle, 577.

¹⁰⁶ Dalley Evidence.

With the possible exception of 1795, in the years prior to 1805 there ought to have been enough ships to supply all the Board's requirements.¹⁰⁷ Indeed there are indications that up to 1805/6 the Board's activities sustained the national fleet, pumping millions of pounds into the industry and the wider economy, at a time when the industry could not conduct business in so many of its traditional markets. There is also strong evidence to indicate that by taking ships from trade there was a material impact on freight rates which led to increased costs and shortages of commodities, particularly coal.

It is clear that other factors such as availability of seamen and seasonality of trade played a greater role in the availability of shipping during that period. In contrast it is clear that in the period 1807 to 1810 and in 1813/ 14 there was a significant shortage of ships. To support the European expeditions during that period the Board was forced to hire vast numbers of three month ships, including far more ships from the coasting trade and more ships of less than 200 tons, than it had done previously. Besides sustaining the fleet, the repair and refitting of the transport service fleet sustained many shipbuilders during difficult trade periods when there were few commissions for new ships.

The Transport Board competed strongly for sufficient capacity but the level of demand changed frequently resulting a number of government instructions to reduce the fleet to cut costs during the period between 1807 and 1809.¹⁰⁸ Occasionally an instruction was received only months before the receipt of conflicting demands for significant additional volumes of shipping. In short term economic terms there is no doubt that this saved costs but there was no consideration of benefits of sustaining that cost to offset future inconvenience caused by the inability to rehire or the additional cost if the hire rate had to increase.

The restricted availability of seamen and the seasonality of trade, conspired to make the Transport Board's task more demanding when record numbers of transports were required to

¹⁰⁷ See earlier note 77 on page 85.

¹⁰⁸ Ho CPP, 1807, 115, IV.105, 1, 10 Aug 1807, Return of the amount in tonnage of the Transports in His Majesty's Service.

support military operations.¹⁰⁹ The Transport Board had to pay high prices to obtain ships. In 1809 even that measure had its limitations since there were no more ships available except foreign ships and the Board was very reluctant to use this resource. Yet despite these considerable difficulties, over the wars as a whole, there is no doubt that the strength and depth of the British merchant fleet gave the country a significant military advantage in the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France.

¹⁰⁹ Ship-owners preparedness to release shipping also had an impact. This will be discussed in a later chapter.

Chapter three

The Transport Office: organization and methods.

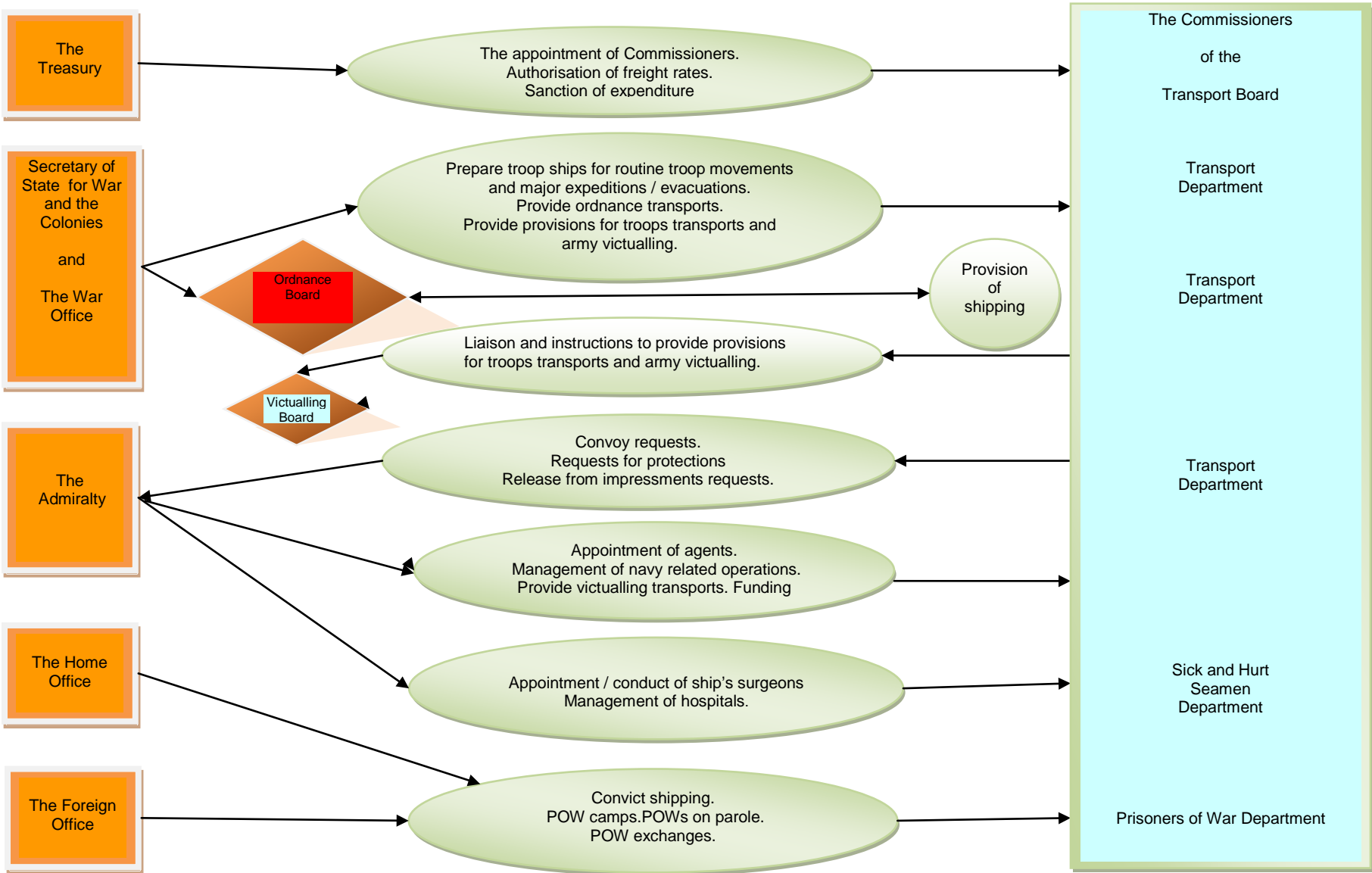
The position of the Transport Board in the government hierarchy created some ambiguity, being staffed by naval officers, serving the army and established as a subsidiary board of the Treasury. The funding of the Transport Service was approved annually by Parliament within the Naval Estimates, an allocation which included the pay of agents but not the cost of the Transport Office. The Treasury appointed the Chairman and commissioners. HM's patent defined their roles and limits of authority.¹ The patent stated clearly that the Board did not have authority to pay any sums, without the sanction of their Lordships at the Treasury, even if requested by other members of the cabinet. However, from time to time the Treasury gave blanket approval for specific types of expenditure. In May 1795 the Transport Board had to seek treasury approval following a request from Secretary of State for War, Henry Dundas. It was authorized to 'provide for the reception and conveyance from Ireland of all such forces as may from time to time be ordered to proceed from that kingdom to Great Britain or any other part of the world by HM's Secretary of State for War'.²

Although the Transport Board was officially responsible to Treasury it was considered by many to be a branch of the navy. Indeed the 18th and 31st Reports from the Select Committee on Finance in 1798 reviewed the activities of the Board under the section heading 'Admiralty,

¹ TNA,ADM,108/4b, George Rose, Secretary of the Treasury Board, to the TB, 7 Aug 1795, informing the TB of the impending appointment Captain Rupert George to succeed Rear Admiral Christian.

² TNA, ADM.108/4b/179. George Rose, Secretary of the Treasury Board to TB, 7 May 1795.

Chart:3.1
Transport Board Relationships



Dockyards and Transports'.³ The Commission for Naval Revision reviewed the Transport Board's operations in its 9th Report and revisited them in its 13th Report. However, its services were called upon by almost all of the cabinet offices but predominantly by the Secretary of State for War, who was responsible for the strategic planning of the war and directed the major expeditions involving troop movements. The War Office, headed by the Secretary at War, who was generally responsible for troop dispositions, also placed significant demands on the Board. In 1814 these services accounted for 83 per cent of the cost of the service.⁴ The Transport Board fulfilled an important role within the large government administrative structure that is illustrated in chart 3.1. In 1798 the Committee on Finance confirmed this, it reported that it 'cannot but consider the Transport Board, in time of war, to be a useful Establishment'.⁵ This role became more significant when the Transport Board took over, from the Sick and Hurt Board, responsibility for prisoners of war in 1795, and all sick and hurt seamen in 1806 when the Sick and Hurt Board was abolished. The Chairman was obliged to manage a multiplicity of relationships. He liaised with the Treasury about any abnormal expenditure requests and adjustments to the hire rates and he was also answerable to the Secretary of State for War who directed troop, ordnance and army victualling shipments. In addition, he was responsible to the Admiralty for a number of complicated tasks: preparing annual estimates of costs⁶, the appointment of transport agents, who were all naval officers, Navy victuallers, assembling convoys for which protection was to be provided by naval vessels, the conduct of agents and

³ *31st Report of the Select Committee on Finance on the Admiralty, Dockyards and Transports*, 26 Jun 1798. Vol 113.3-74

⁴ HoCPP, 1813/14, 110, XI.131, 21, Estimate of the Money that will be wanted for the Several Services of the Transport Board in 1814.

⁵ Commission on Finance (18th), 488.

⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/74/149, Navy Board to TB Requesting an account of expenditure of the Department for 1802, 29 Jan 1803.

transport masters, providing care for sick and hurt seamen and finally, the Board's relations with the Navy in general.

The Board also acted on instructions from the Foreign Secretary and the Home Secretary relating to their prisoner of war responsibilities, including the provision of cartels for prisoner of war transfers and exchanges. As the wars progressed this aspect of the Transport Board's responsibilities assumed an increasingly significant role and at times dominated its business. The Board also received instructions from the Home Secretary for the provision of convict transports bound for Australia. Given this multifarious range of responsibilities and relationships it was unsurprising that from time to time there was a considerable degree of intervention in the day-to-day operations, particularly from the Secretaries of State for War and from the Admiralty.

The Commissioners of the Transport Board

The Board's first Sea Commissioner and Chairman was Captain Sir Hugh Cloberry Christian who was destined to be in office for just a year. He resigned from the post following his promotion to Rear Admiral of the Blue in 1795.⁷ The other two commissioners appointed in May 1794 were Captain Phillip Patton and Ambrose Serle. Captain Phillip Patton (1739-1815) had experienced an active naval career. Lord Spencer found him so useful at the Transport Board that when he was due promotion to Rear Admiral in 1799 he tried to persuade him to stay on at the Board but Patton insisted on taking his flag. Spencer then refused to employ him at sea again.

⁷ Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III*, (Vol 2), 429.
Captain Sir Hugh Cloberry Christian. (1747- 98). He had been made Captain in 1778. He took part in the action off Grenada, 6 Jul 1779, and was present at the actions off Chesapeake, 5 Sep 1781; St Kitts 26 Jan 1782; Dominica 12 Apr 1782. He resigned from the Transport Board, after just one year, following his promotion to Rear Admiral of the Blue in 1795. He was appointed to lead the naval expedition and transport convoy in support of Abercromby in the West Indies. The convoy sailed on 16 Nov 1795, but appalling weather drove it back to port with the loss of several transports. He set off again on 9 Dec but more storms drove his battered ships home at the end of Jan 1796. He was knighted later in 1796 and he died in 1798 whilst he was Commander in Chief at the Cape of Good Hope.

Pitt, however, considered him to be ‘wretchedly destitute of alacrity’.⁸ Ambrose Serle (1742-1812) was the first civilian commissioner and the only one of the original three commissioners to stay on the Board throughout the wars.⁹ During his tenure he became a commissioner on the Board of Revision where Barham was chairman. He was in the unusual situation of being a member of the commission which was reporting on the Transport Board of which he was also a Commissioner.

When Christian resigned his successor was the forty-six year old Captain Rupert George (1749 to 1823). However it is not clear why an apparently undistinguished naval captain came to the attention of the Commissioners of the Treasury. It is noteworthy that his first son born in 1789 was named Samuel Hood George; he may have been named after Samuel, Viscount Hood thus making it seem very likely that he had been responsible for his appointment. Hood was renowned for looking after his following. As a Commissioner at the Admiralty, Hood was certainly well positioned to promote George’s interests.¹⁰ Few details of Rupert George’s life have materialised.¹¹ He was of Irish decent and became a naval lieutenant in September 1770 serving on the *Rose*, then, in 1775, on the *Enterprise*, as second then first lieutenant. In 1779 he joined the *Robust* as first lieutenant. He became commander of the *Charleston* in 1781. In this

⁸ Aspinall, *The Later Correspondence of George III*, (Vol 2), 392. Pitt to Dundas
Captain Phillip Patton (1739-1815) was present at the Battle of Quiberon Bay and had taken part in the reduction of Havana. He was made captain in 1779 and played an important role in the defeat of Langara, 16 Jan 1780. He was a commissioner at the Admiralty between 1804 and 1806 and became Vice Admiral 1805.

⁹ Condon, *Transport Service*, 76.

Ambrose Serle (1742-1812). He was a Calvinistic writer before being appointed to the Transport Board in 1794. After serving under Lord Dartmouth for a considerable period he was appointed Solicitor and Clerk of the Reports at the Board of Trade and soon afterward accompanied Lord Howe to America as his private secretary. At the invitation of Governor Tryon, Serle had charge of the political section of the *New York Gazette* from September 1776, until he departed for Philadelphia in July 1777. He left America in 1778.

¹⁰ M. Duffy, ‘Samuel Hood, First Viscount Hood’ in Le Fève and Harding (eds) *Precursors of Nelson* (London, 2000)

¹¹ *Greenwich Morning Chronicle* 3 Sep 1806 suggests that he was to join a new Quarantine Board to be chaired by the Comptroller of the Navy who was to be president and Dr Harness of the TB plus several other medical gentlemen. Cannot trace a Quarantine Board although there was a Board of Health in 1805 / 6. The Chronicle reference may have been related to the integration of the Sick and Hurt Board into the TB.

ship he served on the North American station in the American War, possibly under Hood, and whilst there he met and married Margaret Cochran in June 1782. She was also of Irish origin, daughter of an influential family from Halifax, Nova Scotia.¹² . He commanded the sloop *Vulture*. He made captain in November 1781. In 1790 he joined the *Thistle* and in 1792 the *Hussar* in which he was again in North American waters in 1793. He refused his flag in 1800, was knighted in 1803 and created Baronet in August 1809. He served as Chairman of the Transport Board for over twenty years until the Board's dissolution.¹³ George's tenure in office survived seven changes in government administrations and the consequent changes in policies, personalities and interdepartmental relationships and rivalries. His tenure in office established him as one of the longest serving incumbents of the period. By comparison Evan Nepean¹⁴ served as first secretary to the Admiralty for almost nine years. Captain Sir Andrew Snape Hamond was Comptroller of the Navy for almost 12 years followed, in 1806, by Captain Sir Thomas Boulden Thompson who was in post for just less than ten years. George must have possessed some likeable and remarkable qualities to have retained his position for such an extensive period. Sadly, no personal papers have been found so remarkably little is known about him or of his character and personality.

George was well supported by a number of very able commissioners. Their complement was increased by two when the department for the Care & Custody of Prisoners of War in Health at Home and Abroad was transferred from the Sick & Wounded Board in 1795. When peace was

¹² Rev A.W.H. Eaton, *The Cochran-Inglis Family of Halifax Nova Scotia* (Halifax, N.S. 1899), 8. George and his wife had two sons and six daughters.

¹³ TNA, ADM, 1/ 3770, Sir Rupert George was still employed at the Transport Office on 3 Apr 1817 where he was preparing to hand over to Commissioner Boyle who was to complete the settlement of all outstanding accounts assisted by the secretary Mr McLeay and Mr Harding the general accountant. On 25 Mar George had been notified of orders from the Commissioners of the Admiralty to the Navy and Victualling Boards 'to execute duties now taken up within the TB'

George died in 1823 and was buried in the family crypt at St Mary's Church, Battersea, London. His title became extinct on the death of his son Rupert Denis George in 1856.

¹⁴ Evan Nepean, later Sir..... Secretary at the Admiralty 3 March 1795 to January 1804.

declared in 1802 the number was reduced back to three and then increased again in 1806 when the Board took over the full responsibilities of the Sick and Hurt Board. A physician was added to the Board, of which the first was John Harness M.D. Throughout the life of the Board there were two chairmen, fourteen commissioners, five sea officers and nine civilians, and two secretaries. They were appointed by royal patents.¹⁵ The Board generally conducted business together at one table and operated under the principle of collective responsibility at a time when the notion of individual responsibility was being promoted in some quarters.¹⁶ Until 1810 almost all the Transport Board's correspondence was signed by three of the commissioners present on the day, from 1810 the secretary began to sign on behalf of the Board, as was the practice in the Treasury, Admiralty and the Ordnance Board.

With few exceptions, there was little disharmony within the Boards of government bodies. However the Navy Board had a major problem with Osborne Markham's disagreement with his colleagues in 1804.¹⁷ Four years earlier there had been a similar episode at the Transport Board. It related to the *Hillsborough*, a convict ship, which had been chartered, on instruction from the Treasury in July 1798 to convey 300 convicts to New South Wales. During the passage there had been a high mortality rate amongst the prisoners. The Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, demanded a report on the circumstances and so, following an internal review, the Board's record of the events were set out in a letter to Home Secretary on 11 June 1800. This report considered: the state and condition of the vessel when she received the convicts on board, the question of whether the mortality could be attributed to any cause other than goal fever, the state of health of

¹⁵ Their periods of service are shown in the appendices.

¹⁶ Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1760 – 1850* (Aldershot, 2004), 177.

¹⁷ Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, 177. In March 1804 Markham refused to sign a Navy Board letter opposing the shoaling of shipwrights much to the frustration of his colleagues. To solve the problem caused by the rift Barham suggested that Markham should exchange his seat at the Navy Board with that of the Hon. Edward Bouverie at the TB. Markham refused, he felt that the TB was inferior to the Navy Board despite the salaries being equal. Markham was dismissed from the Navy Board on 15 July 1805. Bouverie did eventually leave the TB to join the Navy Board in 1806.

the convicts, the quantity of space and degree of accommodation afforded to them in the *Hillsborough*, the provision of clothing and finally into their treatment during the voyage. Captain Schank was one of the three Commissioners who signed the report on behalf of the Board, however on the following day he ordered the secretary to scratch out his signature from the report, calling it a 'scandalous transaction'. In a letter to his fellow Commissioners dated 16 June 1800 he explained that he had received a letter from the assistant surgeon of the settlement at New South Wales telling him that ninety six of the prisoners had died aboard the *Hillsborough* 'in consequence of bad usage' and as a result did not feel able to support the letter to the Duke of Portland, which had effectively exonerated the Board.¹⁸ Commissioner George explained that 'for the sake of quietness he took no notice of the offensive words' but then Schank subsequently produced a list of nine articles of accusation against Commissioners George, Serle and Otway. This has not been traced but must have caused great offence to his colleagues.¹⁹ However Schank continued to be a Commissioner, although he was removed from the Board in May 1802 when the numbers were reduced on account of the recently-declared peace.

Although the Board generally conducted business together, when professional knowledge was required the one or two members most competent to investigate and to form a judgment considered the matter then recommended their view to the Board for final decision. The resolution was then initialled by those present and the necessary orders were given for the execution of the service. The Chairman was responsible for the overall management of the three departments for transports, prisoners of war and sick and hurt seamen. As such he presided over the discussions of the Board, whether upon the subject of transports, sick and wounded seamen, hospitals, hospital ships, surgeons, prisoners of war, or the numerous other directions issued by

¹⁸ TNA, ADM, 1/3740, John Schank to his fellow Commissioners at the TB, 16 Jun 1800.

¹⁹ TNA, ADM, 1/3740, TB to the Admiralty, 5 Aug 1800.

the Government. He was the principal channel of communication with the Treasury, Admiralty and Secretaries of State. Naturally he was the conduit for all of the Board's confidential communications which included directions to prepare transports for special service.²⁰ He frequently met with Pitt and Dundas to discuss proposed operations and he was in regular, almost daily contact with Castlereagh during the preparations for the all the major expeditions initiated by him but there is no evidence of such meetings with other Secretaries of State. In addition he was expected to visit the dockyard at Deptford and examine ships offered for service as often as business of the office would allow, they were paid an allowance, including travel, of thirty shillings a day whilst on this service.²¹ On 10 May 1803 Captain Rains, the Resident Agent at Deptford advised the Board that four army victuallers and a bomb vessel were at Deptford ready for inspection and he was advised that Commissioner George would be at Deptford on the following day to inspect the ships.²² Again in September 1806 George was engaged on inspecting transports at Deptford.²³ Apart from such diversions he attended the office six days a week. According to the report of the Commission of Revision the role was 'unremitting, allowing no absence'.²⁴

The two civil commissioners attended to the correspondence and accounts and the general management of the office to prevent arrears both in the correspondence and accounting branches. They, together with the chief accountant, periodically examined the books of the sub-accountants. They assisted in the general business of the Board and especially with respect to contracts, bills and other written documents. Again their attendance was daily and their roles

²⁰ Commission of Revision (9th), 26.

²¹ Committee on Finance (18th), 197.

²² TNA, ADM, 108/75/57, Capt Rains, agent at Deptford, to TB, 10 May 1803.

²³ TNA, WO, 1/803/45, TB to William Windham, 2 Sept 1806.

²⁴ Commission of Revision (9th), 26.

described as ‘unremitting’. The two sea commissioners were chiefly employed in assisting the Chairman in his various duties regarding the inspection of transports proposed for hire which required frequent visits to Deptford Dockyard; in recommending the appointment of agents, directing the purchase of stores; in considering the terms and conditions for charter parties and other matters relating to the service at sea; in examining log books, musters of men in transports and the returns submitted by the transport agents; in pointing out neglects of duty by masters of transports and recommending the appropriate mulcts. Except when visiting out-ports and leading TB operations at ports or foreign stations, their attendance at the office was also constant.²⁵

Joseph Hunt was appointed as a commissioner in November 1798. He had previously been a commissioner at the Victualling Board. Earlier he had been a secretary to Lord Hood in the West Indies. He left the Board to join the Board of Ordnance in November 1803 and in 1810 absconded with some of the Board’s funds and later died in exile in France.²⁶ John Marsh who was appointed in September 1795 transferred to the Victualling Board in October 1798, eventually becoming Chairman.

In 1806 physician John Harness M.D was appointed as an additional commissioner. The physician’s role was to direct his particular attention to the Sick and Wounded Branch and examining candidates who applied to be surgeons and assistant surgeons, on board naval vessels and at the various naval hospitals after their examination by the Royal College of Surgeons and the production of a certificate of their abilities in surgery: he also inspected the reports from the hospitals, hospital ships, prisons and prison ships and all sick quarters for seamen. Finally he advised the Board in the procuring of medical supplies. He was expected to attend the Board daily thus was restricted from private practice.

²⁵ Commission of Revision (9th), 26

²⁶ Roger Knight, ‘Politics and Trust in Victualling the Navy 1793-1815’ in *Mariner’s Mirror*, 94 (2008), 139.

The Commissioners were expected to take very active roles during for major operations: Captain John Schank traveled to Holland and assumed a principal role in the 1795 evacuation of the army ahead of the French advance into the Netherlands. In February 1796 Rupert George was at Portsmouth under the direction of Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War.²⁷ Captain George Henry Towry assumed command of agents at Portsmouth in 1807 to oversee the embarkation of troops Major-General Spencer's expedition to Sicily.²⁸ Captain James Bowen assumed command of the Transports at Vigo in late 1808 and, working closely with Sir Samuel Hood, Admiral Michael de Courcy and Lieutenant- General Sir John Moore, he supervised the evacuation from Corunna under enemy fire in January 1809.

The Transport Board's relations with other Boards.

The establishment of the Transport Board was not universally popular. Most of the new Transport Commissioners were Scots, and several were associates of Sir Charles Middleton. In the early days there were inevitable tensions as the other offices learned to live with the newly established board. In September 1794 the Transport Board wrote to the Admiralty requesting its intervention in a dispute with the Victualling Board regarding the supervision of victualling transports. The Victualling Board was claiming the right to continue to give directions for the movement of the transports, limiting the Transport Board's authority to hiring the ships. This arose when the Agent for Transports at Deptford had given instructions to the masters of two transports that had been loaded with victualling provisions to make their way to Spithead. However the masters had already been instructed by the Victualling Board's agent directing them not to proceed, until they had further directions from the Victualling Board, as had previously

²⁷ TNA, ADM,1/3731, Rupert George to TB, 22 Feb 1796.

²⁸ George Henry Towry, not to be confused with George Phillips Towry, his father, who was a Vice Chairman and Secretary of the Victualling Board.

been the custom. The Transport Board described this conduct as ‘very extraordinary and in our opinion highly censurable’. Following a protest from the Transport Board the Admiralty supported its view that once loaded victualling transports should be returned to the control of the transport agent. He would advise the master of the Transport Board’s directions to proceed to the pre-designated destination.²⁹

The authority of the Board was further enhanced when, in September 1794, Henry Dundas the Secretary of State for War decided that orders for provisioning troop transports and army victuallers would, in future, only be issued to the Transport rather than both boards. The Transport Board would then instruct the Victualling Board accordingly. He requested the Admiralty to order the Victualling Board to accept such instructions from the Transport Board in future.³⁰ Subsequent relations between the two boards were relatively harmonious with only the occasional disagreements. In fact the Victualling Board requested the Transport Board’s support in collecting old outstanding debts from the earlier war. In 1795 it asked the Transport Board not to pay accounts to ship owners who had unpaid accounts with the Victualling Board. In March 1807 the Board felt obliged to complain to the Admiralty that the Victualling Board had short circuited the system and negotiated directly with owner of *Collingwood* for freight of provisions to Buenos Ayres at £8 per ton despite the average competitive rate being £5 per ton. Even though the provisions were already loaded, the Admiralty agreed with the Transport Board. The Victualling Board was advised that it could not pay more than £5 per ton and another vessel was hired at the revised rate.³¹

²⁹TNA, ADM, 1/3570/37, TB to the Admiralty, 20 Sep 1794.

³⁰ TNA, ADM, 1/4162, 3 Sep 1794. Cited in both Roger Morriss ‘High Exertions and Difficult Cases: The Work of the Transport Agent at Portsmouth and Southampton, 1795 -1797’ and Condon, *Transport Service*, 64.

³¹ TNA, ADM, 1/3751/142, TB to the Admiralty, 25 Mar 1807.

The relationship with the Board of Ordnance was more complex. A letter dated August 1808 from the Commissioners of the Transport Board to Lord Castlereagh, Secretary for War, summarized the Board's frustration with the attitude of the Board of Ordnance.

'We have uniformly caused that service (Ordnance) to be provided for in preference to every other, and have particularly instructed our officers to afford them every facility and accommodation in their power; but we are nevertheless fully aware of the extreme difficulty of satisfying the Ordnance officers with respect to transports, and of their readiness on all occasions to complain of this department'.³²

The Transport Board believed that it had done everything in its power to facilitate a smooth relationship with the Ordnance Board by prioritizing the provision of shipping for it. For example, in 1796 the Board issued a circular to its agents following representations by the Master General of the Board of Ordnance, who alleged that Transport Agents had frequently transferred ordnance stores from one vessel to another without observing the necessary formalities. This was creating difficulties in generating the usual clearing certificate to enable the owners to receive payment. The agents were directed to ensure that the master always completed a Bill of Lading when shipping ordnance stores or when transferring them from one vessel to another.³³ However the Transport Board was not slow to highlight the Ordnance Board's deficiencies. In March 1799 the Board was in dispute with the Ordnance Board regarding the *Queen* transport procured at 13/- per month per ton which was equivalent to £1,365 per year. Since February 1796, this vessel has been used as an ordnance store in Portsmouth harbour. The Board advised Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War that this ship was too expensive to be used as a mere warehouse at the cost of the Transport Board without his authority.³⁴ In January 1803 the Board complained to the Ordnance Board that several ordnance certificates had been received which had omitted the quantity of ordnance tonnage for which freight was to be paid.

³² TNA, ADM, 108/21/125, TB to Castlereagh, Secretary of State for War, 18 Aug 1808.

³³ TNA, ADM, 108/28, Circular from the TB, 8 Jul 1796.

³⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/204, TB to Henry Dundas, 25 Mar 1799.

This matter had been raised in August 1800 and resolved successfully but had since reoccurred. The Transport Board was anxious to ensure that it was not paying for tonnage that had not been shipped.³⁵

Gareth Cole has investigated some aspects of the relationship between the Transport Board and the Ordnance Board and suggests that the Ordnance Board was frequently criticized but was much maligned. During the preparations for a convoy to the West Indies in 1795 there were apparent delays in the turnaround of ships which the Ordnance Board's Superintendent of Ordnance Shipping, Thomas Dickinson, was keen to attribute to matters outside his control rather than to the time taken to load the ships. He cited delays in the ships arrival at Woolwich: some had ballast that needed to be removed prior to loading, some were lacking in full crew complement to assist with the loading, some had previously been used as troop ships and still had cabins that needed to be removed and they all needed magazines and racking building and installing.³⁶ Captain Stephen Rains, the transport agent at Deptford made it clear that although some of the delays were not attributable to the Ordnance Board, its performance aggravated the position. The speed of loading with Ordnance stores was inhibited because only two ships at a time could be loaded in the Ordnance dock, others had to be loaded in the river. He pointed out that some of Dickinson's statements did not accord with his understanding of events. Dickinson was not the best of communicators and there are indications of a lack of diligence or possibly laziness on Dickinson's part.³⁷ This example was from early in the war, but in March 1806 the Transport Board again felt obliged, no doubt frustrated by lack of positive response from the Ordnance Board, to advise the Secretary of State that there were six bomb tenders hired in June

³⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/74/142, TB to the Ordnance Board, 27 Jan 1803.

³⁶ Gareth Cole, *The Office of Ordnance and the Arming of the Fleet in the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, 1793 to 1815*, PhD (Exeter University, 2008), 65

³⁷ Cole, *The Office of Ordnance*, 87.

and July 1803 in addition to two hired in 1804. The monthly hire rate was £946/13/00. These vessels had been lying idle at Sheerness under the direction of the Ordnance Board at considerable expense to the government.³⁸ This supports the conclusion about Dickinson's casual approach. Dickinson remained in post throughout the war and it is clear that the relationship between the Transport Board and Ordnance Board did not improve dramatically, possibly partially due to difficult relationships between the agents at Deptford where there was little mutual respect. Indeed it was generally considered within the Transport Board that numerous Ordnance transports were lost at sea or materially damaged due to the tendency of the Ordnance Board to over-load the vessels.³⁹

Transport Office improvements.

After the defeat in the American war there was a continued distrust of government bureaucracy and public servants. The Committee on Public Accounts appointed in 1780 established new guidelines for the acceptable practices of public servants.⁴⁰ These were reiterated by the Commission on Fees who reported in 1787 – 1788 but Pitt shelved most of the recommendations.⁴¹ Throughout the 1790s the concept of the payment of salaries for services performed rather than fees for sinecure holders became the accepted norm, financial controls with checks and balances became more stringent and the concept of individual rather than collective responsibility became more accepted.⁴² Nevertheless the Transport Board operated

³⁸ TNA, WO, 6 /158, TB to Viscount Liverpool, Secretary of State for War, 26 Mar 1806.

³⁹ Committee on Finance (31st), 506, list of Ordnance Store Ships lost, taken or materially damaged between June 1795 and December 1796. 16 ships listed. TB memorandum 'it appears that the Loss and Damage of the Ordnance Ships was occasioned by them being overloaded'.

⁴⁰ Knight, 'Politics and Trust in Victualling the Navy 1793 – 1815' in *Mariners Mirror*, 94 (2008), 133.

⁴¹ Middleton became so frustrated by the lack of implementation and it was one of his principal reasons for resigning as Comptroller of the Navy Board in 1790.

⁴² Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, 259

under the principle of collective responsibility throughout its existence, although the Chairman was the figurehead who represented the Board in contacts with ministers.

The operations of the Transport Board were scrutinized by the Ninth and Thirteenth Reports of the Commissioners of the Board of Revision which were both published in 1809. They considered that responsibilities of the Board were well conducted. In contrast with the Victualling Board and the recently abolished Sick and Hurt Board it did not carry the burden of un-cleared accounts from earlier periods. The accounting functions of the Board were effective as Middleton observed to the King when the Sick and Hurt Board's responsibilities were integrated into the Transport Office.⁴³ Accounting delay was a common wartime failing amongst government departments under pressure from the war.⁴⁴ However, even the Transport Board struggled when it inherited the accounting backlog of the Sick and Hurt Board and there were still some of these accounts outstanding when the Board was devolved in 1817. Bannerman suggests of an earlier period that 'One of the graver defects of the (general contracting) system was the absence of clear guidelines relating to the propriety of official involvement in contracts'.⁴⁵ The Board had overcome this by issuing an early instruction that no agent or employee of the Board should have any interest in any vessel hired by the Board and issuing its agents with a comprehensive set of standing instructions. The occasional abuses by agents, ship's masters, owners and brokers that did occur were dealt with forcefully. The administrative employees were employed subject to a bond and oath. They were rewarded, however, through receipt of a share of the fees charged to ship owners and the Board's agents at a time when such payments were being questioned in some quarters.⁴⁶

⁴³ Aspinall, *Later Correspondence of George III*, Vol 4 doc 3149 Barham to King 4 Nov 1805.

⁴⁴ Knight and Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet 1793 -1815*, 212.

⁴⁵ Bannerman, *Merchants and the Military Establishments*, 42.

⁴⁶ Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, 233, and Committee on Finance (36th), 78.

Throughout its life the Transport Board escaped draconian purges of commissioners and processes that were experienced by other Boards, following reports of the Commission of Revision, such as the Sick and Hurt Board in 1806, the Navy Board in 1806 / 1808 and the Victualling Board in 1808 / 9. When older Commissioners retired the Treasury, the Ordnance Board and the Army were similarly reorganized to improve efficiency and effectiveness during this period. This might well have been attributable to the good stewardship of Sir Rupert George and his colleagues and their comparative youthfulness. In 1808, at the time of the Commission of Naval Revision, George would have been 59. It almost certainly also reflects the fact that the Transport Board was a new board with no accumulated backlogs in accounting.

The Board's secretariat

The Board was supported by a Secretary, of whom the first was Alexander Whitehead who was also the purser to the ship *London* at the same time. He was succeeded, by Alexander McLeay who was previously been Chief Clerk in the Prisoner of War department of the Transport Office.⁴⁷ All correspondence to and from the Board passed through his hands. He read all letters addressed to the Board, recorded minutes of the answers or considerations of the Board thereon or, where appropriate, made the necessary arrangements to obtain further information. He ensured that all letters were duly entered in the several books of correspondence and that all letters and papers received were properly dealt with and filed. He managed the general conduct of the office and ensured that there were no irregularities or abuses. He was responsible for the performance of the junior staff. His own attendance was therefore necessarily constant and

⁴⁷ TNA, T/1/959/46-47. Abstract of Transport Office staff in 1805 compared to 1795 showing the remuneration of each person. The Secretary was paid £425 per annum plus a share of fees, described below, of £150. He was also provided with an apartment in the office, so that he was always on hand to attend to his duties. In April 1796 the secretary was granted an allowance of £25 p.a. for coals and candles.

‘unremitting’.⁴⁸ By 1806 he was assisted by twenty clerks: seven supporting the transport service, seven in the Sick and Wounded Branch and six for Prisoners of War.

Processes and procedures were updated from time to time. In November 1808 the Board ordered that all minutes made by the Board should be inserted in the minute book of the appropriate branch, all letters, tenders and others mail should be sent to the minute clerk in that department and should not be acted upon until entered in the minute book. The Accountant General was to receive every order and minute relating to the accounts no later than 12 o’clock on the following day. All original letters had to be returned to the Minute clerk within 6 days for safe keeping. Every morning the Secretary, assisted by the sub accountants, advised the Accountant General the number and amount of 90 day bills and drafts made out the previous day. The Accountant General passed this information to the Minute clerk for recording in the minutes of the Board.⁴⁹ The number of administration staff in the Transport office increased significantly during the wars, particularly when the additional responsibilities for prisoners of war and the sick and hurt seamen were added to the Board’s responsibilities. Although the funding of the services was included in the naval estimates the Treasury’s approval was required for any increase in the establishment. This was demonstrated when the Board applied in January 1795 for an increase and approval was granted on 30 April for the appointment of an extra clerk and for the first clerk to be appointed principal accountant.⁵⁰

By 1813 number of clerks under the Secretary and General Accountant had yet again increased. In the Transport branch there was an accountant and first assistant, both relatively young at 33 and 36 with 18 & 17 years service. They were supported by nine other, all male, of whom only one was over fifty years of age. Their responsibilities included preparing all contracts

⁴⁸ Commission for Revision (9th), 31.

⁴⁹ ADM.108/81, TB Minutes. 11 Nov 1808.

⁵⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/4b, Charles Long, at the Treasury to the TB, 30 Apr 1795.

for the hire of regular transports and ships on freight, examining and submitting the accounts of the ships and the supply of stores and issuing bills in payment thereof, examining the accounts of Agents for Transports, preparing them for the Board's approval and making the payments thereon. This was in addition to the examination and payment of bills, for the miscellaneous purchases, made at the direction of the Lords of the Treasury and the management of the accounting transactions between the Navy Board and the Transport Board and also preparing various monthly accounts for the different Public Departments, as also Parliamentary estimates.⁵¹

In the Secretary's department were six men including the Chief Clerk who handled all the correspondence relative to the Transport Service. Three others registered the appropriation and services of the transports for the embarkation of troops, horses and stores, and furnishing accounts, made out schemes of embarkation.⁵² The Board also employed administrative and clerical staff in the Sick and Wounded Seamen division where there were 37 staff in 1813 and in the Prisoners of War department there were twenty seven staff. There were also five administrative staff at Deptford and three at Portsmouth and a number based at the various prison locations.⁵³ By 1816, besides the five commissioners, there was a secretary, an accountant and an Inspector of Hospitals and seventy four administration and clerical staff. The cost of these was £25,849 per annum. One commissioner, an accountant and twenty clerks were transferred to the Navy Office, whilst another commissioner, an inspector and fifteen clerks were transferred to the Victualling Board. The Secretary and twenty four clerks remained to clear the outstanding

⁵¹ There were also two men under the Assistant to the Clerk of the Stores who were to ensure that the transports were appropriately charged for the stores supplied to them.

⁵² TNA, ADM, 1/3764, An account showing the names, rank, age, time in service and salaries of the various clerks employed by the TB in Jan 1813.

⁵³ TNA, ADM, 1/3764, An account showing the names, rank, age, time in service and salaries of the various clerks employed by the TB in Jan 1813.

accounts. The remainder, including Sir Rupert George either retired or had their employment terminated.⁵⁴

The Transport Board officers at Deptford

The Board had an office at Deptford which was the base for the Resident Agent, the Inspecting Agent, the Shipwright Officer and Storekeeper who inspected and prepared ships for service. Prior to the 13th Report of the Commission for Revision, these roles had not been clearly defined, however, this Report set out clear descriptions of the roles and responsibilities. The Inspecting Agent lived in a house allotted to him at Deptford, so that he was always available to react quickly to new instructions. His primary task was to survey, in conjunction with the Master Shipwright at Deptford Dockyard, all vessels intended to be hired as regular transports. Together they were to report on their fitness for the service. He was also to correspond daily with the Transport Board in London. The Shipwright Officer was to inspect all ships proposed for transports and report particularly on the hull, masts and spars and record such details that were required to value the ships where they were to be taken on as regular transports. The Stores Officer was responsible for receiving, storing and issuing of stores and for accounting for them in full. He was to take care to prevent deterioration or loss.⁵⁵

The logistical task.

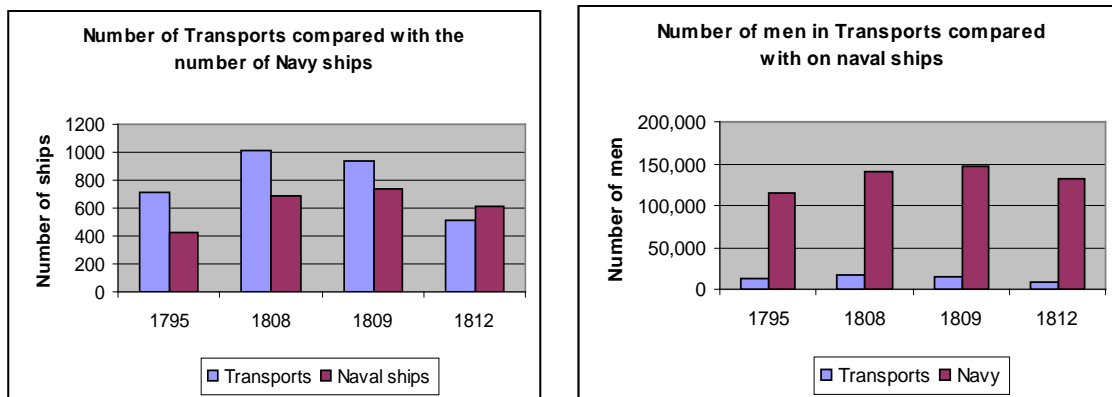
Managing the fleet, which expanded to over a thousand vessels in 1808 / 9, balancing supply and demand and directing its disposition would be a challenge today with the assistance of computing and satellite communications. It was far more difficult when correspondence took

⁵⁴ ADM,106/3571 Memorandum by W. Smith Assistant Secretary at the Navy Board 6 Jan 1817

⁵⁵ Commission for Revision (13th), 63.

days, weeks and sometimes months. Considerable reliance had to be placed on the Resident Agents and Agents Afloat on overseas stations. In terms of the fleet size it was not dissimilar from the navy, although obviously the tonnage and number of seamen was much smaller, this is demonstrated below.

Chart 3.2



To manage the disposition of the fleet the Admiralty maintained monthly reporting from Commanders in Chief which was consolidated into List Books⁵⁶. These list books showed the disposition of the fleet, the complement of ships by class and number of crew on each station as on the first day of each month of the war. The Transport Board relied upon daily reports of ships movements in the following format from Resident Agents together with less frequent reports from Floating Agents which were consolidated into a Register of Shipping Movements.⁵⁷

| Daily Log of movements of Transports | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|---|
| Folio of Transport Account | Folio of Distribution Account | Date | From what person What order | Name of the Transport | Tonnage | Observations Arrived from: Sailed to: |

By a system of regular two way communication, between the Agents and the Transport Board, transports were passed from one agent to the next around the coast and then to the Floating

⁵⁶ TNA, ADM, 8, List books.

⁵⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/168, Register of Transports.

Agent who escorted them to the convoy collection points and on convoy, subsequently passing them on to other floating agents until their return to England.

This was a complex process that required rigorous and comprehensive reporting with a strong centralised administration. To illustrate this, here is a record of the progress of a number of cavalry ships bound for bound for Lisbon, Portugal at the end of 1796. On 22 December the Transport Board sent Captain Daniel Woodriff, Agent at Portsmouth, a list of eighteen cavalry ships which were preparing in the River Thames and were expected to arrive at Portsmouth shortly. These ships had the capacity for 642 horses and riders which were expected to embark at Southampton.⁵⁸ He was subsequently advised that two of the ships, had been held at Gravesend, *Harmony* 270 tons and *Swan* 284 tons, to take on 116 men (this turned out to be 156 men) under orders to Guernsey. Woodriff was ordered to arrange onward transport from Portsmouth for these men.⁵⁹ On 28 December he was ordered to Southampton to assist in the embarkation of the troops and horses. Captain Stephen Rains was the agent responsible for preparing the ships in the Thames, he had advised the Board that when the ships left the River they would be complete with stalls, water, provisions, horse gear and forage but that additional ballast would be required once the cavalry had been loaded. In Rain's view the ballast should be obtained from the beach at Southampton because it was of considerably better quality than could be obtained in the River.⁶⁰ On 28 December Rains issued an updated list of the state of loading, he had ordered the ships to Southampton without forage or ballast. Agents Lieutenants Pemberton, Parks, Lamb and Hay had been charged with getting them out of the River but strong easterly winds and thick fog

⁵⁸ TNA, ADM,108/28/49, TB to Captain Woodriff, Agent at Portsmouth, 22 Dec 1796.

These ships were: *Harmony* 270 tons, *Swan* 284, *Fowler* 255, *Leighton* 374, *Calypso* 295, *Barrick* 288, *Scarborough* 429, *Aid* 334, *Maria* 314, *Beckford* 296, *Argo* 360, *Argo* 294, *Adventure* 344, *Betsy* 300, *Hero* 323, *Fanny* 429, *William* 254, *Oeconomy* 355.

⁵⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/28/50, TB to Captain Woodriff, 22 Dec 1796.

⁶⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/28/50, Captain Rains, Agent at Deptford, to TB, 23 Dec 1796.

had prevented them from sailing.⁶¹ Nine ships did finally sail from Deptford on 30 December under Lieutenant Pemberton.⁶² On 1 January, the Transport office advised Woodruff that the *Swan* was anchored in Stokes Bay and that Lieutenant Whitaker was coming to Southampton to assist him, he was be put under Lieutenant Pemberton.⁶³ On the 2 January 1797 the Board responded to a suggestion from Woodruff with a mild rebuke:

‘We leave it to you to consider whether the mode you propose of embarking the cavalry at Itchen River may not be attended with delay, in case southerly winds should prevent the ships from getting out. You will act as you judge best. We hope that with the assistance of the gun and flat boats no other expenses will attend the embarkation, than has been incurred on former occasions, when that service was under your direction’.⁶⁴

Also on the 2 January Rains advised the Transport Office that 28 bushels of bran would be required for each ship. Woodruff was instructed to purchase it.⁶⁵ On the following day Rains reported that all 18 ships had finally sailed. Three of the ships had been ready for over a week but the masters had been reluctant to sail, much to Rain’s exasperation: ‘I have used every means to get them out of the River, without effect, notwithstanding their orders.’ On 1 January he had forced them to sail but they did not sail far, they were discovered at Woolwich some time later by Lieutenant Parke. The *Hero* was ‘on freight’ and Rains had been unable to persuade the master to leave until he had more ballast and because he was ‘on freight’ Rains had ‘no power over him’.⁶⁶ On 5 January the Transport Office advised Woodruff that Lieutenant Pemberton, with ten transports, was in the Downs.⁶⁷ By the 7 January two ships arrived at Portsmouth and were ordered to Southampton where four others had already arrived, two were at Spithead, nine

⁶¹ TNA, ADM, 108/28/50, Captain Rains, Agent at Deptford, to TB, 28 Dec 1796.

⁶² TNA, ADM, 108/28/53, Captain Rains, Agent at Deptford, to TB, 30 Dec 1796.

⁶³ TNA, ADM, 108/28/54, TB to Captain Woodruff, 1 Jan 1797.

⁶⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/28/54, TB to Captain Woodruff, 2 Jan 1797.

⁶⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/28/54, TB to Captain Woodruff, 2 Jan 1797

⁶⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/28/56, Captain Rains, Agent at Deptford, to TB, 5 Jan 1797.

⁶⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/28/56, TB to Captain Woodruff, 5 Jan 1797.

were on passage to Southampton and the location of the remaining ship the *Calypso* was not known.⁶⁸

Meanwhile the Governor of Chalshot Castle had refused to allow the ships to take on ballast from the beach near the castle. Woodriff wrote to the Board, who in turn wrote the Ordnance Board who subsequently issued instructions to the Governor to allow the ballasting to proceed to avoid further cost and delays.⁶⁹ On the same day the Board advised Woodriff that the method of fitting of the stalls in the horse ships was entirely up to him but he should take account of any proposals by the cavalry officers to ensure the safety of their horses.⁷⁰ On the 13 January the Board asked if the ships had arrived in Southampton and requested a daily report until the embarkation was completed.⁷¹ The next day the Board advised that two thousand sets of horseshoe sets and nails were being prepared to be sent with the fleet. The first batch of eight hundred sets and 76,800 nails were being dispatched to Southampton. On the 16th the Board praised Woodriff for the 'alacrity' in the discharge of his duty saying that it 'is highly approved of'.

On 17th the Board advised Woodriff that he was to follow the published instructions relating to the number of women who could be shipped with the troops otherwise War Office approval would be required.⁷² Another 600 sets of horseshoe sets were dispatched. The troops had arrived, the Board was pleased that the embarkation was going well and recommended that the transports were taken out into the Creek when the foraging was completed, later they recommended the mooring off Calshott Castle for better security.⁷³ Meanwhile one of the

⁶⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/28/56, TB to Captain Woodriff, 5 Jan 1797.

⁶⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/28/58 & 59, TB to Captain Woodriff and Ordnance Board to the TB, 9 Jan 1797.

⁷⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/28/59, TB to Captain Woodriff, 11 Jan 1797.

⁷¹ TNA, ADM, 108/28/60, TB to Captain Woodriff, 13 Jan 1797.

⁷² TNA, ADM, 108/28/62, TB to Captain Woodriff, 17 Jan 1797

⁷³ TNA, ADM, 108/28/64, TB to Captain Woodriff, 21 Jan 1797

Transports, the *Beckford*, was found to be leaking 24 to 30 inches of water each day and its longboat was unfit for service. The Board advised Woodriff that if he had the least doubt about the *Beckford's* condition then he should order *Harmony* to go along side and take onboard the horses and riders from her. The *Beckford* would be mulcted for time spent bringing her back into service.⁷⁴

Woodriff had established himself on board the *Fowler*. He received an instruction to visit the convoy commander, Captain Thompson, of the *Leander* that was anchored at Spithead. He set off on 1 February at daybreak but the captain was not on board so he returned to the *Fowler*. By the time he returned it was 4.00 pm, it was too late to get the transports down to Spithead before it was dark. The next day he ordered the transports to Spithead. The convoy departed from there on 3 February, forty-three days after he was first advised that the ships were being prepared in the river, under the convoy protection of *Leander* with Woodriff acting as the senior floating agent aboard *Fowler*. By that time the troops and horses had been aboard for almost two weeks. This case study demonstrates the complexity of the preparations of a relatively small fleet of transports. Not all the individuals involved were cooperative, some coercion was necessary and it highlights clearly that weather played a highly significant role in the events, particularly at that time of the year. Above all it shows that regular communications and strong centralized control was essential and that the Board's procedures were effective.

The Transport Board as a Procurement Agency

The service was used as a procurement agency. Henry Dundas issued frequent instructions to the transport office to purchase materials for the use of the army overseas. Often the requirements were for items which might have been expected to be the responsibility of other

⁷⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/28/66, TB to Captain Woodriff, 24 Jan 1797.

departments such as the Victualling Board or Ordnance Boards. The Transport Board was used presumably because of the need for speedy reaction and its familiarity with the tendering process. Of course, from 1795 when the Board had responsibility for prisoners of war and later sick and hurt seamen procurement became a much more significant role. The Board's advertisements appeared regularly in the *London Gazette* and the *Morning Post* seeking the supply of a whole range of goods and services from ships and maritime supplies to the building of Dartmoor and other prisons and various hospitals and even a new office for itself in 1814⁷⁵.

The Transport Board was requested to purchase many and varied items. For instance in August 1794 Charles Long, the Junior Secretary to the Treasury Board, at Henry Dundas's request, instructed the Board to acquire clothing, saddles, bridles, horse shoes and shoe nails to be sent to foreign troops in Holland. The Transport Board requested authority from the Treasury to avoid the usual requirement to advertise for contractors and buy at the cheapest price. The Treasury agreed with this, so long as the articles could be obtained quickly and at a reasonable price. This was unusual and indicated the urgency of the requirement. On 13 September five thousand pairs of shoes were added to the list.⁷⁶ In October that year George Rose, the Senior Secretary to the Treasury, sent a long list of items to be purchased for gifts to the Indians in Canada in 1795.⁷⁷ In December 1794 Rose had instructed the Transport Office to purchase coal to load twenty Transports from 150 to 200 tons for HM forces, to be sent to the Commissary-General Brooke Watson at Rotterdam.⁷⁸ However in February 1795 this cargo of coals was still lying at Gravesend in a dangerous state and incurring demurrage. Following a request from the

⁷⁵ HoCPC. 1814/15, 313, IX.187, 1, *A Statement of the Authority under which the rebuilding of this office was undertaken, the amount of the original estimate and the sums hitherto expended together with the names of the person employed to draw up the plan and superintend the work; and specifying what rate of commission is allowed*, 22 May 1815

⁷⁶ TNA, ADM 108/ 4B/ 5, Charles Long to TB, 23 Aug 1794.

⁷⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/4B/36, George Rose, Treasury, to TB, 30 Oct 1794.

⁷⁸ TNA, ADM 108/4B/78, George Rose, Treasury, to TB, 16 Dec 1794

Board, Rose instructed the Board to dispose of it at the best price.⁷⁹ In February 1795, he ordered the Transport Board to inspect and purchase a stand of 50,000 muskets if they could be obtained at reasonable price. Although it might have been expected that this transaction should have been handled by the Ordnance Board, the Transport Board appointed the army contractor Alexander Davison to conduct the inspection and purchase. The cost was £35,770/10/04, Davison was to receive one and a half per cent commission plus £84/03/06 expenses. However the Treasury over-ruled that agreement insisting that the commission rate was too high, the Board were instructed to pay ‘10 shillings per centum’ (one per cent) only.⁸⁰

Costs of the Transport Service

The funding for the services of the Transport Board and the Victualling Board was included in the Naval Estimates which were voted by Parliament which was independent of Treasury control. In 1798 the transport proportion of the total Naval Estimate was seven per cent.

| Table 3.3 An Estimate of the expected total amount of the Expense of the Navy for the year ending 31 December 1798 | |
|---|-------------|
| Navy | £7,614,969 |
| Victualling | £3,411,768 |
| Transports | £671,348 |
| Prisoners of War in Health | £220,000 |
| Sick and Wounded Seamen | £345,000 |
| Sick Prisoners | £82,000 |
| Total | £12,344,116 |
| Source: Committee on Finance (31 st), 486. | |

This was before the Board had been given responsibility for sick and wounded seamen and prisoners of war. The composition of that year’s naval estimate was as shown in table 3.3. The Transport funding for that year was allocated as shown in table 3.4.

⁷⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/4b. Rose, Secretary at the Treasury, to the TB, 28 Feb 1795.

⁸⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/4b, Rose, Secretary at the Treasury, to TB, 7 Feb 1795.

| Table 3.4 Allocation of the Transports funding in the 1798 Naval Estimate | |
|--|-----------------|
| Freight of regular transports and ships hired on Freight For the conveyance of Troops, provisions, Ordnance Stores and Baggage. | £613,348 |
| Pay to Officers employed as Agents of Transports | £14,000 |
| Wages of the Crews of several of His Majesty's ships employed as armed transports, | £24,000 |
| Expenses of building cabins and other accommodation on board transports and furnishing them with stores, beds, hammocks, fumigating and hospital stores, repair of transports, pilotage of them and other incidental charges | £20,000 |
| Total | £671,348 |
| Source: Committee on Finance (31 st), 490. | |

The funding of £671,348 for 1798 expense was much reduced from the previous three years because the West Indian expeditions were over. The cost for 1795 had been £1,979,834, for 1796 £2,390,998 and for 1797 £1,666,318.

By 1806 the cost of the Transport Service was double the 1798 estimate, increasing from £671,348 to £1,387,641 reflecting the significant number of ships hired for the northern Germany expedition and the increases in the cost of hire. Chart 3.5 shows how the costs continued to

| Table 3.5. Annual Amount of the Payments made by the Three Branches of the Transport Office, from the year 1806 to 1812 | | | |
|--|---------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Year | Transports | Sick & Wounded Seamen | Prisoners of War |
| 1806 | 1,387,641..19...10 | 257,058...7...5 | 412,471...16...6 |
| 1807 | 1,520,320...6...4 | 234,675..11...8 | 518,055...0...1 |
| 1808 | 2,341,030...4...11 | 270,934...7...11 | 510,789...0...3 |
| 1809 | 3,189,169...0...2 | 357,998...1...8 | 631,017...8..11 |
| 1810 | 3,014,165..13...7 | 337,333..15...10 | 774,322...6...4 |
| 1811 | 2,763,568...7...5 | 303,128..10...2 | 913,564...12...6 |
| 1812 | 2,483,782..11...9 | 258,913...6...1 | 1,013,377...16..4 |
| Total | 16,699,678...4...0 | 2,020,042...0...9 | 4,773,598...0..11 |
| Source: ADM.108.1.3764 | | | |

increase over the next few years to the peak years of expenditure in 1809 and 1810, the time of Walcheren and the Peninsular War.

The 1796 cost of £2,390,998 was only exceeded in the years 1809 to 1812, despite the significant increases in the hire rate in the intervening period. The Transport Board was frequently under pressure to reduce costs; at certain times the Secretary of State for War specifically ordered fleet

reductions. At times of financial crisis, as in January 1807, the Treasury instructed the Board to discharge all vessels which were not wanted for immediate service.⁸¹ One must assume that the Treasury was in a position to know the Secretary of State's immediate plans when such instructions were issued. It was not always possible to fully comply with the instruction immediately. On this particular occasion there were seventeen ships hired on six months charters on instructions from the Secretary of State in the previous November. There were nine ships which had recently returned from the Mediterranean that were held in quarantine and could not be discharged immediately.

The Committee on Finance of 1798 reviewed the activities of the Transport Board and interviewed Commissioner John Schank. One of his recommendations to the committee was that the government should attempt to purchase Dudman's dock which was next to the Victualling Board's office and store at Deptford. He reasoned that there would be a significant reduction in the cost of loading and unloading of ships which was, at that time, done in the river, which required all stores and provisions to be loaded first onto a barge then on board the ship, a process subject to delay from tides and inclement weather. If the ship could be moored alongside in a dock it would have been much quicker.⁸² The Treasury pursued this matter, firstly by asking Captain Andrew Snape Hamond, the Comptroller of the Navy Board, and Commissioner George if they too saw benefits in this suggestion. Both agreed, they estimated annual cost savings in the range of lighterage £2500 and labour £7,000 per year and the cost of damage to the provisions and of repairing damaged water casks, and 'particularly Irish meat casks'. A well considered plan was submitted to the Treasury who requested Snape Hamond to ascertain how much the

⁸¹ HoCPP, 1807, 117, IV.109, 1, George Harrison at the Treasury to TB, 22 Jan 1807.

⁸² Committee on Finance (31st), 504.

owner would sell the property for.⁸³ The outcome is not clear, the purchase did not take place possibly because the owner did not want to sell, or the price was too high. It would seem that this was a great opportunity to improve the effectiveness of the service which was lost.

The management of costs and the improvements in efficiency and effectiveness

There are several illustrations of the Transport Board's diligence in managing the costs of the service and exploiting the commercial market. In a memorandum dated November 1801 the Board explained that soon after its appointment it had discovered that the contract for conveying troops to and from England and Ireland was fixed at an extraordinarily high price. After discussion with the Treasury this contract, which had been with the same family for over 40 years, was terminated. This move saved £1/12/04½ per head, in aggregate it had saved over £80,000 up to 1801 on the passage of troops to Ireland and back.⁸⁴ Another example occurred in November 1798; Kean Osborn, the transport agent in Jamaica, died and subsequently the Board learned that the cost of the charter parties that he had established for the hire of two vessels, the *Winchester* and the *Iris*, was exorbitant. The Board wanted to know how much it would cost to render the Charter parties void. Needless to say both owners responded with long letters justifying the cost and both claimed that they could not cancel the charter party without great loss. The Board placed the matter with its lawyers for advice.⁸⁵

⁸³ HoCPP, 1715-1800, 114, 256. *Further Proceedings of the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury Respecting the matters stated in the Reports of the Committee on Finance so far as they relate to the several offices concerned with the Receipt and Expenditure of Public Money. In addition to the Reports presented to the House of Commons on 12 January 1798 and 18 June 1799.*

⁸⁴ TNA, WO, 1/801, Transport Office, 4 Nov 1801.

⁸⁵ TNA, ADM, 1/3773, Edward Gibbons Agent at Jamaica for Transports and Prisoners of War to the owners of ships *Winchester* and *Iris*, 8 Nov 1798.

Cost scrutiny was also effective. Henry Boyce, the surveyor at Deptford, refused to approve the cost of making a mizzen mast for the *Friends* transport and of repairing the decks as a government expense. He also questioned the cost of repairing of the decks of the *Neptune* and the *Eleonora* at Southampton where the cost was six pence per day per man more than at Portsmouth. This was due to a beer allowance that was customary at Southampton. Boyce instructed that further work should be done at Portsmouth whenever it was practicable.⁸⁶

The 1801 Board memorandum highlighted various other means by which it had saved public funds.⁸⁷ Previously transports belonging to various Boards had been known to remain unemployed or skulked in duty for months, unnoticed. In the Transport Board's judgement, if each department had had only one transport each so tied up, three such transports of a common size would amount to above £8,000 per annum, this greatly exceeded the expense of the transport establishment. The savings made by the Board by allocating the necessary tonnage, managing them well and discharging them immediately had saved the public purse a considerable amount. It claimed savings of several hundred thousand pounds through its role as a procurement agency on behalf of the Treasury as well as considerable savings from the detailed control of the expenditure on transports and stores, by checking the times and places of employment, by mulcting defaults, by close examination of log books and papers in tracing abuses, by resisting false claims on various pretences, 'which seamen only could have detected'; by reviewing and enforcing musters of compliments and many other articles of detail which have saved numerous charges and expenses. The Board also enumerated some of the benefits derived from transferring the responsibility for healthy prisoners of war into its control. It had taken over the hiring of cartels, ships used to bring prisoners of war back to Britain and, from time to time, to repatriate

⁸⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/28/36, Henry Boyce at Deptford to TB, 5 Oct 1796.

⁸⁷ TNA, WO, 1/801, Memorandum prepared by the TB, A Short Statement of the advantages derived to Government from the Institution of the Transport Office, 4 Nov 1801.

them to their homeland, from others less familiar with shipping. In addition the Transport Board had reduced the number of depots for reception of prisoners of war by abolishing twelve small depots, saving £3000 in the first year in salaries, rents and the cost of moving prisoners. Six establishments in West Indies had been rendered unnecessary saving £10,057/19/00 a year in salaries and the hire of prisons and prison ships and over £1,000 in extra charges. The report determined frequent visits by the Commissioners to depots had resulted in the elimination of abuses, the reduction of unnecessary people and the implementation of strict regulations.⁸⁸

The Board was continually looking to minimize costs. In October 1803 it had been requested to hire transports for conveyance of 44th and 67th Regiments from Ireland and advised Mr Wickham, Chief Secretary of Ireland that it was cheaper to hire ships in Ireland when no troops were being sent from England because ships often sailed empty from there to collect cargoes in England. This was because there was a much greater flow of goods into Ireland as the import trade greatly exceeded the export trade.⁸⁹ Also in 1803 the Agents were instructed not to hire any tradesmen to perform any works on board transports that could be carried out by the carpenter or crews of any transports or HM ships in the vicinity. Nor were the agents to purchase materials for fitting transports with bulk heads or cabins if they could be constructed using materials as may already be on board. If ships did need to be fitted then the agents should receive proposals from two or three respectable traders and agree with the lowest offer after taking into consideration any old material that could be used, and also of the assistance that could be rendered by the ship's carpenter and crew. Whilst such works were being performed they should be overseen by a carpenter of one of HM's ships or of a transport who should record the quantity of materials used, the number of men employed and the time spent working. The Agent was

⁸⁸ TNA, WO, 1/801, Transport Office, 4 Nov 1801.

⁸⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/20/193, TB to Mr John King, Undersecretary at the Home Office, 19 Oct 1803.

instructed to carefully inspect the tradesmen's bills, which should be signed by the appointed over-seer, before submitting them to the admiral for his approval and signature.⁹⁰ From time to time the Board had to defend against the demands for payment of port dues, in 1803 there was a dispute with the Jersey port authority regarding four transports which the Board described as an 'unprecedented proceeding which may be carried out to a great extent and become injurious to HM's service if not immediately stopped'.⁹¹

The costs of the Transport Office, Pay and Pensions.

As with all other public offices, the number of staff and the pay thereof was subject to annual review in Parliament. This was the element of cost which the Treasury could control, although compared to the cost of the transport service it was insignificant. Table 3.6 illustrates the rates of pay of the Commissioners and clerks in the Transport Office in 1805. The salary of the Chairman had been increased from £1,000 to £1,200 per annum in 1800, this was comparable to that of the Chairman of the Victualling Board who was also paid £1,200. The salary of the other commissioners remained at £1000.⁹²

There is also evidence that the Treasury monitored the Transport Office costs particularly relating to pay but in 1795 it also reviewed the expense of postage suggesting that some modest abuse of this cost was prevalent. The Board was rebuked and instructed 'to take care to prevent the expense of postage of any letter except those which are actually and bona fide

⁹⁰ TNA, ADM, 106/3096 Handwritten update to printed *Articles of General Instructions to Agents* dated 1803.

⁹¹ TNA, ADM, 108/20/230, TB to the Earl of Camden, 10 Apr 1805.

⁹² Prior to October 1801, the established allowance to a Commissioner, while absent from town on service was £2 per day for subsistence and the traveling expenses actually incurred were reimbursed but by an order in Council in October 1801 this allowance was reduced to 1 guinea per day and 1/6d per mile for traveling charges. This is assumed to be one sixth of a penny.

sent from or received by your officers on public service'.⁹³ This occurred within the first year of the Board, and is the only indication of abuse within the Transport Office that has been revealed by this study.

| Table 3.6 Chart of the Rates of Pay of the Commissioners and Clerks employed in the Transport Office in 1805 | | | | | |
|---|--------------|-------------|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | Salaries | Emoluments | Reduction of 1/6 Duties & Property | Total net Receipts | Deductions % of Gross |
| | £...s...d | £...s...d | £...s...d | £...s...d | |
| First Commissioner | 1200...0...0 | | 150...0...0 | 1,050...0...0 | 12.5% |
| Second Commissioner | 1000...0...0 | | 125...0...0 | 875...0...0 | 12.5% |
| Third Commissioner | 1000...0...0 | | 125...0...0 | 875...0...0 | 12.5% |
| Fourth Commissioner | 1000...0...0 | | 125...0...0 | 875...0...0 | 12.5% |
| Fifth Commissioner | 1000...0...0 | | 125...0...0 | 875...0...0 | 12.5% |
| Secretary | 425...0...0 | 150...0...0 | 58..15...0 | 516...5...0 | 10% |
| First Clerk | 400...0...0 | 421...7...5 | 59..16...4 | 761..11...1 | 7.2% |
| Second Clerk | 180...0...0 | 303...7...5 | 37..13...4 | 445..14...1 | 7.7% |
| Third Clerk | 150...0...0 | 252..16...2 | 31...7..10 | 371...8...4 | 7.7% |
| Fourth Clerk | 120...0...0 | 202...5...0 | 25...2...3 | 297...2...9 | 7.7% |
| Fifth Clerk | 120...0...0 | 185...8...0 | 23...0...5 | 272...7...7 | 5.7% |
| Sixth Clerk | 80...0...0 | 134..16...0 | 12..14..10 | 202...1...2 | 5.9% |
| Messenger | 72...0...0 | | 5...8...0 | 66..12...0 | 7.5% |
| Housekeeper | 30...0...0 | | | 30...0...0 | |
| | | | 903..18..0 | 7,513...2...0 | |
| Source: TNA, T,1/959/ 46-47 | | | | | |

Clerks were not charged a fee on appointment as had been the practice in the Victualling Board and at the Navy Board and in the dockyards.⁹⁴ They did sign an oath but after 1801 all officials entrusted with the charge of public money had to a deposit a bond and sign an oath.⁹⁵

⁹³ TNA, ADM, 108 /4b/236, Charles Long, Second Secretary of the Treasury, to TB, 4 Jul 1795.

⁹⁴ Knight, 'Politics and Trust in Victualling the Navy 1793 – 1815' in *Mariner's Mirror*, 94 (2008), 142.

⁹⁵ Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, 252.

The 31st Report of the Commission of Revision included drafts of the bond and oath statement for the various classes of employees. Between 1795 and 1805 the number of clerical staff did not increase and neither had they received any salary increase. They did, however, receive a share of fees charged for various services. As demonstrated in the chart above, this sum tended to be significantly higher than the basic salary of the clerks. The deductions are described as ‘Reduction of one shilling and six pence – Duties and Property taxes’ however the percentage of the gross value varies from 5.7 per cent to 12.5 per cent in respect of the commissioners whereas one shilling and six pence per £1 is 7.5 per cent.

The Board charged fees for performing various services for ship-owners for preparing Charter Parties and preparing the imprests and for making the final payments for the ship’s hire. It also charged fees in respect of stores purchased and the Transport Agents paid fees for registering their promotions and for having their annual accounts cleared.⁹⁶ The Committee on Finance identified that a fee of one guinea (21/-) per £1,000 was being taken on the amount of the balance due on a ship’s final account. The Treasury considered that ‘it was unfit that any person entrusted in any degree with the examination of accounts or charges should have an interest in the amount of money to be paid by the public’. The Transport Board was directed to discontinue the practice immediately.⁹⁷ The charging of other fees continued as in some other Boards.⁹⁸ In January 1807 the Board reported that the Transport Office fees collected amounted to £4,413/04/00 of this 40 per cent or £1,726/12/02 had been allocated to the clerks in the Office and described as emoluments, see chart 3.7.

⁹⁶ For details of fees levied see appendices.

⁹⁷ HoCPP, 1715-1800, 114, 65. *Proceedings of the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty’s Treasury, or in Consequence of Directions from them since the End of the last Session of Parliament, respecting several Offices concerned in the Receipt and Expenditure of the Public Money.*

⁹⁸ Committee on Finance (36th), 681. Reports that a fee fund had been established to defray the salary of each officer in the Secretary for War’s office.

| Table 3.7 | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Transport Office | | |
| 31 January 1807 | | |
| An Account showing the sum of fees received during the last year and what part thereof has been paid to the Clerks or to any other person. | | |
| Transport Branch | | |
| | | £.....s...d |
| Balance remaining on 1 January 1806 | | 2,271...6...1 |
| Fees received in the year 1806 | | 4,413...4...0 |
| Total | | 6,684..10...1 |
| | £.....s...d | |
| Payable to the clerks | 1,726..12...2 | |
| Taxes ex Salaries of Commissioners, Secretary, Clerks i.e. the One shilling and sixpenny duties | 728..15..10 | 2,455...8...0 |
| Balance remaining | | 4,229...2...1 |
| Source: TNA, ADM, 3774/236 | | |

How the sum of £1,726/12/02 was allocated between the clerks is unclear. In 1805 the sum paid to the Transport Department clerks as shown in table 3.6 was £1,600, duties having been paid. By 1813 the fees collected had doubled to £8,965 and in 1814 increased again to £10,237, enabling the clerks in all three departments of the Transport Office to share £3,918 and £4,198 respectively.⁹⁹ The Sick and Hurt department and the Prisoners Department also operated a fee collection and fee sharing system albeit the sums involved were much smaller.

Table 3.8 shows pensions that had been granted to ex-employees of the Transport Board. It is interesting to note that besides payments to the Alexander Whitehead who had been the Secretary and Henry Boyce the long serving Surveyor at Deptford the list also includes some payments to Masters killed in service of the Board and to several seamen for reasons not disclosed. It may well be that these were the only transport seamen killed in action whilst in the transport service as distinct from lost through marine accidents, if so the number is remarkably low.

⁹⁹ HoCPP, 1814/15, 313, IX.187, 1, Papers Relating to the Transport Office 22 May 1815

| Table 3.8 | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|-----------|
| Estimate of allowances or superannuation to be paid in 1817 | | | |
| Name | Situation from which they retired | Date of Order | £ |
| Mr Alex Whitehead | Secretary | 3 Feb 1806 & 17 Dec 1812 | 600 |
| Henry Boyce | Surveying Officer Deptford | 7 Dec 1805 | 150 |
| John Woodroffe | Chief Clerk in Secretary's Dept at the TB | 1 Feb 1815 | 350 |
| Ralph Dixon | Seamen of the <i>Doris</i> Transport | 8 July 1805 | 16 |
| William & Jane White | Parents of John White – Master of the <i>British Queen</i> transport – killed in action | 30 March 1811 | 25 |
| Hannah Weakner | Widow of Jacob Weakner, Master of the <i>Mary</i> transport Killed in Action | 3 Jan 1815 | 30 |
| William Johnson | Seaman of the <i>Mary</i> Transport | 22 Nov 1813 | 16 |
| John Hutchinson | Seaman of the Colonial Brig <i>Princess Charlotte</i> | | 10 |
| John Sequest | Seaman of the <i>Millbanke</i> Transport | 14 Mar 1814 | 12 |
| Geo Goulden | Carpenter of the <i>Oakhall</i> | 10 May 1814 | 8 |
| William Collins | Second mate on <i>Permona</i> | 29 July 1817 | 14 |
| John Newsome | Chief mate on the <i>Hound</i> | 22 Nov 1813 | 14 |
| William Patterson | Gunners mate of the <i>Kangaroo</i> Colonial Brig | 27 Sep 1813 | 18..5..00 |
| Francis Walton | Seaman of the <i>Recovery</i> Transport | | 12 |

Source: TNA,ADM,1/3770 From Commissioners of TB still including R.George 11 Jan 1817

Subsequently further pensions were granted to Commissioners Sir Rupert George £1200 pa, Honourable John Douglas £650, John Forbes £500 and Dr John Harness £750. The Surveyor of Transports William Fearnall was awarded £300 and agent for Transports Captain Charles Patton £200. Others, mainly clerks, total £2060/02/06 per quarter. All payable quarterly from 29 September 1817¹⁰⁰

Summary

Despite the ambiguity of having three masters, the Treasury, the Secretary of State for War and the Admiralty, the Chairman of the Transport Board, Captain and later Sir Rupert George was obviously very competent. He would not have survived in the role for over twenty years during seven administrations and picked up additional responsibilities along the way, if this had

¹⁰⁰ TNA, T, 1/4320.

not been the case. Under his leadership the Transport Board was a very bureaucratically centralized organization but at the same time it relied on the zeal and resourcefulness of its Agents. Collectively the Commissioners and Agents strove successfully to achieve the primary objective of restricting costs and reducing cost inefficiency whilst at the same time delivering an effective transport service. This was achieved by having men with naval and maritime experience performing these tasks without the distraction of other tasks. The Board developed effective processes, involving a large number of ships' brokers, to bring forward ships and the complex process of preparing transports for service was achieved by the implementation and strict adherence to the production of daily reports by the Resident Transport Agents. Through the strong centralized system the Board was fully aware of the state of readiness of transports and of all transport movements. It established processes to ensure that all relevant parties were fully informed of the rate of progress and that the Agents clearly understood their instructions. The Transport Board was an effective, well managed organization.

Chapter four

Economy versus efficiency: some case histories.

‘The transport service is liable to a great variety of unforeseen or unavoidable accidents and delays which, though independent of Board itself, might blemish the impact of honest and unwearied energies’.¹

The inevitability of delays.

Each government administration was anxious to keep down the costs of war.

Occasionally, attempts to minimise the cost resulted in decisions that lessened the efficiency of the transport service. In particular, instructions to discharge transports only to find them required again within a few months. The ensuing difficulty of re-procuring and preparing transports for service resulted from the combined effects of ministerial interference, misunderstandings, miscommunication, obfuscation and confusion that was invariably prevalent during the build-up to most military expeditions. At the port of embarkation the Agents for Transports were responsible for bringing order to an often frenetic situation. Delays were almost inevitable given the number of departments involved, each with its own priorities and all operating under Treasury scrutiny for economy, combined with the reliance upon good fortune and favourable weather conditions. Such delays were hardly a surprise, but rarely were they anticipated or were mitigations planned. When the preparations for expeditions did not run as smoothly as was expected it invariably led to a degree of manoeuvring to place the responsibility for failure elsewhere.

¹ TNA, ADM, 108/19/1, TB to Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, 29 Dec 1796.

The Transport Board was in an invidious position, given its central role in this logistics process; other departments were not slow to criticise it. That criticism, which was usually directed through the Secretary of State for War, invariably led to demands to conduct an enquiry into the circumstances relating to the complaint. Study of the directions issued to the Board by its political masters and of the outcome of some of these enquiries reveals much about the complexity of the process of preparing for an expedition: it highlights the huge endeavours required and demonstrates the quality of the achievement. This chapter will consider the impact of political direction and the outcome from three enquiries, which will illustrate how delays occurred and the impact thereof.

West Indies and Portuguese expeditions, 1796.

First, an enquiry initiated by Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War 1794 to 1801. He had been extremely irritated by the delays to the West Indies convoy led by Rear-Admiral Christian in 1795.² So when there were delays to much smaller expeditions to the West Indies and to Portugal in the following year Dundas' frustration increased and resulted in him taking the unusual step of bypassing the Admiralty to direct the departure of the convoy. This was, in his own words, 'an extraordinary deviation from the established regulations of the service'. It was an unprecedented occurrence which he described as 'a measure so extraordinary'. He was determined to find out what had caused the delays by questioning all the departments involved in the preparations 'in order that blame may not be imputed indiscriminately..... and to prevent the reoccurrence

² For a narrative of the Abercromby / Christian expedition see Duffy *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 159 - 252 and Morriss 'High Exertions and Difficult Cases: The Work of the Transport Agents, 1795-1797 in Doe and Harding (eds) *Naval Leadership and Management, 1650-1950*. (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 2012), 95-107.

of similar evils and complaints'. He demanded that the Board report on its role in this matter trusting 'that both the Board and its subordinate Agents stand exculpated, and deserving of that confidence which a liberal government will never withdraw, but upon strong and palpable grounds of misconduct or neglect'. At the same time he requested consideration of a complaint that numerous officers, some men and baggage had been left behind when the convoy finally sailed, due to there being insufficient accommodation on the transports.³

Need-less-to-say, in true civil service style, the Transport Board totally refuted any allegation that responsibility for the delay in the embarkation of troops for the West Indies and for Portugal was attributable to itself or its Agents. 'Not a day nor an hour have been lost; that no possible exertion, within the reach of this Board and its agents has been omitted; to carry into the fullest effect the orders communicated to us'.⁴ Instead the Board blamed the delays upon ministerial interference. When ordering the shipment of 3,000 troops to the West Indies, on 7 October 1796, Dundas himself had specified which ships were to perform the service. They were teak built East India Company ships, but unknown to Dundas they were 'in a very deficient state'; three of them were actually in dock in the River undergoing repairs. This delayed their sailing from Deptford until the 28 and 31 October and 11 November but then they experienced further delays due to contrary winds. When they finally arrived at Portsmouth it was realized that they could only receive 2,014 of the 3,000 men so the armed transports *Coromandel* and *Weymouth* had to be prepared to take the remainder. Preparations and embarkations were completed

³ TNA, WO, 6/156/180, Henry Dundas to the TB, 24 Dec 1796.

⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/19, TB to Henry Dundas, 29 Dec 1796.

and they were ready to sail on 12 December, nine weeks after the initial instruction, of these three to four weeks were attributable to the essential repairs.

Dundas was also unhappy about delays in the preparation of troop ships for St Domingo that he had ordered on 26 November 1796. The Board was obliged to remind him that on 5 November, when he and Mr Pitt had met Captain George, the Chairman had been instructed to 'discharge all vacant tonnage at Portsmouth beyond 2000 tons' to reduce the 'expense' of transport and to retain only 4,000 tons in the River. George had taken action immediately and consequently on the 26th (3 weeks later) very few ships were ready to be allocated to the St Domingo service. The 4,000 tons of transports in the River had already been taken up by the Victualling Board which had, in fact, required 7,700 tons for provisions for the fleets on the Leeward Islands and Mediterranean Stations. In response, Dundas accepted that, 'the wish expressed by Mr Pitt and myself for the reduction of transports at home to 6,000 tons, appeared to have led to a mistake'. He explained they had only considered the forthcoming requirements for troop transports, they had not made allowance of the demands of the other departments including the victualling office 'of which we could form no accurate opinion'. He did suggest that the Board, in concert with the other departments, ought to have made 'similar estimates upon the best material, which can be formed'. This clearly demonstrates several deficiencies on the minister's part, a lack of planning even over a relatively short three week period and a failure to communicate precisely the parameters of the instruction to discharge transports. It exposed a weakness both in the communications between the Board and the Victualling Board regarding shipping intentions and in the Board's preparedness to question an instruction from the minister.

Nevertheless, to ensure that the St. Domingo service was prepared as quickly as possible, George had instructed Captain Patton, the Agent at Portsmouth, to give preference to that service above all others. Patton advised that he had appropriated four ships for the reception of the troops. Unfortunately, because the crew of those transports had been impressed by the Navy, the refitting and provisioning of the ships had been delayed. When these ships eventually left Portsmouth for Cowes to embark troops, the commander of the forces under embarkation thought that the ships were over-crowded, even though at 1,235 tons for 636 men it was almost at the usual proportion of two tons per man. This meant that an additional ship had to be quickly brought into service to placate him. It was not unknown for army officers to interfere with the embarkation process. A difficult officer could create many additional problems for the Transport Agents. The transports were completed in nineteen days and were ready to sail on 15 December.

Dundas agreed to write to the Admiralty about pressing men from transports, requesting that their Lordships prevent any further interruption to the service. The Admiralty confirmed that to avoid future delay and inconvenience, the officers of the impress service had been ordered not 'upon any account whatever' to impress crews of any transports upon production of a protection from the Admiralty that 'stated the number and description of the men employed to navigate such vessel'. The Board explained that examination of the ships charter party and the ships register would enable the impress officer to determine how many men should be on board.⁵ The Board argued that it was impossible to deliver a description of the men because seamen engaged while

⁵ The Charter party stated the number of men or alternatively the Ships Register would show the registered tonnage and the number of men was based on the ratio of five men and a boy per 100 tons.

the ship was in port changed continually. It argued that impress officers should be ordered not to take any men where there was no apparent excess of complement. Neither should men be taken from the transport's boats or from men working ashore, where each individual seaman could produce his ticket of leave for the day signed by one of the Agents at the port.⁶ Although the Admiralty agreed on numerous occasions to clarify, with its officers, the position on impressments, in reality it knew that it could not prevent officers from pressing seamen from transports thus it tended to turn a blind eye to such problems.

Dundas was also unhappy about the delays in preparing the cavalry transports for Portugal, which were ordered on 1 November. The instruction required the Board to bring some foreign regiments which were in Guernsey and Jersey to Portsmouth for onward passage to Portugal. Six transports were selected to collect the troops and bring them to Portsmouth. Three transports were sent to Guernsey arriving back at Spithead on 22 November as directed. However, the three that had been sent to Jersey received orders from the naval Commander there to proceed to Falmouth, to await the appearance of the fleet, rather than to Spithead. He had not considered that they were not provisioned to sail on to Portugal nor was one of them, the *Flora*, fitted for the conveyance of troops on a foreign voyage. She was only intended to be used for the short run to Portsmouth. When the Board learned this it immediately directed Lieutenant Motley, the Agent Afloat with these ships to ensure that the *Flora* was suitably equipped and all the ships were provisioned for the voyage to Portugal. At the time of writing the Transport Board's response the Lisbon fleet was at Falmouth awaiting sailing orders from the Admiralty.

⁶ TNA, ADM, 1/3733, TB to the Admiralty, 11 Jan 1797.

The Board pointed out that the original instruction had said that there were 1,051 men in the regiments but there were actually 1,289, an excess of 238 men increasing the demand for tonnage by almost 500 tons. This situation was not unusual, the Transport Agents regularly discovered that, when the troops arrived for embarkation, there were more than had been expected necessitating the urgent preparation of additional tonnage.

To add to the Board's woes one of the transports selected for the Portugal service, the *Dover*, suffered a series of misadventures which illustrate the sheer unpredictability of the service. She had recently arrived back from the West Indies, and consequently required refitting in sails and rigging. Not only that but her master had to be replaced due to bad conduct and the crew had to be replaced because the original crew had absconded. Consequently she had been detained at Gravesend for refitting and to await a full complement of men. Whilst there she received damages from two ships both 'running foul of her' causing some damage and further delays. Then, on her passage round to Portsmouth, in a fog and bad weather she 'struck upon the Owers and beat off her rudder' and sustaining other damage, all of which was repaired within a few days. Then the final problem occurred on 15 December, when, in response to Dundas' order for the convoy to sail immediately it ran into foul winds which drove the larger part of the fleet into Portsmouth, Falmouth and Torbay. Excluding the problems with the *Dover* the preparations had taken six weeks to organize.

The preparation of the East India ships took longer than might have been expected, due to the necessity of repairs, but the Portugal preparations had taken about the length of time that might have been expected. However, the nineteen days taken to prepare the St Domingo service was particularly speedy. The larger East India ships sailed again on 21st

but the Admiralty had delayed the sailing of the other transports because of the weather conditions and they were still at Falmouth on 29 December, the date of the Board's report. These circumstances do not seem sufficient to warrant Dundas's 'extra-ordinary actions', his actions must have been motivated by other, unidentified events.

In response to the complaints from the army officers who had wanted passages, Captain Charles Patton, the Agent at Portsmouth was able to demonstrate that many applications, from officers, had been made through the proper channels and these had been dealt with quickly and effectively. Some applications however, had bypassed the established procedures. They had been made directly to him without first obtaining the approval from the Secretary of State and the Board itself. Some of these officers, as well as others who had applied through the correct channels but too late, had not been embarked. There had been more applications from officers, who required cabins, than had been anticipated. The Agent had not been able to provide enough cabins at very short notice. The Board was confident that Dundas would agree that, however responsive the Board might be, it was essential 'that proper and timely communications should be made to us of the extent of their numbers and demands; or it will be difficult, if not impossible, to prevent such disappointing delays, as must inevitably arise from sudden and irregular applications'.⁷

The Agent had discovered that, despite his best endeavours to accommodate these late applications by making 'liberal and general offers' to the victuallers and ships 'on freight', to take in as many of these officers, as could be conveniently be accommodated, the masters of those ships had been extremely reluctant to accept any

⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/19, TB to Henry Dundas, 29 Dec 1796.

officers upon any terms. The Agent had thus to find additional transports. Fortunately, the Board had sent round four troop ships, not particularly for that service because it was believed that sufficient transport had been allocated to it, but in fact without them the remaining officers and stores could not have been accommodated.

Dundas supported the Board's position regarding the complaints from the officers for whom no passage to the West Indies had been reserved: 'the blame of disappointment lies with the officers themselves, who appear in most instances not to have made their application in time and in many not till several days after the time fixed for the departing of the convoy'. He planned to discuss the issue with the Duke of York to devise some measures to be taken to prevent reoccurrence.⁸ Subsequently, in 1799, the Board changed the terms of the charter party to oblige victuallers to take a reasonable number of passengers.

The Board told Dundas that the tonnage demanded for ordnance stores and provisions for these expeditions had exceeded all former precedents and had not been anticipated by either the other boards or the Transport Board. The volume of shipping required had only been realized at the last moment consequently the 'demands were sudden and unexpected but happily, they have all been put on board'. The Board requested Dundas to ensure that for all future services, the departments requiring tonnage should anticipate the requirements in advance and it would be Transport Board's responsibility to 'make the necessary provision'. Communications between the departments had not been good, the volume of shipping required had initially been significantly underestimated, fortunately the Board had been able to find additional ships thereby avoiding the delays that might have occurred.

⁸ TNA, WO, 6,156,183. Henry Dundas to the TB. 2 Jan1797.

Dundas' response to the Board's review of events was prompt: 'HM has been pleased to receive your report in the most gracious manner and to signify his entire satisfaction at the distinct justification therein contained of your conduct in the service to which it related', thus exonerating the Transport Board. Nevertheless these events had exposed many embarrassing deficiencies in the government's administrative system including: a lack of planning by ordering the discharge of ships that were needed only a few weeks later; ill informed ministerial interference in selecting ships which needed repairs and refits and not being clear about their troop carrying capacity; lack of communication between departments about anticipated demands in respect of the numbers of troops to be shipped; the extent of officer accommodation required and the volume of supplies to be shipped; uninformed interference, possibly the infringement of procedures, by army officers and naval commanders and the self interest of the navy as evidenced by the activity of impressment gangs.

Major General Spencer's expedition to Sicily, 1807.

In November 1807 Castlereagh had requested the Board to prepare transports for 7,000 troops intended to sail under Major General Spencer to Sicily by way of Lisbon. Preparations took six weeks; the fleet sailed on 20 December. Unfortunately when the convoy finally sailed, it ran into gales shortly after departure. Spencer, together with half the fleet returned to Falmouth, the remainder pressed on for Gibraltar. He did not sail again until 21 February.⁹ Lord Hawkesbury wrote on behalf of Castlereagh demanding an explanation for the delays from the Transport Board on the 19th December. His letter seems to demonstrate a complete lack of understanding about the complexity of and the

⁹ Mackesy. *The War in the Mediterranean 1803 – 1810*. 263/4.

time required to prepare a fleet of about 70 transports that this expedition would have required. Again the Secretary of State must bear some responsibility for the delays because he had specifically designated which ships were to be used for the service. Those particular vessels had only recently arrived from South America, the Mediterranean and Copenhagen and in consequence of long voyages, accidents and ‘uncommonly tempestuous weather’ they had required significant repairs to their hulls, masts and sails before they were ready to be refitted.¹⁰ Clearly Castlereagh had not taken this into consideration.

Captain Patton, the Resident Agent at Portsmouth, was first advised of the details of the ships that had been allocated to the service on 10 November 1807. At the same time the Board advised him that the quantity of beds recently ordered had been increased from 2,000 to 10,000 to support this expedition. This illustrates the extraordinary demands put upon contractors at relatively short notice.

Some of the ships needed their copper sheathing replaced, some needed repairs, others needed their ballast changing and all wanted caulking in the upper decks and bulwarks as well as significant refitting in their rigging and sails. But, due to the lack of availability of dry docks and shortage of skilled labour, it was not possible to refit so many ships at the same time at Portsmouth. The only dry docks at Portsmouth were in the dockyard and since the navy refused to allow transports to be repaired in the dockyards ships had to be beached to facilitate repairs. The queue of ships waiting to be beached was increasing so some of the ships were ordered around to the River for repair.¹¹ To speed up the process at Portsmouth, Patton had engaged shipwrights from Bursledon and

¹⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, TB to Castlereagh, 19 Dec 1807.

¹¹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 11 Nov 1807.

Fareham and had even tried to procure some from other ports including Cowes and Cork, but without success. The Portsmouth Victualling agent was also experiencing considerable difficulties. His local suppliers were fully extended and they were experiencing considerable difficulties keeping up with his demands. In addition, he had not enough men or vessels to supply both the naval ships and the transports. Instead he had been obliged to employ all the vessels at his disposal in supplying the navy's ships. He had not been able to comply with Patton's earlier requests for provisions and water for some transports which had arrived from the Baltic with the King's German Legion on board. Nor had he been able to supply water for the transports for Ireland even though some of the transports had less than three days provisions on board.¹²

Meanwhile pressure was mounting on Patton. He had been advised that another 3,246 men were expected to arrive in Portsmouth shortly and, because all the barracks on shore were full, transports had to be ready to receive them.¹³ Inevitably when there were to be major troop shipments the port towns became inundated with soldiers. The local barrack facilities could not cope with such large numbers. Army commanders preferred to embark the troops directly onto transports which were then moved out to Spithead which reduced the opportunity for absconding. Castlereagh demanded a status report from the Board and it further added to the demands on Patton by insisting that he send, by return, a complete list specifying the state of forwardness of each ship advising when it would be ready to receive troops.¹⁴ Captain Patton was struggling to attend to the competing demands on his time 'it is impossible without neglecting the business of these transports to complete the weekly return in the usual form'. More agents were appointed

¹² TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 20 Nov 1807.

¹³ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 20 Nov 1807.

¹⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, TB to Captain Patton, 25 Nov 1807.

to assist him including Captain James Halstead. Patton made him responsible for the transports at Spithead and put the transports in the harbour under Lieutenants Richard Cheeseman and James Morgan and the horse ships under Lieutenant Edward Tregurtha. By the 27 November many of the transports were ready to receive provisions and water. A few were still in the carpenter's hands and were expected to be completed by the time the others were provisioned. The onus was then on the Victualling Board to complete the supply of provisions and water. On the same day the Transport Board wrote to the Victualling Board, to remind it yet again of the urgent need to provide provisions and water.¹⁵

Meanwhile Patton had realised, perhaps a little late, that there was not nearly enough bedding in store to supply the 7,000 troops that were to be embarked, if they were all to have new bedding rather than washed bedding. The Board advised him that the contractor had been instructed to increase the supply of new bedding urgently. It was intended that the troops were to be supplied with new bedding as far as possible with the deficiency made up of washed bedding.¹⁶ The transports with the German troops on board which had arrived from the Baltic were required for Spencer's troops but would need to be fumigated and fitted with new bedding prior to the arrival of the troops who would embark on them. The General in charge of troops at Portsmouth had not received any orders to disembark the German troops, on the contrary he had been directed to keep them on board because 'they cannot be quartered on shore for want of room'.¹⁷ Therefore Patton had to make arrangements to fumigate these ships whilst the troops were still on board making the task extremely difficult and very unpleasant for the troops themselves.

¹⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, TB to Captain Patton, 27 Nov 1807.

¹⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, TB to Captain Patton, 27 Nov 1807.

¹⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to the TB, 29 Nov 1807.

More troops were preparing to march to Portsmouth.¹⁸ The Transport Board advised Patton to remove the troops who were supposed to be going to Ireland who were already embarked on six month ships, which were now required for this service, and put them on three month ships.¹⁹ This was more economical, these ships could be discharged sooner if they were no longer required.

The Agent Victualler had received directions from the Victualling Board, prompted by the Transport Board's letter. He had been ordered to complete the transports with water and provisions 'with all possible despatch'. Unfortunately, by the same post he had received an Admiralty order to replenish the stores of seven sail of the line with water and provisions 'with all possible speed'. The naval ships took precedence but the agent victualler did agree to employ some vessels to supply the transports with troops on board at Spithead that were out of water and provisions and were surviving on a daily supply collected in their own boats.²⁰

Finally on the 2 December the general in command of the troops at Portsmouth received directions from the Department of War to land the troops that were under orders for Ireland as well as the German Divisions. But he had requested that, in order to make room for them, 450 men who were joining the expedition might be embarked on board the three coppered transports *William* 259 tons, *Ralph Nicholson* 357 and *Jupiter* 341 which were the only transports provided with water and provisions. Despite this, on 6 December the German Legion was still on board, needless to say the men were complaining bitterly having been at Spithead for over four weeks.

¹⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to the TB, 29 Nov 1807.

¹⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, TB to Captain Patton, 30 Nov 1807.

²⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 30 Nov 1807.

In the meantime there were other services to be dealt with. For instance, Patton was ordered to allot transports for a company of German Light Artillery with their guns, wagons, ammunition and stores. One of the ships allocated for the mission was the *Richard*, which on its last voyage had suffered an outbreak of ophthalmia, since then she had been well cleaned, fumigated and examined by a surgeon.²¹ He had confirmed that she could be used but by that time the crew had deserted so replacements were required.

Despite the arrival of additional transports there was still a shortage of regular transports and the Board was forced to consider sending three-month ships with the fleet. By 2 December at Portsmouth there was 'ready and making ready' coppered transports for 5,133 men and sheathed transports for 815 men not including the *Ann* 365 or the *Christopher* 297. The former was in dock and the latter still on Gosport Reach for repairs to damage received striking rocks at St Aubins Point, Jersey.²² Major General Spencer arrived at Portsmouth on 11 December bearing the message that the Secretary of State 'was particularly desirous that there was no further delay'. Unfortunately, Thomas Reeks, the Agent Victualler, chose that day to advise Patton that he had neither pease nor butter to supply the transports, and that he was short of several other articles.²³ The Transport Board immediately ordered the substitution of rice and sugar instead of pease. To add to Patton's woes Portsmouth was experiencing 'an uncommonly low high tide' which was preventing the *Ann* 365 tons from floating out of the dry dock and the *Christopher* 297 being floated off Gosport Beach.²⁴ He was planning to substitute *Aid* 330 to replace the *Christopher* if she could not get off in time and the *Richard* in place of the *Ann*. The

²¹ Ophthalmia, severe inflammation of the eye.

²² TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 2 Dec 1807.

²³ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 11 Dec 1807.

²⁴ It is not clear which dry dock, if it was in the dockyard then it is not clear how Patton had been able to persuade the dock yard officers to allow this ship to be repaired there.

Enterprize 328 that was returning after repair in the River had been delayed by the wind but she was expected to arrive shortly. However to complete the embarkation Patton recommended that several smaller ships should be used although these would not normally be used as troop ships. As one of them, the *Eliza*, were not ready, extra hands had been put to work on her.²⁵ In the meantime the Board had arranged for five transports to be loaded with entrenching tools, engineers' stores, brass ordnance, ammunition and stores at Woolwich. They were then to join the fleet at Portsmouth.²⁶

At Portsmouth the Victualling Agent was experiencing further problems; besides the shortage of pease and other supplies it was now faced with the dilemma that the loaded victualling craft had become grounded in the extremely low water at the Victualling wharf. This was not the first time that such delays had occurred for that reason.²⁷ Patton's view was that the Agent Victualler 'has done everything in his power to forward the service'. However he explained to Admiral Montague, the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, that the problem of the lack of water at the victualling wharf 'might certainly be removed at no very great expense' but did not specify how.²⁸

On the 16 December the agent victualler was expecting a vessel with pease to arrive from the Downs on the next day, for this reason and because he did not know in what proportion to substitute the rice and sugar, he had put off supplying the transports with rice and sugar.²⁹ However Patton was determined that if the ship did not arrive with the pease as expected then the rice substitute would be supplied.

²⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 16 Dec 1807.

²⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, TB to Captain Patton, 9 Dec 1807.

²⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 9 Dec 1807.

²⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to Admiral Montague, 9 Dec 1807.

²⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Captain Patton to TB, 16 Dec 1807.

On receipt of the letter from Castlereagh's office the Transport Board sent Commissioner Captain George Henry Towry to review and finalise the preparations. He confirmed, probably not unexpectedly, that even with all the 'untoward circumstances' all the troops were embarked on board before the supply of the provisions and water could be completed to allow them to proceed to sea. He judged that, because of the time taken to provision the ships, bringing forward more three months ships or crowding the troops at one and a half tons per man would not have expedited their sailing. He also confirmed that Major-General Spencer 'expresses himself highly pleased with Captain Patton's exertions' and Towry agreed that 'he has in my opinion used all the means in his power to forward the arrangements'.³⁰ He reinforced the point that there were insufficient facilities to repair a large number of transports at the same time at Portsmouth. Adverse weather conditions had compounded the problems and had made it particularly difficult to repair ships that were moored at Spithead, owing to the distance of Spithead from the harbour. Towry confirmed that the transports would have been able to sail at the end of the previous week, had the Victualling Board been able to complete the loading of water and provisions. Again the Board asserted that 'no delay has occurred within the power of this Board; whatever delays have occurred have been partly due to the weather and to causes not related to us but by 'the department to which this part of the service belongs in water and provisions'.³¹

Troops bound for Portugal, 1813.

In February 1813 Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for War, demanded an explanation for the delay in sending cavalry transports from Plymouth to Cork from

³⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75, Commissioner Towry to TB, Portsmouth, 18 Dec 1807.

³¹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/75. TB to Lord Hawkesbury, 1 Dec 1807.

where they were to convey 410 artillery horses to Lisbon. This order had been issued on 5 January. It was Bathurst's understanding that the ships were still at Plymouth despite the horses being needed urgently in Portugal for the Duke of Wellington's army. This was just one of a number of instructions that Bathurst had issued at that time that required horse ships. To supply these he had ordered horse ships back from Portugal as well as authorizing the Board to procure additional transports for 1,200 horses. Bathurst claimed that he had been advised on 26 January that the horse ships from the Tagus were beginning to arrive and that, although some had been allocated to other services, there were transports ready at Plymouth for 528 horses. These were sufficient for the conveyance of the artillery horses from Cork. However, he had been informed by the Admiralty that no application for a convoy to proceed from Plymouth to Cork had been made until 1 February, even though the wind at that time had been perfectly fair for the voyage. On the 1st the wind had changed and the vessels were still detained at Plymouth incurring 'a very injurious delay in sending the horses to Portugal'. Bathurst accused the Board of being dilatory between 26 January and 1 February.

The Board denied responsibility for any delay. It also denied providing any report on the 26th that the horse ships were complete. 'Your lordships will observe that we could not possibly have reported on 26 January that ships for 520 horses were ready at Plymouth; nor can we find that any report to that effect either written or verbal was made from this office'. It suggested that on the contrary because of the daily reporting to the minister the actual state of the service must have been very apparent to him. Bathurst was not happy with this response. He reminded the Board that its 'Statement of particular services under order' dated 26 January reported that there were 'at Plymouth ordered to

Portsmouth 520 stalls'. On receipt of that statement Colonel Bunbury, the Military Undersecretary, had sent a messenger to the Transport Office to suggest that instead of sending all the ships to Portsmouth thus taking extra time, sufficient number for the conveyance of 410 horses should go direct from Plymouth to Cork. The messenger had been told that indeed this was already in hand and that the ships in question were already ordered to proceed direct to Cork.

There was no delay in applying for convoy, the Board argued, it had applied to the Admiralty for a convoy from Plymouth to Cork on 23 January. The Agent at Plymouth reported on the 27 January that HMS *Leonidas* was to lead the convoy. The Board had assumed that the horse ships would proceed with the convoy. Orders to that effect had been given to the Agent. However, by a letter from him dated 30th, and received by the Board on the 1st, it appeared that although the transports were expected to be complete by 31 January, the *Leonidas* would not be ready to sail until the 3 February. Therefore the Board judged it advisable to apply immediately for a special convoy for these horse ships to send them sooner, hence the application for convoy protection dated the 1 February. This incident illustrates the breakdown in communication which occasionally occurred within and between government departments. The Board appeared to be taking criticism that might have been more properly directed at the Admiralty.

However this was not Bathurst's only complaint. He had 'noticed the loss of time in providing transports for certain detachments of infantry ordered to be embarked for the Mediterranean'. He recollected that the tonnage for those troops had been ordered on 7 January but he had been embarrassed by receiving advice, from His Royal Highness the

Duke of York, the Commander in Chief, that ‘no transports are yet forthcoming’.³² The Board was anxious to explain that the difficulty it had experienced in procuring additional ships had not been caused by the reduction in the hire rate that it had implemented in the previous April from twenty five shillings to twenty shillings per ton. This reduction had been in line with the assurance that the Board had given to the Treasury when it authorized the last increase; that it would be reduced as soon as the state of trade permitted. Although this may have ‘occasioned the tardiness of ship-owners to offer their ships when latterly wanted’ the reduction had already saved the government £166,615/04/00. The Board hoped that Bathurst would approve of it not offering an increased rate of hire at that time ‘as any increase, if not made general, would occasion much discontent and consequently great inconvenience, and loss to the service’.³³ The Board claimed that other services had been prioritized on Bathurst’s instructions thereby delaying the execution of that instruction. It was expected that sufficient tonnage would be ready to embark those detachments whenever the wind allowed the ships to go round from the River to Portsmouth. Bathurst did not agree with the Board’s approach to holding the charter rate down. ‘However desirable an adherence to the rules you have adopted to the hiring of transport ships may be in ordinary cases I cannot consider it good economy to occasion any in the sending out of troops and stores to these destinations under the present circumstances’. Bathurst’s will prevailed; the charter rate was increased back to 25/- a few weeks later.

During the preparation of the horse ships the Board had experienced a recurrent problem. There were no stores of forage at Portsmouth or any of the other main ports.

³² TNA, WO, 6/159, War Department to TB, 11 Feb 1813.

³³ TNA, ADM, 108/23/97, TB to Earl Bathurst, 19 Feb 1813.

When a large supply of forage was required it was usually ordered round from the River. On this occasion it was sent to Portsmouth but the ships from the Tagus that were to receive the forage were forced to put into Plymouth due to contrary winds where there were no forage supplies. Bathurst had been surprised to learn that there were not adequate supplies of forage as well as ‘every necessary means of re-equipping transports’ at each of the principal ports. He instructed the Board to immediately establish magazines of forage at four of the principal ports; at Cork for 500 horses for three months, at Plymouth for 300, at Portsmouth for 1200 and at Yarmouth for 500. The Board was to ensure that these stores were replenished according to consumption.³⁴

Economy versus efficiency.

The need to minimize the cost of the wars was clear to every administration. Cost was the predominant feature of most of the parliamentary scrutiny regarding the progress of the wars. In certain cases it inhibited efficiency. One example of this was Castlereagh’s proposal, established early on in his tenure as Secretary of State for War, to maintain a ‘discretionary’ military force together with the necessary transports prepared and available for immediate action. The Whig administration dismissed this approach. In August 1807 the size and cost of the transport fleet featured in a series of clashes in the House of Commons between the recently re-appointed Castlereagh supported by George Canning, the new Foreign Secretary, and the ex-Minister William Windham and colleagues. The debate revolved around the level of preparedness that the new Portland administration had inherited from the ‘Talents’ administration. The previous ministers were forced to defend their actions of reducing the size of the transport fleet, rendering it

³⁴ TNA, WO, 6/159, War Department to TB, 22 Feb 1813.

incapable of providing conveyance for the cavalry that might have been offered to support the Swedes or the speedy preparation of sufficient horse transports, to ship Sir David Baird's force to the Cape.

Castlereagh accused Windham of eliminating the disposable fleet of transports, which he had built up, that might have been used for those purposes, on economic grounds in an attempt to save £40,000 per month. He claimed that 'this demonstrates that the policy between the two governments is so different'. Windham considered that the accusation that the fleet reduction had been from financial motives was 'fallacious'; rather that it had been in recognition of the state of Europe at the time. In Castlereagh's view the 'difficulty of providing cavalry transports, besides the time and trouble of fitting up' should have been recognized and the transport fleet should not have been reduced as much as it had been.³⁵

The information presented to Parliament regarding the cost of the Transport service was very restricted. It was included under the Heads of Naval Estimates, for the year 1814 it appeared as shown in table 1. This does clearly demonstrate that the service operated principally to support the army rather than the navy other than that it did not give MPs any indication of how the funds money was spent. It was the same for the funding of all departments, which is curious given that there was so much focus on the cost of the war.

³⁵ Hansard, *House of Commons sittings on 31 July, 7 Aug and 13 Aug 1807*. Ironically the same charge might have been laid against Castlereagh himself in 1809. This relates to his instruction to discharge all horse ships returning from Walcheren and Lisbon shortly before his resignation as Secretary of State in 1809.

| Table 4.1 An Estimate of the Charge of the Transport Service for the Year 1814 | | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|-----------|----|----|
| ARMY | For the hire of Transports for the Conveyance of Soldiers and Horses, and of Stores belonging to the Ordnance, Commissary General, Storekeeper General and Barracks Departments; For Provisions occasionally supplied occasionally supplied to Soldiers on board Transports; Building Cabins and Horse stalls, Forage for Horses and Pay of agents afloat. | 2,488,458 | 13 | 2 |
| NAVY | For the hire of Transports employed as Navy Victuallers and Navy Store Ships, and Pay to Agents Afloat. | 492,165 | 00 | 0 |
| Total of Transport Service | | 2,980,623 | 13 | 2 |
| Source: HoCPP, 1813/14, 110, XI.131, 21. | | | | |

Within Parliament there was a tendency to focus on the headcount, pay and pension commitments of the various departments, which were the minutia, rather than how the significantly larger estimates were to be spent. Morriss suggests that Parliament and the Treasury only became more focused on these costs from about 1811 when they became more easily accessible because they were published in Hansard for the first time.³⁶

It is thus hardly surprising that, with the exception of the Secretary of State for War, few other parliamentarians had much appreciation of the costs and complexity of the Transport Service. This is illustrated by an exchange of letters (in 1806) between William Windham, the Secretary of State for War and the Prime Minister, Lord Grenville, about the possibility of sending troops to support Prussia. Windham, who was against the idea, disingenuously suggested that the cost of hiring transports for 10,000 cavalry for three months would be £2.4m, knowing however that the cost of shipping troops was considerably less than that of shipping the same number of cavalrymen. The latter was four or five times the cost of the first. Grenville might have been expected to be aware of that. Instead he replied that the cost was ‘so very beyond any idea I could have

³⁶ Morriss. *Culture*. 70 and 203 and P.K. Crimmin, ‘Admiralty Relations with the Treasury 1783-1806: the preparation of Naval Estimates and the beginnings of Treasury Control’ *MM* 53(1967), 63-72.

formed'. This caused Grenville to reconsider the proposal to send troops to Prussia.³⁷ The point is that Grenville, despite his extensive government experience (he had been Foreign Secretary between 1794 and 1801), did not appear to appreciate the difference in cost between shipping troops and shipping cavalry.

Nevertheless the transport services and the Transport Board, along with all other government services, did receive considerable scrutiny by parliamentary commissions. Although the Board was not in existence when the Commission on Fees was in progress, comment on transport activities featured prominently. The Chairman, together with Commissioner James Bowen was interviewed by the Commission for Naval Revision during the preparation of the 9th Report. This Commission did not find fault with the Board although it did suggest a revision to the management structure to accommodate the effective management of the broader accountabilities following the integration of the Sick and Hurt Board responsibilities. Commissioner John Schank and William Harding, the accountant at the Transport Office, were interviewed by the Committee for Finance in the preparation of the 18th Report. In addition the Chairman was called before the Scheldt Enquiry to give evidence.

The absence of strategic planning.

Although the Board played a vital role at the principal crucial points of the war it was far removed from any war planning process which was determined at Cabinet level. It was continually forced to seek directions from the Secretary of State regarding the further use of transports. Should they be retained or discharged? The Board's knowledge

³⁷ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic Wars*, 136, In fact the three month cost at 19/- per ton per month of transports for 10,000 troops at 2 tons per man would have been £57,000. For 10,000 cavalry at 8 tons per horse the cost of transports would have been almost £240,000 not £2.4 million.

of future projects was limited to that which the Secretary of State was aware of and was prepared to share. It is clear that Castlereagh rarely if ever consulted the Transport Board before a major Cabinet decision was taken, following the practice of all previous Secretaries of State for War, including Henry Dundas. Whereas the Admiralty and senior military officers were canvassed for ideas, views and opinions on proposals, the Transport Board was probably considered to be too lowly a Board from which to seek advice, instead it received instructions. However, once the preparations were in progress then as Sir Rupert George told the Scheldt Enquiry, he met with Castlereagh almost every day to discuss progress.³⁸

Castlereagh clearly understood the difficulties inherent in the transport procurement process. On one occasion he told the House of Commons that ‘the interval between the wish to obtain transports and the power of obtaining them was much greater than was generally to be imagined’.³⁹ However the impact of the weather and the ability of all the departments involved to perform in harmony, during the preparation phase, were often underestimated. The Walcheren expedition, in 1809, is a classic example of the how the various British administrations invariably reacted to external political and military events rather than working to a grand plan. Although proposals to capture Flushing and Antwerp had been considered by the Cabinet, most recently in December / early January of 1809 it was not until 22 April, when the Cabinet learned of Austria’s declaration of war with France which had occurred a few weeks earlier, that the plan implemented.⁴⁰ On 20 May the Transport Board was instructed to hire shipping. This was about the same time that the Earl of Chatham was being sounded out to lead the campaign

³⁸ HoCPP, 1810, 12, VIII.1, 39, Scheldt Inquiry Sir Rupert George’s Evidence, 20 May 1810

³⁹ HoCPP Hansard 7 Aug 1807.

⁴⁰ Hall, *British Strategy*, 176.

and that advice on the proposed campaign was requested from the Admiralty and senior military officers.⁴¹ Sir Rupert George disclosed in his evidence to the Scheldt Commission that he had not been advised of the plans until 20 May. Given that this was the peak of the maritime trade season and when there were already pressures on the industry, when licenced foreign ships were being used in large numbers and when the Board had already engaged a record tonnage of shipping, one might wonder why he had not been involved in the process sooner.⁴²

To emphasize this point of the government being reactive to events rather than proactive even on 5 April 1809, only six weeks before Chatham was appointed, even Castlereagh had not been contemplating an early adventure and had given the instruction to discharge 8,000 tons of three month ships which were sufficient to carry 4,000 troops, on thereby reducing costs.⁴³ Given that the cost of 8,000 tons would have been at least £8000 per month, £24,000 for three months then, from an economic perspective, this was an appropriate decision. Yet if these had been retained, fewer additional ships would have been required, and the procurement process would have been conducted much more quickly than it was. This was not the only instance when the interventions from ministers advising the Transport Board, to cut the transport fleet, had subsequent repercussions when significant tonnage was required shortly afterwards. This was certainly the case when Dundas and Pitt instructed Rupert George to reduce the fleet dramatically, as described above. Then in January 1807 the Treasury issued directions that ‘all vessels not

⁴¹ Castlereagh *Correspondence* V1, 250-290.

⁴² Curiously there is no evidence of any written instructions until 1 July 1809 when the Transport Board was advised of the urgent need to bring forward a significant amount of shipping.

⁴³ TNA, ADM 6/156.

required for current service should be discharged'.⁴⁴ This was followed, in April 1807, by Castlereagh's order to the Transport Board to assemble 36,000 tons of transports to support the Copenhagen expedition. This caused some difficulty for the Board. It had to report that there was an unusual scarcity of unemployed shipping at that time.⁴⁵ In December 1807 Castlereagh issued the instruction to 'proceed to discharge all horse ships that are employed over and above the tonnage that may be required for 1000 horses'.⁴⁶ This was only four months before a request for 10,793 tons of horse ships.

Just as Castlereagh had reversed Windham's instructions to reduce the transport tonnage immediately after he took office in 1807 so his instruction to discharge all unappropriated cavalry horse ships, given at the end of September 1809, damaged the Board's ability to raise transports for 1,817 horses to Lisbon ordered by his successor, Lord Liverpool on 27 December, just three months later.⁴⁷ Yet another example of this was the instruction received from Lord Liverpool in February 1812 who, having reviewed the latest return of all the ships in the transport service, decided that a proportion of that shipping could be immediately discharged 'without prejudice to the public service'. The Board was instructed to retain about 7,000 tons of infantry shipping and cavalry transports for 300 horses from the 17,284 tons of infantry shipping and horse ships for 1,138 horses that were unappropriated to any service at that time.⁴⁸ Six weeks later there was an urgent request for transport for 200 horses to Lisbon. At the same time Liverpool instructed the Board to dispatch an order to return to Plymouth all the horse

⁴⁴ HoCPP. 1807, 117, IV.109, 1, Return of Amount in Tonnage of Transports in His Majesty's Service on 24 March 1807 including letter from the Treasury to TB, 22 Jan 1807.

⁴⁵ TNA, ADM,108/21/57, TB to W. Fawkener, 8 Jun 1807

⁴⁶ TNA, WO, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB, 25 Dec 1807 then TNA, ADM, 6/156, 10,793 tons of horse-ships ordered 21 Apr 1808.

⁴⁷ TNA, WO, 6/157, Castlereagh to TB, 26 Sep 1809 and Liverpool to TB, 27 Dec 1809.

⁴⁸ TNA,WO, 6/159, War Department to TB, 4 Feb 1812

ships in the Tagus.⁴⁹ None were returned, Liverpool ought to have been aware that, to be effective, such instructions needed the authority of his office and should be issued by him to the military Commander-In-Chief and the Admiralty simultaneously. In March following further requests for horse-ships the Board were forced to seek authority to convert some of the troopships at Portsmouth to horse ships to meet demand for cavalry transports.⁵⁰ By 15 April 1812 the Board had to advise Liverpool that ‘Cavalry tonnage now coming forward insufficient for all the horses preparing for Portugal’.⁵¹

This lack of information on future requirements ensured that the Board was generally reluctant to make decisions relating to the discharge of ships without first checking with the Secretary.⁵² In addition the Board was expected to report in considerable detail transport movements, dispositions and availability to the Secretary of State of the day.⁵³ This applied particularly when major expeditions were in preparation, weekly, sometimes daily, reports of the state of preparations and the disposition of the fleet were demanded. Sir Rupert George advised the Scheldt Inquiry that following the initial instruction to raise shipping he had ‘daily communication with the Secretary of State, indeed several times in the day I reported on the progress’.⁵⁴ The Secretaries occasionally interfered to the extent of selecting the vessels to be designated for certain

⁴⁹ TNA, WO, 6/159, War Department to TB, 19 Mar 1812.

⁵⁰ TNA, WO, 6/159, War Department to TB, 21 Mar 1812.

⁵¹ TNA, WO, 6/159, War Department to TB, 21 Mar 1812.

⁵² TNA, ADM, 108/22/4, TB to Liverpool, 14 Aug 1810. Seeking direction on the appropriation of transports.

TNA, ADM, 108/22/16, TB to Liverpool, 25 Sep 1811. Considerable increase in tonnage unallocated following recent arrivals from Tagus, can any be discharged?

⁵³ TNA, WO, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB, 13 May 1807 and THA, ADM, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB. ‘you will make a return of all transport tonnage in the form herewith enclosed’.

TNA, ADM, 6/156, ‘Daily return of three months ships to be transmitted’, 16 Feb 1808.

TNA, ADM, 6/157, Lord Liverpool requests a daily report on the state of transports, 7 Nov 1809. TNA, ADM, 1, 3751, Dundas to TB, 5th & 10th May. ‘Daily return of troop embarkations for foreign service required’.

⁵⁴ HoCPP, 1810, 12, VIII.1, 39, Scheldt Inquiry Sir Rupert George’s Evidence, 20 May 1810.

tasks, sometimes without full awareness of the implications of that choice. We saw that in the case studies above, first Dundas appointing four East India ships for an operation without being aware of their condition and how long it would take to repair and then prepare them. Then Castlereagh fell into a similar trap when he too nominated ships that needed repairs and refits before they were again ready for service. Dundas and Castlereagh did tend to get very involved in the detail of operations.⁵⁵ Dundas appears to have been disdainful of the Transport Board, he was overbearing and assertive, one might wonder about his grasp of the complexities of the transport service, despite his extensive experience on the Board of Control of the East India Company and Treasurer of the Navy. Castlereagh was a younger ambitious minister who in particular seemed to ensure that he received wide-ranging advice from senior army officers during the planning stages of campaigns.⁵⁶ Yet he does not appear to have sought the advice of Sir Rupert George during those deliberations. He was clearly a risk taker. He allowed the 1805 northern Germany and Sir David Baird's 1808 Corunna expedition to progress so late into the year, when there was a strong chance that the fleet would meet gales and the army would have to endure winter conditions. He also permitted the 1809 Walcheren campaign to sail when there was a very strong likelihood that the climate on Walcheren Island would be very unsuitable and an outbreak of fever might have been expected.

Further causes of delays in preparing transports for service.

When vast numbers of ships were brought forward very quickly the River became exceedingly crowded. The lack of dock space at Deptford, the principal

⁵⁵TNA, ADM, 1/ 3743/390, TB to Admiralty, 16 Feb 1803. WO, 6/156, Hawkesbury in the absence of Castlereagh to TB, 3 Aug 1805.

TNA, WO, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB, 20 Jul 1807.

⁵⁶ Castlereagh *Correspondence*. VI.257-273.

victualling yard, and at Woolwich, where no more than two ships could be alongside at any time meant that provisions, supplies and ordnance materials had to be transhipped using lighters and small vessels to transports that were often forced to moor or anchor some considerable distance, sometimes several miles, from the warehouses. Indeed this was one reason why the Board was keen to pursue the opportunity to purchase Dudman's dock in 1798. This double handling was inefficient and considerably extended the time taken to prepare ships for service in the River. The situation at Portsmouth was little better. Ships were generally moored at Spithead which was some distance from the harbour and in inclement weather the small boats experienced great difficulty reaching, mooring alongside and then performing the arduous task of transferring provisions and troops in the swell of the Solent. Similar comments could be made in respect of the Nore and the Downs where ships were anchored in large numbers awaiting provisions, troops and convoy escorts. At Portsmouth the Victualling wharf suffered from lack of water during low spring tides and it could only manage a limited number of ships alongside. More facilities for mooring alongside would have considerably speeded up the preparation process.

Similarly, repairing transports was made more difficult because the Navy Board refused to allow merchant ships to be repaired in the Royal dockyards and at Portsmouth the only dry docks were in the navy yards. Transports at Portsmouth had to be sent around to the merchant yards in the River for extensive repairs. This incurred extra time, poor weather or adverse winds frequently delayed their return to Portsmouth. In inclement weather it was difficult to repair ships at anchor at Spithead, due to the distance from Portsmouth harbour.

Commanders of both the Army and Navy stations overseas did everything within their power to retain transports on their station to be used as store ships and to be held in case an emergency evacuation was required despite frequent requests for their return. Transports that had been overseas for a long time or had experienced particularly bad weather often sustained major damage. They usually needed significant repairs or refit before they were again ready for service. Speedy preparation demanded that the Ordnance and Victualling Board also performed effectively. This was not always the case, there were numerous breakdowns in communications and working relationships between the Board and the Ordnance Board that led to delays. From time to time the Victualling Board did not have the capacity to prepare for the extraordinary demands placed upon it to provision both the naval fleet and troop transports and store ships that were to convey troops to overseas theatres of war. The second case study illustrates that delays were caused because the Victualling Board's agent had also run out of the supply of pease and other essentials supplies because of the huge demands and the contractor's inability to supply more because they were already working to capacity. Neither did he have any spare vessels to deliver supplies and water to the transports, because he had given priority to the naval fleet. Often the number of troops that finally turned up at the embarkation point was greater than the number expected forcing the Transport agents scrambling to find additional ships. The Admiralty occasionally found the demands of providing convoy protection overwhelming and in 1806 it instructed the Board to advise them at the beginning of each month how many convoys were expected during the coming month. Enemy naval activity disrupted plans from time to time, less so in the Napoleonic war, when the British naval blockades were particularly effective but the

point was illustrated in August 1805, when the passage of the troops under Sir David Baird's to the Cape of Good Hope was detained, after embarking at Cork, for over two weeks after Castlereagh learned that a squadron of three French sail of the line had escaped from Rochefort and its location was unknown.⁵⁷ Finally, the weather often conspired to undo the best laid plans. Contrary winds frequently prevented ships from sailing on time or at sea gales forced them back into port, often having sustained significant damage.

The impact of delays on the preparation of expeditions.

Syrett identified major shortfalls in the planning of campaigns during the American War. He found that the cabinet in general, and the Secretary of State for War in particular, tended not to give due consideration to the timescales necessary for raising and preparing sufficient transports to support the operation.⁵⁸ So did this situation improve in the wars of 1793 to 1815? The most notorious delay was the Abercromby / Christian convoy in 1795. A large number of Transports were ordered on 23 July. The plan, to send 30,000 troops plus supporting officers, artillery and ordnance, was finally approved by the cabinet between 14 / 16 August. The volume of shipping for the ordnance supplies was not determined until 7 September. In the event 18,742 officers, men, supplies and provisions sailed on 16 November in 137 transports, hired East Indiamen and West Indies owned merchant ships and naval ships, without this support then the force would probably have required more than 200 transports of over 55,000 tons.

⁵⁷ Castlereagh *Correspondence* VI.141

⁵⁸ Syrett. *Shipping and the American War 1775-83*, 243-248

| Table: 4. 2 | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| A review of the time that elapsed from the date of the receipt of the first instruction to the Transport Board to procure shipping and the date of sailing of several major expeditions. | | | | | | | |
| Secretary of State for War / Period in Office | Major Military Expeditions | No. Of Troops | No. Of Transports used | First Instruction received by Transport Board | Availability of transports for embarkation | Date of sailing | Elapsed time from first instruction to the Transport Board. |
| Henry Dundas Later Lord Melville July 1794 to March 1801 | 1795 Abercromby / Christian Convoy. | Initially 30,000 Actual 18,742 | 137 | 23 July 1795 Additional tonnage for W.I. | 20 October Originally required ready to depart by 15 September | 16 Nov 1795 | Original target + 7½ weeks Ready for embarkation + 12½ weeks Sailing +16 weeks |
| | 1799 Anglo-Russian landing in North Holland (The Helder) Sir Ralph Abercromby | 46,000 | | 28 June 1799 20,000 tons | | Landing 27 August 1799 | |
| Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh Jul 1805 to Jan 1806 | 1805 Northern Germany Vanguard Lt-Gen Don under Lieutenant General Right Hon, Lord Cathcart | 25,000 | 257 of 61,651 Tons | 3 August 1805 Transports for 10.000 men 29 August 1805 Additional 18,000 tons + ships for 700 horses. | 15 October 1805 8 – 25 November 1805 | 5 Nov 1805 and 27 Nov 1805 | Ready for embarkation + 10 weeks Sailing + 13 weeks and Ready for embarkation +10 to +13 weeks Sailing + 13 weeks |
| William Windham Jan 1806 to March 1807 | 1806 South America | | 21 37 | 6 July 1806 11,000 tons 6 July 1806 7,500 tons | | 19 Oct 1806 12 Nov 1806 | Sailing + 15 weeks Sailing + 18 weeks |
| | 1806 Sicily Major-General Spencer | 7000 | | 9 Nov 1806 | | 24 Dec 1806 | Sailing + 7½ weeks |
| Robert Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh March 1807 to Sep 1809 | 1807 Copenhagen Lord Cathcart | 25,000 | 377 of 78,420 tons | 8 April 1807 36,000 tons/ 16- infantry 10- horses 10-ordnance | | 30 Jul 1807 | Sailing +16 weeks Could have been earlier awaiting political decision for expedition |
| | 1808 Baltic General Sir John Moore | 11,000 | | 21 April 1808 34,807 tons 17-infantry 11-Horses 6 – V&S | 12 May 1808 at Yarmouth | | Ready for embarkation + 3 weeks |
| | 1808 Portugal Lieutenant General Sir zArthur Wellesley | 10,297 men 578 horses | 75 of 25,257 tons | Troops were at Cork waiting for orders to go to South America. | | 12 July 1808 | |
| | 1808 Portugal General Sir John Moore | 14,218 men 1,519 horses | 181 of 40,853 tons | Recently returned from the Baltic. | | 31 July 1808 | |
| | 1808 Corunna Sir David Baird | | | [] Aug 1808 33,000 tons 20,000 tons infantry 8,000 tons cavalry 5,000 tons stores | | Estimated 28 Sep 1808 | Sailing [estimated] + 6 weeks |
| | 1809 Walcheren expedition Chatham/Strachen | 40,000 | | 20 May 1809 | | 28 July 1809 | Sailing + 10 weeks |

The number of men in the force that sailed was less than originally envisaged, not only were transports taking some time to complete so too was the recruitment and preparation of the military force. The bulk of the transports had arrived at Portsmouth ready for embarkation of the troops on 20 October, twelve and a half weeks after instruction to bring forward large numbers of transports, at the height of the trade season. The fleet sailed some three and a half weeks later. Less than thirty-six hours after departing the convoy sailed into the eye of a dramatic storm, the gale force winds drove it back to port. A second attempt to sail on 9 December was again foiled by gales and storms and was forced to return home. It did not sail again until March 1796.

It is difficult to clarify the impact of these delays, certainly the original campaign plans had to be revised. Duffy says that despite the delays and the immense loss of life, this expedition 'saved the war'.⁵⁹ The delays resulted from the combination of a multitude of circumstances not only the impossibly high demands place on the Transport Board to raise a vast tonnage of shipping in less than two months in the middle of summer, but also of the difficulty in raising the troops. Neither of these objectives were achieved by the original planned deadline of 15 September.

The failure of the Walcheren campaign might be perceived as the result of transport delays; the subsequent enquiry was anxious to determine if this had been a contributory factor to the calamitous outcome but assessed that this was not a major factor in the disaster. This had primarily resulted from weak planning, particularly in the anticipation of the impact on the health of the troops and on the breakdown in communications between the senior commanders in the army and navy. Ironically the preparation time for

⁵⁹ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 371.

Walcheren was ten weeks which was the shortest period of all the expeditions considered in table 4.2.

These events indicate that ministerial failings in the American war, as identified by Syrett, were again prevalent during these wars. As can be observed from this table the time between the Transport Board receiving the first instruction to procure shipping to the date of the sailing of the expeditions considered was fairly consistent; between ten and sixteen weeks.

Extended preparation of major expeditions tended to attract speculation in the newspapers, in many cases it alerted the enemy to the preparations to a level of detail that the government may have been anxious to avoid. Wellesley referred to this in 1809 when planning his return to Portugal urging that cavalry and artillery complete, with the full complement of horses, should be sent ahead of the General and staff officers. In his words ‘as soon as the newspapers shall have announced the departure of officers for Portugal the French armies in Spain will receive orders to make their movements towards Portugal’.⁶⁰

Summary

The determination of each government administration to minimise the cost of war had an adverse effect on the efficiency of the Transport Board when it came to preparing for major expeditions. Castlereagh’s plan to have a disposable army on standby, together with the appropriate number of transports to convey them overseas, was eminently sensible. This would have eliminated, to some degree, the constant hiring and

⁶⁰ Gurwood, *The Dispatches of Field Marshall the Duke of Wellington*. Vol 3. 183. Memorandum on the Defence of Portugal. 7 Mar 1809.

discharging of transports therefore speeding up the preparation for expeditions. However the additional cost was not insignificant thus Windham disbanded this fleet, even the horse transports. Thereafter the constant high demand for transports meant that there were not enough vessels to have a fleet in waiting. The army was probably under similar pressures and it is unlikely that a standby force was available.

Government strategy tended to be reactive to external political and military events so the planning process was not as refined as would be expected now. Whilst more senior Boards and individual military officers were consulted for advice and opinions the Transport Board was merely instructed. Yet despite this, its role was an essential element in the preparations of military campaigns. However once the preparations commenced Chairman was involved in frequent, sometimes daily, with the Secretary of State for War. Even so the Board's day to day awareness of future demand for transports was very restricted. It was not in a position to question ministerial instructions to reduce the size of the transport fleet, some of which were, in retrospect, ill-timed or premature. The Board was subject to considerable ministerial interference in the detailed transport operations.⁶¹ These interventions were frequently uninformed.

The Transport Board's pivotal role in the preparation of military expeditions exposed it to regular criticism. The Board was frequently called upon to defend its performance, by the Secretary of State for War, who had to answer criticism for delays in Parliament. Inevitably preparing a large number of transports for an expedition was not a speedy process. Transports were often at sea for extensive periods and on return home

⁶¹This was less so by Hobart, who was the Secretary of State from March 1801 to April 1804 spanning the Peace of Amiens, there were no major campaigns during this period, his contacts with the Transport Board related principally to convict transports. Likewise, Camden was in office for less than a year and, although that was a critical time for the build up of transports bound for the Mediterranean, he refrained from becoming too involved in the details of the service.

generally needed significant repairs particularly to the copper sheathing and the rigging. Once the ships were in a good state for service the further preparations required the coordinated co-operation of the Victualling Board, the Ordnance Board, the War Office and the Commissariat and the Admiralty, in addition to the many private contractors who had to increase output of provisions and supplies at short notice. The shortage of dockside wharfing meant that a considerable part of the preparation had to be done remotely from the dockyards requiring double handling and making the process subject to the vagaries of the weather. Given the complexity of the process, the enormity of the task and the numerous potential causes of delay one might wonder how any major expedition was successfully prepared. However an analysis of the time taken to prepare various expeditions shows a pattern; it demonstrates that between 10 to 16 weeks were required from the first instruction to the Transport Board to the date of sailing. It is difficult to understand why this was not taken into account as a material aspect of the campaign plan alongside a consideration of the seasonal impact on the availability of merchant shipping.

Chapter five

The Transport Board's relationship with the Navy.

Cooperation and co-ordination between the Transport Board and the Navy was essential at all times. The Navy provided convoys for the transport fleets, on overseas stations naval commanders shared responsibility for transports with the military commander. The Navy impressed sailors from transports, it also handed over a small number of ships to the Transport Board to be used as armed transports under a Transport Agent but with much reduced naval crews. The Transport Board provided the ships to provision the Navy and procured small ships for the Navy to use as armed brigs and sloops. Although the Treasury and the Secretaries of State communicated directly with the Transport Board its independence from the Admiralty, was in practical terms, quite limited.¹ This arose because: the service was funded through the Navy estimates and had previously been conducted by the Navy Board, under Admiralty control; Captain (later Vice Admiral) Hugh Christian and then Captain Rupert George and several of the commissioners and all the Agents were naval officers who naturally looked to the Admiralty for future promotion opportunities. When the Transport Board became responsible for sick and hurt seamen in 1806 the links between the two organizations strengthened further. The Admiralty demanded regular flows of information from the Board, however this was restricted to Admiralty related matters, it did not interfere in the Board's other relationships.²

¹ For a review of Treasury / Admiralty relationships see P. K. Crimmin, 'Admiralty Relations with the Treasury, 1783 – 1806: the preparation of Naval Estimates and the beginnings of Treasury control', MM LIII (1967) 63-72.

² The majority of the regular reports that were produced were at the request of the Admiralty. In October 1795 the Admiralty requested weekly lists of the number and location of Army and Navy victualling ships and store ships. In May 1796 the Board was sending the Admiralty a daily return of 'Lists of Embarkation of troops for foreign service currently going on'. Then in September 1798 the Transport Office issued the first weekly reports to the Admiralty of 'Return of all letters sent from the Admiralty Board to the Commissioners for the Transport Service and the Custody of Prisoners of War, unanswered, or unexecuted for the previous week.'

Despite appearances it would seem that the Transport Board managed to hold the Admiralty at a respectful distance, generally keeping them well informed of events. It must be appropriate, however, to consider if the establishment of the Board under the Treasury rather than the Admiralty was the most appropriate structure. Would it have been better to have made it more accountable to the Admiralty? Would there have been more naval vessels used as troopships? Could Transport Agents have been more effective if the Board was under the Admiralty? Would it have had an impact on impressments? Would commanders have retained even more transports on overseas stations?

Agents for Transports.

Agents for Transports carried out the Board's instructions at various ports in England, Scotland and Ireland and overseas and also served afloat with transport fleets alongside naval squadrons on overseas stations. Their efficiency was essential to the success of the transport service. They prepared and dispatched vessels at major ports and dockyards ashore and they sailed with transports to co-ordinate their activities at sea. All Transport Agents were naval officers, either lieutenants or captains, seconded to the Transport Board, and when on duty they wore their naval uniforms. Before an Agent could be appointed the Board had to obtain authorisation from the Admiralty. No indication of this being withheld has been discovered. Clearly the Agents must have had divided loyalties when trying to maintain good relations with senior naval officers, whilst at the same time protecting the position and reputation of the transport service. The Board's insistence on naval officers rather than civilians to fill the role of agents was explained in 1802 following an application from John Wilkinson, ship broker, to be employed as an Agent for Transports in Ireland. The Board was very much against that role

being given to a civilian, and particularly to a ship broker. It was felt that brokers had conflicts of interests and, more importantly, the Board believed that it would be difficult to manage a private individual. It believed 'from long experience, that, with respect to the embarkation of troops, no persons can be so properly employed as commissioned officers of the Navy, and who through experience are less likely to have views inconsistent with the due and proper execution of the service'.³ However, during the West Indies campaign, in October 1795 the Commissioners of the Transport Board had to write to the Admiralty about a rumour which was circulating to the effect that officers employed as Agents for Transports, however 'zealous and meritorious they may discharge their duty', were not to expect promotion. Several officers had requested to leave the service and others were unwilling to serve in their stead. The Transport Board was determined to put an end to this 'rumour of so pernicious attendency'.⁴ It organized a recruitment campaign through newspaper advertisements which specifically alluded to further promotion opportunities 'such Lieutenants of His Majesty's Navy who have not been recently promoted and are desirous of being employed as Agents for Transports are requested to give in their names to this office, without delay. Officers, so employed may be assured that this appointment will be no bar to promotion'.⁵ However, the rumour was clearly affecting recruitment because in November 1795 the Board felt it necessary to explain to the Admiralty about the difficulty of finding suitable agents 'we are under great difficulty in procuring proper men, who, considering the value and importance of their trust, ought to be officers of real probity and ability'. It wrote again in August 1801 using exactly the same words⁶. In fact, these rumours were unfounded. In June 1795 Charles Patton wrote to the Admiralty expressing thanks for his recent promotion to

³ TNA, ADM/108/21/129, TB to Lord Pelham, Home Secretary, 16 Feb 1802.

⁴ TNA, ADM.1/3730/300, TB to the Admiralty, 5 Oct 1795.

⁵ *British Evening Post*, 10 Oct 1795.

⁶ TNA, ADM, 1/3741/199, TB to the Admiralty, 19 Aug 1801 also TNA, ADM, 1/ 3730/406, TB to the Admiralty, 26 November 1795

Captain.⁷ In April 1802 Lieutenant Daniel Woodriff was also promoted to the rank of captain. In November 1808, the Admiralty promoted Captain Halstead to post captain though he remained with the Transport Board.⁸

At the end of 1808, just before the evacuation from Corunna there were 14 Resident Agents and 27 Agents Afloat of whom five were in the Mediterranean, one was at the Cape, three were in North America, one in Brazil, one in the West Indies and 23 on the coast of Spain and Portugal including Captain James Bowen. There was a further seven at home, one of whom had been appointed Superintendent of Mooring of Transports in Portsmouth Harbour.⁹

Through necessity the Board practiced an unusual system whereby an Agent Afloat who was senior in rank to the Resident Agent at his destination port received instructions, on his arrival, from the junior officer under Article 41 of the *General Instructions to all Agents* which had been drawn up by Captain (later Admiral) Hugh Christian, whilst he was the Chairman of the Board.¹⁰ This said ‘Floating agents are to at all times receive directions upon service from our resident agents, though inferior to you in naval rank; but, when two or more other (floating) agents are upon service together, the reports of each Division of Transports must be collected and delivered to us by the senior captain or lieutenant in the form of a regular abstract’. This was difficult for serving naval officers to comprehend but it avoided the considerable delay which might have occurred and ‘possibly fair winds missed’, if the floating agents had waited for written orders from the Board, instead of observing instructions which had previously been sent to the Resident Agent. The Board believed that the knowledge which Resident Agents had of

⁷ TNA, ADM, 1, 3773.

⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/81, Transport Board minute, 21 Nov 1808.

⁹ TNA, ADM/1/3757, TB to the Admiralty, 2 Jan 1809.

¹⁰ A summarised list of these Instructions is included in the appendices.

their own ports would enable them to provide valuable assistance to the Agents Afloat, which would not otherwise have been readily obtained.

On 1 August 1801, the Chairman received an order from the Secretary of State for War to change the instruction given to Captain Thomas Shortland, Agent Afloat. The Board wrote immediately to Lieutenant Edward Flinn the resident agent at Cork requesting him to convey the new instruction to Captain Shortland when he arrived at Cork. The new instruction was hardly provocative. However it did create consternation for the local navy commander, Admiral Lord Gardner, who communicated his disapproval of this practice to the Admiralty.¹¹

Service afloat gave agents an opportunity to raise their profile. Service with distinction was very well regarded by Naval Commanders-in-Chief and numerous Agents were commended in despatches. Rear-Admiral Nelson praised Agents' performance on several occasions, in May 1797 he commended Lieutenant William Day in respect of his work in embarking troops, 'A more zealous, active officer as Agent for Transports I never met'.¹² In October 1799 he wrote from Port Mahon, praising the conduct of Lieutenant John Lamb and recommended him for promotion.¹³ In August 1800 Vice Admiral Sir Hugh Seymour, who was on station at Jamaica praised Lieutenant Thomas Whittaker 'It is not possible that you should have an officer in your service more worthy of the trust which is reposed in him'.¹⁴ In February 1807 the Board were notified of the praise for the efforts and zeal of Commander (promoted to Captain in 1810) Christopher Watson, who had been an agent for seven years, from Major General Sir John

¹¹TNA, ADM, 1/3741/199– TB to the Admiralty, 19 Aug 1801. The new instructions were 'Notwithstanding former orders, if the wind should be westerly when the artillery is embarked on board the *Pandour*, she is to return to Spithead, but, if easterly, she is then to proceed to Falmouth and be ready to put to sea when the Mediterranean convoy appears off that place'.

¹² TNA, ADM, 1/3734, Rear-Admiral Nelson to the TB, 5 May 1797. Lt. Day gained greater prominence in the following year for the intelligence he provided on Bonaparte's Toulon armament whilst on a transport related matter at Genoa. He subsequently became Governor of Sierra Leone where he died in 1806.

¹³ TNA, ADM, 1/3738, Rear-Admiral Nelson to the TB, 17 Oct 1799.

¹⁴ TNA, ADM, 1/3740/163, Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Seymour, Jamaica, to the TB, 1 Aug 1800.

Stewart and General Sir James Craig, for his role as Principal Agent in the Mediterranean. Watson was also commended by Sir Sydney Smith.¹⁵ In October 1813 Lieutenant Thomas Delafons, Floating Agent off the coast of Northern Spain, was commended by Sir George Collier, Captain of the *Surveillante*, for his actions during a recent gale which had created a heavy ground swell, tearing ships from their anchors and causing severe damage to the vessels when they broke adrift and smashed into other vessels. ‘Much more damage would have occurred, but for the zealous and personal exertions of Lieutenant Delafons’. Collier had recommended to Lord Keith that a Captain of the Port should be appointed to regulate the mooring of the shipping and suggested that Lieutenant Delafons was the best officer for this role. He requested the Board to support his recommendation that the lieutenant could hold the temporary rank of commander whilst he performed that task. Delafons had proposed changing the way that transports were moored by laying them ‘athwart’ the harbour instead of fore and aft in tiers. Collier believed this change would considerably lessen the risk of similar damage occurring in the future and he was determined to adopt it.¹⁶

Some agents were not so successful and their performance or behaviour fell short of expectations and it is inevitable that this, rather than the examples of gallantry and zealous performance, generated considerable reporting and correspondence, various examples of which have survived. In July 1798 the Transport Office received a complaint from Sir Hyde Parker against Lieutenant George Sayer, agent, for misconduct. Hyde- Parker wanted him court martialled.¹⁷ In February 1802 the Board received a letter from Captain Charles Davers of the *Active* at Gibraltar in complaint of the conduct of Commander Henry Gunther, Transport Agent;

¹⁵ TNA, ADM, 1/3751/107.

¹⁶ TNA, ADM, 1/3765, Sir George Collier, Captain of the *Surveillante* in Passayes (Nth Spain), 15 Oct 1813. Lt. Delafons was subsequently promoted to full commander in April 1814.

¹⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/3736, TB to the Admiralty, 3 Jul 1798. Instead of being Court Martialled Lt. George Sayer was promoted to Commander in November 1798.

their Lordships at the Admiralty added their disapproval of his conduct. He was discharged and his pay was stopped retrospectively on 27 January.¹⁸

In March 1806 The Commissioners of the Transport Board received a complaint against Captain William Butterfield, Transport Agent, from Lieutenant-General Sir David Baird. The Board responded by explaining that when their agents were afloat and in the presence of any naval ships then they were under the direction of the commanding naval officer. Only he was authorized to make any changes to the instructions issued to the agent. On this occasion the senior naval officer was Commodore Sir Home Popham who had applauded Captain Butterfield in his dispatches. The Board expressed surprise that Sir David had not protested directly to Popham, the Naval Commander-in-Chief.¹⁹ In April 1809 the Transport Board felt it necessary to issue a circular letter regarding the conduct of Lieutenant Richard Simmonds to be displayed in the offices of all the resident agents at home, so that masters of transports are made aware of the circumstances that led to his dismissal from the service.²⁰

As naval officers, Transport Agents were placed on half pay, in addition they received pay for acting on behalf of the Transport Board. Agents' allowances were specified in their warrants of appointment but these were revised from time to time. In August 1795 the Transport Board was obliged to write to the Admiralty, to explain that several agents had complained about the Admiralty stopping their half pay. They referred to a list received from the Navy Board soon after the Transport Office was established setting out the pay of agents and that Transport Office pay was set assuming that they were receiving this half pay. They re-emphasized the point that it

¹⁸ TNA, ADM, 1/3742. Admiralty to TB, 12 Feb 1802.

¹⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/8 & WO, 1/108/11, TB to George Shee, First Secretary to Secretary of State for War, William Windham, 4 Mar 1806.

²⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/82 TB Minute. 29 April 1809.

was by no means an easy matter to retain men with the requisite character and abilities.²¹

However, even without the half pay, the pay of Lieutenant Agents ashore was £21 for 28 days at 15/- per day, Captain Agents ashore were paid £35 for 28 days at 28/- per day. This compares very favourably with naval pay that in 1807 was £8/08/00 for Lieutenants per 28 day month and for the Captain of a sloop £16/16/00 or the captain of a fourth rate ship £18/04/00 but of course the Agents pay did not include board and lodgings.²² The pay scales of transport agents on 1 April 1803 are shown in table 1.

| Table 5.1 Pay of Transport Agents from 1 April 1803 | | |
|---|---|--|
| Captain agent afloat | 25/- per day with the usual ration of provisions | |
| Captain agent ashore | 28/- per day | |
| | Allowance for a clerk, coxswain, Or office rent will not be allowed Without a written order from the Board. | |
| Lieutenant agent afloat | 15/- per day, compensation for a servant to be discontinued. | |
| Lieutenant agent ashore | 15/- per day plus 3/- per day in lieu of provisions clerk, office and every other charge what-so-ever. | |
| Commanders or captains Commanding Armed Transports | 21/- per day plus the usual ration of provisions | |
| Source: TNA,ADM,108/74 | | |

In addition agents ashore were paid travelling costs and extra pay when employed on distant service from their residence.²³ Agents above the rank of lieutenant were allowed a servant.²⁴

Impressment.

The unquestionable shortage of seamen was problematic. Throughout the period naval commanders impressed crews from transports and other merchant shipping, often despite their possession of protections from impressment.²⁵ However, there is a danger of this being seen out of context. Clearly impressments from transports created significant inconvenience for Agents

²¹ TNA, ADM, 1/3773, TB to the Admiralty, 14 Aug 1795.

²² Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 646.

²³ TNA, ADM, 108/50, TB Minutes, 19 Apr 1799 and 28 Apr 1800.

²⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/24, Charles Patton, Resident Agent at Portsmouth to Captain Woodriff, Agent, 7 Oct 1796.

²⁵ For an authoritative review of the impact of impressments see Morriss, *British Maritime Ascendancy*, 242.

from time to time but it probably affected only a relatively small proportion of the hundreds of transport sailings and it does not appear that the number of incidents was so numerous as to have had any major impact on the preparation for any military expedition.

Protections were supposed to grant immunity from the press but were not always effective.²⁶ In 1795 the total number of protections issued by the Admiralty was 27,949.²⁷

Protections issued by the Admiralty were generally specific to a particular voyage or period, say three months. New protections were usually required for each voyage and, of course, if ships were away for a considerable period the protection lapsed. Home coming crews were particularly

²⁶ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World* (London, 1988), 177. There were two sources of protections, those granted by Act of Parliament and those granted by the Admiralty. Parliamentary protections covered masters and chief mates of all merchant vessels over fifty tons, apprentices within their first three years at sea and landsmen in their first two. There were also special provisions for fishermen, whaler crews and colliers. The Admiralty protected privateers, transports, dockyard workmen and the crews of all other types of vessels in government service.

²⁷

| Admiralty Office 10 February 1795 | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| An Account of the Number of Men who now enjoy Protections from the Board of Admiralty, and the Causes for which such Protections have been granted. | | | |
| Causes for which Protections have been granted | Number protected | | |
| | Men | Boys | Total |
| To navigate Merchant Ships and Vessels employed in Foreign Trade | 6,429 | 540 | 6,969 |
| To navigate those employed in the Coal, Coasting and Fishing Trade | 3,929 | 1,760 | 5,689 |
| Employed as Artificers of different denominations in Merchants Yards, but they are not to be protected if they have used the Sea, Caulkers excepted | | | 6,866 |
| Employed as Lightermen and Bargemen | | | 195 |
| Employed under the Corporation of Trinity House in London | | | 180 |
| Apprentices to the Sea Service, not having used the Sea previous to the date of their respective debentures | | | 4,697 |
| Youths not having attained the age of 18 | | | 739 |
| Men of the Age of 55 upwards | | | 722 |
| Foreigners | | | 495 |
| Masters, Apprentices, Mariners and Landsmen, belonging to fishing vessels, and coming under certain Descriptions. | | | 1,397 |
| Total | | | 27,949 |
| NB: A general Protection is granted for the Keelmen and Coblemen of Newcastle and Sunderland, but their numbers are not ascertained. | | | |
| There are 528 Seamen or Seafaring Men at Dover, Deal and other Cinque Ports and also 18 at Gravesend, called Ticketmen, who are employed to navigate Merchant ships in lieu of pressed men. | | | |
| Source: HoCPP, House of Lords Sessional Papers 1714-1805, Vol 010, 1. | | | |

vulnerable to impressments at sea. It has been suggested that ship owners and masters forged protections.²⁸

From time to time the Transport Board issued protests regarding impressments and requested restoration of the seamen to their transports.²⁹ Whilst the Admiralty appeared supportive there was recognition that pressing was a necessity in certain circumstances. The Admiralty occasionally issued instructions to commanding officers and officers of the impress service not upon any account whatever to impress crews of transports in the service of the government upon their producing a protection which showed the number and description of the men employed on board.³⁰ Although impressments from transports continued no record of disciplinary action against offending officers has been discovered.

To protect transport crews the Transport Board took steps to try to reduce the number of impressments. It instructed its agents to ensure that seamen belonging to transports were not allowed ashore at unreasonable hours and they were to use all the means in their power to prevent 'such improper straggling and misconduct'. They were to explain to the seamen that they would not be protected if they disobeyed these orders.³¹ From time to time the Board advised the Admiralty that the number of men and boys employed on board transports was always to be defined by the tonnage. There should be five men and one boy to each 100 tons and for a fraction of 100 tons at the rate of one man per twenty tons. An examination of the ship's charter or register would show the tonnage and assist the impress officer to determine how many men should be on board. The Board claimed that it was often impossible to provide description of the seamen engaged while the ship was in port because the makeup of the crew changed regularly.

²⁸ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, 177.

²⁹ TNA, ADM, 1/3743, TB to Admiralty, 20, 30, 31 May and 8 June 1803.

³⁰ TNA, ADM, 1/3733, TB to Admiralty, 11 Jan 1797.

³¹ TNA, ADM, 1/3730/58, TB to All Agents for Transports, 30 Sep 1794.

The Board requested that impress men should be ordered not to take any men where ‘no excess of complement appears’, nor from transport’s boats or when transport men were on shore duty, where each individual seaman could produce his ticket of leave for the day signed by one of the agents at the port.³² However if masters neglected to make their seamen sign their articles then they exposed the men to impressment.³³

Needless to say naval officers demonstrated their own interpretation of the Admiralty instructions. Sir Peter Parker’s view was that so long as he replaced pressed seamen with an equivalent number of men then he was justified in taking crew-members. Naturally the replacements were usually the duffers that Parker was only too happy to have removed from his crew.³⁴ Admiral Lord Gardner (Chief of the Irish station), of *The Princess Charlotte*, pressed men from the *Ardent* transport engaged in conveying troops to and from Ireland in 1803. When pressed, by the Board’s Agent at Cork, for their discharge on the basis that they were pressed afloat on board their ship, Captain, Lord Gardner replied that he could not give them up ‘as the crews of vessels employed under the transport board, did not come under those directed by the Admiralty to be exempted from being impressed’.³⁵

However leaving transports to join the navy was not always involuntary. In 1803 the Transport Board complained to the Admiralty that when the ships *Minerva*, *Canada* and *Aurora*, ordered by the Treasury to proceed with troops to Ireland and then the West Indies, were being prepared five seamen had deserted and joined the navy:

‘If seamen belonging to transports are allowed to quit their duty and enter the King’s naval service, at their own discretion, and receive pay and clothing, ship-owners will not have it in their power to perform their respective agreements with the government, by which HM’s service

³² TNA, ADM, 1/3733, TB to the Admiralty, 11 Jan 1797.

³³ TNA, ADM, 1/3730/184, Charles Patton, Transport Agent at Portsmouth, 5 Apr 1795.

³⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/32, TB Minutes, 6 Oct 1794.

³⁵ TNA, ADM, 1/3743, TB to Admiralty, 21 Mar 1803.

might be injured, as in this case a very heavy and useless expense will fall on the government from delay.³⁶

Convoys and convoy management.

Convoy organization and escort had become one of the routine skills of the Navy by the end of the seventeenth century.³⁷ There were several Acts of Parliament which made sailing in convoy mandatory. Although the convoy system was in place in 1793 the Acts for The Better Protection of Shipping of 1798, 1803 and 1815, commonly known as the Convoy Acts provided for financial penalties for owners who did not observe the laws. Under these acts it was not lawful for any British ship to sail without convoy protection except those ships that had been granted a special licence. Also excluded was any ship sailing to join a convoy or any ship sailing from one United Kingdom port bound for another (coastal shipping).³⁸ The penalty for sailing without a convoy or for deserting or wilfully separating from a convoy was a potential fine of one thousand pounds, but if the ship was loaded with naval or military stores the potential fine was one thousand five hundred pounds. Probably more importantly any marine insurance policy was deemed invalid.³⁹

Convoys were considered to be a necessary evil. The provision of convoy protection was an operational distraction for the Admiralty particularly before 1805. The smaller ships of the line, carrying 64 guns were generally the first ships to be released for convoy duty because they were the weakest warships and were rarely used in line of battle formations.⁴⁰ Later,

³⁶ TNA, ADM/1/3744, TB to the Admiralty, 20 Oct 1803.

³⁷ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 91.

³⁸ HoCPCP – 1814-15, 447, II.901, *A Bill for the better protection of the Trade of the United Kingdom* – although Rodger in *Command of the Ocean*, 559, suggests that licences were ‘forbidden’ in 1812.

³⁹ HoCPCP - 1814-15, 447, II.901, *A Bill for the better protection of the Trade of the United Kingdom*.

⁴⁰ Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory* (London, 2005), 149.

smaller warships were used to convoy merchant fleets in European waters.⁴¹ Convoy duty was generally despised by naval officers. Sailing with convoys was restrictive for ship owners and frustrating for ship's Masters. Convoys might have been considered bad security risks, sailing times were well advertised and the enemy and privateers knew them. They also knew the convoy collection and dispersal points and were familiar with the trade routes. Yet losses of ships which sailed independently were much higher than those which sailed in convoy. In the early years of the wars there were numerous practical difficulties in organising convoys such as ship-owners failure to agree on timing, the communication of sailing dates, arranging rendezvous and establishing convoy signals and tactics. However the systems became more refined and the benefits of convoys seemed to be apparent. In a sample of 132 convoys between 1793 and 1797, four were attacked. Out of 5,827 ships escorted, 398 straggled from their convoys and thirty five were lost, less than one per cent.⁴² From 1803 to 1815 it has been estimated that only 0.6 per cent of all ships that sailed in convoy were lost compared with 6.8 per cent of stragglers.⁴³ Between June and December 1809 some 2,210 merchant ships were escorted through the Great Belt to the Baltic mainly in large convoys without loss. In 1814 the Chairman of Lloyds said 'Effectual protection can only be given to British commerce by a rigid adherence to the convoy system'.⁴⁴

The convoy system

The blue water convoy system was co-ordinated between the Admiralty and 'conferences' of merchants in particular trades and with Lloyd's for the general ship-owning community. There were generally four West Indian convoys outwards between October and

⁴¹ Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory*, 540.

⁴² Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 559.

⁴³ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, 121.

⁴⁴ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 559.

April sailing from Spithead and three from Cork. There were a similar number of homeward bound sailings from the West Indies, half sailing from Jamaica and the others from the Leeward Islands. Monthly sailings took place from Spithead and from Cork to the Mediterranean, Spain and Portugal depending on the political situation, similarly regular convoys went to the Baltic, South America, the Cape of Good Hope and the East Indies. The sailing times were well publicized; at Lloyds, at the trading houses, in *The London and Dublin Gazettes* and also at the Customs Houses and Consular and civic offices at ports at home and abroad. In addition the Admiralty received a multitude of applications from small groups of ship-owners at ports around the coast for coastal convoy protection particularly when privateers were known to be operating in a specific area.

The demands upon the Admiralty for convoy protection grew as international trade expanded and as the use of transports increased. Whilst transports often sailed with the scheduled convoys it was not unusual that the troops or supplies were required urgently and additional specific convoys were necessary. Transports were forbidden to sail without escort even around the British coast. The Board insisted on investigating each instance that transports sailed without convoy or became detached from the convoy with a view to mulching inappropriate behavior on behalf of the master.⁴⁵ The Admiralty found that the ad hoc nature of requests for convoy escort caused such disruption to the service causing it, in May 1806, to instruct the Transport Board to issue, on the first day of each month, a list of ships likely to require convoy during that month.⁴⁶ The Transport Office confirmed that it would strictly observe that direction as far as was possible but when transports were allocated to victualling and ordnance services it was not easy to predict when they will be ready to sail. In addition, applications from the War department for the

⁴⁵ TNA, ADM, 1/3734, TB to Admiralty, 2 May 1797.

⁴⁶ TNA, ADM, 1/, 3751, Admiralty to TB, 20 May 1806.

conveyance of troops are often made without notice and required immediate dispatch.⁴⁷ The Board indicated that there might be cost savings and more convenience if the timing of shipments were better planned by other departments but there is no evidence that such co-operation was demanded from the Victualling Board, Ordnance Board and the War Office.⁴⁸ In 1814, to economize on escorts, the Admiralty again attempted to persuade the Transport Board to concentrate as many transports destined for the same parts of the world into the same convoy.⁴⁹

The large number of convoy requests meant that the Admiralty tried to synchronise warship movements with convoy protection. This meant that naval vessels sailing to join new stations or returning home for refits or assignments to other duties generally guarded convoys heading in the same direction.⁵⁰

To support the Peninsular War, from the summer of 1808 until the spring of 1814 one Admiralty List shows that 404 convoys sailed from Britain to various Iberian destinations, from small movements of one or two ships to 90 or 100 vessels, in total some 13,427 voyages. These do not include return voyages or those to and from other destinations overseas.⁵¹

Naval officers did not enjoy convoy duty, for amongst other things it deprived them of the opportunity to take prizes. It is said that Convoy duty could 'try the patience of a saint'.⁵² Nelson perhaps best summed up the attitude of naval officers to convoys when he wrote in 1781 'they behaved as all convoys that I ever saw, did shamefully ill, parting company every day.'⁵³ Many of the problems which arose on convoys were probably due to the poor relations between naval officers and merchant seamen, they tended to come from different social backgrounds and

⁴⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/3748, TB to the Admiralty, 22 May 1806.

⁴⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/3748, TB to Admiralty, 22 May 1806.

⁴⁹ NMM, ADM, DP/34A, 12 Mar 1814, cited in Morriss, *British Maritime Ascendancy*, 350.

⁵⁰ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, 112.

⁵¹ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, 112.

⁵² Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, 119.

⁵³ Knight, *Pursuit of Victory*, 67

their operational interests were quite different. Merchant masters were interested in the profitability of voyages and resented the potential for naval officers to impact this by causing delays or by impressing their seamen. Naval officers were inevitably frustrated by the indifference displayed by merchant ship's masters towards measures that were purported to be for their own protection. This was exacerbated later in the war when there was an increasing number of foreign vessels in each convoy that created language barriers.⁵⁴ Every Master, whenever he joined a convoy, was given a printed copy of *Signals and Instructions for Ships under Convoy*. These instructions gave illustrations of all the signals to be used by day, by night and in fog. The principal instructions were about where signals should be hoisted, who had the authority to hoist signals, the importance of each vessel holding station and recovering it if it is lost, instructions to destroy rendezvous and signal records if threatened with capture by the enemy. The penalties for failing to observe the rules defined in the convoy act were also spelt out clearly in the instructions.

Nevertheless the Transport Office received regular complaints from naval commanders, regarding the conduct of Masters of transports and the sailing performance of the transport ships. However investigation frequently exposed a different reality. In July 1796 Captain Dodd of HMS *Atlas* reported, via the Admiralty, the improper conduct of the master and crew of the *Fortitude* transport. Apparently there had been a dispute between one of *Atlas*'s midshipman and the crew of *Fortitude*. On investigation of the incident it appeared that the *Atlas* crew's conduct 'was far from being commendable'.⁵⁵ Such complaints were equally balanced by complaints that the Board received, either directly from Masters of Transports or alternatively from Lloyds Coffee House, regarding the conduct of convoy commanders and escort captains such as the one

⁵⁴ Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, 118.

⁵⁵ TNA, ADM, 1/3732/82 and 128, TB to the Admiralty, 29 Jul 1796.

received in August 1805 from several masters of Transports at Cork about the conduct of Captain Donnelly of *Narcissus*.⁵⁶

Transport Agents sailed with every sizable convoy of transports. At sea, on distant services, there was generally one Agent to ten transports. On short or Mediterranean services there was one agent for every fifteen or twenty transports, on home service there was no particular number.⁵⁷ When an Agent was on board a transport, that ship would wear the Transport Office pendent. Early in the war this caused friction with convoy commanders. In 1795 Captain Williamson of the *Grampus* complained to the Admiralty about the behaviour of transports whilst on convoy, he objected to the wearing of pendants and the firing of guns. The Transport Board's response was to submit a copy of instructions to Agents that confirmed that they 'should follow such orders as the convoy officer gives' but with respect to flying a pendent they responded that 'this has been the practice from time immemorial'. For a while the wearing of Transport Office pendants was a contentious point. It became the subject of some considerable correspondence between the Board and the Admiralty which at first suggested that 'the transport service will be better conducted, by the discontinuance of the present mode of agents hoisting pendants on board the ship in which they are embarked'. By the 25 January 1796 the matter had been resolved. The Transport Office issued a circular setting out the principles agreed with the Admiralty regarding pendants and these rules were incorporated into the *Instructions for Agents*.⁵⁸ It was agreed that the Principal Agent in any convoy would wear a plain blue pendent at the main top mast head.⁵⁹ Junior Agents, in the convoy, would hoist a smaller plain blue

⁵⁶ TNA, ADM, 1/3747/112, Masters of Transports in Cork to the TB, 17 Aug 1805.

⁵⁷ Commission for Revision (9th), 204, Interview with Captain Bowen.

⁵⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/ 28, Printed circular from the Transport Office dated 25 Jan 1796.

⁵⁹ It would be eight feet at the staff, twenty feet long, but in foul weather it was to be four feet at the staff and ten feet long.

pendent.⁶⁰ If transports of different expeditions should meet in the same port then only the Principal Agent of each expedition would hoist a broad pendent. At sea, large fleets of transports were divided into divisions, the Agent commanding each division was to hoist the broad pendent.

Despite sailing with convoys numerous transports were taken, mainly by privateers. Later in the war American privateers captured transports and then released them on promise of payment. This is illustrated by the capture of the *Canada* transport, (William Dobson – Commander, 25 guns and 125 men) in 1813, by the *Paul Jones*, an American privateer. On board *Canada* was a detachment of 18th Hussars and some infantry and 44 horses. The privateers plundered arms and ammunition and threatened to burn the ship. Lieutenant Black, senior officer 48th Regiment signed a bill of exchange for three thousand pounds in exchange for release on the understanding that ‘if the bill is not honoured then the troops and crew should consider themselves prisoners of war’.⁶¹

The management of transports on overseas stations.

The senior Transport Agent in the fleet under convoy was responsible for the transports in the convoy, answerable to the convoy commander. Once on station he came under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the station. However, he also had less clearly defined responsibilities to the senior army commander on the station, if there was one. There were occasional disputes about who had final control over the movements of transports on station. In July 1798 there was a spat between Admiral Hyde Parker and Major General White, commander of the army at Port au Prince, who had sent home the *Aurora* Transport with only 50 Army invalids. The senior Transport Agent was subsequently ordered by the Board not to obey any

⁶⁰ Two feet broad at the head and thirty feet long although at sea, with discretion, a smaller one might be worn.

⁶¹ TNA, ADM, 1/3764, Robert Charnside, Master of the *Canada* transport to TB, 13 Feb 1813.

order he may receive for the dispersal of the transports under his charge, unless given to him by the naval Commander-in-Chief on the station. A few months later, Hyde Parker again complained that there were insufficient transports to convey all army invalids back to England, they needed four tons per man, thus the Transport Agent could certainly not carry out White's instructions to ship back prisoners as well.⁶² Maybe these instances are indicative of a deeper breakdown in relations between those two men. Yet such differences of view between the two commanding officers occurred regularly so, in January 1799, the Board wrote to Henry Dundas complaining that the lines of responsibility between the Agents for Transports and the army officers and commanders 'does not appear sufficiently defined, and as many embarrassments may arise from the improper interposition of military commanders in this branch of the naval service, and great expenses incurred by their control over transports without the authority of superior officers or commanders in HM's navy; we think it our duty to submit the case to you, that such instructions may be given, as may be thought proper'.⁶³

The Agents were very aware that, in the interests of economy, it was preferable to return transports to England as soon as possible for use in alternative services or for discharge. The natural inclination of the naval commander was to retain shipping on station to move troops from one location to another and to be used as storeships. Later in the wars ministers and army evacuation that might become necessary. The Transport Board issued numerous instructions to its Agents to seek authority from the commanders to return unused transports to England, usually with little success. In March 1799 the Board requested Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, to order the return from the Mediterranean, three large armed transports; the *Coromandel*, the *Ulysses* and the *Calcutta*, with about twenty other transports that were lying 'for the most

⁶² TNA, ADM, 1/3736, TB to the Admiralty, 4 Jul 1798.

⁶³ TNA, ADM 108/ 19, TB to Henry Dundas, 29 Jan 1799.

part unemployed' in the port of Mahon. The Board was relying on the weight of Dundas' office to persuade the Commander-in-Chief of HM's ships on that station, presumably through the channels of the Admiralty, to arrange the immediate return of these transports 'both to save money and for the prosecution of some other important duties'.⁶⁴

When William Windham became Secretary of State for War in 1806 he ordered the immediate reduction of the transport fleet to reduce the cost thereof. At that time there were 83 transports in the Mediterranean. The Board suggested that Windham might order the return of some of them because it had tried in vain to get these transports home. The Board had written several letters to the late Admiral Lord Nelson on the subject, in 1805 they had even sent a senior Agent, Captain Cocket, to the Mediterranean 'for the express purpose of ordering home all such transports as could be dispensed with' but Nelson, then the naval Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean had resisted this and none had been returned.⁶⁵ The necessity of returning transports to England was demonstrated most starkly in 1809 when the Walcheren fleet could not have been prepared without the large number of hurriedly returned transports.

On station naval officers frequently raged against transport crews. In Lisbon, in 1809, Admiral Berkeley, the commander of the Portuguese station, complained that they were neither under military nor civil command and the only way to control them was with the threat of impressment and that was illegal.⁶⁶ In August of the following year Berkeley was still at Lisbon and he was still complaining of the 'depredations and bad conduct' of transport crews. The Admiralty recommended that such men should be pressed into the navy. 'The pressing of men for bad conduct service becomes a punishment rather than an honour'. However the pressing of

⁶⁴TNA, ADM, 108/20/2, TB to Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, 14 Mar 1799.

⁶⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/21/1, TB to William Windham, Secretary of State for War, 10 May 1806.

⁶⁶ Hall, *British Strategy*, 45 'for the views of Admiral Berkley see Leeds University Library Brotherton Collection Box V11, Mulgrave Papers 19/29 PD XV11, 89-104, Historic Manuscript Commission Report at Cirencester Park, 1923, 149'.

men from transports was a direct violation of the charter party and thus a breach of contract by the government. The impact of ships losing crews might be significant and the government may be liable. Berkeley wanted to find a way to bring them under military discipline where they would be subject to court martial. His concern was that there were nearly 4,000 merchant crewmen, these were not just transport crews, employed at that time in the Tagus and that as he wrote to the Admiralty, 'the crimes which are committed afloat under the British flag are ignored under the laws of this country (Portugal) as they consider them vessels of war under Naval power'.⁶⁷ The Admiralty had submitted the matter to its lawyer for advice. The Admiralty's solicitors' opinion was that unless these men were taken under naval or military discipline then there was no remedial action that could be taken.

In late November 1810 Berkeley's immediate problem was that some transport crew members had been accused of theft from regimental baggage which was stored on various transports with only one army officer to guard it.⁶⁸ The Portuguese authorities considered transports to be part of the naval establishment and thus none of the restrictions which applied to merchant ships were considered by them to be applicable, thus they refused to interfere in this matter. If the crime had been committed in England then the accused might have been tried by the Court of the Admiralty. Berkeley was frustrated that if the men were sent back to England to be tried it would be no deterrent, whereas the sentence of a court martial could be instantly inflicted and its effect could be seen and felt by the surrounding fleet. He confessed that he was

⁶⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/342/190, Admiral George C. Berkeley, Lisbon to Admiralty, 17 Aug 1810.

⁶⁸ TNA, ADM, 1/432/283, Richard Poulden Resident agent in the Tagus to Admiral Berkeley, 26 Nov 1810.

He describes another similar incident. 'Another daring robbery has taken place on board the *Defence* transport No. 6, Thomas Suckfield, Master. Between 11/ 12 o'clock on 20 November by two of the said transports crew Robert Thin and John Lewis property under the charge of Sergeant Meacham who was guarding the baggage of 40th Regiment. Seamen on watch took the sergeant's chest said to contain £120 in valuables from under his hammock, made off and deserted in the jolly boat. Robert Thin had since been caught with part of the property on his person and confessed and is now in custody on Barfleur.

‘at a loss to know how to proceed and these men are to be dealt with’.⁶⁹ Though, no doubt transport crews had their share of villains, who took advantage of such situations, there is no evidence of widespread misbehaviour. The Transport Board dealt severely with those masters and crew members who transgressed. It is very likely that the majority of transport crews were as honest and hardworking as any other members of the maritime trade. Some crews were highly praised for their gallant conduct as was crew of the *Thetis* transport that was attacked by several French privateers ‘of much superior force to her own’ whilst on passage from Lisbon to the West Indies. She beat them off after a severe fight saving the government nearly £4,000. The crew collectively received a bounty of £295 as a reward for their brave defence of their ship.⁷⁰

Not all complaints from naval officers regarding the performance of its Agents were fully justified. As an example, in 1800 Vice Admiral Sir William Parker complained that insufficient water had been supplied on board the transports under his convoy for Halifax, Nova Scotia. Captain Stephen Rains, Agent at Deptford responded on the circumstances that had caused an apparent deficiency of water. The ships in question had been hired to carry out 600 troops and bring back 1,600. At the request of the Navy, the vessels had been filled with stores for HM’s ships on that station. The ships took on board sufficient water at Deptford for 1608 soldiers for 15 weeks or upwards of 30 weeks for 600 troops. Subsequently it was decided to fill the space left in the holds with naval stores. Rains had instructed the masters in written orders to ensure that the water was stored where it could be located during the voyage. During a later inspection another Agent had raised concerns with the Master Attendant of Woolwich yard because the water casks were covered with stores but that ‘a little exertion in removing some of the stores would have revealed the water casks’. Captain Joshua Watson the Agent appointed to

⁶⁹ TNA, ADM, 1/342 /283, Admiral Berkeley to Admiralty, 27 Nov 1810.

⁷⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/28, TB Minutes, 19 Feb 1798.

sail with these transports must have taken the Master's report of the state of the hold instead of inspecting it himself. Rather than insufficient water there was an immense quantity of water, far more than was necessary for the voyage unless the Masters 'were not attentive to refill their water after sailing from the River, as it was a considerable time after their leaving the River that they sailed from Spithead, which may have been the reason for their being short'.⁷¹ Captain Watson ought to have confirmed that the water was replenished before the ships sailed from Spithead.

On another occasion in 1806 there was a complaint from Sir Home Popham regarding deficiencies in several of the transports under his orders. Lieutenant Thomas Hewit, the Agent at Cork, reported that he had been 'employed daily on board all the transports and inspected them with the utmost attention except the six that arrived the day before the expedition sailed those I only visited once' confirmed that neither of the two Agents who sailed with the convoy had ever mentioned any defectiveness of the transports under their orders, in fact they constantly spoke of their being 'such excellent vessels'. All appropriate certificates were provided to confirm that the ships were regularly inspected and mustered. Neither Sir Home Popham nor any of his captains had ever inspected nor complained about the ships prior to sailing. Hewit described that, in his professional judgment, the condition of all the ships as 'most excellent'.⁷²

Services to the Navy

The transport service supported the navy in several ways. The most obvious was the supply of provisions to ships on blockade and on overseas stations. Throughout the wars the navy transferred a number of naval vessels to the Transport Board; these were then used as

⁷¹ ADM, 1/3704/47, TB to the Admiralty, 22 Jul 1800.

⁷² TNA, ADM, 1/3748, TB to the Admiralty, 18 Feb 1806.

armed transports for convoy support purposes and occasionally to support naval actions. The Board chartered armed vessels on behalf of the navy, small ships that were armed and put under the command of a navy lieutenant but manned by civilian crews. Finally the service, on at least one occasion, Aix (also known as Basque) Roads in 1809, provided ships to be used as fire ships to support the naval attack.

The challenges of supporting naval ships on blockade duty can be illustrated by narrating the events of November 1807 to January 1808 when Rear Admiral Sir Richard Strachan was in command of a squadron of the Channel fleet blockading Rochefort to prevent the escape of the French men of war that had sought refuge there.⁷³ Admiral Strachan commanded a force of fourteen ships comprising two 80 gun ships, five 74 gun ships, four frigates and three sloops. The ships of the line had originally been provisioned for five months, but in some cases had been at sea for most of that time. The 80 gun ships had left port in September and October so they still had a reasonable quantity of provisions but most of the others were in need of replenishment. Five transports were sent out to the fleet at the beginning of November to deliver cargoes of water, coals and candles. They returned laden with empty water casks with directions that these should be refilled and returned to the fleet as quickly as possible along with additional food provisions. Ten transports laden with 552 tons of water, food and other provisions sailed on 7 December. They spent three weeks in the Atlantic alongside the fleet transferring their cargoes, a particularly arduous process given the ships' movements caused by sea swell.⁷⁴ On 3 December the Admiralty ordered the Victualling Board to despatch three pounds of potatoes for each man

⁷³ HoCPCP, 1808, 103, IX.293. See papers presented to the House of Commons relating to the state and condition of the squadron Employed off Rochefort, under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Richard J. Strachan, Bart. 15 Mar 1808.

⁷⁴ Water supply was vital, an eighty gun ship had the capacity to carry 300 tons. On 11 Nov 1808 the fleet had the capacity for 2,456 tons and actually had on board 1,324 tons with a combined weekly usage of 169 tons. There were seven weeks supply on board.

per week for eight weeks, half a pound of onions per man per week together with as many live bullocks as could be stowed. The Transport Board was to supply surgeon's necessities at the same time. Another transport loaded with water had sailed on 11 November but was forced back to Plymouth by bad weather; arriving there on 5 December. The provisions ordered on 3 December were to be loaded onto the *Mediator*, an armed transport. It sailed on 21 December but was forced back by strong winds and did not finally sail until 8 January although the delay did allow time to load a supply of bread on board.⁷⁵ Even on 18 December Admiral Lord Gardner, Commander-in-Chief of the Channel fleet, was expressing concern to William Wellesley Pole, Secretary to the Admiralty, that the ships of the line had only eight weeks supply of provisions. By the end of December Strachan was becoming increasingly concerned about the level of supplies, particularly of bread and spirits, being unaware of the steps being taken to get them to him.

The delays experienced were clear demonstrations why, with adverse weather conditions and the risk that the ships might have to leave the station to pursue French escapees, or seek shelter from the adverse weather conditions, it was important to keep their stock of provisions high and the difficulty of doing so. In fact the squadron had been forced to retire to the shelter of the Basque Roads creating attendant problems of rendezvousing with the transports. In such conditions transferring supplies from one ship to another was difficult, transports were frequently smashed into the naval vessels during the process. A transport 'drove on board' one of the smaller naval ships and damaged her. In early January two more transports were despatched into Catwater to be loaded with two months provisions for 4,500 men. One sailed on 15 January but the other sprang a leak after it was loaded and a replacement had to be located and the provisions

⁷⁵ Loaded onto *Mediator* was 40 oxen, 67 cwt of hay for cattle, 376 cwt of potatoes 34 cwt of onions, 13 cwt of turnips, 614 bags of biscuit, rum, wine, beef, pork, flour, suet, raisins, sugar, butter, cheese and lemon juice.

off loaded onto the alternative transport. Although the *Mediator* joined the fleet on 12 January more bad weather drove Strachan's squadron off station. This delayed unloading until the 18th, by which time some of the bullocks were dying and the vegetables spoiling. The French took advantage of the bad weather. The enemy fleet sailed from Rochefort on 17 January, heading into the Mediterranean, Strachan and his squadron pursued them, but the French managed to reach Toulon before he could intercept them.

A number of naval vessels were decommissioned and transferred to the Transport Board. They were commanded by Transport Agents but usually retained the warrant officers and slimmed down crews, who though still employed by the Navy, came under the direction of the Transport Board. Such vessels were occasionally used to support naval actions as occurred in November 1798 when Captain Richard Poulden, Agent for the Transport Office, was serving as Commander of Armed Transport *Calcutta* which supported the naval capture of Minorca. The armed transports were put into the line of battle manned from the other transports and fifty deserters to act as Marines. The squadron gave chase to four Spanish sail of the line of battle ships off Majorca. The *Coromandel*, another armed transport, parted company in the chase and on her return to the squadron captured a Spanish brig.⁷⁶

The fireship incident occurred in the Basque (Aix) Roads in April 1809. In February that year a French squadron escaped from Brest, but failed to make its destination, Lorient, and instead arrived at Aix Roads at the mouth of the river Charante. This anchorage was not particularly well sheltered from adverse weather nor from the possibility of attack; it was, however, protected by shore batteries and by a boom. Admiral Gambier positioned the Channel Fleet to block a further escape until an attack could be planned. Gambier suggested using fire-

⁷⁶ TNA,WO,1/800, Captain Richard Poulden Agent to TB, 19 Nov 1798

ships and Lord Cochrane was the contentious choice of the Admiralty to lead the attack, despite there being several competent and more senior commanders in the fleet. Inevitably this appointment caused some resentment. Cochrane's plan was for two explosion ships to lead the attack to create terror and panic, these were to be followed by a number of fireships which the enemy, fearing that they too might be explosion ships, would be unlikely to attempt to board and steer them away from their targets.⁷⁷ The subsequent failure of the fleet to join the action after the fire-ship attack ultimately led to Gambier demanding a court martial to clear him of accusations of cowardice. Years later, Bonaparte supposedly said of the events 'the French admiral was an imbecile, but yours was just as bad. I assure you that, if Cochrane had been supported, he would have taken every one of the ships'.⁷⁸

The fire ships were hired transports. On 17 March 1809 The Admiralty had instructed the Board to order its Agent who had charge of the twelve transports fitting as fire ships, to proceed with them with all possible speed to the Downs and report his arrival to await convoy protection.⁷⁹ On the same day the Transport Board received a petition from the Masters of eleven of the transports selected for the task, complaining that this particular service was contrary to the charter by which the ships were hired. They sought various reassurances; if the ships were destroyed, would they and their crews be protected and returned to England? would they be reimbursed for the loss of clothes or otherwise that might be sustained by destruction of their ships? if they or any of their crews were wounded, whether they will receive the same pensions, smart money and other advantages as the seamen on board His Majesty's ships? They said that they did not feel that they would be able to persuade their crews to sail on this

⁷⁷ Charles Stephenson, *The Admiral's Secret Weapon* (Woodbridge, 2006), 9.

⁷⁸ Stephenson, *The Admiral's Secret Weapon*, 1.

⁷⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/174, Admiralty to TB, 17 Mar 1809.

hazardous mission without favourable responses.⁸⁰ The Transport Board felt unable to make any commitment so it immediately passed these comments on to the Admiralty for a decision. In response the Admiralty confirmed acceptance of most of these terms but explained that it intended that the fireships would be manned by naval seamen when they went into action and, therefore, it was improbable that any of the seamen belonging to the transports would be injured.

Lieutenant Francis Lewis was appointed to be the Agent Afloat with these transports. After some delays in provisioning and ballasting and then due to adverse northerly winds Lewis and his charges finally arrived at Basque Roads 10 April. He visited the flagship to meet Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Gambier where he was detained until near 7 o'clock in the evening, after which he was instructed by the officers how the ships were to be set on fire. Initially it was intended to launch the action that evening at nine o'clock. The transports under his directions were all taken over by naval officers with the exception of *Cleveland*. Shortly after that the Admiral decided that they would not be proceeding to action that night, by that time the crews were dispersed in the naval ships and the remainder on *Cleveland* on the understanding that she would not be fitted out as a fire ship. On the morning of the 11th Lewis collected the all the masters and crews and their belongings, on board the *Cleveland*. During that day Lewis was employed from four in the morning in preparing fire ships. The attack took place that evening. On the morning of 12th he gave an order that the transport crews were to be fed on board the *Cleveland* but at 10 o'clock in the morning an officer came on board with an order from the Admiral that the *Cleveland* was, infact, to be fitted as a fire ship and that they had two hours to do it. Consequently the masters and crews of the transports that had been used in the attack were ordered to transfer to some victuallers waiting further out in the Roads. These men left, under

⁸⁰ TNA, ADM, 1/3758, Undated Petition from Masters of Transports now fitting and charging with combustibles for fire ships to the TB.

convoy for England, with little more than they stood up in because there was no time to remove their belongings from the *Cleveland*.⁸¹

In the attack the French lost four ships of the line and a frigate wrecked or burnt and seven others escaped only by throwing their guns overboard. Twelve transports were destroyed in the attack.

Arrangements were made for the officers of Plymouth Yard to examine *Cleveland* and *Sisters* to ascertain the amount of damage that they had sustained in being fitted as fire ships.⁸²

Subsequently, after some debate about the valuations, the Transport Board reimbursed the

⁸¹ In fact the *Cleveland* and *Sister* were not used as fire ships but a later survey showed the damage done to each during the preparations for such purpose that needed to be made good as shown below:

| Survey of the damage done to the <i>Cleveland</i> and <i>Sisters</i> which were fitted as fire-ships on 12 April 1809, but not having been used, were afterwards restored to their Masters charge. | |
|--|--|
| Damage to <i>Cleveland</i> | Damage to <i>Sisters</i>, assessed by the Master, Boatswain and Carpenter of HMS <i>Cesar</i>. |
| <p>The deck scuttles in fire places One of the timber heads on the fore-castle cut away. Quarter boards partly broke down and thrown overboard Bulk heads of cabins between decks partly broke down. Glass of the cabin windows, sixteen panes broken. Cabin skylight and frame thrown over-board. Fore and Main hatches broken. Two raft ports thrown overboard One main topmast and one main yard cut from the quarter to be continued Missing, - three barrels of tar used fitting the vessel as a fire ship. The master complains of having lost all his stock and cabin furniture and two barrels of porter and two hampers of six dozen each, three dozen of wine and four gallons of spirits.</p> | <p>All the cabins and state rooms broke to pieces for the purpose of laying the combustibles. Hatches and Gratings broke to pieces. Main deck scuttled in four places to give vent to the fire. Holes cut in the top shanks of the sides to give vent to the fire, and must be made good before going to sea. The starboard plank three broke to pieces. The Stern Davits broke and the starboard quarter piece broke off. The Magazine broke to pieces. The starboard fore and main channels broken away. The Ballast Ports knocked out and lost, but must be made good before she can proceed to sea. Lost: Yawl x 1, Handspikes x 24, Water casks x 2, Beer casks x 6 Compasses, lay lines, lay glasses, deep sea and lead lines all lost and cut to pieces. The spare sails are of no further service being cut to pieces to cover the fire works 12 sails listed Brewer anchors, cables, hawsers and cables lost. Running rigging is cut but can be made good out of the rope which is on board her. Provisions of all sorts for a compliment of ten men for 5 months totally destroyed. All the powder thrown overboard All the small arms as a transport missing.</p> |
| Reference: ⁸¹ TNA, ADM, 108/174, Admiral Gambier to TB, 20 April 1809 | |

⁸² ADM.108/174, Navy Board to TB, 4 May 1809.

owners of the transports that had been used in the attacks and for the damage to those which had been converted but not used.

Summary

The Transport Board was established as a subsidiary board of the Treasury but the activities of the Board were inextricably linked to the Admiralty. Many of the Commissioners and all of the Agents were naval officers with strong allegiances to the navy. Their continued reliance upon the Admiralty for promotion ensured that the Admiralty was well informed and supported. The Admiralty provided the convoy escorts for transports and other merchant ships, though after 1805 it became one of the principal roles of the Navy. It seems to be quite clear from the statistics of losses that the convoy system was a very effective instrument for the protection of trade, war supplies and troop movements.

The Admiralty, though it relied upon the Transport service to provision the fleet, was sometimes less than supportive of the Board. Commanding officers retained shipping on station when the Transport Board had alternative uses for it or wanted to discharge it to reduce costs. Naval commanders also created problems for Transport Agents by impressing transport crew members although the incidence seems to have been relatively insignificant. It certainly did not appear to occur when major expeditions were being prepared and thus was not responsible for delays at those times.

It is hard to conceive that the transport service was disadvantaged by being established under the Treasury rather than the Admiralty. In fact, the arms length relationship with the Admiralty which was supported by the Treasury and the Secretary of State for War probably prevented the navy taking advantage of the service to the detriment of additional cost. Based on

Syrett's study of the transport service in the American war there is every reason to believe that more transports would have been retained, in greater numbers, for even longer periods on station if the service had been Admiralty controlled. The closer relationship may well have encouraged far more impressments from transports than was the reality.

It is clear that the direct communications between the Transport Board and the Secretary of State for War were absolutely essential, particularly after 1805 when speedy response to the preparation of the European expeditions was vital. Syrett demonstrated that under the previous regime 'the administrators of the transport service were bureaucratically isolated' and 'that there was a lack of communication between ministers and the Navy Board who provided the shipping'.⁸³ The structure established in 1794 went some to reducing, but not eliminating, those problems. So much success could not have been expected if the Admiralty had been an intermediary between the Transport Board and the Secretary of State for War.

⁸³ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, 244.

Chapter six

Troops ships; King's ships or Merchant Transports.

'I have no objection to a board for the transport service. I believe if proper men are appointed it is a most excellent institution, but I am decidedly of the opinion that if they are not provided with a set of shipping appropriated to the special purpose of transports and of a size to accommodate a considerable number of troops at a time, it is impossible that service can be carried on with any degree of propriety. Indeed, so much am I impressed with that conviction, no consideration on earth would induce me to take charge of any expedition, if the present system of providing transport in any chance way you can was to be continued. I am positive, exclusive of every other advantage, the saving to the public by such an arrangement would be immense. Twenty or twenty five ships of the size of India ships or 44 gun ships would be adequate to all the service of the country, and it would take a volume to point out all the advantages to the public service that would result'.¹

There was a body of opinion that naval vessels should always be used as troop-ships rather than merchant ships. This debate raged throughout the wars. Though there were strong arguments that supported this proposal the Navy objected vociferously. It claimed that there were not enough naval vessels, but in fact that statement is questionable, there appears to have been a considerable number of ships in Ordinary which might have been suitable. This issue requires further research, which is beyond this study. The most realistic obstacle was the limited availability of seamen. There were never enough seamen to fully man the operational demands of the navy. Also of great concern to the naval hierarchy was the question of precedence of authority when troops were on board naval vessels. Indeed there had been open dispute, between naval and army officers, about whose authority troops on board naval vessels should observe. When, in 1794, Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War, applied to the Admiralty for three 44 gun ships to transport troops Lord Chatham, the First Lord of the Admiralty, refused to comply unless it was clearly understood that the

¹ TNA, WO, 1/84, Henry Dundas to Spencer at the Admiralty, 24 Nov 1795 also Condon Transport Service, 92. This letter was generated by Dundas' frustration with the delays in procurement and preparation of troop transports for the Abercromby / Christian convoy for the West Indies, in 1795.

soldiers would be subject to naval command whilst on board. According to Duffy 'it was several weeks before this delicate issue of inter-service relations could be sorted out to the Admiralty's satisfaction'.²

This discipline question was to erupt again in 1795 when the navy court-martialled, for insubordination, an army lieutenant serving as a marine in the Mediterranean fleet. The army commander in the Mediterranean refused to recognize the court martial and ordered the lieutenant to rejoin his regiment. The case was referred to London where HM, on advice from his law officers, eventually endorsed the court-martial verdict. This worsened relations between the two services and to avoid reoccurrence the Duke of York, Commander in Chief of the army, established regulations empowering naval officers to arrest and detain soldiers only until they could be court-martialed by the army. When these regulations were released to naval officers there was great consternation which led to protests by a number of Admirals and captains.³ The issue was fudged to avoid delays to the Abercromby / Christian expedition which was then being prepared but the matter continued to simmer and it does not appear to have been resolved in the twenty years that followed.

Even in 1810 the discipline question was raised as an objection to Melville's proposal to use more naval vessels as troop ships.⁴ Although troops were shipped on naval vessels this disciplinary issue was probably one of the principal stumbling blocks to the establishment of a dedicated fleet of naval troop ships.

Troop shipping was not restricted to major campaigns, there were scores of smaller campaigns and there were almost daily demands for troop ships to redeploy troops from one place to another, to ship out newly appointed officers and recruits and to relocate troops

² Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 51.

³ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 187. Duffy suggests that the significant extent of the protest by the officers may have encouraged the 'great mutinies of 1797'.

⁴ Melville, Lord. *Substance of the speech of Viscount Lord Melville in the House of Peers, Monday 21 May 1810 on the subject of Troop Ships*. (London, 1810)

repatriate the sick and wounded. At home, troops were constantly being moved between depots. Sea transport was preferred for this because it was cheaper, speedier and it reduced the opportunities for desertion. There were constant troop movements to and from the Isle of Wight, Guernsey, Jersey and Ireland.⁵ To illustrate this, on one day in April 1800 Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War instructed the Transport Board to facilitate the following troop movements: a regiment of 600 men to Halifax, Nova Scotia; two regiments, the Banffshire Fencibles of 600 men and the Second Argyleshire of 600 men from Portsmouth to Gibraltar; two regiments, the 69th and the 60th plus an additional 100 recruits, in total 1500 men from Portsmouth to Jamaica; two battalions of the 24th & 16th regiments of 1600 men to be returned from Halifax, Nova Scotia to Portsmouth; 500 horses for the 12th & 26th Light Dragoons to Lisbon from Portsmouth; 614 Kings County Militia from Guernsey to Ireland and 608 men of the Wexford Militia also from Guernsey to Ireland from Jersey to Ireland.⁶ By that day's instruction, which was by no means uncommon, the Transport Board were requested to provide transports for 6,122 men, plus 500 horses, requiring about 16,000 tons or 60 ships.

The Transport Board was frequently obliged to request Admiralty support to provide shipping to enable it to meet its entire obligations. In June 1796, when there were significant demands for tonnage from the Victualling Board to carry provisions to the Leeward Islands and the Mediterranean, Rupert George found it necessary to advise the Secretary of State for War, Henry Dundas, that 'from enquiries made there is at present no adequate supply to be obtained from the several ports in the United Kingdom'. He asked 'can the Admiralty assist with ships of war'.⁷ In April 1799 the Board again requested Henry Dundas, to apply to the Admiralty requesting that some of their ships on the Irish station might be called into service to convey the Irish Militia from Dublin to Guernsey because it was aware of the 'great

⁵ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*. 345.

⁶ TNA, WO, 6/257, Henry Dundas to TB, 10 Apr 1800.

⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/3731, TB to Henry Dundas, 21 Jun 1796.

expense and difficulty of procuring the necessary shipping'.⁸ In 1801 the troops and supplies that were landed in Egypt in the expedition led by Sir Ralph Abercromby were shipped in a mixed fleet of forty naval troop ships, sixty transports and fifty seven Turkish vessels under the command of Lord Keith.⁹

Table 6.1
Extract of an Account showing the names and tonnage of the several Ships and Vessels of War employed in the Conveyance of Troops in the course of the Years 1800 and 1801 with the number of Men allotted to each when fitted for troops – Laid before the House of Lords.

| Guns | Ships Names | Tonnage | Complement of crew | | Guns | Ships Names | Tonnage | Complement of crew |
|------|-----------------------|---------|--------------------|--|------|--------------------|---------|--------------------|
| 64 | <i>Diadem</i> | 1,376 | 250 | | 36 | <i>Inconstant</i> | 890 | 155 |
| | <i>Dictator</i> | 1,388 | 250 | | | <i>Modeste</i> | 940 | 155 |
| | <i>Delft</i> | 1,266 | 250 | | | <i>Romulus</i> | 879 | 155 |
| | <i>Haerlem</i> | 1,324 | 250 | | | <i>Sensible</i> | 946 | 155 |
| | <i>Inflexible</i> | 1,386 | 250 | | 32 | <i>Astrea</i> | 703 | 121 |
| | <i>Stately</i> | 1,389 | 250 | | | <i>Blonde</i> | 682 | 121 |
| | <i>Wassenaar</i> | 1,269 | 250 | | | <i>Ceres</i> | 692 | 121 |
| 60 | <i>Alkmaar</i> | 1,041 | 215 | | | <i>Druid</i> | 718 | 121 |
| 54 | <i>Not identified</i> | 1,110 | 215 | | | <i>Eurus</i> | 702 | 121 |
| 50 | <i>Not Identified</i> | 1,047 | 215 | | | <i>Espion</i> | 986 | 121 |
| | <i>Trusty</i> | 1,088 | 215 | | | <i>Heroine</i> | 779 | 121 |
| 44 | <i>Adventure</i> | 910 | 155 | | | <i>Iphigenia</i> | 681 | 121 |
| | <i>Charon</i> | 889 | 155 | | | <i>Niger</i> | 679 | 121 |
| | <i>Dolphin</i> | 880 | 155 | | | <i>Winchelsea</i> | 679 | 121 |
| | <i>Experiment</i> | 892 | 155 | | | <i>Wilhelmina</i> | 827 | 121 |
| | <i>Expedition</i> | 911 | 155 | | 28 | <i>Alligator</i> | 599 | 121 |
| | <i>Regulus</i> | 889 | 155 | | | <i>Cyclops</i> | 603 | 121 |
| | <i>Roebuck</i> | 886 | 155 | | | <i>Dido</i> | 595 | 121 |
| | <i>Sheerness</i> | 906 | 155 | | | <i>Pegasus</i> | 594 | 121 |
| 30 | <i>Hebe</i> | 1,063 | 155 | | | <i>Resource</i> | 603 | 121 |
| | <i>Pallas</i> | 778 | 155 | | | <i>Thisbe</i> | 596 | 121 |
| | <i>Renommee</i> | 924 | 155 | | | <i>Tourterelle</i> | 581 | 121 |
| | <i>Thetis</i> | 954 | 155 | | | <i>Vestal</i> | 601 | 121 |
| | | | | | | | | |

Source: Melville *Speech* Appendix 3

Table 6.2 names the forty six naval ships that were used to convey troops in 1800 and 1801.

Many of these were involved in the invasion of Egypt launched from Aboukir Bay, under

⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/20/7, TB to Henry Dundas, 30 Apr 1799.

⁹ Christopher Lloyd, (ed). *The Keith Papers* Vol 2 Naval Record Society, 90 (1950) 267-269

General Sir Ralph Abercromby and Admiral Lord Keith. The ships ranged from 28 guns to 64 guns.

The size of the ship determined the crew complement as demonstrated in table 6.3.

In August 1803 the Transport Board had been requested to transport the 25th Regiment from Portsmouth to Cork, HM's ship the *Tellicherry* was identified for this service. However the

| Crew size | 250 | 155 | 121 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Crew comprised of: | | | |
| Captain | 1 | | |
| Commander | | 1 | 1 |
| Lieutenants | 3 | 2 | 2 |
| Other Officers | 54 | 44 | 32 |
| Able seamen and boys | 163 | 94 | 72 |
| Marines | 30 | 20 | 14 |
| NB breakdown of crew size 215 not identified. | 250 | 155 | 121 |
| Source: NMM, DM,BP/35C, Navy Office, 2 Mar 1798 | | | |

Board had originally been advised that 586 men were to be transported, in fact there were 717¹⁰. Captain Patton, the agent at Portsmouth, requested that a frigate in the convoy might convey the additional 150-200 men.¹¹

Table 6.1 demonstrates that between 1798 and 1804 naval vessels were used as troop ships, in limited numbers, in each year. The use of 46 ships in 1800 possibly undermined the Navy's argument that there were not enough ships, particularly post Trafalgar.

| Year | Number of ships | Year | Number of ships |
|--|-----------------|------|-----------------|
| 1798 | 17 | 1802 | 17 |
| 1799 | 24 | 1803 | 11 |
| 1800 | 46 | 1804 | 12 |
| 1801 | 43 | | |
| Source: HoCPP, 1803-04, 47, VII.225,5 Accounts Presented to the House of Commons from the Admiralty Office 5 Apr 1804. | | | |

In April 1807 the Board was experiencing difficulty finding enough ships for the Copenhagen expedition,

they suggested to the Secretary of State for War 'Under these circumstances, we feel it our duty to make this representation, in order that you may make application to the Admiralty for ships in conformity with the custom on former occasions, particularly in the instance of conveying troops to Egypt'.¹² Later that month the Board was asked to ship a number of

¹⁰ It was not unusual that the number of troops who presented for embarkation was different from the number for which tonnage had been requested. It was a reasonably common occurrence.

¹¹ TNA, ADM, 1/ 3743/ 286, 19 Aug 1803.

¹² TNA, ADM, 108/21/56., TB to Castlereagh, 20 Apr 1807.

troops of the Royal Artillery to Halifax. As there was no spare accommodation on the transports that were about to sail, it requested the Admiralty to allow the troops to be carried on the ship which was to escort the convoy.¹³ Naval ships were also used as troop ships for the Walcheren expedition in 1809.

Rodger suggests that late in the Napoleonic wars the Admiralty began to regard troopship command as a suitable apprenticeship for frigate command.¹⁴ These ships remained under the command of the Admiralty. The Transport Board insisted that it never gave directions itself or through its Agents to any of the naval armed troopships, but only to such armed transports that had been formally transferred to it.¹⁵

When John Schank, a Commissioner of the Transport Board, was interviewed by the Committee on Finance in 1798 he was asked ‘can any mode be devised for reducing expense and promoting dispatch in the business of transporting men, stores and provisions.’ He suggested that this could be achieved by having forty or fifty gun ships, capable of carrying 500 to 800 men, fitted as transports.¹⁶ However, when asked to respond to the report, the Transport Board stated that ‘we do not believe that a more speedy, cheap or efficacious transmission of stores can be made, than is already practiced’. Note there was no reference here to transmission of men or troops.

The statement went on to suggest that the Transport Board did not believe that the navy could spare the required number of ships. The Board concluded that ‘However if the ships could be supplied then the next objects of consideration would be their manning and discipline’. Merchant seamen’s wages were higher than the equivalent navy pay. If the ships were to be manned by the former the cost would be higher. If, to reduce costs, the ships were manned at the same level as the armed transports, which operated under the Transport Board,

¹³ TNA, ADM, 1/3751, TB to Admiralty, 7 Apr 1807.

¹⁴ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 519.

¹⁵ TNA, ADM, 1/3741/199, TB to the Admiralty, 19 Aug 1801.

¹⁶ Committee on Finance (31st), 504.

‘they could only repel privateers but would be no match for stout frigates.’ Discipline was perceived to be an even greater problem because if the ships were under civil jurisdiction military law would not apply. Crews would be able to leave the ship for a man of war at any time. Seamen would also be wary that should they be expected to join in hostilities with the enemy there would be no provision for the wounded or incurable in any of the hospitals or charitable provisions for seamen, nor relief for those that fell in action.¹⁷

Thus the Transport Board was reiterating the Admiralty’s position although this view seems to be contrary to the individual views of another Commissioner. James Bowen had at one stage proposed that the government should engage and man a hundred collier brigs as troop transports.¹⁸ Then, when he appeared before the Commission for Revision, he was asked ‘Do you consider that HM’s troops would be conveyed with greater convenience in ships of war in commission, rather than in Transports?’ he responded that ‘Ships of war in commission cannot carry troops conveniently but ships of war of a certain description properly fitted and manned as the troop ships as they were in the last war are the best ships for conveying troops.’¹⁹

The matter was regularly discussed in the press. A report in 1800 about a transport with two hundred and fifty troops on board that had been captured and taken into a French port concluded that ‘If any proof were necessary of the advantages of troops being, upon every occasion, conveyed in ships of war, this would furnish an additional one’²⁰ Dundas claimed subsequently that he had discussed this proposal with Pitt shortly before his death in

¹⁷ Further Proceedings on Committee on Finance (31st), 155.

¹⁸ David Bonner Smith, (ed), *Letters of Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of St Vincent’s Letters*, Vol 2, Naval Records Society, 402.

¹⁹ Commission for Revision. (9th), 207. Bowen was referring to 44 gun ships which had the lower deck guns removed.

²⁰ *English Chronicle*, 15 Apr 1800.

1806 and he remained convinced that ‘if his valuable life had been spared, the suggestions I offered to him would not have been overlooked’.²¹

Army commanders and their troops were generally not enthusiastic about using civilian vessels. Again the press regularly reflected these views. In 1800 the following report was filed:

‘We learn today from Torbay, that the troops which sailed in the Armed troop ships from Deal last week expressed their highest satisfaction at the accommodation, convenience and safety, which they experienced in these ships in preference to the former mode of embarking them in small merchant vessels hired as transports’.

Apparently they had sailed through a violent gale without detriment or inconvenience whereas it is claimed that if they had been on merchant ships ‘dispersion, if not more serious disaster would have been the consequence’.²² Lieutenant- General Sir John Moore grumbled about the unwieldy nature of the convoys taking his troops to Sweden in 1808, he noted that it took seven or eight vessels to carry each battalion and that the resulting convoy numbered over 200 ships. He felt that much larger vessels of at least 1000 tons were needed to make his command fully effective ‘what can a convoy of 200 small brigs do, commanded by North Country skippers, who will do nothing but what they like themselves’.²³ Moore’s contempt for transports’ captains also highlights the antipathy between crews and their military passengers.²⁴

The politicians’ perception of the shortcomings of merchant troop ships were underlined by Spencer Perceval when in 1810 he referred to the many delays, and not a few accidents, that were occasioned by the ‘desertion, indiscipline and want of seamanship’ of both masters and men in transports. He also highlighted the grumbles of naval officers who

²¹ Melville *Speech*, 38.

²² *English Chronicle*, 15 Apr 1800.

²³ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 43.

²⁴ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 43.

‘complain of the want of skill or discipline from inadequate crews in obeying their orders and signals; and indeed I believe that this is the constant complaint on every occasion when a large body of transport is employed’.²⁵ He also suggested that large numbers of ships involved lengthened the time taken to position convoys at the rendezvous points. Many, like Dundas, believed that the solution was a properly maintained and Admiralty controlled body of military transports. Being larger vessels these ships could carry guns, baggage and ammunition as well as troops. It was believed that under formal naval control their seaworthiness could be better maintained and their crews would become more experienced in embarkation and disembarkation. Some even believed that such increased efficiency would also be accompanied by financial savings.²⁶

Whilst there was not a standing fleet of naval troopships, by 1808 some nineteen vessels, ranging from sloops to 64 gun ships of the line, had been converted to carry 150 - 500 soldiers each. In 1810 nine such ships, former frigates and small ships of the line, were sent to replace civilian vessels in the Tagus; although few in number, they had the capacity to carry 3,000 men, twice as many as a similar number of merchant ships would have been able carry.²⁷ Had it been possible to convert more warships to transports it might have been possible to reduce the considerable time and risk involved in landing troops on hostile shores. Landing troops from a large number of transports took a considerable time, even when the landing was unopposed. The 1807 landing for the Copenhagen campaign took a week to complete and setting 9,000 men ashore at Mondego Bay, near Lisbon in 1808 took five days. In 1800 a proposed landing in Spain between Rota and SanLucar was abandoned after the order to disembark was given, when the commanding officer General, Sir Ralph Abercromby realized that only three thousand troops could be landed at one time, he considered that this

²⁵ Hall *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*. 43.

²⁶ Hall *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War* . 45 his ref 45.

²⁷ Hall *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 45. his ref 46 .

was not a large enough force for the initial landing.²⁸ Abercromby's objection was that the boats available had not been filled to their expected complement because of the rough seas. He was willing to try again the next day with the boats properly filled but Keith's reluctance to guarantee that he could re-embark the army under conditions of bad weather led to the abandonment of the enterprise. Disembarkation plans were frequently disrupted when transports were separated from the main fleet as in Egypt in 1807 when 19 out of 30 transports were separated from the convoy leaving few boats to make the landing, and that in rough weather. Only part of the initial group got ashore on the first day, the second having to wait, and no stores or provisions were disembarked in the early stages of the landing.

Supporters also believed that armed naval troop ships would be able to protect themselves and would certainly reduce the number of escorts required.²⁹ Melville supported the popular argument that the Corunna evacuation in 1809 would have been conducted much more smoothly if naval troop ships had been used, according to him, this would have eliminated:

‘the anxiety of the troops, indeed, far more anxiety than they had experienced in the hour of battle, owing to the want of order and discipline amongst the transports; and that this want of discipline produced the utmost confusion and embarrassment, and created in the minds of those present the greatest alarm for the fate of the army’.³⁰

Certainly the boats from naval troop ships could re-embark troops quicker than merchant men because of the number of boats carried and because the size of the warship's crew enabled them to change boat crews and avoid exhaustion. At Corunna it was calculated that the ratio of trips from beach to ship was 10:1 in favour of naval launches.³¹ Naval troopships still had sufficient men on board to manoeuvre the ship, if necessary, when its boats were away

²⁸ *New Lloyds Evening Post*, 24 Oct 1800.

²⁹ Melville, *Speech*, 27.

³⁰ Melville *Speech*, 9.

³¹ Melville *Speech*, 10.

whereas the absence of merchant ships' boat crews often left them short handed.

Comparatively fewer naval troopships would be required for the conveyance of an army, about a half to a third of the number of merchant men. This would have increased the possibility of complete regiments arriving simultaneously, overcoming the problems created when troop ships were separated from the convoy. It was a very strong argument, if there were sufficient numbers of warships and naval seamen available from ordinary duties. Supporters of naval troop ships also argued that the preparation and assembly of expeditions could be achieved faster and more discreetly and that their superior sailing capabilities and enhanced armaments meant that there would be fewer maritime losses and captures of armed naval troop ships.

Sir Home Popham recognized the benefits, suggesting that transports are 'the greatest clog to every sort of expedition' and that dismantled line of battle ships should be used in the forthcoming Scheldt expedition. He hoped to meet with Castlereagh to 'better satisfy you of the expediency of this measure'.³² The minister was aware of the cost

| Table 6.4. Arrangement for conveying Troops in Men of War (for the proposed Walcheren expedition) | | | |
|--|-----|----------------|--------------------|
| | No. | Troops in each | Total No Of Troops |
| 74 gun ships | 18 | 550 | 9,900 |
| Line of battle ships | 8 | 250 | 2,000 |
| Flutes | 9 | 600 | 5,400 |
| Frigates | 14 | 250 | 3,500 |
| Sloops | 30 | 50 | 1,500 |
| Gun-brigs | 30 | 30 | 900 |
| Vessels from Dockyards, Victualling Establishments Transport Board etc. | 20 | 50 | 1,000 |
| | | | 24,200 |
| Source: Castlereagh Correspondence. V1.278. 18 May 1809 | | | |

comparison of naval troopships and hired transports, he had seen computations that were marginally in favour of using naval vessels.³³ Indeed, because of the anticipated difficulty that the Transport Board were experiencing in raising transports for the expedition, the Admiralty was persuaded to supply naval

vessels to ship troops across the North Sea in 1809 to Walcheren. The Admiralty proposed

³² Castlereagh *Correspondence* VI, 274. Letter Sir Home Popham to Lord Castlereagh, 13 Jun 1809.

³³ Castlereagh *Correspondence* VI, 254 Memorandum respecting the Expense of Transports, 1 Apr 1809. Author not identified.

sufficient shipping for over 24,000 men, as demonstrated in table 6.4, but ultimately only 17,000 troops were eventually shipped in naval vessels. This does seem to indicate that the earlier opposition by the Navy was beginning to evaporate. When Liverpool was appointed Secretary of State for War in October 1809 he was already aware of the issue. In March 1810, a few months before Melville's speech, he had written to the Admiralty:

‘In order to obviate in some degree the difficulty and expense attending to the provision of sufficient quantity of Transport tonnage to meet the exigencies of public service I have received His Majesty's pleasure to desire that your lordships will take the necessary steps for immediately providing a number of armed ships well qualified for the transport of troops’.³⁴

As a result the Admiralty requested the Navy Board to identify which ships were available and appropriate for that service.³⁵ The Navy Board's response has not yet been traced, however by September 1810 there were at least fourteen naval ships being prepared to convey between five and six thousand troops to Lisbon.³⁶

The Melville Proposal

In May 1810, Lord Melville finally forced a vote on the subject of troop transports in the House of Lords, although by that time he had been out of office for five years. This was after the Walcheren disaster. By then his proposal had developed well beyond the provision of naval shipping for troops. He proposed fitting out, from the ordinary of the navy, about 40,000 tons or 30 to 40 ships, sufficient for the accommodation of 24,000 men, to become a standing fleet permanently garrisoned by troops. He was effectively proposing the creation of a number of floating barracks. These were to be distributed along the enemy's

³⁴ TNA,ADM,1/4213, Liverpool to Admiralty, 23 Mar 1810

³⁵ TNA,ADM,1/4213, Liverpool to Admiralty, 23 Mar 1810

³⁶ TNA, ADM, 2/1370, Admiralty to Lt Colonel Bunbury and TB, 20 Sep 1810.

The ships were *Diadem, Regulus, Leyden, Agincourt, Brune, Melpomene, Vestal, Mercury, Tonnant, Apollo, Macedonian, St Fiorenzo, Audacious* and *Swiftsure*.

coasts, and to act separately or together with the capability of annihilating the enemy coasting trade. He believed that their presence would cause constant alarm, obliging the enemy to deploy a very great part of their armies on their coasts, for the purpose of protecting them against attacks and predatory incursions. Melville's proposal was very similar to Lord Castlereagh's proposal of 1805 to develop a 'disposable force' of about 40,000 men, probably better described as an expeditionary force, together with the appropriate number of transports.³⁷

Melville's critics argued that this would be an unacceptable drain on the naval capacity although he had made a very powerful argument that the navy could well afford to lose the 40,000 tons that he felt was necessary given that the naval tonnage at the time was eight hundred thousand tons. Indeed he reminded the House that this had been achieved previously in more difficult circumstances. He was referring to 1800 and 1801 when the number of naval troop-ships and armed transports amounted to 50 sail, and their tonnage to about 50,000 tons. That had been at a time when the fleets of France, Spain and Holland, amounted to about 100 sail of the line. In his view that figure had reduced to 71 by 1810.³⁸

Melville, with his wealth of experience, was firmly convinced that 'the naval establishment of this country is now upon a scale considerably exceeding that in wisdom, in sound policy and of every principle of economy, it ought to be'.³⁹ His justification was that Britain had about 105 ships of the line in actual service and another 103 sail of the line in ordinary. In fact he believed that only 91 ships of the line were required to provide effective security for Britain. He estimated that 81 would suffice in European waters with 10 more for

³⁷ Richard Glover, *Peninsular Preparation. The Reform of the British Army 1795 to 1809* (Cambridge, 1963), 18.

³⁸ Melville *Speech*, 31. His estimate was 'The Russian fleet, in the Baltic, consists of thirteen sail of the line with several heavy frigates. The Danes have one ship of the line, and the Swedes eleven sail. The Dutch have agreed by a recent treaty, to furnish nine sail of the line to France. These are all the ships they have; and no doubt they will find great difficulty in fitting and manning them for active service. France has, in the Scheldt, ten sail of the line whose crews, though not nearly complete, are (as far as they can go) composed of various nations. She has also two sail of the line at Cherburgh, and, in the ports on the Bay of Biscay, about twelve sail of the line, most of which are at Rochefort. France has also in the Mediterranean, thirteen effective ships.

³⁹ Melville *Speech*, 32.

foreign service.⁴⁰ However he was not able to predict at that time, that there would be an increased demand for warships off the American coast in 1812 / 13.

Melville constructed a persuasive argument to demonstrate that the costs were comparable to chartering the equivalent tonnage from the market. He compared the cost of hire with the cost of a 64 gun

ship, with an estimated tonnage

of 1380 tons with her usual

complement of men of 491

reduced by two thirds to 164

men. He computed the annual

cost to be £20,549/02/00. as

shown in table 6.5. He compared

this with the cost of hiring one thousand, three hundred and eighty tons of transport at 25/-

per ton per month, for twelve months.⁴¹ This would be £20,700. There was thus a marginal

difference in favour of troops-ships of £150/18/00.⁴² However it should be noted that at any

hire rate less than 25/- a ton, which was not paid until April 1807 and had temporarily

reduced in 1810 back to 21/- per ton, the naval troop ship proposal would have been more

expensive.⁴³

| Table 6.5 | | |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| Estimated annual cost of using a 64 gun naval ship as a troop ship | | |
| | Cost Per man per month | Total Cost per annum |
| Wages for 164 men | £1...17...0 | |
| Victualls for 164 men | £2...19...0 | |
| Total per man | £4...16...0 | £10,233...12...0 |
| Wear and Tear – 1,380 tons | £2....6...0 per ton | £10,315....10...0 |
| | | |
| | Total cost per annum | £20,549.....2...0 |
| Cost per ton £15 | Number of troops 690 | Cost per man £30 |

Source: Melville *Speech*, 24.

⁴⁰ Melville *Speech*, 33. His estimate was: For the Baltic 20, To watch the motions of the Dutch fleet, And the French fleet in the Scheldt and at Cherbourg 18, For the ports in the Bay of Biscay 12, For the Mediterranean and Black Sea 21, For the service of Lisbon and Cadiz 10. The total for European Service 81 Regarding foreign service: France did not have any ports in the West Indies, so very few ships of the line were required for that station; and very few ships were required in the East Indies, Portuguese America, the Cape of Good Hope and North America. 10 ships should suffice.

⁴¹ Melville *Speech*, 25. The price paid during the previous year.

⁴² Melville *Speech*, 25.

⁴³ Melville *Speech* . 27. Regarding the estimated cost, which his opponents said was too low, Melville used the example of the *Inflexible* 64, of 1386 tons, which ship was employed for 28 months as a troopship. His calculation would allow £796/19/00 per month for wear and tear and ordnance, or £10,360/07/00 per annum for a sixty four troop ship. The actual cost appeared to have been at the rate of only £771/06/05 per month, for fitting, wear and tear and ordnance; or £10,027/03/05 per annum.

Indeed very similar comparisons are found in an unattributed memorandum dated 1 April 1809 in the Castlereagh papers. That compared the cost of transports to the costs of various size naval vessels including a 74 gun ship with a compliment of 250 men, a 64 gun ship with a compliment of 200 men and a 36 gun frigate with a complement of 125 men. Those calculations also resulted in a small annual saving per ship if the naval ships had been used but suggests that the annual cost of shipping 20,000 men in transports would be £597,000 compared with £448,000 in old men of war ships. Although not included in the calculation there was a recognition that there may well be some savings of half pay to sea officers who would become employed again.⁴⁴ This calculation ignored the flexibility of hiring and discharging transports in line with demand and the initial cost of refitting the ships for this service. When challenged on the basis of his cost estimates Melville retorted ‘I reject all such calculations; for I hold the life of a British sailor or soldier to be inestimable: cannot therefore consent to have this subject considered upon the ground of a trifling saving of expense’⁴⁵

In the debate that followed Lord Mulgrave, who up to recently had been First Lord of the Admiralty, from March 1807 to April 1810, expressed surprise that Melville had dwelt upon the advantages to be derived from the naval discipline on board ships of war employed for the conveyance of troops. This, despite Melville having received letters from high ranking naval officers which strongly expressed ‘the great inconvenience that had arisen from it’, and after what had happened on board some of the ships previously employed for this purpose. He also disagreed with Melville’s cost estimate citing the 1801 Egyptian expedition where 41,000 tons of troopships had been employed for the conveyance of 17,000 troops. The apparent cost comparison, although no evidence seems to be available and it seems to be overstated, was that in troopships the cost was £27 per ton and £55 per man; and in hired

⁴⁴ Castlereagh *Correspondence* VI, 254-256. Unattributed Memorandum respecting the expense of Transports. 1 Apr 1809.

⁴⁵ Melville *Speech*, 28.

transports it was not more than £12 per ton and £24 per man.⁴⁶ Needless to say the former First Lord rejected the principle of reducing the navy, knowing how difficult it would be to restore it again if it became necessary. In addition, he believed that Melville had miscalculated the number of ships that could be mustered against Britain, it was actually 101 ships. For this reason he believed that it was quite impracticable to derive the tonnage necessary for the transport service from the 147,000 tons then employed in the navy. Mulgrave's logic appears sound if applied to the period up to 1805 when the naval fleet was comparatively balanced with enemy fleets, except even then in 1800 and 1801 between 40 and 46 ships had been designated for that purpose. However post Trafalgar there would seem to be strong indications that supported Melville's theory, given the government's success in preventing the principal naval ships of Denmark, Portugal and Russia from falling under French control, however further consideration is beyond the scope of this thesis. Clearly irritated, Mulgrave described the motion to be an 'unnecessary interference with the executive government'. Melville's proposal was, unsurprisingly, defeated.

Despite this, by June 1810, Liverpool's actions were bearing fruit, there were newspaper reports that 'At all dockyards the weakest ships of war are fitting as troop ships, it being intended to bring this description of force into service as extensively as circumstances will admit, instead of having transports.'⁴⁷ In 1814 the Admiralty was asked by the Transport Board whether it was the intention that troop ships, able to accommodate 10,000, men were going to be maintained.⁴⁸ As preparations were being made for the end of the war a list of naval vessels to be retained as troopships was drawn up see table 6.6.⁴⁹ In fact the Transport

⁴⁶ Clearly Mulgrave was assuming the cost of transports at 20/- per ton per month (whereas the rate was actually 21/-) and the rate at 2 tons per man. The comparative cost of the 64 gun ship based on Dundas' model was £15 per ton and £30 per man per annum rather than the £27 and £55 that he quoted and taking the actual freight rate his values would be £13/04/00 and £26/08/00. Marginally in favour of using merchant transports.

⁴⁷ *The Aberdeen Journal* 20 June 1810

⁴⁸ NMM, ADM, 359 /346/195, TB to Admiralty, 18 Aug 1814 .

⁴⁹ NMM, ADM, 359/37a/20 ,A list of ships to be reserved as troopships.

Board had suggested that this was a practical course of action for the post war period back in 1798.⁵⁰

Table 6.6
A list of ships proposed to be reserved (including those presently fitted) for troop ships showing the number that each will accommodate, an estimate of the expense of fitting those that have not been so employed and what it would be proper to do with them if they were not so fitted.

| Guns | Ship's names | Number of troops that can be Carried by each | Estimate of the expense of fitting The hulls of those not now employed as troop ships | What it would be proper to do with the ships if they were not so fitted |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|--|--|---|
| Ships now fitted | | | | |
| 38 | Hydra | 365 | | |
| 32 | Bucephalus | 325 | | |
| 32 | Ceylon | 325 | | |
| 32 | Dover | 325 | | |
| Ships proposed to be fitted | | | | |
| 50 | Antelope | 525 | £5,000 | Reserved for harbour services |
| | Akbar | 525 | £2,000 | Built with teak reserved for store ship |
| | Grampus | 525 | £5,000 | Repaired for sea service |
| 44 | Dolphin | 465 | £2,000 | Reserved for store ship |
| 36 | Elhalion | 365 | £2,800 | Repaired for sea service |
| 32 | Amphion | 325 | £2,000 | } |
| 32 | Narcissus | 325 | £2,000 | } Reserved for harbour service |
| 32 | Nereus | 325 | £6,000 | } |
| 32 | Sir Francis Drake | 325 | £1,500 | Built with teak to be reserved for a store ship. |
| | Total | 5045 | | |

Source: NMM, ADM/BP/34B. Navy Board to Admiralty 15 Jan 1817.

East India Company ships as alternatives to naval vessels as troop ships.

East India Company ships were occasionally used, their size being not dissimilar from that of some naval vessels but the Transport Board viewed East India ships as ‘not the most eligible in point of expense’; only to be hired as an unavoidable necessity.⁵¹ Indeed

⁵⁰Further Proceedings on Committee on Finance (18th), 156.

⁵¹Further Proceedings on Committee on Finance (18th), 155.

during the American war the Navy Board did occasionally use East India Company ships take troops to India. However it was reluctant to use such ships because it could not gain complete operational control of the vessels since the company insisted that the vessels 'be discharged from the King's service as the Company's service may render it necessary' and the Navy Board had been reluctant to accept this condition.⁵²

During his examination by the Committee on Finance, in 1798, Commissioner John Schank was asked 'does it increase or diminish the expense of the service to take up East or West India men?' He advised the committee that 'hiring such ships generally meant that the government carried responsibility for high demurrage 'in consequence of the disappointment of wind or the change of service in consequence of the operation of war' and that that liability usually subjected the government to the risk of high additional costs⁵³ He was no doubt referring to an incident in 1795 when the Board was requested to urgently provide transports to convey troops to the West Indies, due to other demands there were not enough transports available. Rear Admiral Christian approached the managers of the recently arrived East and West India fleets but their owners could not be encouraged to agree because of the risk of missing their next voyage. To persuade them to undertake the voyage Christian was forced to concede to pay demurrage at twice the normal rate which had proved to be very expensive for the government.⁵⁴

From time to time the East India Company was persuaded to pay for transports on behalf of the government but they were not always fit and suitable; in August 1803 the Company had selected 24 ships that it was proposing to charter for the government, when they were inspected by Captain Rains on behalf of the Board he found many of them unfit for

⁵² Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, 72.

⁵³ Committee on Finance (31st), 503.

⁵⁴ TNA, ADM, Rupert George to Huskisson, 12 Apr 1796. This arrangement was made by Admiral Christian, when subsequently advising Dundas of the facts Rupert George felt obliged to comment that 'It may be necessary to further observe that this arrangement was not made by a man or set of men just entered with office with improper experience as has been erroneously stated' to make it clear where the responsibility lay.

the service, some were under the required tonnage whilst others did not have sufficient height between decks.⁵⁵ Only half were subsequently taken up. Even these had a further unhelpful restriction on their use beyond a fixed six month charter. They were required to be discharged at Portsmouth or Deptford at the end of that period otherwise they would be subject to a high demurrage charge.⁵⁶ Clearly politics were at play. The Board did not welcome these ships but felt obliged to take them. Similarly in 1804 when offered further East India Company ships the Board wrote to the Admiralty that they should be rejected because they were not fitted as transports and were larger ships than the Board normally hired. The Board explained that it could get ships at 19/- per ton per month but these vessels which had larger crews and were fitted as armed ships would cost 21/- per ton per month. It recommended that all those ships that were not coppered should be rejected.⁵⁷ It is not known how many were finally taken up nor are the politics clear.

The East India Company had traditionally provided homeward cargoes, from India or China, for ships engaged by the Government for convict ships to New South Wales or transports to India or Ceylon when homeward cargoes could not be obtained there. However the practice caused the company great inconvenience and the Court now believed that cargoes could be procured in New South Wales. In October 1806 following a request from the Board and from an owner the Court declined to continue to guarantee homeward cargoes.⁵⁸ Thus in May 1807 when Castlereagh requested transports to take 600 men to Ceylon, the Board were forced to respond that it could not engage vessels to convey these troops and also about 540 tons of Ordnance stores for the same island, without paying at a

⁵⁵ TNA, WO, 1/801, TB to Lord Hobart, 24 August 1803.

⁵⁶ TNA, WO, 1 /801, TB to Lord Hobart, 24 August 1803.

⁵⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/3774/221, TB to William Marsden, 16 February 1804.

⁵⁸ TNA, WO, 1/803/195, W. Ramsey, East India Company to TB, 21 Oct 1806.

very high rate, unless the Court of Directors should agree to give them back freight. Neither could the men and cargo be accommodated in any of the company's ships.⁵⁹

Transports as troop ships

Troops invariably found that long stretches at sea were unpleasant, the ships often damp and generally overcrowded, there was little to occupy them and the damp conditions encouraged ill health. It had been suggested that 'On board ship private soldiers suffer ten times as much almost, as before an enemy'.⁶⁰

In 1794 a number of troops conveyed to Barbados from Ireland were reported to be 'very fickle (sickly) on their arrival'. Between 800 and 900 were sick and sent ashore, without any provision for their reception in terms of stores, utensils nor medicines.⁶¹ This was not an unusual situation. In September 1794 Sir Jeremiah Fitzpatrick M.D. was appointed by Dundas as Inspector of Health for the Land Forces, 'with a particular view to their situation when on board Transports'.⁶² Fitzpatrick demonstrated early successes but was ultimately sidelined by the vested interests of regimental commanders and the army medical board.⁶³

The main specification for troop ships was that there was to be five feet between decks and the carrying capacity for each ship for extended voyages was two tons per man but in European waters this was frequently reduced to one and a half tons per man. The Board was

⁵⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/53, TB to Castlereagh, 15 May 1807.

⁶⁰ Mackesy, *Victory in Egypt*, 226.

⁶¹ IHR *House of Commons Papers 1795 -96*, Vol 100, 226, Mr Mallet, Director General of Hospitals, Barbadoes to Mr Keate. Jan 21 1794.

⁶² IHR *House of Commons Papers 1795 -96*, Vol 100, 257, Letter confirming appointment Instructions for conduct of duties. Duffy, *Sugar, Soldiers and Seapower*, 353, 'Dundas found however that the appointment of a trouble shooter, to expedite reform and improvements, seldom broke through the traditional procedures of the ramshackle British administrative system. Fitzpatrick's energetic start soon bogged down in the face of the vested interests of regimental commanders and the army medical board. His tactlessness undermined the support that Dundas was prepared to give him and his powers were soon reduced to those of advice and exhortation though many of his ideas found their way into the Southampton Board's report'.

⁶³ Duffy, *Sugar, Soldiers and Seapower*, 353, also see O. Macdonagh, *The Inspector General; Sir Jerimiah Fitzpatrick and the politics of social reform 1783-1802* (London, 1981)

very strict about observing these regulations. In 1795 it reacted strongly to a complaint from the army, following sickness on board troop transports, by publishing a chart which showed the actual tonnage appropriated for the reception of troops to the West Indies compared with the tonnage required at the rate of two tons per man. This demonstrated clearly that the mandated tonnage was exceeded although it was marginal in some instances, see table 6.7.⁶⁴

| Table 6.7 Transport Office 20 th January 1795 | | Extract from the General Embarkation Book relative to the Regiments under Captain George Aire and destined for the West Indies Islands | | | | |
|---|-----|---|-----------------|--------------------|---------|--|
| | Men | Women | Total Number | Tons Per man | Tonnage | |
| The 96 th Regiment embarked in Weymouth, 13 th Sep 1794 | 674 | 62 | 736 | 2 | 1,472 | |
| Transport appropriated in 5 ships | | | | | 1,760 | |
| Surplus tonnage afforded this Regiment | | | | | 288 | |
| The 81 st Regiment embarked Southampton, 27 th Sep 1794 | 989 | 0 | 989 | 2 | 1,978 | |
| Transport appropriated in 7 ships | | | | | 2,204 | |
| Surplus tonnage afforded this Regiment | | | | | 326 | |
| The 34 th Regiment embarked first at Southampton in August last, landed in Zealand, re-embarked and arrived at Spithead 27 Sep 1794. | 541 | 52 | 593 | 2 | 1,186 | |
| Transport appropriated in 4 ships | | | | | 1,225 | |
| Surplus tonnage afforded this Regiment | | | | | 39 | |
| The 31 st Regiment embarked at Southampton in August last, landed in Zealand, re-embarked and arrived at Spithead 27 Sep 1794. | 562 | 66 | 628 | 2 | 1,256 | |
| Transport appropriated in 4 ships | | | | | 1,262 | |
| Surplus tonnage afforded this Regiment | | | | | 6 | |
| The 17 th Regiment embarked Southampton 3 Sep 1794 | 660 | 0 | 660 | 2 | 1,320 | |
| Transport appropriated in 4 ships | | | | | 1,349 | |
| Surplus tonnage afforded this Regiment | | | | | 29 | |

Source: TNA, WO, 1/ 790 TB to Henry Dundas, Secretary of State for War. 23 Jan 1795

In December 1799 Lieutenant Ebenezer Fisher, Agent at Liverpool, hired ships to convey troops to the West Indies but did not follow the rules. ‘It is the constant rule of this Board not

⁶⁴ TNA, WO, 1, 790/157, TB to Henry Dundas, 23 Jan 1795.

to appropriate any ships for troops unless they exceed five feet between decks, and to apportion on West Indies voyages two tons per man. The agent at Liverpool has fallen into great error'. However, the Board did recommend that, because of the urgency, it was expedient to proceed with the arrangements and allow the troops to sail in those vessels on that occasion only, as the two ton per man rule had been observed.⁶⁵

The encouragement of good health and welfare of the troops on passage was taken very seriously. The two ton per man rule went some way to prevent overcrowding but if disease broke out on board then the limited confines of the ship invariably encouraged the spread of the virus. In 1795 William Windham, Secretary at War, issued a set of instructions regulating the conduct of troops on board troop ships which had been recommended by The Board of Military and Medical Gentlemen held on 28 September.⁶⁶ The principal objectives of these were to guard against fire and to preserve the health of troops by 'cleanliness, disciplines, regularity of messing and general attention to the treatment and conduct of the soldiers while on board'. To prevent fire a sentry was constantly posted 'at the caboose, or one on each side if the number of soldiers on board were sufficient'. There was to be no fire of any kind without permission and when fumigating, which was deemed 'highly material', every precaution was to be taken against accidents by fire. Materials used for fumigation included 'brimstone with sawdust or brimstone thrown over hot coals, nitre to which a little vitriolic acid is added; common salt, with the same addition as vitriolic acid or gun powder wetted or the heated loggerhead in the pitch pot'.⁶⁷ Fumigating between decks was to be immediately after the cleaning of the berths and again if practicable after each meal once all the dirt or fragments of victuals had been removed by sweeping.

⁶⁵ TNA, ADM, 108 / 20/ 29, TB to W. Huskisson, 11 Dec 1799.

⁶⁶ BL, c.194.a456, *Regulations to be observed by Troops embarked in Transports for service abroad particularly those destined for the West Indies*. (War Office, 10 Oct 1795), 10.

⁶⁷ BL, c.194.a456. *Regulations to be observed by Troops*, 11.

To preserve cleanliness the men were to wash their feet every morning, for this purpose there had to be two tubs of salt water upon the forecastle by 0600 every morning and again in the evening. They had to comb their hair every morning. Twice a week they had to shave, wash thoroughly and put on clean shirts. There was also to be provision for changing their clothing when wet. Other measures included great attention being paid to the cleanliness of the privies; buckets of water had to be thrown down frequently during the day, to prevent the soil from sticking to the sides of the ships. Bedding was to be brought upon deck every morning, weather permitting, by 0700 and to be well aired. Once the bedding was taken up on deck, the men were to proceed in sweeping, scrubbing and scraping the berths and decks. The decks were not to be washed more often than once a week and then only when the weather was dry.

Breakfast would be at 0800 after the cleaning followed by a general parade at 0900 when every man should appear as clean as his situation would allow. At dinner time the officer upon duty to see that the men were at their messes and that their rum was mixed with at least three parts water to one of spirits. They were also to observe any 'neglect in victualling of the troops' and report such events to the commanding officer who would report it to the Transport Agent

The greatest care had to be taken to ensure that the coppers were cleaned before and after use. The troops then had to parade again half an hour before sunset. At sunset the bedding was to be taken below and at 20.00 every man was to be in his berth except the men on watch. There were instructions regarding married couples who were not allowed to make separate berths all over the ships by hanging blankets which obstructed the circulation of air. They were to have adjoining berths in one part of the ship if possible. The women were obliged to rise at 0700 hours so that all the partitions could be cleared away for the day.

All the troops aboard were to be divided into three watches. The whole duty watch was to be always on deck except when it was raining heavily. In fine weather every man was to be on deck the whole day and drilled as often as weather permitted to give regular 'bodily exercise'. There were also instructions for the surgeon to examine the men's hands at morning parade when he was to indentify the sick and decide whether he needed to isolate the individual or transfer him to the hospital ship to minimise contagion. There were also to be regular divine services to boost morale.⁶⁸

Returning troop ships were stripped of beds and mattresses, these were usually destroyed if the ship had been in the West Indies, otherwise if it was practical they were washed and repaired.⁶⁹ The ships were then defumigated and thoroughly dried out.⁷⁰ Occasionally Fitzpatrick ordered that even the ballast was removed and replaced. Additional air holes were cut into the decks to allow a better flow of air. At the end of the charter owners received reimbursement for the damage caused by the cutting these holes.

Naval troop ships carried a surgeon but merchant transports did not usually have one. For major expeditions troops were embarked and then the ship moved into the roads to allow other ships into port to take on troops and supplies, they could often be there for several weeks while the fleet was assembled before commencing the voyage. This was not pleasant, boredom set in and the damp crowded conditions were ideal for the fermentation of disease. Alternatively they were frequently detained on board, at the end of a voyage, because land based camps were full, this must have been particularly damaging to morale.

⁶⁸ BL, c.194.a456. *Regulations to be observed by Troop, 12.*

⁶⁹ *Hampshire Telegraph* 30 Mar 1807 request for tenders to 'wash and repair bedding ...The materials for mending the same to be supplied by the contractor; and the foul bedding to be taken away' placed by Charles Patton Resident Agent Portsmouth.

⁷⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/32, TB Minute, 12 Nov 1794. Sir Jeremiah Fitzpatrick condemns the airing machines, supposed to be used in ships and recommends those of his own invention; which Mr Winlow of Margaret Street will make for £6/06/00 each. He recommends an improvement to his own invention which Mr Winlow will add without charge to some machines now lying unused at Portsmouth.

Although the health issues of troops on transports improved during the Revolutionary war, as the focus moved away from the West Indies, it was still a very important consideration for the Transport Board. In 1803 Captain Philip Patton, agent at Portsmouth wrote to the Transport Board that the *Ceres* 455 tons ‘from continuing at Spithead in this damp and rainy weather, has become sickly’. Even though the *Ceres* was a very high and roomy ship, and no more crowded than transports commonly were for short trips, sickness broke out and two men died. The Inspector advised that any newly infected person should be removed to the military hospital. The appointed escort, the frigate *Apollo*, had been delayed at Spithead so Patton requested an additional transport and the appointment of a new escort. In the covering letter to the Admiralty the Transport Board said that it has ordered the Agent to find other vessel for the reception of the sick and requested that a new convoy escort be urgently appointed.⁷¹

Merchant ship owners of ships that were to be used as troop ships were expected to provide, at their own cost and in sufficient quantities, the coppers or furnaces for boiling and dressing the provisions for the troops together with cans and pumps for serving them with beer and water as well as platters, spoons, candles and lanterns.⁷² Masters were obliged to fix an explanatory notice of the victualling arrangements for the troops, as shown in table 6.8, to the mainmast so that they were advised of the rations to which they were entitled. Troops were to be victualled in accordance with the standing instructions which were equivalent to two thirds the seaman’s allowance. Women were to be victualled at three quarters the soldier’s allowance and children at half the woman’s allowance.

⁷¹ TNA, ADM,1/3744, Captain Patton, Agent at Portsmouth to TB, 18 Dec 1803.

⁷² Committee on Finance (18th), 202, Form of General Charter Party.

| Table 6.8 | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|
| Rules to be Observed in Victualling the Troops when embarked – Six soldiers Allowance for every day in the Week | | | | | | | | | |
| Day | Bread Pounds | Beer Gallons ½ Pints of Spirits or Pints of Wine | Beef Pieces of Eight Pounds | Pork Pieces of Four Pounds | Pease Pints | Oatmeal Pints | Butter Pounds | Cheese Pounds | Vinegar |
| Sunday | 4 | 4 | | 1 | 2 | | | | One Quart in a week |
| Monday | 4 | 4 | | | | 4 | ½ | 1 | |
| Tuesday | 4 | 4 | 1 or 6 pounds of flour, half a pound of suet and one pound of Raisins | | | | | | |
| Wednesday | 4 | 4 | | | 2 | 4 | ½ | 1 | |
| Thursday | 4 | 4 | | 1 | 2 | | | | |
| Friday | 4 | 4 | | | 2 | 4 | ½ | 1 | |
| Saturday | 4 | 4 | 1 or as above | | | | | | |
| <p>In cases of substitution of one article for another the following proportions are to be observed: When flour, suet and raisins are put on board, they are to be served in equal proportions with beef, viz. one half in beef, the other half in flour, suet and raisins, on each beef day. Four pounds of Flour, or three Pounds of Flour, with half a pound of raisins or a quarter pound of currents, and a quarter pound of Suet are equal to four pounds of Beef or two pounds of Pork with Pease. Half a pound of Rice is equal to a pint of Oatmeal, half a pound of sugar is equal to half a pound of butter, or two pounds of cheese; that is, a pint of Oil is equal to the allowance of Butter and Cheese. One pound of fresh Beef is equal to one pound of Salt Beef, and one pound and a half of fresh Beef is equal to One pound of Pork. A pint of Wine or half a pint of Brandy, Rum or Arrack is equal to a gallon of Beer</p> | | | | | | | | | |
| Source: Commission for Revision (13 th), 220. | | | | | | | | | |

Accommodation arrangements on board troop transports were a frequent source of friction between the senior army officer on board and the Transport Agent when they were both allocated to the same ship. The Agents Afloat took priority. The Articles of Instruction to Agents of 1803 were subsequently revised with the instructions that in all cases where there is no agent embarked on board of a transport the starboard state room be allotted to the officer of the troops on board if he was a commissioned officer, but when a Transport Agent was on board the stateroom was to be allotted to the Agent.⁷³ There is much evidence in the correspondence about the ill will that was generated by this. Quite often soldiers' cabins on transports were broken or destroyed during the passage to the extent that they required considerable repairs when the ships returned to port. Recognising this the Board amended the

⁷³ TNA, ADM, 106/3096, Handwritten update to printed *Articles of General Instructions to Agents*, dated 1803.

Articles of General Instructions to Agents, directing that when any troops were embarked on transports the Agent should apply to the officer commanding them to appoint a sergeant to take responsibility for the cabins during the time the troops remained on board. This procedure had previously been adopted in shore barracks, in order minimize damage.⁷⁴ One of the arguments in favour of the use of troop ships was the degree of comfort in terms of accommodation which officers and men enjoyed on the voyage, compared with that which they experienced in merchant transports.⁷⁵

Agents were frequently called upon to provide accommodation for females on board. Their instructions specified six women to every one hundred men. These were sometimes overruled by specific instructions as issued by Dundas as in 1801 ‘no women should be allowed to embark with those troops belonging to the regiments actually serving in the field with Sir Ralph Abercromby, but those intended to join any of the regiments actually serving in any of the garrisons in the Mediterranean may take with them the proportion of women allowed under regulations.’⁷⁶

Masters of troop ships were governed by a series of instructions which were included in the Committee on Finance 13th Report. The instructions were specific on the quantity of provisions to be supplied for troops, women and children. It was mandated that a notice was to be fixed to the mainmast between decks showing a table of these victualling arrangements so that the troops knew what to expect, thus ensuring that the Masters complied with the rules. There were also specific instructions about the daily allowance for horses.

Master’s were required to keep a good record of when any of the soldiers deserted, died or were absent from the ship. Generally relationships between merchant ship master’s and crew and the infantry on board were workmanlike to good. Due to the confined situation it was inevitable that there were, of course, many conflicts, most of which were resolved on

⁷⁴ TNA, ADM, 106/3096, Handwritten update to printed *Articles of General Instructions to Agents*, dated 1803.

⁷⁵ Melville’s *Speech*, 7.

⁷⁶ TNA, WO, 1/801, Dundas to TB, 16 Mar 1801.

board or by the transport agents. Some however could not be resolved locally and were passed to the Secretary of State for War or the Admiralty for resolution. One such complaint, in 1803, from the Ordnance Board related to the attitude of the Master of the *Prince of Wales* transport towards the officers of a detachment of artillery, who were on passage to Gibraltar. When the Transport Board investigated the situation the owner blamed the dispute between the officers and the Master on the extremely bad behaviour of the Officers of Artillery. He alleged that they had broken into the Master's stateroom, where all his belongings including clothes and books were kept, while he was in town on business.⁷⁷ Despite this the Board decided, 'that for his highly culpable conduct', the master of the *Prince of Wales* would not in future be allowed to command any ship taken up by the Board. It is not clear precisely what the Master had done.

Given the number of troops conveyed in crowded, cramped, uncomfortable, often damp circumstances, it is quite natural to expect that there were many expressions of discontent. Many of these were resolved by the Agents accompanying the transports but others led to complaints to the Secretary of State who, in turn, demanded explanations from the Board. In one instance in 1813 Bathurst had received a complaint from Colonel Ferreno, serving under Sir Thomas Graham, about stores, particularly blankets and camping equipment, which were being shipped for troops in Holland. On receipt of the application of the Storekeeper General, on 23 November, the Board had immediately ordered its Agent at Ramsgate to arrange for these stores to be shipped with the troops who were under orders for embarkation from there to Holland. The transports allotted for that service had been detained at Portsmouth by contrary winds therefore seven small transports, which were lying at Dover ready to receive troops, were ordered to proceed to Ramsgate to transport the supplies. After they arrived at Ramsgate they were diverted by Sir Thomas Graham to convey the troops

⁷⁷ TNA, ADM, 108 / 74 / 63, R.H. Crew Secretary to the Ordnance Board to the Admiralty, 13 Jan 1803.

from there to the Downs where they would be transferred to the ships of war. This prevented the stores from being put on board those transports until the 13th December, after the transfer of troops was completed. They sailed from Ramsgate on 17th December.⁷⁸ As was often the case Ferreno was unaware of his commander's involvement in causing the delays. Another instance arose in May 1810 when seven officers and 134 men under orders for Canada were left behind when the convoy sailed. The Agent was accused of not allowing sufficient time for embarkation of the troops on the *Sanderson* transport. The Board defended the actions of Lieutenant Parker, the Transport Agent at Cowes who had advised Brigadier General Taylor, the complainant and commander of troops at Cowes, on 15 May that the *Sanderson* was engaged to ship the troops 'on freight', giving him twelve day notice to prepare for embarkation but the troops were not ready to be embarked on the *Sanderson* until 5 June by which time the convoy had sailed. The Board pointed out that the timing of the departure of convoys was very much in the hands of the Navy.⁷⁹ Occasionally there were conflicts when army officers interfered with Agents' role as was experienced by Lieutenant Parke, Agent at Bristol, in 1799. He was engaged in procuring vessels for the transmission of the Pembrokehire Regiment of Militia to Cork when the un-named officers refused to accept the vessels selected. In the Board's view this was without justification. This left the only other alternative of bringing alternative ships from Plymouth with the consequent delays.⁸⁰

Horses at sea.

Horses were usually loaded and unloaded by hoisting them in slings, with practice about 30 to 40 horses could be loaded in an hour.⁸¹ As with troop ships, horse ships were

⁷⁸ ADM, 108, 24/100, TB to Earl Bathurst, 12 Jan 1814.

⁷⁹ TNA,ADM,108/21/240, TB to Liverpool, 7 June 1810.

⁸⁰ TNA,ADM, 108/20, TB to Dundas, 3 Apr 1799.

⁸¹ Lieut-Col. George Armand Furse. *Military Transport* (London,1882), 172.

loaded and then moved out into holding areas until the remainder of the fleet was loaded and the until the weather was suitable for sailing.

In 1800 the Transport Board advised Dundas:

‘The artillery and other horses for the expedition under command of Gen Sir Charles Stuart having now been some time embarked on board the cavalry ships at Portsmouth; we request that you will be pleased to inform us, if it is intended that they shall be landed or remain on board, as we apprehend some inconvenience from their being suffered to remain long embarked, previous to their departure from Spithead’.⁸²

It was well known that such delays had a detrimental effect on the horses. It is not clear that this issue was ever fully addressed, such delays occurred frequently throughout the wars.

During passage the daily allowance for each horse was ten pounds of hay, eight pounds of oats, a small quantity of bran and six gallons of water.⁸³ Under the terms of the Charter Party owners were obliged to provide the proper number of pumps and buckets for drawing and serving water for the horses.⁸⁴ Horse ships required a considerable volume of forage. Masters of horse-ships were expected to sign receipts for quantities take on board and to keep an exact daily record of the usage, following a stock take at the end of the voyage any deficiency was charged against the ships.⁸⁵ There appears to be little information on the construction of horse stalls in the period but in an 1868 publication there are good illustrations of these constructions which are likely to have been very similar to those of the day.⁸⁶ There were numerous factors to be taken into consideration. Horses varied in size. Those that hauled wagon trains were much bulkier than cavalry horses. Horses needed sufficient space but not too much that they could fall over in rough weather. Some of the bars

⁸² TNA, ADM 108/20/40, TB to Henry Dundas, 28 Apr 1800.

⁸³ Commission for Revision (13th) *Regulations to be observed by all Masters of Ships and Vessels employed and hired in HM's Transport Service.*

⁸⁴ Committee on Finance (18th) Form of General Charter Party.

⁸⁵ Commission for Revision (13th) *Regulations to be observed by all Masters of Ships and Vessels employed and hired in HM's Transport Service.*

⁸⁶ Furse, *Military Transport*, 159 to 177.

in the construction were required to be rounded to avoid the horse being injured during sudden movement. In certain conditions the horses would be suspended in slings to avoid dramatic movements in strong weather. There also had to be strict guidelines to ensure that the horses had sufficient ventilation and that the stalls were cleaned out regularly.

Summary

Merchant ships, supported from time to time by naval vessels, transported hundreds of thousands of troops and thousands of horses to join major expeditions and subsequently repatriated the survivors. In addition, they supported numerous minor operations and general troop movements which occurred with high frequency. This was a valuable contribution to the ultimate defeat of the enemy. In the debate about whether naval vessels should be used to a greater extent for this purpose the political and professional view was that there were not enough naval ships. This was strange because forty to fifty naval ships were provided for this purpose in 1800 and 1801 (when there was little difference in the size of the Royal Navy and the combined size of the enemy fleets) and there appears to have been between ten and twenty ships allocated for this purpose throughout the wars. There was still great uncertainty about how long the war might last, about the changing allegiances of the nation states and the development of the French Navy. It would have required a bold politician to make the strategic decision to trim back the naval capability. Pitt might have done it under Dundas' influence if he had survived his illness. The case for using naval vessels to convey troops became much stronger after Trafalgar in 1805 when the Navy had the dominant fleet, it was even more so after the capture of the Danish fleet in 1807, particularly when the charter rate increased to 25/- per ton per month. It is very likely that one of, if not the major restricting factors was the availability of sufficient men to crew troop ships. This needs further exploration as is beyond the scope of this study.

Commissioner Bowen's assessment that naval vessels were probably the preferred method of shipping troops suggests that, although some naval ships were used, an opportunity was missed by not providing more naval vessels to be used as troop ships.⁸⁷ However, the question of the accountability of troops on board naval vessels was never resolved and consequent disputes may have negated all the other benefits which might have otherwise from this. His failure to press the Admiralty, to agree to using more naval vessels might well have been one of Castlereagh's lost opportunities. The troops may have experienced more tolerable voyages, particularly on the longer passages and there may have been fewer 'lost at sea' incidents and consequently a lower fatality rate. It is hard to anticipate whether the use of naval vessels as troop ships would have had a material impact on the length of the war. This seems unlikely; but maybe more merchant ships were diverted from trade than was really necessary. The potential impact of this will be considered elsewhere in the thesis. It is important to reflect on the high number of troop passages and recognize that, despite the discomforts and the close proximity of troops and crews, the majority of passages were successful, with surprisingly low levels of disaffection.

⁸⁷ Commission for Revision (9th), 207.

Chapter seven

Castlereagh's European expeditions, 1805 to 1808.

Viscount Castlereagh was Secretary of State for War between July 1805 and September 1809 except for the fourteen months of the Ministry of the Talents between January 1806 and March 1807, during which time the office was occupied by William Windham. Shortly after Castlereagh's first appointment in 1805 the French military camps at Boulogne were broken up and the troops marched eastward, removing the immediate threat of invasion. Nevertheless, this was a period of great uncertainty regarding the loyalties of the states of Europe, but on the 9 October, the Third Coalition was established, uniting Great Britain, Austria and Russia. Prussia refused to join, preferring instead to retain her position of neutrality, although she was prepared to form an alliance with France in exchange for the possession of Hanover. Bonaparte reneged on the deal so no alliance was concluded, in September, subsequently France reduced its force in Hanover. In light of this Britain prepared to send a light corps of about 10,000 men, by way of the Elbe, to reoccupy Hanover.¹ It was to be a campaign which heralded a period of feverish military activity, under Castlereagh, requiring high transport usage as thousands of soldiers were moved around Europe.

The planning for this campaign had to solve the problem that had frustrated army commanders immensely, the shortage of horses for staff officers, for cavalry and for the commissariat for hauling supply wagons and for artillery to pull heavy guns. This was a perennial challenge, due to the volume of tonnage required for each horse and rider, for forage and supplies, and for artillery equipment and wagons. There was a shortage of suitable ships and the costs were significant, at £8 to £10 per horse per month compared to troop

¹ Castlereagh *Correspondence*. VI, 3-5. For further explanation of the politics behind this strategy see Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 118 – 124 and Richard Harding, 'Expeditionary Armies and Naval Power: The North Germany Campaign of 1805/6' in *Trafalgar Chronicle*, 16, 53-75.

ships at £2 per man per month.² This chapter will explore the challenges that the Board faced during Castlereagh's early years as Secretary of State for War and particularly the shortages of horse ships.

The expedition to northern Germany in 1805.

Lieutenant-General George Don was appointed to lead the vanguard of 10,000 men including 5,000 troops of the German Hanoverian legions who were then in Ireland. Lord Keith would be the naval Commander while Lord Cathcart was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army. The scope of the operation developed significantly; the 10,000 men from England would be joined by a further 10,000 and also by 20,000 Russians, 10,000 Swedes and 26,000 Danes to create a force of 70,000 to 80,000 possibly even 100,000 men, a force strong enough to sweep the French out of Holland.³ The full force would require a vast fleet of transports, over 305,000 tons, which was more than the total tonnage chartered at any other time during the wars. Almost 200,000 tons of this was for horses.⁴

When Castlereagh assumed office there were 322 chartered ships of 88,835 tons, of which 102 were in the Mediterranean, 47 in the West Indies with another 49 at Cork preparing to embark more troops for the West Indies, under Lieutenant-General Eyre Coote. Twenty-six transports were provisioning the fleet while the remainder, just fewer than 100 ships were at home, unallocated to any specific service. In early August 1805 the Transport Board was instructed to procure 18,000 tons, fit for distant service, of which half was to be sent to Cork and the other half to Portsmouth. In addition transports for 10,000 men were required, provisioned for 6 months, to be assembled in the Downs. At that time there were 21 troop ships in Loch Ryan that Lord Hawkesbury, Home Secretary, writing on behalf of

² At 19/- per ton, later in 1807 to 1809 and again in 1813 to 1814 at 25/- per ton per month this increased to £12 to £15 per horse per month

³ Castlereagh *Correspondence*. Vol 6. 8. Memorandum for the Consideration of the Cabinet. Sep 1805.

⁴ Castlereagh *Correspondence*. Vol 6. 86. Memorandum 21 Dec 1805.

Castlereagh, suggested 'did not appear to be fit for purpose I am desired that they should be paid off'. Quite how he came to this judgement is not known; it certainly appears that he was making decisions that ought to have been the Board's responsibility. In his letter Hawkesbury was somewhat condescending to the Transport Board 'I have no doubt that in execution of this service, which is indispensable, you will make every exertion to prevent as much as possible any embarrassment to trade or any increase of charge to the public'.⁵

Towards the end of August Castlereagh increased the tonnage requirement by 15,000 tons for infantry, cavalry ships for 700 horses and 3000 tons of store ships. He also demanded that the Board report to him regularly on the progress of engaging and fitting these ships which were for 'European' service.⁶ The total required by now was almost 60,000 tons, to be sent to Cork, to Portsmouth and to the River in equal proportions. They were to embark 2,000 cavalry men and horses, 1,500 artillery and associated horses and equipment and 20,000 infantry men. Castlereagh wanted the total tonnage to be raised and prepared before the end of December (1805), allowing 16 weeks, probably a reasonable expectation of the time required to prepare this tonnage. Fifty thousand tons were to be provisioned for two months and ten thousand tons for six months.⁷ In addition three-month ships were chartered by the score. Captain Stephen Rains, the resident agent at Deptford, was responsible for arranging the surveying of the ships, preparing them for service and then sending them on to the Nore where another agent, Lieutenant William Braithwaite, monitored their arrival and reviewed their preparedness, remedied any shortfalls and hastened them on to the Downs. There the transports were assembled to await the embarkation of troops and supplies, the formation of the convoy and the arrival of the convoy escort. Captain John Culverhouse was the agent at the Downs but, due to the level of activity, he was soon joined by three more

⁵ TNA, WO, 6,156/318, Hawkesbury in the absence of Castlereagh to TB, 3 Aug 1805.

⁶ TNA, WO, 6,156/321, Castlereagh to TB, 29 Aug 1805.

⁷ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 17. Memorandum relative to the Provision and Equipments of Transports. 16 Oct 1805.

agents. Hammocks and beds were in great demand; an order for 3000 to be delivered to Deptford was placed on 3 September followed by another for 5,000 two day later. At Portsmouth, Captain Charles Patton, the Resident Agent, was also heavily involved in the allocation and preparation of ships for onward passage to the Downs.

By 9 September the Board was able to advise Castlereagh that plans for the transports for 10,000 troops to be assembled in the Downs were well advanced. This would require 103 ships including 63 infantry ships, 24 horse ships for the cavalry and 16 for ordnance and provisions, as demonstrated in table 7.1.

| Table 7.1. Transport Office. 9 Sep 1805 Scheme of Embarkation for 10,000 troops at 1½ tons per man in Transports victualled to six weeks. | | | |
|---|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| | No of ships | | Tonnage |
| In the Downs | 38 | | 9,310 |
| On passage to the Downs | 14 | | 2,926 |
| Fitting at Deptford | 7 | | 1,663 |
| Ordered from Portsmouth to the Downs | 4 | | 1,118 |
| Total | 63 | | 15,017 |
| Cavalry ships foraged to 8 weeks | Ships | Tonnage | Horses |
| In the Downs | 19 | 4,899 | 596 |
| Fitting at Deptford | 3 | 899 | 102 |
| Ordered from Plymouth and Cork to the Downs | 2 | 562 | 66 |
| Total | 24 | 6,360 | 764 |
| 3000 tons for Ordnance and Victualling Stores | Ships | Tonnage | |
| Ordered to Deptford | 8 | 1,876 | |
| Cleaning the Bottoms at Portsmouth afterwards to proceed to Deptford | 8 | 1,299 | |
| Total | 16 | 3,175 | |
| Source: TNA, WO,1/ 802 | | | |

Anticipating that the Transport Board would have some difficulty procuring all the ships required Castlereagh asked Lord Keith ‘what number of infantry could you transport to the coast of Holland in the King’s ships under your command, should that course of action be necessary?’ Keith estimated that the armed ships under his command should be able to receive about 14,000 men.⁸ By December the proposed British and German force had

⁸ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI.26 Memorandum relative to the Projected Expedition, for the Consideration of the Cabinet, 21 Oct 1805.

increased to 65,090 combatants 1,268 Commissariat staff and 1,000 hospital staff corps, in total 67,358 men, 17,000 horses and all the attendant stores, supplies and forage. By the 23 December almost 74,000 tons were ready and provisioned, a further 101,000 tons were hired and awaiting provisions; nearly all were three month ships which had been hired since early August. This was a significant achievement but a task made easier when availability improved as the summer sailing season drew to a close. The remaining 126,000 tons of horse ships had still to be found.⁹

In recognition of this difficulty Castlereagh proposed that 3,000 draught horses should be procured on the Continent and that 4,000 horses for the light dragoons, the commissariat horses and some of the artillery horses should be transported ahead of the main contingent so that the horse transports that delivered them could return and prepare for a second voyage. That would leave 10,000 horses to travel with the main body of troops and allow three weeks for the return voyage to the River Weser. The allocated transports could make two trips over a five week period thus reducing the requirement for horse ships to about fifty thousand tons equivalent to approximately one hundred and fifty to two hundred ships.¹⁰ The relatively short distance made such plans practical, assuming the weather conditions were conducive, but, as the expedition would sail between November and January, this could not be expected. Castlereagh was taking a risk; delays in sailing and landing were almost inevitable. The overall cost would be reduced by £190,000, but even so the cost of the remainder of the transports would still be in the region of £402,000.¹¹ This proposal addressed the practical problem of the shortage of horse ships. It clearly

⁹ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 85, Memorandum by Castlereagh, 23 Dec 1805.

¹⁰ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 86-87, Memorandum by Castlereagh, 23 Dec 1805.

¹¹ The horses originally required 170,000 tons at 19/- to 20/- per ton per month for up to two months, this plan required 50,000 tons making three voyages possibly over three months saving £340,000-£150,000 = £190,000. Total cost 306,000 less horse ships 170,000 tons = £136,000 tons for two months £272,000 plus horse ships £150,000 total cost £402,000. Although many of these ships were still in service when William Windham took over as Secretary of State for war in February 1806 so the cost of these ships may well have been 50% more.

demonstrates that, in this instance, cost and availability were significant factors in the planning of the operation but the solution created operational risks.

The vanguard of 10,883 troops embarked in the Downs in mid-October where they were joined by the 5,000 Hanoverian troops from Cork; contrary winds prevented them from sailing until 5 November arriving at the Elbe on 17th. In this convoy, in addition to the eighty three troop transports, with 11,272 men, 465 women, 228 children and 676 horses, were two ships with arms and hay for the King's German Legion and three army victuallers, as illustrated in table 7.2.

| Table 7.2. Transport Office Sailed from the Downs November 5 1805 for a particular under convoy of HM ship <i>Leopard</i> . | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|-------------|---------|-----------------|-------|----------|--------|
| | | Transports | | Number embarked | | | |
| | | No of ships | Tonnage | Men | Women | Children | Horses |
| German Legions | Infantry | 24 | 6,624 | 4,666 | 193 | 147 | |
| | Hospitals | 1 | 198 | 58 | | | |
| | Cavalry | 19 | 5,065 | 694 | 14 | 11 | 612 |
| | Total | 44 | 11,887 | 5,418 | 207 | 158 | 612 |
| British | Infantry | 37 | 8,139 | 5,829 | 257 | 70 | |
| | Cavalry | 2 | 552 | 25 | 1 | | |
| | Total | 39 | 8,691 | 5,854 | 258 | 70 | 64 |
| | Total | 83 | 20,578 | 11,272 | 465 | 228 | 676 |

Source: TNA, WO, 1 / 802

Captain Culverhouse, the Principal Agent, sailed with Agents Lieutenants Mears and Ross who were responsible for the ships carrying the British contingent whilst Agents Captain Thomas Withers and Lieutenant John Curtis had responsibility for the ships carrying the German troops.

Ships were still being brought forward at Deptford until 23 October 1805 when the Board instructed Rains that 'No more ships for either troops or stores are required (for Germany) but he should continue to take up such ships as are offered giving cavalry the preference'.¹² On 30th transports loaded with six pounder guns left Deptford for the Downs.

¹² TNA, ADM, 1/80, TB Minute, TB to Rains at Deptford, 23 Oct 1805.

At the same time 3,000,000 rounds of ammunition for the German legion and a similar amount for the British force were being loaded onto transports in the River and at Portsmouth. Also at Portsmouth were five transports laden with other ordnance stores and six with medical and camping equipment. All of these ships would be sent to the Downs as soon as possible for onward passage to join Lieutenant General Don's combined force.¹³ The frenetic activity at Deptford was being supervised by the very experienced agent, Captain Stephen Rains. Unfortunately Rains became embroiled in a controversy, fermented by a disgruntled contractor, which implied an element of corruption. He felt obliged to resign his post until he had cleared his name. He was subsequently transferred to be the Transport Board's Agent at Ramsgate. Despite this, the pace of activity at Deptford was barely disrupted, his place was taken by Captain Young.¹⁴

Ships continued to pass the Nore every day and on to the Downs where the troop ships waited for troops to be ferried out to them. Cavalry ships and some store ships were ordered into Ramsgate to embark horses and heavy equipment from the quay. By 12 November there were 32 Infantry ships, cavalry ships for 2,018 horses and 48 army victuallers and store ships in the Downs. Even these were insufficient; more were required, particularly horse ships, obliging the Duke of York to insist that the priority be given to transports for heavy horses for artillery and wagon trains. The cavalry would have to await the return of horse ships that had already sailed.¹⁵ On 25 November 11 cavalry transports for 302 horses arrived from the River, 6 of them were ordered to Ramsgate, and another 12 cavalry ships for 414 horses arrived from Spithead.¹⁶ The Transport Commissioners were fully advised of all these activities by the daily returns of transport movements issued by the agents. To relieve the congestion at Ramsgate they ordered some ships to be diverted to

¹³ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 35.

¹⁴ TNA, ADM, 1/80, TB Minute, 23 Oct 1805.

¹⁵ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 43.

¹⁶ TNA, WO, 1 / 802.

Northfleet to receive 700 heavy horses of the German legion and two troops of wagon train, later more horses were embarked from there.¹⁷

A second fleet of transports with cavalry and artillery sailed for Germany on 27 November carrying 978 men, 19 women, 14 children and 989 horses accompanied by 25 store ships carrying 4,915 tons of ordnance and camping equipment as shown in table 7.3. Three Transport Agents sailed with the fleet.

| Table 7. 3. Return of Embarkations at Ramsgate, the whole sailed from the Downs on 27 Nov 1805. | | | | | |
|--|---|-----|-------|----------|--------|
| Embarkations | Troops | Men | Women | Children | Horses |
| Nov 8,9,24,25. | 1 st Regiment of Light Dragoons of King's German Legion. | 651 | 19 | 14 | 687 |
| Nov 26 | Artillery | 327 | | | 302 |
| | Total | 978 | 19 | 14 | 989 |
| Store ships which sailed with the above troops | | | | No. | Tons |
| Ordnance Stores | | | | 11 | 2,201 |
| Camp Equipment for German Legion | | | | 6 | 949 |
| Army Victuallers | | | | 7 | 1,605 |
| Tents etc. | | | | 1 | 160 |
| Total | | | | 25 | 4,915 |
| Source: TNA, WO, 1/802 | | | | | |

A third force of nine infantry battalions and one cavalry regiment sailed on 10 December. Tragedy struck this force, severe gales caused the loss of eight transports at the cost of the lives of 664 seamen and troops although 1,552 were rescued from these ships.¹⁸ The surviving vessels were forced back to English ports from where they sailed again on 22 December.¹⁹ Culverhouse was sending regular reports of arrivals 'every effort being made to send them back but wind adverse'.²⁰ However many of them had been damaged.²¹ By early January 1806 there were roughly 25,000 troops in Hanover. All the troop transports had been

¹⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/80, TB Minute, 13 Nov 1805.

¹⁸ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 125. List of Eight Transports employed on the Continental Expedition which have been wrecked. Transport Office, 15 Jan 1806.

¹⁹ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 37. Chronological Memorandum.

²⁰ TNA, ADM, 1/80, TB Minute, 18 Dec 1805.

²¹ TNA, ADM, 1/80, TB Minute, 26 Nov 1805. Captain Culverhouse, Agent to TB.

provisioned for two months; in addition more supplies were shipped from England: salt provisions and biscuits for 15,000 men for 5 months, 12,000 bags of meal to supply 50,000 men for three months and 12,000 quarters of oats equal to the supplies for 12,000 horses for one month. It was estimated that this would supply the whole of the 25,000 strong force for four months, in addition to such supplies as might be procured locally. In anticipation of winter conditions, supplies of flannel waistcoats, drawers, blankets and 30,000 pairs of shoes and additional hospital and camping equipment were loaded into transports and dispatched to the Downs. Some 3,214 horses had been transported, more were waiting for transports to become available. However Lieutenant-General Don was not experiencing any great difficulty in procuring wagons and draft horses locally for the transporting of supplies from the place of debarkation to the magazines and then onwards in support of the army.²²

Whilst the military preparations proceeded, the political landscape changed; the Austro-Russian army was defeated at Austerlitz on 2 December.²³ Immediately there were calls for the troops to be brought home. Further troop shipments were deferred and planning of the withdrawal commenced at the end of December. Empty transports had been retained for this purpose, only additional horse ships were required to complete the withdrawal. Meanwhile the weather conditions deteriorated. In early January Captain Withers, the Agent in the Elbe, told the Board that he had been advised by the harbour master that it would be advisable to haul all transports ashore so that they would be out of danger from ice. He proposed to comply with the advice but would ensure that they were not hauled out too far so as to prevent their getting off again when the ice broke up and they were again wanted for service.²⁴

²² Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 73-74.

²³ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 121

²⁴ TNA, WO, 1/ 802, Lieutenant Withers, Agent in the Elbe, Cruxhaven Roads to TB, 3 Jan 1806.

The politicians prevaricated, delaying the departure until early February 1806. The troops returned home safely without firing a shot.²⁵ In all 257 ships of 61,561 tons, a much smaller tonnage than was originally planned, were employed in this service. The eight that were lost represented 3% of the total fleet.²⁶ Of course whilst this dramatic buildup of ships for the expedition was in progress there were many other more routine demands for transports. To facilitate these demands plus those of the expedition the fleet was doubled in size between 1 September and 1 November rising from 506 ships of 130,655 tons to 1,028 ships of 261,240 tons, the average tonnage per ship was 254 tons, as highlighted in table 7.4. This demanded a great effort by the agents to ensure that the transports were prepared speedily and it put extreme pressures on the Victualling Board to ensure that there were sufficient provisions available and also on other contractors to supply for other items such as beds and bedding.

| Table 7. 4. An account of the increase in the total of the transport tonnage between 1 Sep and 1 Nov 1805 during the preparations for the expedition to Northern Germany. | | | | | | | |
|--|---------|---------|--------|---------|-------|---------|-----------------|
| 1805 | At Home | | Abroad | | Total | | Average Tonnage |
| | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | |
| 1 Sep | 174 | 40,149 | 332 | 90,506 | 506 | 130,655 | 258 |
| 1 Oct | 212 | 49,783 | 373 | 101,052 | 585 | 150,835 | 258 |
| 1 Nov | 397 | 102,306 | 631 | 158,934 | 1,028 | 261,240 | 254 |

Source: Castlereagh Correspondence. VI. 97.

This case study raises the question relating to the manageable size of the force and the practicality of attempting such expeditions in the winter months. The size of this expedition grew to the point where it was probably too large to be effectively manageable both in terms of procuring and preparing sufficient transports and of the state of preparedness of each service and the level of co-ordination that could be achieved between services.²⁷

Every service was operating at its capacity. Castlereagh was taking risks. He was relying on

²⁵ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 122.

²⁶ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 100.

²⁷ Richard Harding, 'Expeditionary Armies and Naval Power: The North Germany Campaign of 1805-06' in *Trafalgar Chronicle*, 16, 2006, 63-75. However, Harding's assessment is that the operation was smoothly organised but had transport problems.

good weather in the depth of winter to allow repeat voyages to deliver troops and horses without incurring delays. Duffy's conclusion that the 1795/6 West Indies expedition was 'too logistically ambitious' and it suffered from 'a succession of unkindly weather accidents' further reinforces the need to consider these questions.²⁸ Glover suggests that the Anglo / Russian Helder campaign, of 1799, suffered similarly from lack of planning and might be considered in the same light as the West Indies and north German expeditions.²⁹

The Collapse of the Ministry of All the Talents.

In March 1807, the ageing Duke of Portland was appointed to lead a new Tory administration.³⁰ The Ministry of all the Talents led by Lord Grenville had collapsed over the matter of Catholic emancipation, the thorny issue that had brought down the Pitt administration in 1801. Grenville's administration had become embroiled in South America and had not been particularly active in Europe. However, in reaction to the shifts in the European political situation, the new government brought the European dimension back into focus. Within months the emphasis of the war shifted from South America back to mainland Europe, in particular to Denmark, the Spanish Peninsula and Holland.

When Castlereagh left office in January 1806 the number of transports was inflated by the ships hired for the German expedition. In total there were 630 ships of 157,222 tons. However, when he was reappointed the fleet had been reduced to 340 ships of 100,000 tons in accordance with demands of the previous Secretary of State for War, William Windham.

²⁸ Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 374.

²⁹ Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, 24 to 26. The Helder Campaign. 'Despite having been among the British Army's more notable excursions to the continent between 1795 and 1808. The troops made good an opposed landing, captured a fleet, fought two battles without actual disaster and came home relatively intact'.

³⁰ The new government included: Canning as Foreign Secretary and his rival Castlereagh as Secretary for War for the second time. The new First Lord at the Admiralty was Lord Mulgrave and the Home Secretary was the Second Earl of Liverpool (the former Lord Hawkesbury). The Master General of the Ordnance was the Earl of Chatham.

Table 7.5.
Account of all Navy and Army Victuallers, Troop ships and Store ships now employed in the Transport Service – 7 March 1807

| | Troop ships | | Navy Victuallers | | Army Victuallers | | Store ships | | All ships | |
|--|-------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|------------|----------------|
| | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons |
| Expeditions: | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sailed From Falmouth. Oct 19 1806 with General Auchmughty for Montevideo | 20 | 6,533 | | | | | 1 | 220 | 21 | 6,753 |
| Ditto Nov 12 to join ditto | 4 | 1,537 | | | | | 1 | 149 | 5 | 1,686 |
| Sailed from ditto ditto with General Crawford | 26 | 9,289 | | | 3 | 861 | 3 | 541 | 32 | 10,691 |
| At Buenos Aires | 12 | 4,170 | 5 | 1,451 | 2 | 883 | | | 19 | 6,504 |
| Under Orders under General Whitelock for Buenos Aires | 13 | 4,441 | | | | | 1 | 332 | 14 | 4,773 |
| West Indies – In the West Indies | 1 | 389 | | | | | | | 1 | 389 |
| West Indies - On passage sailed Jan 4 & Mar 2 | 4 | 1,574 | | | | | 4 | 1,272 | 8 | 2,846 |
| West Indies - Under Orders for. | 2 | 614 | | | | | 9 | 2,926 | 11 | 3,540 |
| Mediterranean – In the Mediterranean | 68 | 23,575 | 24 | 6,824 | 4 | 1,023 | 22 | 6,336 | 118 | 37,758 |
| Mediterranean – On passage sailed Jan 4 | | | | | 6 | 1,097 | 1 | 364 | 7 | 1,461 |
| Under Orders for Mediterranean. | 6 | 1,850 | 14 | 3,626 | 1 | 120 | 18 | 4,636 | 39 | 10,232 |
| Cape of Good Hope – At Cape | 2 | 748 | 2 | 664 | 2 | 580 | | | 6 | 1,992 |
| On passage sailed Oct 4 & Feb 26 | | | | | | | 2 | 938 | 2 | 938 |
| Under Orders for the Cape | | | | | | | 2 | 575 | 2 | 575 |
| Ceylon, sailed from Portsmouth Oct 4 | | | | | | | 1 | 272 | 1 | 272 |
| New South Wales. On Passage, sailed Jan 4 & Feb 26 | 2 | 805 | | | 1 | 327 | | | 3 | 1,132 |
| North America – Under Orders for | | | | | | | 4 | 933 | 4 | 933 |
| Particular Service – On Passage, sailed Feb 1 | | | | | | | 1 | 165 | 1 | 165 |
| Particular Service – Under Orders for. | | | | | | | 4 | 724 | 4 | 724 |
| Home Service - Victuallers to the fleet off Ushant | | | 26 | 3,346 | | | | | 26 | 3,346 |
| Home Service –Miscellaneous Services | 7 | 1,706 | 1 | 290 | | | 4 | 509 | 12 | 2,505 |
| Home Service – Defence Ships. | 2 | 843 | | | | | | | 2 | 843 |
| Unappropriated at Home | 38 | 10,844 | | | | | | | 38 | 10,844 |
| Total Tonnage employed | 207 | 68,918 | 72 | 16,201 | 19 | 4,891 | 78 | 20892 | 376 | 110,902 |
| Deduct Freight Tonnage | 5 | 2,024 | | | 8 | 1,544 | 23 | 6,840 | 36 | 10,408 |
| Total Tonnage on Monthly pay | 202 | 66,894 | 72 | 16,201 | 11 | 3,347 | 55 | 14,052 | 340 | 100,494 |

Source: TNA, ADM, 1/3751, Transport Office. 7 Mar 1807.

In fact the Board had received another direction from the Treasury as recently as 24 January 1807 ordering further reductions.³¹ As can be seen in table 7.5 the main concentrations of transports, in March 1807, were in the Mediterranean where there were 164 ships, and to a lesser extent, South America where there were 91 ships. The landing of troops in Egypt to capture Alexandria occurred ten days after the preparation of this report on 17 March and in South America in the previous month Sir Ralph Auchmughty had captured Monte Video. In addition there were 72 ships serving as navy victuallers of which 38 were in the Mediterranean, along with 41 store ships and 11 army victuallers, and 26 servicing the home fleet off Ushant. There were only 38 unallocated transports at home and those would have been discharged in accordance with the instruction from the Treasury but for the fact that 17 of them were taken up on charter parties subject to a six months certain clause, which had been agreed in October and November 1806, that could not be terminated before the expiration of the period without penalty and also because the remainder had been held in quarantine after returning from the Mediterranean.³²

The previous administration's desire to reduce the number and cost of transports had included removing the transports that Castlereagh had held in reserve to support a 'disposable force' of the army.³³ Within weeks of taking office for the first time in July 1805, Castlereagh had proposed to the Duke of York that a force of some 30 to 35,000 infantry and 8 to 10,000 cavalry should be established to create a 'disposable force' which would be permanently ready to 'menace or attack the enemy on their maritime coast and particularly Holland'. He had promised that a fleet of transports 'perfectly equipped and victualled for foreign service, capable of carrying about 10,000 men, in one lift would be constantly

³¹ HoCOP, 1807, 117, IV.109, 1, Treasury to TB, 22 Jan 1807.

³² HoCOP, 1807, 115, IV.105, 1, Return of Tonnage of Transports at Home, 25 Mar 1807.

³³ The Treasury's last instruction to further reduce numbers had been issued in January, just two months earlier. HoCOP. Treasury to TB 22 Jan 1807 but this was under the previous administration, it was in line with William Windham's determination to reduce the transport fleet.

stationed between Cork and Portsmouth'.³⁴ This arrangement did not survive under the Talents. He did not immediately plan to reinstate this reserve fleet recognising that when such large numbers of transports were required operationally that there were not enough ships to support a disposable force as well.

However he certainly acted quickly to increase the size of the number of chartered transports. On 8 April, shortly after his return to office, he instructed the Transport Board to hire 36,000 tons of shipping urgently, 16,000 for infantry, 10,000 fitted out for horses and 10,000 for ordnance transports and victuallers. Although described as 'service of a pressing nature' the destination was not identified.³⁵ The Board was authorised to increase the hire rates, if necessary, to achieve this; thus the price of coppered transports would be raised from 19/- to 25/- per ton per month and that wood sheathed ships from 17/- to 21/- per ton per month, both for 6 months certain, after which time the latter rate would be reduced to 19/-. Single bottom ships would be increased from 15/- to 20/- for 3 months certain, this rate would then to be reduced to 15/-. Despite this considerable increase no coppered or sheathed ships were tendered, only a few single bottoms. Enquiries indicated that there were no vessels available, even at the out-ports. Though relatively early in the season ships had sailed to their respective destinations or were already committed to trading ventures. The Board was convinced that even if higher rates were offered this would not bring forward any more shipping. So desperate was the position that two commissioners of the Board were dispatched to visit the River and the docks where they saw very few ships fit for the transport service. The Board strongly recommended an application to the Admiralty for use of its ships; as had been done before in similar circumstances, most recently to convey troops to

³⁴ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VII, 6. Glover, *Peninsular Preparations*, 33 and Aspinall, *Later Correspondence of George III*, Castlereagh to HRH Duke of York 25 Jul 1805. To date no trace of any response has been located.

³⁵ TNA, WO, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB, 8 Apr 1807.

Egypt in 1801.³⁶ Castlereagh concurred. Curiously when the Board wrote to the Admiralty it suggested that the prevailing demands of the government was inducing owners to withhold their ships in expectation of further increases in the rate of hire. Therefore the Board made the request to the Admiralty which offered eight ships.³⁷ The Board advised the Admiralty that one contributing factor to the lack of availability of transports was the number of victuallers and store ships that had been retained in the Mediterranean where there were 82 ships of 23,079 tons. It requested that Vice Admiral Lord Collingwood be instructed to return them, with as little delay as possible, retaining on station only those which were absolutely necessary. The Admiralty subsequently issued instructions to Collingwood to give ‘most positive orders to the flag officers under his command’ on the return of transports.³⁸

Nevertheless Castlereagh increased the pressure on the Transport Board, directing that procurement ‘should be pushed forward with the utmost possible despatch’ and demanding a weekly return of the progress of the preparations.³⁹ The Board reported that the difficulties in procuring transport were arising ‘owing to the unusual scarcity of unemployed shipping at this season of the year, as well as the very great amount of tonnage already in the service of this department’.⁴⁰ Such was the sensitivity about the rate of progress that the Board sought instruction from Castlereagh in matters where it might have been expected to use its judgment such as attributing priorities to troop movements from Jersey to Cork, Portsmouth to Jersey, and Portsmouth to Guernsey.⁴¹

The higher rates did have an impact eventually as owners who had been holding out for further increases realised that they had received the best offer that the Board was prepared to make. During the following four months, April to August 1807, the number of troop

³⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/21/56, TB to Castlereagh, 20 Apr 1807.

³⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/3751/245, TB to Admiralty, 24 Apr 1807.

³⁸ TNA, ADM.1.3751.277, TB to the Admiralty, 7 May 1807.

³⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/53, TB to Castlereagh, 15 May 1807.

⁴⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/21/57, TB to W.Faulkner, 8 Jun 1807.

⁴¹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/58, TB to Castlereagh, 10 Jun 1807

transports and store ships at home was increased by 32 regular ships and 146 three month ships, whilst the number of cavalry ships increased by 149 increasing the capacity for horses by almost 4,000 as indicated in table 7.6. These ships were to provide the transports to service the Copenhagen campaign.

| Table 7.6. | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| 12 Aug 1807 Transport Office | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Return of the Amount of Transport Tonnage for Home Service on 24 March and 8 August 1807: Distinguishing Cavalry transports from Troop and Store ships, and also showing the number of six month ships and the number of three month ships. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Troop and Store Ships | | | | Cavalry Ships | | | | Total | | Horses |
| | Six Months Ships | | Three Months Ships | | Six Months Ships | | Three Months Ships | | | | |
| | No. | Tons | No | Tons | No | Tons | No | Tons | Ships | Tons | |
| 24 Mar 1807 On Home Service | 25 | 7,807 | 43 | 7,458 | 3 | 732 | 3 | 471 | 74 | 16,468 | 148 |
| 8 Aug 1807 On Home Service | 57 | 17,587 | 189 | 34,795 | 10 | 2,702 | 145 | 27,059 | 401 | 82,143 | 4,089 |
| Increase | 32 | 9,780 | 146 | 27,337 | 7 | 1,970 | 142 | 26,588 | 327 | 65,675 | 3,941 |
| Source: HoCPP, 1807, 115,IV.105,1. | | | | | | | | | | | |

The bombardment of Copenhagen, September 1807.

The Treaty of Tilsit was ratified on 7 July 1807 following Russia's decisive defeat at Friedland. There was a real danger of Bonaparte building an extensive combined naval fleet, incorporating ships of Russia, Denmark, Spain and Portugal.⁴² The news of the ratification stimulated the new administration into action. A naval force of about twenty ships was ordered to Kattegat to watch the Danish navy and to be prepared to react to events.⁴³ Meanwhile Castlereagh was preparing plans to attack Copenhagen and capture the Danish fleet. Admiral Lord Gambier was appointed naval commander; the military commander was to be Lieutenant General the Right Hon Lord Cathcart. In a preliminary move, on 20 July,

⁴² Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 158-162.

⁴³ Wendy Hinde, *George Canning* (London, 1973), 47.

Castlereagh ordered that all transports at Portsmouth, including some recently returned from the Mediterranean were to proceed, with all possible expedition, to the Downs to await the arrival of troops and supplies.⁴⁴ Captain James Young was appointed as the senior transport agent, for the expedition, to oversee the final preparations. Castlereagh was also considering an expedition to the Baltic and so was anxious to economise on the transport tonnage for Copenhagen, he ordered the Ordnance Board to reconsider the proposals for despatch of ordnance.⁴⁵ With so many ships to be loaded at the same time some troops and supplies had to be loaded into small vessels to be transferred to transports assembled offshore, at Spithead and in the Nore and the Downs. Imagine the noise and confusion as thousands of men were marched into Portsmouth and Ramsgate to be embarked on ships and supplies were delivered to the dockside and loaded aboard. The first contingent of troops sailed ten days later on 30 July 1807. This force was joined by 10,000 troops under Lord Cathcart that had sailed in transports from Stralsund.

It was intended that the army would land on the morning of the 14 August but the wind prevented the transports reaching the disembarkation point so it had to be delayed until early on the 16th when it occurred without much opposition. By 1 September the army had surrounded Copenhagen and the naval force was anchored just off the town. The Commander in Chief of the Danish Land Forces, General Peyman, was invited to surrender the Danish fleet. He refused, so a naval bombardment commenced the following day. The Danes finally opted for a truce on 5th and the capitulation was signed on 7 September 1807. In consequence, the Danish naval fleet comprising of 16 ships of the line, 9 frigates, 14 sloops and brigs together with 31 smaller merchant ships together with victualing and naval stores were spirited away to England.⁴⁶ The Admiralty was obliged to make requests to merchant

⁴⁴ TNA, WO, 6,156, Castlereagh to TB, 20Jul 1807.

⁴⁵ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 174.

⁴⁶ T. Munch-Petersen, *Defying Napoleon* (Stroud, Gloucestershire, 2007) 215. The author does not mention the stores and supplies.

seamen to volunteer to assist in bringing the captured ships back to England. Men from the Greenland whale fishery ships of Whitby and seamen from Hull and Grimsby volunteered, some also joined from Newcastle although there was some concern that the navy might not release them on their return.⁴⁷ It was decided to commence the embarkation of the army on the 13 October.⁴⁸ Accordingly, on that day, the 8 battalions of the line of the King's German Legion were embarked at the Arsenal and on 14th the two light battalions of the King's German Legion, together with the 7th and 8th regiments of British troops. These corps, together with the depot and garrison company of the Legion and the sick and wounded of the army, completely occupied all the troop ships, which had not been appropriated to the conveyance of naval stores. By Sunday afternoon, the 18th, only the rearguard remained, its departure was delayed for a few days due to gales which prevented embarkation.⁴⁹ This campaign was a welcomed success. Canning's assessment was that 'a Northern Confederacy, an invasion of Ireland and the shutting of Russian ports had been prevented'.⁵⁰ After an examination of the Danish naval fleet Gambier reported that 'it is certain that the fleet could have been completely ready for sea in three weeks, or a month at the most'.⁵¹

Three hundred and seventy seven transports of 78,420 tons were involved in the campaign of which only fifteen (4per cent) were wrecked, captured or missing, this did represent the tragic loss of four hundred and two troops and fourteen seamen, sixty horses and a significant volume of naval stores, as demonstrated in table 7.8. However four hundred and ninety five troops, one hundred and twenty five seamen and eighteen horses were rescued from those vessels and three hundred and sixty two transports completed their

⁴⁷ *The Hull Packet*, 29 Sep 1807.

⁴⁸ HoCPP, 1808, 9 and 11, Papers Presented to the House of Commons relating to The Expedition to Copenhagen, Feb 1808.

⁴⁹ HoCPP, 1808, 9 and 11, Papers Presented to the House of Commons relating to The Expedition to Copenhagen, Feb 1808.

⁵⁰ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 160.

⁵¹ HoCPP, 1808, 11, Papers presented to the House of Commons relating to the Surrender of Copenhagen, 28 Feb 1808. Gambier to WW Pole, 28 Jan 1808.

missions returning safely.⁵² Of the fifteen losses; five were captured on the return voyage, five were wrecked on the return voyage, four were wrecked between Yarmouth and Dover, one was run down in the Dover Roads and one was blown up off Copenhagen and one was still missing.⁵³

| Table 7.7. 18 Feb 1808, Transport Office | | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|------|----------------------|----------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Return of Transports that were Lost or Missing by Capture, Wreck or Otherwise; on their return from Copenhagen | | | | | | | |
| | Transports | Tons | Troops | | Seamen | | Remarks |
| | | | Lost | Saved | Lost | Saved | |
| Captured | <i>Augustus Cesar</i> | 457 | | 387 men | | 27 | Dismasted and driven on the coast of Holland |
| | <i>Mary</i> | 141 | | 12 men 18 horses | | 8 | Captured by French Privateer |
| | <i>King George</i> | 141 | Naval Stores | | | 8 | Ditto |
| | <i>Bee</i> | 157 | Naval Stores | | | 9 | Captured but particulars not known |
| | <i>Olive Branch</i> | 112 | | | | 7 | Ditto |
| Wrecked | <i>Hope</i> | 176 | | | | 10 | Wrecked on return from Copenhagen |
| | <i>Hope's Increase</i> | 197 | | | | 11 | Ditto |
| | <i>Emperor of Russia</i> | 334 | Naval Provisions | | | 20 | Ditto |
| Wrecked | <i>Salisbury</i> | 324 | 200 men | 60 men | | Unknown at present Had 19 on board | Wrecked between Yarmouth and the Downs |
| | <i>Eagle Packet</i> | 230 | 180 men | | | 14 | Ditto |
| | <i>Endeavour</i> | 167 | 22 men 23 horses | | | 9 | Ditto |
| | <i>Providence</i> | 112 | 18 horses | 16 men | | 7 | Ditto |
| Run Down | <i>Shorn</i> | 160 | 19 horses | 20 men | | 9 | Run Down in Dover Roads |
| Blown Up | <i>Avon</i> | 167 | Naval Stores | | | 9 | Missing |
| Unaccounted for | <i>Charles</i> | 251 | | | | Unknown at present Had 15 on board | Armed with heavy guns, blown up off Copenhagen, by the enemy. |
| 15 ships | Totals | | 402 men 60 horses | 495 men 18 horses | | 14 125 | |

Source: HoCPP, 1808, 10, IX.53,2, Account of Transports employed against Copenhagen, 2 Feb 1808.

⁵² TNA, WO, 6/156. Castlereagh to TB, 29 Jan 1808.

⁵³ HoCPP, 1808,10. Account of Transports employed against Copenhagen, 2 Feb 1808.

Several ships owned by Michael Henley and Son were involved in the action, *Friendship* sailed from Deptford to Harwich where it embarked troops for Copenhagen, returning to Yarmouth with captured naval stores and thence to Portsmouth. *Pitt* sailed from London to Sheerness and then Copenhagen, returning to Sheerness then Deptford. *Norfolk* carried coal to London, then ballast to Copenhagen where it was loaded with captured naval stores which it delivered to Deptford similarly the *Salus* was also used to bring back stores captured from the naval arsenal.⁵⁴

The captured victualling stores comprised of casks and staves with an estimated value of £4,611.⁵⁵ The naval stores confiscated included hemp, cordage, timber, masts, canvas, sails, iron, anchors copper bolts and copper sheets; the value attributed to these stores was £270,240/06/06.⁵⁶ Planning the removal of the stores and ships and the re-embarkation of troops and the subsequent return to England was a complex process. The stores were removed in transports. The German cavalry was re-embarked onto transports for the return to Yarmouth. The whole of the British infantry returned on board HM's ships and the Danish ships of war.⁵⁷ It is reported that on one day, 21 October, some 460 ships and vessels sailed through the sound, of which 370 were transports.⁵⁸

Subsequently the government came under attack, in Parliament, for over estimating the capacity of the Danish forces, it had assessed that there were 35,000 Danes whereas it

⁵⁴ NMM, The Henley Papers, HNL/61/53, HNL/106/16, HNL/99/35.

⁵⁵ HoCPP, 1808, 236, IX.95, 7, Accounts presented to the House of Commons of Stores taken at Copenhagen, 13 May 1808.

⁵⁶ HoCPP, 1808, 236, IX.95, 11, Accounts presented to the House of Commons of Stores taken at Copenhagen, 13 May 1808 and TNA, WO, 1/803, 18 Dec 1807. Seven transport agents presented a petition the naval Commander in Chief to receive part of the Copenhagen prize money led by Captain John Halstead and Lieutenants John Grieg and Richard Cheeseman they claimed that as naval officers working for the Transport Board they did not normally qualify for prize money however their work had been unremitting, landing and re-embarking troops and shipping the naval stores from the arsenals and experiencing the dangers attached to those services. In their view they should be treated as other officers of the Navy present on that occasion. The outcome of this petition has not been established.

⁵⁷ HoCPP, 1808, 9, IX.113, 5, Papers presented to the House of Commons relating to the Expedition to Copenhagen, 2 Feb 1808. Admiral James Gambier to convoy commanders, 20 Oct 1807.

⁵⁸ HoCPP, 1808, 9, IX.113, 7, Papers presented to the House of Commons relating to the Expedition to Copenhagen, 2 Feb 1808. Note to letter number 8.

was reported that there were only 6,000 men garrisoned at Copenhagen and Cronberg.⁵⁹ The suggestion was that more troops, and consequently transports, were committed to the campaign when they might have been better used elsewhere. However the report did not mention the 7,500 troops stationed nearby at Køge nor the fact that Gambier claimed that he needed 12,000 troops to help navigate the Danish fleet to Britain.⁶⁰

By Christmas 1807 a significant number of transports had returned from the Mediterranean, the Baltic and South America; Castlereagh advised the Transport Board to 'proceed to discharge all horse ships that are employed over and above the tonnage that may be required for 1,000 horses'.⁶¹ He again recommended that the disposable force be reintroduced, proposing that 30,000 men be positioned at the main embarkation points Cork, Portsmouth, Harwich and close to the Downs these were to include 10,000 'selected with a view to more distant operations'. To provide transport for these troops he proposed retaining all the infantry transports knowing 'the delay and difficulty attendant on taking up a large supply of transports when immediately wanted for service'.⁶²

On 24 March 1808 the Board received orders to prepare the fitting out of the transports for the 1,000 horses, which it had previously been instructed to retain.⁶³ However, by 21 April, the Board was probably wishing that it had retained more horse ships when it received a secret memo from Castlereagh to bring forward 34,807 tons for service in the Baltic under Lieutenant General Sir John Moore. Of this tonnage 17,276 was to be for up to 11,000 infantry, 10,793 for a regiment of cavalry with a proportion of artillery, 2,046 for army victuallers and 4,692 for store ships⁶⁴ Moore was to sail with Vice Admiral Saumarez

⁵⁹ Cobbett's, *Weekly Political Register*, 22 Oct 1808.

⁶⁰ Munch-Petersen, *Defying Napoleon*, 213.

⁶¹ TNA, WO, 6/156/387, Castlereagh to TB, 25 Dec 1807. He clearly had forgotten his own statement in the House of Commons on 31 Jul 1807 regarding the difficulty of raising horse ships. This instruction is contrary to that statement.

⁶² Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VIII, 161. Undated State of the Army.

⁶³ TNA, WO, 6/156/387, Castlereagh to TB, 24 Mar 1808.

⁶⁴ TNA, WO, 6,156, Castlereagh, Sec of State for War to the TB, 21 Apr 1807.

to support Sweden against Russian invasion in Finland. Subsequently the Board received a complaint from Sir John dated 8 May regarding delays in sending these ships to Yarmouth where the troops were waiting to embark. He had received a report on 4th stating that all the transports had sailed except two oat ships and a hospital ship but they had not arrived. On 2 May an officer had been sent from the Board in a small vessel to prevent any transports loitering on their passage to the Nore but he found that the ships were still provisioning and that the convoy escort had not arrived, they did not arrive at the Nore until the 6th.

The expedition arrived at Gothenburg on 13 May 1808. Almost immediately the relationship between Moore and Gustavus IV, the Swedish monarch failed. This was principally attributable to the restrictive scope of Moore's orders which fell way short of Gustavus's expectations. The Swedish King had Moore arrested. Moore responded by bringing his whole force back to Britain without the troops having disembarked.

The Peninsula

Prior to 1808, the British could not invade the Peninsula, for fear of driving the Portuguese and Spanish populations into the French camp. However, by replacing the Spanish king with his own brother, Joseph, and attempting to subdue Portugal Bonaparte caused a nationalist backlash. In May 1808 the Spanish rebelled against French rule. In the summer Spanish and Portuguese delegations visited Britain to persuade the foreign secretary to engage in a joint campaign against the French. Britain decided to support the revolt by landing troops in Portugal.⁶⁵ Sir Arthur Wellesley was initially appointed to lead this force. He sailed for Portugal ahead of his troops to establish the situation in northern Spain and Portugal and to select a landing point. His force of 9,196 infantry men, 384 cavalry men but only 238 horses and 693 artillerymen but only 306 horses, sailed from Cork on 12 July 1808

⁶⁵ Charles John Fedorak, 'The Royal Navy and British Amphibious Operations during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars' in *Military Affairs* Vol 52 No 3 (Jul 1988), 141-146.

in 40 troop transports, 18 cavalry ships, seven ordnance vessels, nine victuallers of which four carried oats and hay and two store ships with camping equipment, 75 transports in total of 25,257 tons.⁶⁶ Oman attributes this shortage of horses to the authorities (mistaken) belief that both draft and saddle horses could be readily procured in Portugal'.⁶⁷

The expedition landed, unopposed, at Mondego Bay, about a hundred miles north of Lisbon in Portugal. It took five days to get the whole of the force ashore even when the restricted number of the transports' ships boats was supplemented by those from the accompanying naval vessels. Later landings were supported by hiring local small boats.⁶⁸ Shortly after the landing the force was joined by 7,204 troops under Major-General Spencer. These troops, who had sailed from Gibraltar on 14 May, 6 and 9 June, were embarked on 46 infantry ships, 2 horse ships with artillery regiments and staff horses, 2 hospital, 2 victuallers and a store ships with camping equipment and provisions. They had previously sailed from England for the Tagus and Sicily in January 1806. Meanwhile another force of 4,817 infantrymen, under Brigadier General Anstruther and Colonel Acland, sailed from the Downs on 22 July 1808 in 28 troop ships, 2 horse ships and 3 provision ships arriving ten days after Spencer's force. They were landed further south at Maceira. They were followed by a convoy of a further 181 transports which sailed from Portsmouth on 31 July with mixed British and German force under Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore consisting of 11,774 infantry, 1,557 artillery, 646 cavalry, 241 staff and 1,519 horses. The fleet included 57 horse ships and 34 store and provision ships. This force arrived at Mondego Bay, but was ordered to land further to the south, which it did between 20 and 24 August.⁶⁹

These arrivals are summarised in 7.8, within a period of three weeks 32,620 infantry troops, 1,815 cavalry with 1,653 horses, 2,537 artillery men with 984 horses and 349 staff

⁶⁶ HoCPP, 1809, 17,XII.1,224,Proceedings of the Inquiry relative to the Armistice and Convention in Portugal.

⁶⁷ Sir Charles Oman, *The History of the Peninsular War*. Vol 1, 1807-1809 (Oxford, 1902), 225.

⁶⁸ Hall, *Wellington's Navy. Sea Power and the Peninsular War*, 30.

⁶⁹ HoCPP, 1809, 17,XII.1,224,Proceedings of the Inquiry relative to the Armistice and Convention in Portugal.

See table 7.8 at the end of the chapter

with 294 horses, in all 37,311 men and 2,931 horses and accoutrements had been shipped mainly from Ireland, England, Cadiz and Gibraltar. This combined force had been transported in 204 troopships, 108 horse ships, 27 Army victuallers, 9 forage ships, 7 store ships with camping equipment and 17 ordnance store ships, in all 372 transports of 95,243 tons. Captain Lawrence Halstead, the transport agent sought instructions on what to do with the transports after the army had moved inland as ‘few troop ships will be required in the next four months’.⁷⁰ This was to be an unfortunate misjudgment. However the comment does highlight the difficulty of determining whether to retain transports on station, at a significant cost, or returning them to England to be reassigned or discharged.

The landings preceded Wellington’s victory at the Battle of Vimiero after which Junot, Bonaparte’s defeated commander, sought terms. This led to the contentious Convention of Cintra. One of the terms of this convention established that the French troops would be removed in British vessels.⁷¹ The convention addressed the mode of repayment for the use of the transports, where the troops were to be sent. It was decided that Rochefort and L’Orient should be used because they were the French ports furthest from Spain. It also addressed the security of the transports that would repatriate the troops; this was felt necessary because fifty British transports that had returned the French army of Egypt had been detained by French authorities. Subsequently 24,735 men, 213 women, 116 children and 759 horses were returned in October 1808 in 151 transports at the rate of one man per ton, almost 30,000 tons in all. The French were permitted to leave commissaries in Spain to sell the horses that could not be shipped in British transports or to arrange alternative transport.⁷² However Captain Halstead reported on 17th that 9 of them had been caught in a

⁷⁰ TNA, WO. 1/804.

TNA, WO. 1/804, Sir Rupert George to Castlereagh, 21 Nov 1808. Captain Halstead was subsequently promoted to post captain in reward for his services off Portugal.

⁷¹ Hall, *Wellington’s Navy*, 35.

⁷² HoCPP, 1809, 17, XII.1, 243. Proceedings of the enquiry relative to the armistice and convention made and concluded in Portugal in August 1808.

storm and returned to their anchorage.⁷³ Later during the debates on the Corunna debacle in Parliament there was a suggestion that the use of transports for this purpose had forced Sir John Moore to march his troops into Spain rather than convey them by sea and had contributed to the unfortunate outcome in Spain although this was denied strongly by Castlereagh who claimed that there were sufficient transports available had it been deemed expedient 'the movement by land was not adopted by necessity but because it was deemed most advantageous'.⁷⁴ In September 1808 there were 451 transports of 113,273 tons off the coast of Spain and Portugal this was surely enough transports to repatriate the French army and ferry Moore's army around the coast of Spain if he had opted for that.

For want of horse ships.

The British army overseas never had enough horses. Some cavalry brigades even ended up fighting as infantrymen and there was also a consequent shortage of heavy artillery and of commissariat carts for moving supplies to the front line.⁷⁵ There may have been other reasons for this, but as demonstrated above the shortage and cost of horse transports were certainly significant contributory factors.

The average tonnage for horse ships was between 250 and 300 tons, at 8 tons per horse each ship of that tonnage could only carry 31 to 37 horses. However, horses were frequently transported in smaller vessels to enable them to get over the bars in river estuaries or to enable them to manoeuvre close in shore so that the horses could be lowered in slings into shallow water onto sand which meant that they suffered far fewer injuries than when they were hoisted from a heaving deck and lowered into flat bottomed boats which were, themselves, rising and falling in the swell of the tides. This was illustrated in a cavalry

⁷³ TNA, WO. 1/804.

⁷⁴ Hansard, House of Lords, 7 Feb and 9 May 1809.

⁷⁵ See Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*. 46. And Flayhart, *Counterpoint to Trafalgar*, 107. Mackesy, *British Victory in Egypt*. Oman, *The History of the Peninsular War*. Vol 1

officer's report of an embarkation from Ramsgate of 350 horses in 1815, in small colliers holding from 10 to 35 horses each. In that instance the horses were put into the hold loose, without the support of stalls. It was judged that because the weather was calm and the transit speedy, that no horses would be injured during the voyage or when they were landed onto the sand. In his words 'Larger vessels could not have crossed the bar at Ostend and to have them fitted up regularly for cavalry would have required so many and caused so much delay' but using smaller vessels obviously required many more'.⁷⁶ Although eight to ten tons per horse was the standard allowance the size of ships used varied considerably. In 1809, replacement horses for the 20th Light Dragoons were sent out to Portugal in four ships of varying sizes; the *Elizabeth and Ann* of 286 tons with 38 horses at 7½ tons per horse, the *Frederick* of 131 tons with 18 horses at just under 7½ tons per horse, the *Liberty* of 123 tons with 20 horses at 6 tons per horse and the *Rodney* of 312 tons with 32 horses at almost 10 tons per horse.⁷⁷

The most commonly used vessels for this service were colliers which normally plied the coastal route between the coalfields in the north east of England and London. Taking large numbers of these vessels out of that service at one time had a significant impact on the availability and price of coal. For instance in August 1799 it was reported that the price of coal was 'daily advancing' owing to the great number of the largest colliers being employed as transports for the Helder campaign and that the colliers remaining were insufficient to supply enough coals for the London market.⁷⁸ Again, in 1809, there was a report that 'the people of Plymouth and the whole kingdom are paying extra price in consequence of the scarcity of colliers due to so many being used on the Walcheren expedition'.⁷⁹ Even Castlereagh was forced to admit that the high number of colliers taken for Walcheren was

⁷⁶ James Tomkinson, (ed) *The Dairy of a Cavalry Officer in the Peninsular War and Waterloo Campaign, 1809 to 1815, Lieutenant-Colonel Tomkinson, 16th Light Dragoons*. (London, 1971), 273.

⁷⁷ TNA, WO, 1/804.

⁷⁸ *New Lloyds Evening Post*, 9 Aug 1799.

⁷⁹ *The Bury and Norwich Post*, 20 Dec 1809.

having a major impact on the price of coal in London.⁸⁰ There was even press suggestion that, during the preparation for that campaign, colliers were being taken up as they arrived in the River 'some say impressed for service'.⁸¹ This is likely to have been press exaggeration, but it does possibly give an indication of the pressure that the Board was under to find horse ships. In 1805 when Castlereagh was planning the northern Germany expedition he needed to ship out 17,000. This would have required 140,000 to 170,000 tons of horse ships, which were unlikely to be available. In recognition of this he had to make alternative plans. The relatively short voyage time meant that he was able to plan for repeat sailings of a smaller number of vessels besides some provision for local procurement. In 1808, when preparing to send additional infantry and cavalry brigades to Portugal it was necessary to await the return of horse ships, from earlier convoys, sufficient for 2,300 horses before the additional horses could be shipped. These took some time to return, causing some delay.⁸²

One of the most critical events of the wars occurred in 1809 when the preparations for the Walcheren expedition were underway. At that time most of the Transport Board's fleet of horse ships was in Portugal where there was shipping capacity for over 5,600 horses. On 22 May Castlereagh made an urgent request to Sir Arthur Wellesley to send home shipping capacity for 3,000 horses because 'so much depends on their arrival being accelerated'.⁸³ For various reasons it was seven weeks before the first convoy arrived at Portsmouth on 11 July, only two weeks before the fleet sailed. These ships and other infantry ships returned from Portugal and elsewhere were prepared in a remarkably short time. They sailed with the fleet on 28 July.⁸⁴ There is no record whether they had been as hygienically prepared as usual.

⁸⁰ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 43.

⁸¹ *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, 8 Jun 1809.

⁸² Castlereagh *Correspondence* VI, 401.

⁸³ Castlereagh *Correspondence* VII, 68. Castlereagh to Sir Arthur Wellesley, 22 May 1809.

⁸⁴ Castlereagh *Correspondence* VII, 95, Castlereagh to Sir Arthur Wellesley, 11 Jul 1809.

Colliers intended to carry horses took some time to prepare, for the holds to be cleaned of coal dust and for stalls to be built. After 1803 this cost was the responsibility of the owner. Naturally, for short charters there was some reluctance on behalf of owners to pay these expenses, particularly when there was alternative employment for their ships. Then at the end of the charter these stalls had to be dismantled, again at the owners cost, the materials were then often sold at auction, as demonstrated by the advertisement in September 1811, for an auction for the sale of ‘pressed hay, oats, bran, horse mangers, fitting for troop and horse transports all landed from transports’.⁸⁵ This meant that newly taken up ships had to be fully fitted again, even if they had been used as horse ships on previous occasions. There was no apparent planning for the retention of horse ships during periods when they were not required so that there would be a reserve for when they were required. Given the difficulty of bringing forward such vessels this probably ought to have been a serious consideration, however it was outweighed by the cost and the shortage of vessels and the impact on coal prices.

The situation was exacerbated because officers took several horses with them. Horses were also required for the commissariat and other staff which accompanied major expeditions in large numbers. Though they may have survived the journey and escaped injury during the landing horses frequently suffered from a debilitating sea sickness for several days after landing.⁸⁶

Then the challenge was to obtain an adequate supply of oats and forage, the standard allowance for each cavalry horse was eleven pounds of oats and nine pounds of hay per day, for draft horses thirteen pounds of oats and nine pounds of hay.⁸⁷ There was rarely enough as was reported in the diary of a cavalry officer during the Peninsular war in 1812:

‘There was no straw in the country and from the horses being so starved they eat the weathered grass with so much avidity that they swallowed

⁸⁵ *Hampshire Telegraph*, 23 Sep 1811.

⁸⁶ John Pimlott, *British Light Cavalry* (London, 1977), 43.

⁸⁷ Glover, *Peninsula Preparation*, 295.

many of the stones at the roots and some died in consequence.⁸⁸
and:

‘The weather was extremely severe; the horses got nothing by way of long forage but the long grass that the men cut themselves from out of the woods. We were frequently 8 to 9 days without corn and in consequence lost many horses’.⁸⁹

Even if there were local supplies of forage the local population took advantage of the opportunity to inflate prices dramatically. For this reason forage and oats was constantly being shipped from England.

There was a high attrition rate of horses. During the battle of Talavera on 27 and 28 July 1809 it was reported that there were 211 horses killed, 71 wounded and 159 missing.⁹⁰ There were constant demands for replacement horses. In 1809 Wellesley frequently wrote to Castlereagh requesting more horses ‘it is inconceivable how fast the horses of both the cavalry and artillery fall off. When horses as well as men, are new to war, I believe that the former are generally the sacrifice of their mutual inexperience’.⁹¹ There were no horses to be procured in Portugal and in Spain the demands of the French had invariably reduced local availability. During one short period in 1812 the following remounts for various cavalry regiments were shipped to Spain, 21 horses sailed on 7 June, 32 on 28th, 100 on 6 August, 729 on 27th and 125 on 4 September and 535 on 2nd and 9 November. In total 1,542 replacement horses representing 23 per cent of the total number of cavalry horses in Wellington’s army which was 6,546.⁹² The situation was so extreme that in 1812 Wellington

⁸⁸ Tomkinson, *The Dairy of a Cavalry Officer in the Peninsular War*, 121

⁸⁹ Tomkinson, *The Dairy of a Cavalry Officer in the Peninsular War*, 121.

⁹⁰ Robert O’Byrne, *The Victories of the British Army* (London, 1889), 53. Also in Michael Glover, *Wellington as Military Commander* (London, 1968), 211. It was reported in Aug 1809 that a cavalry brigade that had landed in Spain four to five months earlier with 1,300 horses then had 800 but ‘not above 20 taken or killed by the enemy’.

⁹¹ John Gurwood, *The Dispatches of Field Marshall the Duke of Wellington* V3. 215 and 318

⁹² Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VIII, 248.

was to declare that ‘The Peninsula is the grave of horses; I have lost no less than 12 for my own riding’.⁹³ Reliance on local supply of horses could not be guaranteed.

During retreat, horses were often sacrificed due to lack of transport or in expedience. During the Corunna retreat William Werner, an officer in the 7th Hussars, noted that his regiment had shipped out 640 horses but were only taking back 60 horses.⁹⁴ Oman reports that at Corunna ‘the horses were in a terrible state very few were worth reshipping ...more than 2,000 were shot, stabbed or flung into the sea’.⁹⁵ Even during the return voyage horses could be lost. In 1795 *Freedom*, a ship owned by Michael Henley, was hired to bring back some of the remnants of the Duke of York’s army that had evacuate from Holland and Germany. She embarked some Irish troops and 46 horses but was subsequently delayed in the river Weser for a month whilst awaiting an escort. The convoy eventually arrived at Shields but by that time 10 of the 46 horses had died.⁹⁶ In September 1809 when Castlereagh was planning to increase the tonnage in the Tagus to provide accommodation for the whole army, should an evacuation from Portugal become essential, he pointed out that the cost of the 40,000 tons required would be £50,000 per month. He said that:

‘it is quite impossible to think of retaining in the service tonnage for horses, unless with a view to an immediate evacuation, the monthly expense for each horse being £10.00. Government will have to make up their mind, that in the event of the army continuing indefinitely in Portugal, to leave the horses to their fate, that is, to be put to death should you be forced to retire.’⁹⁷

When Sir Rupert George was interviewed by the members of the Scheldt commission much of his testimony was in response to questions about the availability of cavalry shipping. He

⁹³ Glover, *Wellington as Military Commander*. 212.

⁹⁴ Pimlott, *British Light Cavalry*, 44.

⁹⁵ Oman, *The History of the Peninsula War*, Vol 1. 1807 – 1809, 582.

⁹⁶ John Barney, ‘North Sea and Baltic Convoy 1793 – 1814: As Experienced by Merchant Masters employed by Michael Henley & Son’. *MM* vol. 95 no 4 (November, 2009), 429-440.

⁹⁷ Castlereagh *Correspondence* VII, Castlereagh to Sir Arthur Wellesley, 12 Sep 1809.

acknowledged that ‘there was much more difficulty in providing cavalry transports than in providing ships for infantry or stores’.⁹⁸

In 1810 Liverpool recognized, just as Castlereagh had done in 1805, the advisability of keeping troop and horse transports in constant readiness for sea at Cork, Plymouth and Portsmouth ‘for the most expeditious performance of any service that may arise’. He directed that, at Cork 3,500 tons of coppered troop ships and cavalry vessels for 70 / 80 horses should be held in readiness, at Portsmouth 3,500 tons coppered troop ships and at Plymouth a large amount of cavalry tonnage. Recognising that all horse ships were currently being used he proposed that the amassing of tonnage required for Plymouth should be deferred ‘until all the services in contemplation shall be completed’. In the meantime he ordered that ‘no horse ships should be discharged’.⁹⁹

Summary

Castlereagh was Secretary of State for War at a crucial time. He instigated several major campaigns, northern Germany in 1805, Copenhagen in 1807 and the Peninsula in 1808 later the Peninsula again and Walcheren in 1809. Each required the movement of a large number of men and huge consignments of materials and supplies, a large number of transports were critical, in fact indispensable, for this service; however, it was also a period when the demand for shipping by trade was at its peak and so it took time to build up a fleet to ships thousands of men, horses and equipment. The hire rate had to be increased by 20 per cent to 25/- per ton per month to persuade ship-owners to commit their ships to government service when there were many other opportunities to generate returns.

To transport a mixed force of 10,000 would require 103 ships of 25,000 tons representing a significant element of the available, suitable transport fleet. The organization

⁹⁸ Cobbett, *Parliamentary Papers*, Papers relating to the Scheldt expedition, V15, 1810.

⁹⁹ TNA, WO, 6/158/11, Liverpool to TB, 6 May 1810.

of such expeditions required significant planning and co-ordination. So when Castlereagh allowed the plans for the British contingent of the expedition to northern Germany to expand from 10,000 men to over 67,000 men and 19,000 horses, had he repeated Dundas' error of creating an expedition that was, in Duffy's words 'too logistically ambitious'.¹⁰⁰ All the indications are that he had. The invasion of Portugal in 1808, the proposed invasion of Spain from Corunna and Portugal towards the end of 1808 and the Walcheren expedition will be considered in the same manner in the next chapter.

Despite this, Castlereagh appears to have been a man of detail and of foresight, described by Fortescue as 'the ablest man that ever controlled the [War Office]'.¹⁰¹ He certainly consulted widely on the best approach before committing to an expedition but he failed to bring the Transport Board into the planning at an early stage. The reactionary nature of many of the campaigns invariably meant that the timing of expeditions were imposed by events which forced Castlereagh to take risks; by restricting the planning process, by failing to anticipate the length of the preparation time or failing to take into account the dramatic impact of winter weather.

During this period the Transport Board acquired significant status, it had a reputation for competence, it acquired additional responsibilities and its role in the military operations was critical. Despite this, the cost of the service was under constant scrutiny, especially the costs of major expeditions which were monitored closely. Consequently it was expensive to maintain a fleet in waiting as conceived by Castlereagh in 1805 and again in 1807 and reaffirmed by Liverpool in 1810 even though such a fleet would have made the amassing of an expeditionary force more predictable and quicker. This was particularly the case in respect of horse ships. The impact that this had on the military campaigns is beyond the scope of this thesis, suffice to say that it was probably quite significant. The cost of horse

¹⁰⁰ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 85.

¹⁰¹ Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, 32 –Described by Glover as the right sentiment but wrong department. Castlereagh was Secretary of State for War, he was never Secretary at War who controlled the War Office.

transports was immense, the cost for 6,000 horses for six months would have been £360,000 excluding the procurement and shipping cost of forage and foodstuffs. Colliers were the preferred transports for horses but when they were taken out of normal service shortages drove up the price of coal dramatically. This had a material impact on the living standards of the citizens and on the economy.

Table 7.8. page 262

Transport Office 16 Nov 1808.

Return of the Officers and Men embarked and sailed for Portugal and Spain assembled under the command of Sir Hew Dalrymple and also of the Transports employed on that Service.

| | | Troops | | | | | | | | | Transports | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|--------|---------------|--------|------------------|-------|--------------|-------|-------------|-------|-----------------|-------|--------|--------|
| Force Commander | Sailed | Infantry | Cavalry | | Artillery | | Staff | | Total | | Troop Ships | | Cavalry Ships | | Army Victuallers | | Forage Ships | | Camp Stores | | Ordnance Stores | | Total | |
| | | Men | Men | Horses | Men | Horses | Men | Horses | Men | Horses | Number | Tons | Number | Tons | Number | Tons | Number | Tons | Number | Tons | Number | Tons | Number | Tons |
| Lieut. Gen. Sir Arthur Wellesley | Cork * 12 Jul | 9,196 | 384 | 238 | 693 | 306 | 24 | 34 | 10,297 | 578 | 40 | 15,565 | 18 | 5,065 | 4 | 1,389 | 4 | 859 | 2 | 453 | 7 | 1,926 | 75 | 25,257 |
| Major Gen Spencer | Gibraltar 14 May 6, 9 Jun 14 Aug Madeira | 2,327 2,184 943 925 | | | 83 204 | | 38 | 21 | 7,024 | 21 | 46 | 14,137 | 2 | 429 | 2 | 452 | | | 1 | 334 | | | 51 | 15,532 |
| Brig. Genls Anstruther & Aceland | Harwich 20 Jul | 4,771 | | | | | 46 | 40 | 4,817 | 40 | 28 | 5,784 | 2 | 510 | 3 | 434 | | | | | | | 33 | 6,728 |
| Lieut. Gen. Sir John Moore | Portsmouth h 31 July | 11,714 | 646 | 642 | 1,577 | 678 | 241 | 199 | 14,218 | 1,519 | 90 | 19,616 | 57 | 13,243 | 18 | 4,711 | 2 | 285 | 4 | 876 | 10 | 2,122 | 181 | 40,853 |
| Brig. Gen. Stewart | Portsmouth h 9 Aug | | 775 | 773 | | | | | 775 | 773 | | | 29 | 6,411 | | | 3 | 642 | | | | | 32 | 7,053 |
| Total | | 32,620 | 1,815 | 1,653 | 2,537 | 984 | 349 | 294 | 37,311 | 2,931 | 204 | 55,102 | 108 | 25,658 | 27 | 6,986 | 9 | 1,786 | 7 | 1,653 | 17 | 4,048 | 372 | 95,243 |

Source: HoCPP, 1809, 17, XII.1, 224, Proceedings upon the Inquiry relative to the Armistice and Convention in Portugal.

Chapter eight

1809: A year of national crisis: the Transport Board's finest hour.

Background

1809 has been described as a year of military disappointments.¹ In fact it was a disastrous year of crisis of confidence starting with the emergency evacuation of the British army of Spain from Corunna, during which Sir John Moore was killed. It ended with the ill fated Walcheren campaign when a large number of troops contracted fever in the unhealthy environment of Walcheren Island, many of whom died as a consequence. The campaign was a military disaster.² It was followed by the demise of the Portland administration culminating in its replacement by another Tory administration led by Spencer Perceval, with the Lord Liverpool becoming Secretary of State for War. However, though it was a year of national disasters, there were rare military successes such as Wellesley's victory at Talavera, Spain in July.

Ironically, 1809 was a good year for the Transport Board. In January Commissioner Captain James Bowen was highly praised for his strenuous efforts in managing the Corunna evacuation under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. In April a number of transports converted into fire-ships were the vanguard of Cochrane's success at Aix roads; at the same time, despite the severe competition from trade, the Transport Board managed to procure large tonnage for the shipping of troops returning to the Peninsula. Then in May, June and July, when trade usage of merchant shipping was at an unprecedented high, leaving few ships for government service, the Board managed to organise the transport for a major expedition involving 46,000 men and their equipment to Walcheren. A few months later transports played

¹ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, 556.

² Hill. *British Strategy in the Napoleonic Wars*. 178.

a highly important role in the evacuation of the sick troops. The success of the Board and its Agents in procuring and preparing sufficient tonnages of shipping in very difficult circumstances on these occasions demonstrated its important position in the government war machine. The significance of this role is further illustrated by the recognition of the importance of transportation by senior military leaders. Their degree of personal involvement in transport arrangements is exemplified by Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Commander-in-Chief of the army in Portugal.³ Also in April the 9th Report of the Commission for Revision on the Transport Service was published, it confirmed that the benefits anticipated from merging the procurement of transports under one Board had been achieved, even exceeded, it made a few recommendations, but certainly did not criticise the Board, as it had other Boards in earlier reports. This no doubt enhanced the Commissioners' reputations.⁴ The confidence in the Board was reinforced in May when Rupert George, the chairman of the Board, was elevated to the baronetcy. Could 1809 be described as the Transport Board's finest hour?

Spain, late 1808

Captain James Bowen, the Transport Commissioner appointed to lead the transport service off the coast of Spain, sailed to Corunna with the troops under Sir David Baird that were to join up with those under Sir John Moore who were marching from Portugal to meet them. The combined force was to support the Spanish army's bid to drive the French out of Spain. Bowen sailed with 20,000 tons of infantry transports, almost 8,000 tons of horse ships

³ Gurwood, *The Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 213, 216,263.

⁴ The Commission was critical of the dockyard management, the Victualling Office and naval hospitals and it rewrote the regulations governing these organisations.

for cavalry and 5,000 tons of shipping for stores. This brought the total number of transports used in 1808 to support the Peninsular campaign to 676 of 166,906 tons. These transports had conveyed in total 65,627 men, including a German contingent of over 6,000 troops, and 7,155 horses and stores and supplies from England to Portugal and Spain as described in table 8.1. This table illustrates that the infantry were shipped at one and a half tons per man, cavalry at eight tons per horse and artillery at ten tons per horse, it also demonstrates the tonnage required to ship supplies for such a significant force, adding almost 25 per cent to the tonnage requirements over that required for troops and horses. Included in this large amount of tonnage were the transports which had conveyed the

| Table 8.1. | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------------|----------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Statement of the various Armaments which have sailed for the Coast of Spain and Portugal, and of that now under Orders, distinguishing the number of Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery and of any Victuallers, Forage-Ships, Camps and Ordnance Store Ships at 30 September 1808. | | | | | |
| | | Transports | | Men | Horses |
| | | No. | Tons | | |
| | { Infantry | 155 | 43,555 | 28,779 | |
| British | { Dragoons | 36 | 8,558 | 1,159 | 997 |
| | { Artillery | 34 | 9,132 | 2,062 | 811 |
| | | | | | |
| | { Infantry | 36 | 7,216 | 5,279 | |
| German | { Dragoons | 26 | 5,601 | 646 | 642 |
| | { Artillery | 10 | 2,665 | 686 | 189 |
| | | | | | |
| | Staff Horses | 12 | 3,009 | 339 | 278 |
| | Hospital Ships | 6 | 2,024 | 0 | |
| Under Orders | | | | | |
| | Infantry } | | | 12,298 | |
| British | Wagon Train } | 171 | 41,801 | 252 | 164 |
| | Artillery } | | | 1,027 | 974 |
| | { Dragoons } | | | 3,100 | 3,100 |
| | | | | | |
| | Spanish Infantry from Langeland, Denmark | 36 | 10,773 | 10,000 | |
| | | | | | |
| | Total | 522 | 134,334 | 65,627 | 7,155 |
| Including the 10,000 men in Sicily and 4,000 men in North America will make a force afloat of 79,627 men. | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| Recapitulation of Store Ships and Victuallers which have sailed and those under orders | | | | | |
| | | Total sailed | | Total under Orders | |
| | | No | Tons | No | Tons |
| | Ordnance Stores | 16 | 3,912 | 8 | 1,921 |
| | Camp Stores | 7 | 1,663 | 3 | 603 |
| | Forage Ships | 21 | 3,860 | 12 | 2,158 |
| | Ship with Rockets | 1 | 136 | 0 | 0 |
| | Army Victuallers | 28 | 6,986 | 13 | 2,847 |
| | Empty Store-ships Sailed for Langeland | 5 | 1,068 | 0 | 0 |
| Store-ships for the Spaniards: | | | | | |
| | Ordnance Stores | 22 | 4,193 | 3 | 626 |
| | Camp Equipage | 2 | 313 | 0 | 0 |
| | Accoutrements | 1 | 194 | 1 | 178 |
| | Army Stores | 0 | | 3 | 572 |
| | | | | | |
| | To bring Spanish Sheep to this Country | 8 | 1,402 | 0 | |
| | Total | 111 | 23,727 | 43 | 8,845 |
| Source: HoCPP, 1809, 66, XI.1, 59, Correspondence relating to the expeditions to Spain and Portugal, Letter Castlereagh to Sir John Moore, 30 Sep 1808. | | | | | |

Spanish troops, who had originally been part of the French army of occupation in Denmark under the Marquis de la Romana, together with their equipment. They had been repatriated from a small island off the Danish coast, by the British, to join the uprising in Spain.⁵

Soon after his arrival, in accordance with the standing instructions for Agents Afloat, Bowen began to send regular reports back to the Transport Board in London.⁶ These reports serve as an interesting study of the role of Transport Agents involved in overseas amphibious expeditions. In his report dated 25 October he enclosed a log of his daily activities, a return of transports under his charge, a report of the muster of those who were short of complement. He also sent a disembarkation list of horses and men and he recorded in detail the arrival and departure of transports. He reported that Sir David Baird had wanted to save the salted provisions, so Bowen entered into an agreement with M. Santos, the American Consul, for the supply of fresh beef. Bowen also reported the misconduct of James Harris, master of the *Yare* for repeated neglect and inattention to signals and for only having only one boat and that was unfit for service. He also reported the masters of the *George & Mary* and the *Ocean* for disobeying orders which had slowed down the rate of disembarkation of the horses. The Board immediately advised the brokers of those ships that they would be severely mulcted.

Bowen advised the Board that the disembarkation of the infantry has been delayed because of the difficulty of feeding the army that was already ashore. The first divisions of 2,000 light troops were to be landed the following day.⁷ On 30 October he reported that seven regiments and two companies of artillery had been landed but progress had been hampered

⁵ James Davey, 'The Repatriation of Spanish Troops from Denmark, 1808: The British Government, Logistics, and Maritime Supremacy' in *The Journal of Military History*, 74 (July, 2010), 689 – 707 and Hall, *Wellington's Navy*, 65.

⁶ See appendices for a summarised version of the 'Articles of General Instructions to Agents relative to The Service of Transports'.

⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/81, TB Minute, 16 Nov 1808.

because there was not enough accommodation in the town for more than 2,000 men. Further troops could only be disembarked as those that had landed earlier left the accommodation and marched into the interior. He predicted that the whole force would be landed by 3 November.

On 31 October a further thirty four ships sailed for Corunna including nineteen ships with Horse Artillery and Royal Wagon Train.⁸ Bowen subsequently reported their arrival, although some of the troops were ‘very sickly’ and had been removed to ships appropriated as temporary hospital ships.⁹ He also reported that forty sail had arrived from Santander. Bowen had received no instructions regarding the return of empty transports so he sought the Board’s view; it was unable to advise having no knowledge of Lord Castlereagh’s intentions so it had to seek his directions on what to do with these transports.¹⁰ In the meantime Bowen had ordered some vessels to return to England, under the convoy of the *Racoon* and *Sparrowhawk*.

Bowen had also sought the views of Rear Admiral Michael De Courcy on the subject of returning empty transports, for which he did not have any current use. The increasing number of ships was overcrowding the small harbour; returning ships would reduce the likelihood of accidents. The ships that he proposed to return cost £15,000 per month. However, De Courcy had verbally declined to give his consent.¹¹ Bowen had responded in writing sending a copy to the Board trusting that it would agree that he had ‘omitted nothing that could tend to the diminution of public expenditure’. Whilst no record of Castlereagh’s response has been traced, De Courcy had obviously acquiesced to the return of more transports because on, 20 November, Lieutenant Debenham reported his arrival at Weymouth from

⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/185, TB Office at Deal to TB, 31 Oct 1808.

⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/81, TB Minute, 16 Nov 1808.

¹⁰ TNA, ADM, 108/81, TB Minute, 16 Nov 1808.

¹¹ TNA, ADM, 108/81, TB Minute, 18 Nov 1808.

Corunna with empty transports though some of the fleet had been dispersed by a heavy gale. A few days later nine more ships of the convoy arrived at Portsmouth.¹²

Bowen was able to report that all the infantry was disembarked when he transmitted returns of the infantry on 10 November 1808. He confirmed that the Agents were then engaged in disembarking the 7th, 10th & 15th Light dragoons, horse artillery and wagon train.¹³

Meanwhile transports were still arriving. Five vessels including one with hay arrived on 5 November as had the *Sally* with Lord Paget's horses from Lisbon. He explained that as there were numerous troopships, victuallers and store ships at Santander, he intended to send three Agents to manage the transport service there.¹⁴

Meanwhile, ashore, Moore had run into problems, leading his troops into Spain in support of the Spanish army. But before he could establish his command at Salamanca, the Spanish army was routed at Durango on 31 October, Espinosa on 11 November and Tudela on 23 November. At about the same time Commissioner Towry was sent to Portsmouth to direct the preparation of more horse transports bound for Spain.¹⁵ By 29 November Towry reported that there was capacity for 892 horses, but there had been a communications break-down because the Army commander there had not been advised of the arrangements. The cavalry had not arrived and the artillery horses were only just about to commence their march. In addition, there was some confusion about the number of horses expected. Portsmouth harbour was exceptionally crowded with shipping. This was causing Towry some anxiety, for he was keen that embarkation should start without delay because he judged that 'a gale of wind would probably cause much mischief'. Not only that, but the presence of a large number of transports

¹² TNA, ADM, 108, 81, TB Minute, 22 Nov 1808.

¹³ TNA, ADM, 108, 81, Captain Bowen, Corunna to TB, 10 Nov 1808, TB Minute, 21 Nov 1808.

¹⁴ TNA, ADM, 108/81, TB Minute, 21 Nov 1808. There is a gap in the Transport Board Minutes between 22 Nov and 28 Dec 1808 which impacts the reporting of Bowen's communications.

¹⁵ ADM108.81, TB Minute, 25 Nov 1808.

in the harbour caused severe friction with the navy relating to the anchoring arrangements, despite the considerable time devoted by the Agents in making the best arrangements for anchoring the transports out of the way of HM ships going in and out of the harbour.¹⁶ To add to Towry's problems he was forced to report that the ropes of the horse slings were of poor quality and that several of them had given way, injuring several horses. The Board instructed the contractor that if any horse was injured or killed then he would be accountable for the loss.¹⁷ The transports, under the charge of the agent, Captain James Anderson, with 1,230 horses and several cavalry brigades sailed from Portsmouth for Vigo on 15 December.¹⁸

In order to join up with Baird's force Moore had to break through Marshal Soult's corps in northern Spain which he achieved, allowing the two British forces to unit on 20 December. Bonaparte, who had arrived in Madrid on 4 December, responded by ordering his much larger army to the north west of Spain. When he learned of this Moore concluded that his best course of action was to withdraw to the coast to transfer his army back to the Tagus.¹⁹ Events were moving quickly. Suddenly all Castlereagh's plans to send more infantry, cavalry and materials to Spain were thrust into reverse when, on the 16th, the day after that fleet sailed, he received early indications from Moore that he was proposing to retreat to the coast. On the same day he received a letter from Sir David Baird informing him that he was withdrawing to Vigo where he would need transports for 2,000 horses.²⁰ Castlereagh immediately ordered the fleet that had just sailed to return to Portsmouth, where the horses and cavalry were to be disembarked and the empty vessels sent to Vigo with 2,400 tons of empty troop ships, 2,000

¹⁶ TNA, ADM, 108/81, TB Minute, 10 Dec 1808.

¹⁷ TNA, ADM, 108/81, Commissioner Towry at Portsmouth to TB, 7 Dec 1808.

¹⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/81. TB Minute, 15 Dec 1808.

¹⁹ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 173.

²⁰ HoCPP, 1809, 69, XI.97, 154 and 146, Correspondence relating to the expedition to Spain and Portugal, Jun to Dec 1808. Lieutenant General Sir John Moore to Castlereagh, 24 Nov 1808 and Lieutenant General Sir David Baird to Castlereagh, 24 Nov 1808.

tons of store ships laden with provisions, 3,000 tons loaded with hay and 1,400 tons loaded with oats.²¹ These ships were prepared quickly but shortly after they sailed again adverse weather on 27 December forced part of the fleet of back to Portsmouth.²²

In accordance with earlier instructions, Major General John Brodrick, the army commander of the forces at Corunna, was sending most of the transports ships from Corunna which was 'ill adapted for re-embarkation' around the coast to Vigo, which had been identified as the port of departure, being 'the most eligible place for re-embarkation' by Sir David Baird and Admiral De Courcy.²³ He ordered 143 transports there on 2 December, retaining about 32 at Corunna.²⁴ Conditions at sea were not good. Strong easterly winds were making coastal passages hazardous. Bowen reported the arrival at Corunna of the *Perseverance* on 13 December, with army provisions from Santander having been 'beating about nearly three weeks'. By then there were twenty five transports at Corunna and one hundred and fifty six at Vigo.²⁵

Well after the decision to withdraw had been made, presumably without knowing what his commanders were planning, on 31 December, Brodrick ordered back to England, 27 light horse transports that had recently arrived, empty. Three weeks later these ships would have been a welcome addition to the evacuation fleet. In England there was a period of uncertainty, plans in place had to be reconsidered quickly to fit the new circumstances, troops had to be disembarked and some provisions and supplies had to be hastily prepared to feed and shelter the troops and horses at Vigo and provide further ships for the evacuation. By 5 January

²¹ HoCPP, 1809, 66, XI.1, 77, Correspondence relating to the expedition to Spain and Portugal, Jun to Dec 1808. Castlereagh to Lieutenant General Sir John Moore 16 Dec 1808 and TNA, WO, 6/156. Castlereagh to TB. 10 Dec 1808.

²² TNA,ADM.108/.21/147. TB to Castlereagh.27 Dec 1808.

²³ HoCPP, 1809, 112, XI.277.2. Correspondence relating to the expedition to Spain and Portugal 1 Mar 1809.

²⁴ HoCPP, 1809, 112, XI.277, 1, Correspondence relating to the expedition to Spain and Portugal, 1 Mar 1809, Major General Brodrick, Corunna to Castlereagh, 2 Dec 1808.

²⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/ 81, TB Minute, 28 Dec 1808.

there were, ready to sail to Vigo, 36 ships, made up of 23 empty troop ships, four army victuallers, two transports loaded with hay, one with clothing, three with camp equipment and three with ordnance stores.²⁶

On 11 January Castlereagh advised Moore of his provision of shipping for the evacuation, 20,000 tons of troopships then at Vigo and Corunna plus a further 5,000 tons, that had been ordered around from Lisbon, accompanied by the eleven ships of the line, which had also been directed to receive troops. A further ten thousand tons which was being assembled at Portsmouth and expected to be despatched within two weeks, should enable the army to be embarked at the rate of one man per ton. This would be more crowded than normal, but this was an emergency measure.²⁷ Castlereagh directed that if the Marquis of Romana's Spanish troops were to be evacuated then an additional 40 to 50 men should be evacuated in each horse transport. As a temporary measure the Spanish troops were to be taken, with camping equipment and stores, to the Bayonne Islands until sufficient transports could be allocated to move them on. At Corunna and Vigo there were transports sufficient for 2,670 horses and transports for 1,230 horses were proceeding to Vigo from England. In the Tagus there were transports for 2,155 horses. Lieutenant- General Sir John Craddock, at the Tagus, had been directed to send some of these direct to Vigo. If these vessels were insufficient then the Bayonne Islands were to be used as temporary depots for horses. The hope was that not only the cavalry and artillery horses could be saved but also the draft horses and mules. To sustain these beasts there were large stocks of forage at Vigo and more was on the way together with further supplies of 54,000 pairs of shoes for the Spanish troops and 50,000 pairs for use as

²⁶ TNA, ADM.1.3757, TB to Admiralty, 5 Jan 1809.

²⁷ HoCPP, 1809, 66, XI.1, 92, Correspondence relating to the expedition to Spain and Portugal, June to Dec 1808. Castlereagh to Sir John Moore, 11 Jan 1809.

Moore felt appropriate.²⁸ However, it was later recorded, that 2,000 horses were slaughtered rather than saved.²⁹

Early in January, Moore realised that he was not going to be able to get the army to Vigo where most of the transports were waiting, because it was too great a distance, so he gave notice to Admiral De Courcy of his intention to retreat to Corunna. He requested that the transports be urgently brought around the coast from Vigo to Corunna. This was a major catastrophe. Later in Parliament the government were accused of incompetence by allowing this situation to develop, Castlereagh defended his record 'it was entirely as a consequence of an arrangement between Sir David Baird and Admiral De Courcy that the transports were sent from Corunna to Vigo'.³⁰

16 January 1809: The evacuation of Moore's army

Unfortunately, the majority of transports had not arrived at Corunna by 11 January when Sir John Moore arrived with the main body of the army. On 13th he wrote 'had I found them here on my arrival on the 11th the embarkation would easily have been effected, for I had gained several marches on the French'.³¹ The main body of transports did not arrive back at Corunna until 14 January. Commissioner Bowen, working closely with Rear-Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, played a principal role in the evacuation which began immediately the transports were available.³² There were over 30,000 British soldiers to evacuate plus several thousand Spanish troops, horses, equipment and stores transports. This was a huge challenge

²⁸ HoCPP, 1809, 66, XI.1, 54, Correspondence relating to the expeditions to Spain and Portugal. Castlereagh to Sir John Moore, 30 Sep 1808.

²⁹ Oman, *The History of the Peninsula War*, Vol 1, 1807-1809, 582.

³⁰ Hansard . House of Lords. 9 May 1809

³¹ HoCPP. 1809, 112, XI.277, 2. Extract of a letter from Lieut. Gen. Sir John Moore to Viscount Castlereagh. 13 Jan 1809.

³² TNA, WO, 1/805, Commissioner Bowen, Corunna to TB, 28 Jan 1809.

to be accomplished in a very short time. There were two evacuation points, the quay near the Citadel in the town and the nearby beach at St Lucia. Effective organization at the evacuation points was paramount to the success of the evacuation. Hundreds of ships, including ships of the line, were at anchor in heaving seas. Thousands of men, wet, tired, many injured, had to be embarked. Other ships were trying to manoeuvre closer inshore. The beach-masters organized the landing of the ships launches, mostly from the warships, filled them quickly and dispatched them to the waiting ships. Meanwhile the enemy was getting closer. It wasn't long before the troops were embarking under direct fire from artillery which had reached the surrounding hills. There was a great shortage of small boats to embark such a large numbers of troops. Some Spanish boats had been requisitioned but they were not in good condition and most of them had to be abandoned. Despite this, before daylight on 16th, artillery, horses and the Royal Wagon Train had been embarked and thirty four loaded ships were sent off under convoy of HMS *Plantaganet*. These ships included three with French prisoners and guards, six with ordnance stores, eight hospital ships, three with forage, one baggage ship, one with artillery staff and forage, four with the 4th Hussars cavalry, two army victuallers, two with staff horses, one with engineers and victualling, one with 10th Hussars and two with artillery and horses.

From the beach at St Lucia, the troops were brought off entirely by transports' boats, Captain Bowen, himself, brought off on the last picket consisting of fourteen men of 26th Regiment at eight a.m. on 17th, by that time the French were in the sight of St Lucia and had begun to kill stragglers. Bowen then went to the Citadel where the men of war's boats were embarking the wounded. Major General William Beresford was still defending his lines. At one p.m. on 17th the enemy opened fire 'which soon became very brisk', on the transports. Bowen describes the wind at this moment as blowing 'with great violence'. The embarkation

kept on going from the Citadel until after midnight until General Beresford left the Citadel to complete the embarkation.³³

Bowen was to describe the embarkation as a ‘complete success in unfavourable circumstances’. ‘The tide being out when it commenced, the troops were obliged to wade into the boats up to their necks in water, the night was excessively dark, the transports were obliged to lay out at a considerable distance, a gale of wind whipped up the surf greatly endangering the safety of the boats’.³⁴ The boat crews from the men of war were able to take breaks for rest and food whilst colleagues manned the boats continued shuttling men and materials. The merchant crews’, being much smaller in number, had no-one, to spell them and had to keep toiling away. Similarly, the Agents had to work without breaks for three days and two nights ‘almost without refreshment, without rest, and without a murmur and were so exhausted at the conclusion as to be unable to pull to windward in the strong squalls’.³⁵ Bowen was pleased to report that the artillery attacks had not given the French the satisfaction of ‘sinking a single boat or destroying a single man’.³⁶ However, five or six transports had been lost in the melee due to the ‘violence of the winds and occasional confusion in the minds of masters’. Bowen pronounced that ‘the general conduct of the Transports has been highly meritorious, notwithstanding the actions of a few, some masters had remained to get their allotment of troops long after the signal to weigh had been made’.³⁷

The successful evacuation was probably the one of the Transport Board’s finest moments. On 31 January the Transport Board sent Bowen’s report to Castlereagh commenting that ‘we flatter ourselves that it will appear to your lordship, notwithstanding rumours which

³³ TNA, WO, 1/805, Commissioner Bowen to TB, 28 Jun 1809.

³⁴ TNA, WO, 1/805, Commissioner Bowen to TB, 28 Jun 1809

³⁵ HL, STG Collection, STG, 136 (21), Captain James Bowen to TB, 28 Jan 1809.

³⁶ HL, STG Collection, STG, 136 (21), Captain James Bowen to TB, 28 Jan 1809.

³⁷ HL, STG Collection, STG, 136 (21), Captain James Bowen to TB, 28 Jan 1809.

have gone abroad, that Commissioner Bowen and the several agents under his direction, performed their duty, in the embarkation of the army at Corunna, with judgment, activity and unwarranted perseverance'.³⁸ Bowen declared that he was much indebted to Rear Admiral Sir Samuel Hood 'for his countenance and support he gave me and for his ready compliance with all my wishes'. The two men had clearly got on well, their professional relationship was probably the platform on which the successful evacuation had been achieved. In the days prior to the evacuation, Bowen had moved from his quarters on the *Montreal* transport to the flagship *Barfleur*, a move which further strengthened the communications between the two men.³⁹ However it was Sir Samuel Hood who received the approbation of the House of Commons for his 'effectual and able disposition of the ships and transports in the embarkation of HM's troops at Corunna.'⁴⁰

Some army officers were very critical of the evacuation. Lord Melville (the elder) used this incident to reinforce his demands that naval ships be used as troopships 'the naval and military officers who superintended that midnight embarkation, endured by far more anxiety than they had experienced in the hour of battle, owing to the want of order and discipline amongst the transports' he claimed that 'this want of discipline produced the utmost confusion and embarrassment, and created in the minds of those present the greatest alarm for the fate of the army'. His view was that serious consequences were only prevented by the zeal and active exertions of the officers and seamen of HM's navy, and of the superintending commissioners of the Transport Board.⁴¹

³⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/ 21/156, TB to Castlereagh, 31 Jan 1809.

³⁹ HL, STG Collection, STG, 136 (21), Captain James Bowen to TB, 28 Jan 1809.

⁴⁰ Hansard. House of Commons, 1 Feb 1809.

⁴¹ Melville *Speech*, 9.

The cost of the Board's Peninsular service

Following Corunna, Parliament was keen to have an understanding of cost of the transports employed in the service of conveying the army, ordnance, stores and provisions to Portugal and Spain in the year 1808, together with the cost thereof.⁴² In response the Board prepared the return shown in table 8.2.

| Table 8. 2. Transport Office 27 Feb 1809 A Return of the Number and Tonnage of all the TRANSPORTS employed in the Service of Government for the Transportation of the Army or Stores, Ammunition, Clothing, money etc. to Portugal and Spain, in the Year 1808, together with the sums expended or contracted for as the Freight of such Transports. | | | | |
|---|---------|----------------------------------|----|---|
| Number of Transports | Tonnage | Amount of freight contracted for | | |
| | | £ | S | d |
| 803 | 194,670 | 1,178,112 | 15 | 0 |
| N.B. Besides the above Sum, an Expense has been incurred for providing the Transports with Forage, Bedding, Cabins, Horse Stalls and various other Stores usually supplied to Troop and Cavalry Transports , and for pay to agents amounting to the sum of: | | 114,669 | 5 | 0 |
| Total cost | | 1,292,783 | 0 | 0 |
| As this Service did not terminate until the end of Jan 1809, the Freight and other Expenses incurred for that Month are included in the above accounts. Signed by Rupert George, Ambrose Serle and T. Douglas | | | | |
| Source: HoCPP, 1809, 86, XI.209, 9, Papers Relating to the Staff of the Army employed in Portugal and Spain, 1808. | | | | |

It is estimated that it had used 803 transports of 194,670 tons, to ship troops, horses, artillery, wagon trains, supplies and provisions, at the cost of £1,178,112/15/00 and in addition had spent £114,669/05/00 fitting out transports for troops and horses and for the pay of agents Afloat who had managed the transports.

⁴² TNA, ADM, 108/21/160, TB to Brigadier General Stewart, 27 Feb 1809.

The Ordnance Board and the Victalling Board produced detailed listings of the supplies and provisions shipped to Spain and Portugal, the majority of which was dispatched in transports, the volume of these materials and provisions is shown in tables 8.3 and 8.4.

| Table 8. 3. Victualling Office 24 Mar 1809 A Statement of Provisions shipped on Transports from the Army Stores at St Catherine's between 1 May 1808 and 6 Feb 1809. | | | | | | |
|---|----------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| | Number of Transports | Beef Pounds | Pork Pounds | Flour Pounds | Bread Pounds | Spirits Gallons |
| To Portugal | 28 | 2,339,776 | 1,328,946 | 1,111,152 | 5,366,940 | 150,883 |
| To Spain | 27 | 1,532,352 | 883,188 | 1,675,632 | 2,900,647 | 147,420 |
| For a Particular Service | 14 | 474,064 | 286,224 | 1,099,512 | 1,907,816 | 75,820 |
| | | | | | | |
| Total | 69 | 4,346,192 | 2,498,358 | 3,886,296 | 10,175,403 | 374,123 |
| Source: HoCPP, 1809, 102, XI.263, 6 to 8, Papers relating to Supplies embarked for Portugal and Spain, Victualling Office. | | | | | | |

| Table 8.4. Ordnance Office, 20 Mar 1809. A Return of the Arms and Ammunition sent to Spain and Portugal from 1 May 1808 to 20 Mar 1809. | | | |
|--|---------|----------------------------|------------|
| Guns | 98 | Pistols | 316 |
| Howitzers | 38 | Swords | 61,391 |
| Carronades | 20 | Pikes | 79,000 |
| Mortars | 6 | Infantry Accoutrement sets | 39,000 |
| Ammunition for Guns | 31,600 | Ball Cartridges | 23,477,955 |
| Ammunition for Howitzers | 7,200 | Lead Balls | 6,060,000 |
| Ammunition for Carronades | 4,000 | Lead (cwt) | 10,544 |
| Musquets | 200,177 | Powder Barrels | 15,428 |
| Rifles | 120 | Flints | 2,442,080 |
| | | | |
| The Royal Artillery contingent consisted of 2,255 Officers, non-commissioned officers, gunners and drummers and 1,684 drivers and 2,469 horses | | | |
| Source: HoC PP, 1809, 82-85, XI.193,12, Supplies embarked for Portugal and Spain . 20 Mar 1809. | | | |

The Return to Portugal 1809: Wellington's involvement in arranging transports' movements.

In March and April 1809 20,000 infantrymen and several regiments of cavalry were embarked for Portugal. To provide the transports for this service the Board had to increase the charter rate to 25/- per ton per month.⁴³ Following the return of some of these ships from Portugal the Board received an instruction from Brigadier General Charles William Stewart, military undersecretary and Castlereagh's half brother, On 5 April 1809, specifically directing that 8,000 tons of 3 months ships to be paid off and discharged.⁴⁴ By that time freight rates were coming down and the Transport Board was quick to respond to this development. On 20 April 1809 the Board issued a notice to owners via the brokers 'that any owners not accepting the new rate of 20 shillings per ton to find that their vessels will be returned to this country for discharge and are unlikely to be hired again'.⁴⁵

Sir Arthur Wellesley returned to Portugal in April 1809 and assumed command of all British and Portuguese troops. He drove Marshal Soult and his forces out of Oporto on 12 May and then crossed into Spain and achieved a further, though costly, victory at Talavera.⁴⁶ He then decided to retreat to Portugal and there he began to build a defensive system to protect Lisbon. Wellington's correspondence from the first few months of his time in Portugal as he prepared his forces for those early battles demonstrate most clearly his awareness, not only of the importance of the transport service to these preparations, but also of the cost. In addition it highlights the commander in chief's significant involvement in the transport arrangements. On 5 April 1809 Castlereagh had forwarded to Wellesley a list of 83 transports which were in

⁴³ Scheldt Inquiry, Sir Rupert George's Evidence, From 21/- per ton per month for coppered ships.

⁴⁴ TNA, WO, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB, 5 Apr 1809.

⁴⁵ TNA, ADM, 108/81, TB Minutes, 20 Apr 1809.

⁴⁶ Wellesley was elevated to Viscount following the battle of Talavera in 1809 and then to Duke of Wellington on 11 May 1814 after the fall of Napoleon.

Portugal, requesting that after careful survey he send home as many as he felt able, retaining only those that he considered 'indispensably necessary to the security of your army, in the event of its being obliged to re-embark'. He was advised that a regiment of cavalry was under orders to join him but as there was a great shortage of horse transports he should send sufficient for 800 horses from Tagus to Cork 'as the expense of horse transports presses severely on the public finances at the present moment'.⁴⁷ By 24 April this had been arranged plus sufficient tonnage for an additional 300 horses for the Commissariat.⁴⁸

On 7 May Wellington confirmed that before he had left Lisbon he had made arrangements for the return of 5,000 tons of infantry ships plus tonnage of every description. However he was not sure if these instructions had been executed because 'the Agent of transports is the worst hand of that description, and as you know transports are not solely under my directions'. This was pretty strong condemnation of the transport agent and also possibly an indication of frustration that he shared control of the transports with the naval commander. He requested that the current agent be replaced by Lieutenant Fleetwood, an Agent with whom he had worked before. This commitment to return transports was agreeable not only to Castlereagh but also to the Treasury to whom Wellesley wrote 'you may depend upon it that I shall keep the expenses as low as possible. I have already made arrangements for sending home a quantity of transports and victualling tonnage'.⁴⁹

Vice-Admiral George Berkeley, officer commanding the ships off the Peninsular coast, was also aware of the costs of retaining transports, he proposed to Wellington that the cargoes of some of the store-ships containing provisions and hay and oats should be unloaded

⁴⁷ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VII, 50 Castlereagh to Sir Arthur Wellesley, 5 April 1809.

⁴⁸ Gurwood, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 190. Wellesley to Castlereagh, 24 April 1809.

⁴⁹ Gurwood, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 213. Wellesley to W. Huskisson, Sec to the Treasury, 5 May 1809.

and stored ashore in depots. Wellesley agreed ‘the hire of store houses will be a much less heavy expense upon the public than that of victuallers, which may, of course, be sent back to England’.⁵⁰

On the same day, 7 May he sent the naval captain who had led a convoy from England with troops and horses the benefits of his experiences from earlier landings at Mondego Bay, advising him to direct those ships that had the shallowness of draft into the river for the purpose of disembarking. In preference to attempting to land on the beach, he suggested using local boats to ferry troops and horses into the river from those vessels whose draft was too deep.⁵¹

The transports on the Portuguese station were in constant demand to withdraw troops and to bring in reinforcements, particularly to and from Gibraltar whence troops were sent to for periods of relief from battle duties: On 14 June ‘the 23rd light dragoons having arrived, the 20th will proceed to Sicily as soon as transports shall be ready for them’, on 15th ‘please arrange transports for the 2nd battalion of the 9th Regiment to Gibraltar to relieve a garrison so that those troops might be returned to Portugal’. Such movements were originated or sanctioned by Wellesley as commander in chief. When he wanted transports he always communicated with Admiral Berkeley rather than directly with the Transport Agent, since that relationship had broken down completely. Wellesley was continually issuing requests to Castlereagh for replacement horses and for further supplies to be transported to Portugal for instance on 31 May he requested the supply of 30,000 pairs of shoes of the best quality and 1,500,000lbs of biscuit, 3,000,000lbs of hay and 3,000,000lbs of oats and on 11 June 1809 he sent a request for

⁵⁰ Gurwood, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3,263

⁵¹ Gurwood, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 216.

'40,000 knapsacks, 5,000 saddles and bridles, 6,000 carbines, 6,000 swords, 4000 pairs of pistols, 2,000 rifles and 5,000 saddlebags'. These were needed for the Portuguese allies.⁵²

Preparations for Walcheren.

Canning, the Foreign Secretary, had wanted to attack Flushing for some time, as he believed that there were five enemy ships of the line there. However he also felt that a continental expedition might encourage Austria, which was vacillating, to move against France.⁵³ It would also help to eradicate the memories of the failure of Corunna. Lord Mulgrave, the First Lord of the Admiralty was naturally in favour of an attack on France's naval capacity. When the Earl of Chatham was appointed to command the operation he was told that it was to be nothing else but a 'coup de main'. It was intended that once the naval forces had been destroyed, the troops, excluding a small garrison on Walcheren Island, were to return home immediately.⁵⁴ Unfortunately many of the transports that would be needed were in Portugal.

On 22 May Castlereagh wrote again to Wellington suggesting that there was tonnage for 5,654 horses in Portugal and directing him to return shipping for 3,000 horses to Portsmouth where they were urgently required to support the Walcheren campaign. Castlereagh explained 'I do not make this order peremptory but unless a crisis is anticipated send them immediately much depends upon their arrival being accelerated'⁵⁵ Although he had not received that letter Wellesley complained, on 31 May, that he was not being kept informed of the situation regarding the Transports because 'the Agent of transports keeps so much aloof

⁵² Gurwood, *The Dispatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 289.

⁵³ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 177.

⁵⁴ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, 179.

⁵⁵ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VII, 69. Castlereagh to Sir Arthur Wellesley, 22 May 1809.

from us' he had already requested a replacement. Despite this, he had begged Vice-Admiral George Berkeley to send home all the three-month infantry ships and a great proportion of the cavalry ships.⁵⁶

Wellington did not receive Castlereagh's letter of 22 May until the night of 6/7 June, this letter had taken over two weeks to catch up with him.⁵⁷ No doubt this was because, as he said in another letter to the Admiral of the same date, he had 'been constantly moving'. Immediately, on 7 June he wrote to Berkeley 'I enclose the copy of a dispatch, which I received in the night from the Secretary of State. It is my opinion that the transports for 3000 horses may, with safety, be sent to England as soon as you think proper to dispatch them'.⁵⁸ Some of those cavalry ships had already been dispatched to Oporto to collect French prisoners of war, captured there when the Marshal Soult and his force was driven out from there on 13 May, to be delivered to England. It was another four weeks before the first batch of horse ships arrived at Portsmouth on 11 July. This was just seventeen days before the Walcheren fleet sailed. Castlereagh had been under the impression that the fleet was under sailing orders at Lisbon on 5 June but this is clearly not the case.⁵⁹ Such a voyage would normally take two weeks, three with adverse winds as was the experience of the remainder of the fleet which arrived a few days later having been delayed by strong north easterly winds.⁶⁰ There is no doubt that Captain Charles Patton, the Resident Agent, at Portsmouth, and the Board would

⁵⁶ Gurwood, *The Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 266. Wellesley to Castlereagh 31 May 1809. At this time he had not received Castlereagh's letter dated 22 May, he did not receive that until the night of 6 June thus the earliest letter on the subject to Admiral Berkeley on the subject included in *The Despatches* is dated 7 Jun 1809, Vol 3,274.

⁵⁷ Gurwood, *The Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 273. Wellesley to Vice-Admiral Berkeley, 7 June 1809 and Wellesley to Castlereagh, 7 June 1809.

⁵⁸ Gurwood, *The Despatches of the Duke of Wellington*, Vol 3, 274. Wellesley to Vice-Admiral Berkeley, 7 June 1809.

⁵⁹ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 281. Castlereagh to HM King George III, 21 Jun 1809.

⁶⁰ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VII, 94, 95. Wellesley to Castlereagh and Castlereagh to Sir Arthur Wellesley, 11 Jul 1809.

have been extremely anxious about the delay in their arrival, knowing how extremely important they were to the preparations for the Walcheren expedition.⁶¹

Despite Rupert George's evidence to the Scheldt Inquiry that the Board had been advised of the need to raise significant tonnage on 20 May, there was no clarification at that time about the mix of tonnage required, nor was the objective defined at that time. The lack of clarification about the required tonnage was no doubt because Castlereagh was only just starting to be formulate the plan of the operation and at that time had not determined the nature of the force that would be sent. On 20 May there had been 23,000 tons of unallocated transports at home. Only 24,000 tons was taken up over the next few months despite the rate being 25/- per ton. The 48,000 tons of cavalry and infantry ships returned from the Peninsula were absolutely vital to make up complement for the fleet of over 100,000 tons.⁶² Later Rupert George was to explain that although the Board had given serious consideration to recommending an increase in the hire rate to 30/- per month per ton, it had finally agreed that the benefit of this in terms of additional tonnage raised would be materially offset by the 'great inconvenience' to the service generated by the 'grave discontent' of existing transport owners. 'I believe', he told the Scheldt Inquiry 'that my opinion in some measure decided the case'.⁶³ However the Board did in some cases take up ships for six months certain and in some cases twelve months instead of the usual three months. This encouraged some ships to come forward that might not have done so otherwise and because the price was at the current rate, this arrangement did not antagonise existing transport owners.

⁶¹ Curiously in his evidence to the Scheldt enquiry George did not refer to these horse ships. When asked where the horse ships had been found he responded 'the River'.

⁶² HoCPP, 1810,12, 37. Scheldt Inquiry. Sir Rupert George's evidence.

⁶³ HoCPP, 1810,12, 37. Scheldt Inquiry. Sir Rupert George's evidence.

During May and June Lieutenant Colonel James Willoughby Gordon, military secretary to the Duke of York, had proposed that naval ships be used to convey troops.⁶⁴ This proposal was supported by Captain Home Popham, who wrote to Castlereagh that ‘transports are the greatest clog to every sort of expedition, particularly those in which promptness and celerity are so essential to success’. He argued that the benefits of embarking whole brigades into fewer ships would enable them, their horses and their equipment to arrive together and allow them to go into action ‘on the first moment of their landing’.⁶⁵ The Admiralty proposed that the operation should consist of nine sail of the line and 87 gun boats unencumbered by troops but that up to 21,400 troops could be conveyed in other naval vessels including eighteen 74 gun ships, which could carry 550 troops each, and fourteen frigates, which could each carry 250 men, together with a number of flutes, sloops and gun brigs. It was finally agreed that 17,000 men would be conveyed in naval ships.⁶⁶ This naval support was crucial, given the Board’s difficulty of procuring enough transports. It had even considered procuring some of the great number of foreign ships that were in the River at that time but in a discussion between Rupert George, the minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer it was agreed that it would not be proper to take them.⁶⁷

Given the large body of troops allocated to this campaign it was necessary to embark them from numerous ports so they were marched to Portsmouth, Dover, Ramsgate, Chatham and Harwich. A smaller number of ports could not have accommodated such a body of troops. On 17 July Castlereagh advised the King that ‘the whole force, with the exception of the

⁶⁴ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 257. Lieutenant Colonel Gordon to Castlereagh, 31 May 1809

⁶⁵ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 273. Sir Home Popham to Castlereagh, 13 June 1809.

⁶⁶ HoCPP, 1810,12, 37. Scheldt Inquiry. Sir Richard Strachan to Rear Admiral Otway, 27 June 1809.

⁶⁷ HoCPP, 1810,12, 37. Scheldt Inquiry Sir Rupert George’s evidence.

cavalry, will be on board tonight'.⁶⁸ It was expected that of the 616 sail 352 would be transports and 264 ships of war.⁶⁹ The fleet, with over 44,000 men and 4,500 horses on board, finally sailed on 28 July 1809, only ten weeks after the Transport Board had received the first notification of the requirement, this was a very speedy preparation, achieved mainly because almost three quarters of the transports used were already in service.

The men of war were provisioned for four months for their complement and the transports carrying troops six weeks full allowance in addition to fifteen days of meat and thirty days of bread for 40,000 men. In addition the Commissary General was funded and ordered to establish supplies of provisions locally trying to avoid the anticipated exploitation and inflated prices that the local population might try to exact.⁷⁰ However, in mid August further provisions were sent for 20,000 men for a month plus oats for 3000 horses and a supply of coals. It was expected that even though the local population would no doubt inflate prices that fresh meat should be purchased from them at the best price that could be negotiated.⁷¹

Once again the transport agents received criticism this time from Rear-Admiral Sir Richard Strachan, the naval commander. He was frustrated with his ability to communicate with the transport agents 'I can never get an agent of transports near me and from the neglect of these people the light transports are gone into Veer Gat with the loaded ones'.⁷²

By 2 September the health of the troops was deteriorating rapidly and, on advice from Lord Chatham, the expedition military commander, Castlereagh confirmed the order to commence the evacuation of Walcheren down to the minimum troop level need to defend the

⁶⁸ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 286, 17 Jul 1809.

⁶⁹ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 283, 15 Jul 1809

⁷⁰ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, .305. Mr Huskisson to Commissary-General Robinson, 17 Aug 1809.

⁷¹ Castlereagh *Correspondence VI*, 306. Mr Huskisson to Commissary-General Robinson, 17 Aug 1809.

⁷² HoCPP, 1810,12, 37. Scheldt Inquiry. Sir Richard Strachen to the Earl of Chatham. 2 Aug 1809

island.⁷³ Meanwhile further medical men were sent to care for the sick soldiers.⁷⁴ However, once again, there had been no consideration in the planning regarding the disposition of the transports once they had disembarked the troops and horses. On 26 September the Board sought guidance on the future plans for the 122 cavalry ships of 27,576 tons fitted for 3,456 horses which had recently arrived from Walcheren. 'Are they to be completed for further service or discharged'.⁷⁵ Castlereagh confirmed that any unappropriated cavalry ships should be discharged.⁷⁶ The subsequent reduction caused some delay when Liverpool instructed the Transport Board to prepare to ship 1,817 horses to Lisbon only three months later.⁷⁷

On the 28 September Captain Daniel Woodriff, Principal Transport Agent at Flushing, requested directions for action in relation to the many ordnance and other store ships stated to be now lying idle at the Scheldt.⁷⁸ Two weeks later it was reported that the transports there were suffering considerably from loss of anchors and cables because of the 'foul ground' and that it would be inappropriate for them to remain there in safety. Many of these contained ordnance stores which the Board was anxious to land or return to Sheerness.⁷⁹ It had sought advice from the Ordnance Board that in response denied further responsibility for the supplies 'the stores in question were no longer an ordnance charge as they had been supplied on the signification of the King's pleasure by Mr Secretary Canning, then HM's Secretary of State for the Foreign Dept'. The Ordnance Board advised the Transport Board to seek directions from the Foreign Secretary himself.⁸⁰ The Board also sought guidance regarding the two transports

⁷³ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VI, 320. Castlereagh to Chatham, 2 Sep 1809.

⁷⁴ TNA, ADM.108/21/189, TB to JF Robinson. Newly appointed Military Under Secretary, 9 Sep 1809.

⁷⁵ TNA, ADM.108/21/192, TB to Castlereagh, 26 Sep 1809.

⁷⁶ TNA, WO, 6/157, Castlereagh to TB, 28 Sep 1809.

⁷⁷ TNA, WO, 6/157, Liverpool to TB, 27 Dec 1809.

⁷⁸ TNA, ADM, 108/21/193, Captain Woodriff, Principal Agent at Flushing to TB, 28 Sep 1809.

⁷⁹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/194, TB to Castlereagh, 10 Oct 1809.

⁸⁰ TNA, ADM, 21/195. TB to the Earl Bathurst. 17 Oct 1809.

which had been appropriated for over a month to receive recruits from the prisoners recently arrived from Walcheren at an annual cost of £14,922. ‘Can these men be landed?’⁸¹

Although Chatham ordered the bulk of his command home on 2 September, Walcheren was not evacuated completely until November due to the vague hope of stimulating Austria to renew hostilities. A statement of transports at the Scheldt or preparing to go there to remove the troops dated 11 November shows that there were still 85 transports involved as well as 31 others preparing for the Peninsula which might be diverted to the Scheldt if necessary. By 28 November 1809 the majority of the troops both sick and healthy had been removed, leaving only the force that was to remain for some time together with enough transports to accommodate them all.⁸²

However horse transports were anxiously awaited so the surviving horses could be repatriated.

The campaign was a disaster, plagued by delays and bad weather.⁸³ Over 44,000 men were shipped over the North Sea; Flushing was not captured until 15 August by which time the French had time to strengthen forces around Antwerp. The army suffered high levels of sickness due to insanitary conditions and bad

| Table 8.5. | | | |
|--|---|-----------|----------|
| Whitehall Treasury Chambers, 8 Mar 1810 | | | |
| An Account of the Total Extraordinary Expense, so far as can be made up, of the late Expedition to the SCHELDT. | | | |
| Departments | Total extraordinary expenses of the late Expedition to The SCHELDT | | |
| | £ | S | D |
| Paymaster Forces | 2,962 | 0 | 0 |
| Secretary at War | 12,902 | 7 | 0 |
| Commissary General | 146,146 | 2 | 8 |
| Storekeeper General | 46,479 | 8 | 3 |
| Medical | 9,850 | 12 | 0 |
| Ordnance | 73,589 | 8 | 9 |
| Barracks | 9,436 | 13 | 7 |
| Navy | 64,202 | 16 | 10 |
| Victualling | 184,781 | 13 | 11 |
| Transports | 280,966 | 10 | 0 |
| Secretary of State (Colonial and War) | 2,957 | 17 | 7 |
| | | | |
| Total | 834,275 | 10 | 7 |

Source: HoCPP, 1810, 110, VII.337, 1, Papers Relating to the late Expedition to The SCHELDT.

⁸¹ TNA, ADM, 108/21/194. TB to Castlereagh. 10 Oct 1809 the ships were the *Norfolk* 642 tons and the *Royalist* 420 tons

⁸² TNA, WO, 6/157.

⁸³ Gordon Bond, *The Grand Expedition* (Georgia, 1979), 164.

weather, fever was rife, 4,000 men died, 11,000 were classified as sick. It was conducted at great cost which was subsequently assessed to be £834,275/10/07 of which the largest single element was the cost of transports. See table 8.5.

The Transport cost was assessed to be £280,966 but it excludes costs of the 48,000 tons of transports that Wellesley had arranged to urgently ship back to England to be used on the expedition. It was claimed that these ships would probably have continued to be used off Spain and Portugal had they not been wanted for this service. The gross cost before this deduction was £501,101.

| Table 8.6. | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------|
| Transport Office, 10 Feb 1810 | | | | |
| A Return of the Total Extraordinary Expense, so far as can be made up, of the late Expedition to the Scheldt | | | | |
| | Amount of Freight Tons | £ | s | D |
| For the: Army | 65,687 | 462,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Navy | 3,976 | | | |
| Ordnance | 22,978 | | | |
| Wagon Train | 4,581 | | | |
| Barrack Departments | 2,510 | | | |
| Commissariat | 1,006 | | | |
| Total tonnage | 100,738 | | | |
| Building and repairing Cabins for Soldiers and Horse Stalls, Horse Gear, Bedding, Stores and Medical Comforts for the Troops. | | 17,000 | 0 | 0 |
| Forage for the Horses | | 19,671 | 10 | 0 |
| Pay to Officers of the Navy, employed as Agent for Transports | | 2,430 | 0 | 0 |
| | | | | |
| Total cost of Expedition | | 501,101 | 10 | 0 |
| Part of the Transports above mentioned were withdrawn from Portugal, in aid of this Service, to the amount of 48,000 tons, Where they would probably have remained, had not this expedition taken place; it is therefore presumed that a deduction should be made from this account, to the amount of freight which would have been incurred, had the ships remained in Portugal. | | 220,135 | 0 | 0 |
| Making the Extraordinary Expense of the Expedition | | 280,966 | 10 | 0 |
| Source: HoCPP, 1810, 110, VII.337, 9, An Account of the Total Extraordinary Expense of the Late Expedition to the Scheldt, 12 Mar 1810 | | | | |

The main costs were not only the shipping of troops, horses and ordnance stores but also the cost of building cabins for officers and stalls for the horses and the provision of forage as described in table 8.6.

As Castlereagh stated in Parliament when justifying the cost, three quarters of the Walcheren force had been carried in ships already in government service that could not have been paid off even if the service not been undertaken.⁸⁴ Given the experience of Corunna and the recent evacuation from the Scheldt, Castlereagh was forced to consider the implications of an urgent evacuation from Portugal should the need arise. He promised Lord Wellington that he would ensure that there were enough ships for the reception of the whole army in the Tagus as soon as the transports returned from the Scheldt. However this would be at a significant cost. Indeed the 40,000 tons that would be required would cost £50,000 per month. In Castlereagh's view it would be too expensive to retain horse ships indefinitely. At £10 per horse per month, this would not be viable, with over 5000 horses it would add another £50,000 per month to the cost. He recommended that if the army was forced to withdraw then the majority of the horses would unfortunately have to be put to death.⁸⁵ One of his last instructions as Secretary of State for war was to order that the transports tonnage at Lisbon where there was 20,143 tons should be increased to 40,000 tons as speedily as possible.⁸⁶ This fleet was intended to lie in the Tagus to facilitate an emergency evacuation of the entire British army from Portugal should that prove to be necessary.

In addition to satisfying the demands for shipping to support the major European campaigns the transports conducted a multifarious assortment of routine task. The Board committed 130 transports to the Mediterranean station and over 30 to the Baltic station. It was

⁸⁴ Hansard, 26 Mar 1810.

⁸⁵ Castlereagh *Correspondence*, VII, 118, Castlereagh to Lord Wellington, 12 Sep 1809.

⁸⁶ TNA, WO, 6/157.

also called upon to supply transports to support the lesser campaigns in 1808/1809 to achieve the surrender of Martinique, which finally fell on 24 February 1809, to a force commanded by Lieutenant General Beckworth commanding 10,000 troops which had been based in Nova Scotia.⁸⁷ When St Domingo fell to Spanish and British troops in July 1809, the Board also supported the 1809 / 10 campaign to capture Guadeloupe, the last remaining French colony in the region. This was achieved on 6 February 1810; bringing to an end the British West Indies campaigns. Throughout this period the Board committed more than 50 transports of over 15,000 tons to the North American and West Indies station which were used to support these campaigns. In addition the Board sent transports to South America and the Cape of Good Hope. There were also some 30 transports involved in victualling the English Channel and North Sea fleets and twenty two transports were required to ship Russian troops back to Russia.

A new administration

The Portland administration fell in October 1809 to be replaced by another Tory administration, led by Spencer Percival, in which Lord Liverpool became the new Secretary of State for War. Following the debacle of the Walcheren expedition the new government established a major inquiry to investigate what went wrong. Sir Rupert George appeared before the commission, his attendance was preceded by that of General Sir Thomas Trigge, Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance who was asked: 'Were not transports supplied for the embarkation of the ordnance equipment, in the proportion that they were required within the time that was necessary to complete the armament at the period it was required to assemble in

⁸⁷ Hall, *British Strategy*, 185.

the Downs'. His response was very positive 'The transports were very quickly supplied, and I have no recollection of any transports being waited for, for any considerable time'.⁸⁸

During his cross examination Sir Rupert George was questioned in particular about the timing of the first instruction to prepare transports and the nature of the instruction, the timing of the readiness of the transports and whether, if the hire rate had been increased sooner or further, more ships might have been available more quickly. He was also questioned about the provision of hospital ships and the arrangements established once the scale of the ill health of the troops became known. He was asked 'Do you imagine that there would have been any difficulty in procuring a considerable amount of transports earlier in the spring, if timely notice had been given' and 'do you imagine that it would have been impossible to have procured transports in the spring if a sufficient price had been offered'. George did not consider that more ships could have been obtained earlier in the year at a price that was favourable to the transport service. In his evidence he answered questions but he did not refer to the instruction that the Board had received on 5 April 1809 from Brigadier General Stewart, specifically directing that 8,000 tons of 3 months ships to be paid off and discharged.⁸⁹ Had these ships been retained then the additional cost would have been £12,000 per month for say two months but the task of preparing the fleet would have been completed more speedily assuming that the troops had been ready to embark.

The Scheldt Inquiry was exercised about the difficulty of finding cavalry ships and when precisely they were ready to embark troops. George explained that they had been ready to receive cavalry on 17, 18 and 19 July. Understandably he did not mention the significance of the transports that were sent back from Portugal which only arrived in the nick of time. The

⁸⁸ Cobbett, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol 15, 23rd Jan to 1st March 1810, exlii.

⁸⁹ TNA, WO, 6/156, Castlereagh to TB, 5 Apr 1809.

Inquiry found no fault with the performance of the Transport Board.

In the year after Walcheren, Lord Melville used this expedition to support his proposal for using naval vessels as troop ships and for the establishment of floating barracks which was more or less in line with Castlereagh's discretionary army scheme.⁹⁰ The British expedition alerted Napoleon to the potential of the Scheldt. He subsequently refortified its naval establishments during 1810 / 11 by restoring Flushing's docks and arsenal, enlarging the dockyards at Antwerp and increasing the size of his fleet there. By 1812 the Scheldt formed a significant part of a revived French naval capability.⁹¹ Bond even suggests that, but for events elsewhere, this might have enabled him to seriously threaten Britain with invasion again.⁹²

In February 1810 Lord Liverpool demanded information on the progress toward assembling 40,000 tons of troop ships in the Tagus, as requested by Castlereagh in the previous September, to support an emergency withdrawal from Portugal.⁹³ He was sent a version of table 8.7 which showed how the transport tonnage in the Tagus was being amassed, there was at that time 33,204 tons. The 40,000 tons would be complete once the 7,000 tons then being prepared arrived there.

After 1809, the bridgehead on the Peninsula having been established, expeditions to the European continent were less critical, supporting this mainland foothold became the dominant feature of the Transport Board's European activities.

⁹⁰ Melville *Speech*, 28.

⁹¹ Gordon Bond, *The Grand Expedition*, 164.

⁹² Bond, *The Grand Expedition*, 164.

⁹³ TNA, ADM, 108/21/210, TB to Lieutenant Colonel Bunbury, 10 Feb 1810.

| Table 8.7. Transport Office, 10 Feb 1810. Statement of the progress made in completing the troop tonnage in the Tagus to 40,000 tons agreeably to Mr Cooke's letter of 13 September 1809. | |
|---|--------|
| | Tons |
| Troop tonnage in the Tagus on 13 Sept 1809 | 8,473 |
| Empty division sailed from Falmouth – 6 th October | 11,488 |
| Sailed from Portsmouth 15 October with troops for Gibraltar, from thence proceeding empty to the Tagus | 1,248 |
| Empty division sailed from Portsmouth 3d November | 5,569 |
| Sailed from Portsmouth to Guernsey, Jersey and Cork, about 24 th January with troops | 7,003 |
| At Portsmouth with the 4 th and 28 th Regiments for Gibraltar, to proceed thence empty to the Tagus | 3,000 |
| | 36,781 |
| Deduct Troop tonnage returned to England from Lisbon, since the date of Mr Cooke's letter | 3,577 |
| Tonnage now in the Tagus | 33,204 |
| The following troop tonnage is now preparing to complete the 40,000 tons ordered. | |
| Coppered { Complete and on their way to Ports from Deptford | 1,791 |
| { Completing at Deptford | 1,074 |
| Three months ships { At Portsmouth, will be complete by 12 th Feb | 3,628 |
| { Completing at Portsmouth | 577 |
| Tonnage coming forward for the Tagus | 7,070 |
| Total | 40,274 |
| Source: TNA, ADM.108.21.210. TB to Liverpool. 10 Feb 1810. | |

Summary

1809 was a year of military disappointments and political upheaval. Canning and Castlereagh fought a duel on 21 September 1809, after which they both resigned. The Portland administration collapsed in October 1809. For thirty six months Castlereagh had dominated the war strategy, with operations in not only in Portugal, Spain, Holland and the Peninsula again but also in the West Indies. Very large number of ships was required but the number of suitable, available shipping was restricted because trade demands were also high. The Transport Board was under pressure, not only to procure shipping but also to manage the

increasing number of prisoners and its sick and hurt responsibilities. Even so the Board was successful in chartering the ships that were required in challenging circumstances.

The forced evacuation of Moore's army following the dismal outcome of the battle of Corunna was a national disaster; but it was possibly the Transport Board's finest hour.⁹⁴ The Walcheren expedition has been described as the largest amphibious operation in the war and the greatest disaster suffered by British arms during it.⁹⁵ However the Transport Board again had performed well, responding quickly to the government demands and in the evacuation of the sick. Throughout the year it had used the price mechanism skilfully to attract ships, refusing to pay a rate higher rate that would have brought forward more ships but would not have brought forward sufficient to have warranted the dissatisfaction of the existing transport owners. Where necessary it extended the usual three month certain commitment to six and even twelve months to attract some ships.

Despite the Board's successes both Wellington in Spain and Strachan at Walcheren had been critical of the transport Agents on station with them, the circumstances are not clear but Wellington, who had already requested a replacement, accused the Agent of being aloof whilst Strachan accused the Agents of being elusive. Whether these situations were due to the workloads placed on the agents of dereliction of duty is not clear. Nevertheless, it is clear that Sir Rupert George and his fellow Commissioners were well regarded and his elevation to the baronetcy was clear evidence of that. It is fair to view 1809 as one of the best years in the Transport Board's twenty three year history.

⁹⁴ Mackesy, *War in the Mediterranean*, 357, citing TNA, WO, 6/ 56. Castlereagh to Stuart, 5 Oct 1809.

⁹⁵ N.Tracey, *The Naval Chronicle*, Vol 4, 263.

Conclusion

Hitherto seen as a relatively insignificant branch of the naval service, the role of the Transport Board and the ships that it chartered was far more important than has previously been perceived. Its role was mainly directed towards supporting the military activities of the army. Transports were used as troopships, horse ships and supply-ships in far greater numbers than were employed as naval victuallers. The service played a vital role in all the principal military expeditions of the wars. Massive tonnages of transports were used to support each expedition.

Traditionally military failure has been attributed to lack of cooperation between commanders of the army and navy, but this thesis contributes significantly to a mounting body of evidence that suggests that some of these expeditions were just too large to be conducted efficiently and effectively. This includes particularly the campaigns of: 1795 to the West Indies; 1799 to the Helder in Holland, 1805 to North Germany and 1809 to Walcheren; despite this there were a large number of smaller expeditions that were highly successful, such as Copenhagen in 1807, the Peninsula after 1809 due to with its managed expansion and many others not considered in this study. Two other key factors emerge from this research. The first is that the British government tended to be reactive to the actions and motivations of other states rather than being proactive and planning ahead strategically. This meant that there was little time for detailed planning. The second factor was the dominant impact of the weather on the outcome of so many of these adventures. This is a factor that does not appear to have been sufficiently understood. The reactive nature of the government meant that it was not considered as seriously as it should have been in any of the planning processes and, inevitably, some expeditionary forces sailed too late in the year, with disastrous consequences. Ministers, particularly

Castlereagh, were forced to take great risks by sending the army overseas into adverse weather conditions.

Although the number of ships and tonnage of ships on the British shipping register increased dramatically, from 16,329 ships of 1,564,520 tons in 1793 to 24,862 ships of 2,681,276 tons in 1815, so too did the volume of international trade. Imports increased by 83 per cent and exports by 172 per cent over the same period. Government demand for transports put a great strain on the merchant ship fleet because the vast majority of British ships were either too small or otherwise unsuitable for government transports. This was particularly so when demands for transports peaked in 1795, 1805, 1808, 1809 and 1814. In 1795 over 700 ships of almost 200,000 tons were taken up, after 1805 over a thousand vessels of more than 250,000 tons were taken up by the Transport Board.

In the Revolutionary War, the government demand for transports materially subsidized the British shipping and shipbuilding industry which would otherwise have suffered dramatic losses due to the closure of markets on the continental mainland such as France, Holland, Germany and Spain. In the Napoleonic War, when the demand for shipping for trade boomed, Castlereagh launched a number of large offensive operations in Europe which required unprecedented tonnages of merchant shipping to support them. This study demonstrates that this demand was considerably higher in terms of the available shipping than has been previously imagined, its impact on trade was substantial, it caused higher freight rates, commodity shortages and higher commodity prices. It made the Transport Board's task exceptionally challenging and accounts for the difficulty that was experienced in bringing forward ships. The Board's success in procuring that level of shipping at such crucial times illustrates its indispensable role in the government's wartime administration and its vital importance to the shipping industry. Over the

twenty- two years of the war the government channelled almost £20 million into the merchant shipping industry. This is likely to have delayed the inevitable downturn in the industry which occurred after the end of the war by a considerable number of years.

The Board needed ships of over 200 tons to serve as troop ships, over 73 per cent of regular charters were ships of over 220 tons. Only 15 per cent of the ships registered were over 220 tons and some of those were overseas, out of reach of the Board. In reality only nine or ten per cent of the registered British fleet was of suitable size, manned and operational, and these were also in great demand to support international and domestic trade. International trade was a vitally important contributor to the funding of the wars. Domestic trade, particularly the supply of coal to London and other major cities was equally essential. Nevertheless, against this stiff competition, the Transport Board managed to secure between 30 and 39 per cent of this pool of suitable ships. This is considerably higher than has hitherto been estimated.

The Board's ability to procure that volume of shipping was a significant accomplishment, given the fluctuating but growing demands from trade. It was achieved because of the Board's familiarity with the state of the shipping market, its cultivation of a large cadre of ships brokers and its skillful manipulation of the charter price, increasing the rate only when the necessity arose, taking the opportunity to reduce rates when the market permitted and resisting rate increases if it felt that the disadvantages outweighed the benefits.

Seasonality influenced the availability of shipping. The most advantageous time to procure merchant shipping was early in the season, in March or April, before the ships were committed to foreign trade. With the exception of the 1807 Copenhagen expedition and Sir John Moore's expedition to the Baltic in 1808, the Board was invariably instructed to procure

shipping, for major expeditions, well into the sailing season when ship owners had already made commitments for their vessels. This occurred when Dundas ordered the preparation of the Abercromby / Christian expedition in July 1795 and the Helder expedition in June 1799, in August 1805 when Castlereagh gave instructions for the preparation of transports for the northern Germany expedition and in May 1809 when the Board received orders to procure large numbers of transports for the Walcheren expedition. At such times ship-owners were very aware of the extent of the government's needs and the relative strength of their negotiating position, although, on more than one occasion they overplayed their hand by holding out for higher rates, which the Board did not judge to be a fair value, and consequently held the price rather than increasing it further. Nevertheless, due to the competition for suitable shipping together with the inflation of the cost of materials, supplies and wages, the charter rate almost doubled during the twenty - two years from 13/- per ton per month in 1793 to 25/- in April 1807, even rising briefly to 30/- during the Walcheren preparations and again in 1813 to raise transports to support of the army on the Peninsular.

During the period under review the British government tended to react to events rather than being proactive; there was, generally, an absence of what today would be called strategic planning. Reactive short term planning of military operations was in the hands of a very small number of politicians and naval and military officers. The Transport Board was not part of this process. Consequently it lacked knowledge of likely future requirements forcing it constantly to seek the advice of the Secretary for War on the question of retention or discharge of transports. Because the cost of the war was under continuous parliamentary scrutiny, there was a constant desire for economy and efficiency. Inevitably, however one normally came at the cost of the other. Clearly the preparation of major campaigns could have been expedited if transports had

been retained rather than discharged. However, this would have been at a considerable cost. Lord Castlereagh was quick to identify this dilemma. Within two months of being appointed Secretary for War in 1805 he proposed a 'disposable' army with transports on standby to enable troops to be moved quickly to any theatre of war. These reserves were dissipated by his successor, William Windham only to be revived by Castlereagh in 1807. In 1812 when Earl Bathurst was Secretary of State for War he considered implementing this proposal once again. However, from 1807 the demand for transports was so high that there were generally insufficient ships available for immediate action, let alone to support a standby fleet. Except that, particularly after Corunna, there was a standby fleet under another guise when it was recognised that there was a moral obligation as well as military necessity to leave sufficient transports on station to facilitate further emergency evacuations. Significantly the Walcheren expedition would not have sailed without the recall of many of those ships. Castlereagh and later Liverpool both subscribed to that philosophy of an emergency evacuation fleet, despite the cost of some fifty thousand pounds per month, when they insisted on retaining 40,000 tons of shipping in the Tagus to support any urgent withdrawal of the army from the Peninsula.

The cost of maintaining cavalry or horse ships in service was even greater. It cost £10.00 per horse per month to retain such transports. Horse ships were procured in large numbers, for major expeditions, the cost, but more importantly, the capacity requirements invariably meant that forces sent overseas did not have as many cavalry or draft horses, for hauling heavy guns and supply carts, as the commanders would have wished for. This must have impacted the effectiveness of those armies, but further consideration of this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Colliers were the preferred vessels for horse ships but the impact on withdrawing large numbers of such ships from their routine task, of ferrying coal from the coalfields of the Northumberland

and Newcastle regions in the north of England to London and other ports, was an immediate shortage and resultant increase in the cost of coal in those places.

The availability and effectiveness of troop transports could have been improved enormously if commissioned naval ships had been used in much greater numbers. The benefits would have been significant; fewer ships would have been required allowing regiments and equipment to be landed together rather than piecemeal, often in several locations. The fighting forces would have been more effective in a much shorter time. It was also argued that such ships would have had better defensive capability and would not have required the same level of convoy support and that fewer would have been lost due to maritime misadventures. The involvement of naval ships in the conveyance of troops was the subject of contentious debate throughout the wars. The army was strongly in favour of using naval vessels. The principal naval reluctance was the unresolved question of the command structure whilst at sea. Did the naval captain have the ability to direct the conduct of the troops whilst they were on board? The Navy's preferred argument against the use of more naval vessels as troopships was that neither ships nor, more importantly, crews could not be spared. This argument withers under scrutiny because even, during the Revolutionary war, when the balance of naval power with the enemy was more evenly matched, the 1801 Egypt landing involved 46 naval troopships. In the Napoleonic war naval ships were used to supplement transport capacity, in early 1809 naval ships were used to evacuate troops from Corunna and a few months later 17,000 troops were carried to the Scheldt in naval troopships. Even greater use of naval troopships, would probably have improved the effectiveness of troop movements in the larger expeditions and would certainly have eased the challenge of bringing forward merchant ships and would almost certainly have speeded up the preparations.

Extraordinary levels of co-operation, co-ordination and communications between the many parties involved were essential to the successful launch of an expedition. When this broke down there were inevitable delays. There were many other factors that also caused delays: the shortage of docking facilities for repairs and wharf facilities for loading and unloading ships, the requirements for installation of cabins for officers and stalls for horses, the shortages of beds and bedding, the late arrival of ships and troops and the shortages of supplies and water. However it is important to observe that impressment, though an inconvenience, was not a major factor. Castlereagh was well aware of the impact of such delays ‘The interval between the wish to obtain transports and the power of obtaining them is much greater than seems generally to be imagined’.¹ Amassing large numbers of ships in one place demanded the competent application of well-developed practices and procedures conducted by the Transport Agents. This involved the co-ordination of the activities of numerous government departments, the Transport Board, the Victualling Board, the Ordnance Board, the War Office, the Commissariat and the Admiralty, and in the private sector numerous ships brokers and provisions and material suppliers.

By 1815, Pitt’s decision, made in 1794, to establish an independent Transport Board under the auspices of the Treasury had been fully justified. In the American war the maximum number of ships hired for the various transport services was 416 ships of 128,427 tons compared with more than almost two and a half times the number of ships and almost double the tonnage at the peaks of the later wars. It is also significant that in the American war between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of the transports were victuallers rather than troop ships. Another point of note was that the charter rate was more consistent ranging from 11/- per month per ton in June 1776 to

¹ HoCPP, Hansard, 7 Aug 1807.

13/- at the end of the war in 1783.² The previous administrative arrangements would have been totally inadequate and would not have been able to cope with the demands that were placed on the Transport Board given, the size and complexity of the expeditions, the volume of shipping involved and the increasing competition from trade. The consequences would have been disastrous. In addition, the establishment of the separate Board remedied many of the inefficiencies of the former transport service removing the competition between boards, duplication of effort and abuses. In fact it generated some savings that had not been anticipated.

However, Syrett identified a more significant failure at ministerial and cabinet level during the American War. He argued that ministers failed to understand the timescales and the nature of the delays that invariably occurred in the preparation of expeditions. There is no doubt that the various Secretaries of State for War knew or learned quickly about these issues, but despite this, military planning was weak. Conducted by a small cadre, the experience of the Transport Board and others was not brought to bear until too late in the proceedings. Ministerial interference in the detail and the constant fear of expanding the costs of the wars impacted on efficiency and effectiveness. This study indicates that despite the inevitability of some delays due to the complexity of the preparations and the number of departments involved, the time taken to prepare various major expeditions from the time that instructions were first issued to the Transport Board to the date of sailing, which were between 10 and 16 weeks, was not excessive, even by today's standards. The failure of campaigns should not be attributed to this phase of the operations. This particularly applies in the case of the Walcheren campaign, which was prepared in a shorter timeframe than all the others, in fact within 10 weeks. Syrett's observations would seem to be as appropriate to the period between 1793 and 1815 as they were to the American

² Syrett, *Shipping in the American War*, 249 to 252.

War. It is as if no lessons had been learned, each government administration had to learn the lessons anew.

The result of the Board's establishment as a subsidiary board of the Treasury rather than the Admiralty or the Secretary of State for War was that the Chairman had three masters. A strong part of the Transport Board's success was Sir Rupert George's enduring presence. Although he was the Board's chairman for over twenty years he remains an enigma. His tenure spanned that of seven administrations and the war years from 1795 to 1815. He survived these changes of administration and the organizational purges that had significant impact on the other important departments, making his one of the longest tenures of any serving civil servant during that period. During this time the Board acquired greater responsibilities for prisoners of war and the care of sick and wounded seamen, each complicating the Board's role and increasing the possibility of failure. This unique record points to Sir Rupert's qualities as an administrator and communicator and to the ability and judgement of his fellow Commissioners. Under him the transport service was a highly centralized organization, the Commissioners retained very tight control on the costs of the service and the disposition of the transports. They relied heavily on various long serving and very experienced Transport Agents who played a central role in bringing forward and preparing transports and keeping the Board informed of the progress of the preparation and movements of the transports.

Given the complexity of logistics management in the age of sail the reader might wonder just how anything was achieved. It is testament to the efforts of all the parties involved that so many major expeditions were prepared reasonably successfully in timescales that even today would be considered acceptable. Without doubt Sir Rupert George and his colleagues at the Transport Board performed a vital, even indispensable, but hitherto unrecognised service, at a

time that was critical for Britain, by skilfully harnessing the operations of the market to obtain the ships that played a major role in all the military adventures that ultimately contributed to Bonaparte's downfall.

Appendix

| Appendix 1 An account of the number of ships, with their tonnage, and number of men and boys usually employed in navigating the same which belonged to the several ports of the British Empire on the 30 September between 1799 and 1820. | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|------------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------|---|
| | 1799 | 1799 | 1799 | 1800 | 1800 | 1801 | 1801 | 1802 | 1802 | 1803 | 1803 |
| | Ships | Tons | Men | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons |
| England | 11,487 | 1,337,181 | 99,309 | 12,208 | 1,466,632 | 12,767 | 1,541,425 | 14,790 | 1,642,224 | 13,936 | 1,709,302 |
| Jersey | 61 | 4,611 | 694 | 53 | 4,244 | 52 | 3,922 | 55 | 4,367 | 83 | 7,264 |
| Guernsey | 78 | 6,199 | 803 | 77 | 6,403 | 88 | 7,622 | 93 | 8,610 | 137 | 11,988 |
| Isle of Man | 227 | 5,146 | 1,201 | 238 | 5,463 | 237 | 5,560 | 234 | 5,516 | 372 | 8,799 |
| America and West Indies | 2,996 | 201,743 | 15,982 | 2,161 | 157,364 | 3,285 | 251,928 | 3,361 | 226,893 | 3,225 | 235,164 |
| Scotland | 2,031 | 148,110 | 12,413 | 2,155 | 161,807 | 2,279 | 173,564 | 2,349 | 183,935 | 2,662 | 209,222 |
| Ireland | 999 | 49,825 | 4,835 | 1,003 | 54,262 | 1,004 | 54,241 | 1,030 | 56,510 | 1,030 | 56,510 |
| Total | 17,879 | 1,725,815 | 135,237 | 17,895 | 1,856,175 | 19,712 | 2,038,262 | 20,568 | 2,128,055 | 21,445 | 2,238,249 |
| | 1804 | 1804 | 1804 | 1805 | 1805 | 1806 | 1806 | 1807 | 1807 | 1808 | 1808 |
| | Ships | Tons | Men | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons |
| England | | detail | | 15,327 | 1,799,210 | 14,877 | 1,786,692 | 15,087 | 1,797,102 | 15,327 | 1,833,971 |
| Jersey | | not | | 74 | 6,769 | 68 | 6,485 | 77 | 6,891 | 66 | 5,439 |
| Guernsey | | located | | 111 | 9,759 | 108 | 10,193 | 106 | 9,927 | 110 | 10,850 |
| Isle of Man | | | | 404 | 9,650 | 398 | 9,568 | 390 | 9,373 | 381 | 9,237 |
| America and West Indies | 2,904 | 191,509 | | 3,024 | 190,953 | 2,867 | 183,860 | 2,917 | 184,794 | 3,066 | 194,423 |
| Scotland | | | | 2,581 | 210,295 | 2,788 | 211,431 | 2,615 | 216,553 | 2,592 | 211,950 |
| Ireland | | | | 1,067 | 56,806 | 1,076 | 55,545 | 1,098 | 56,981 | 1,104 | 58,959 |
| Total | 21,774 | 2,268,570 | | 22,588 | 2,283,442 | 22,182 | 2,263,774 | 22,290 | 2,281,621 | 22,646 | 2,324,829 |
| | 1809 | 1809 | 1809 | 1810 | 1810 | 1811 | 1811 | 1812 | 1812 | 1813 | 1813 |
| | Ships | Tons | Men | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons |
| England | 15,687 | 1,875,224 | 122,815 | 16,048 | 1,918,089 | 16,164 | 1,942,406 | 16,295 | 1,951,234 | 16,602 | 2,029,637 |
| Jersey | 58 | 5,451 | 576 | 57 | 5,454 | 59 | 6,003 | 54 | 5,369 | 64 | 6,379 |
| Guernsey | 112 | 10,506 | 912 | 104 | 9,947 | 94 | 9,485 | 76 | 8,312 | 84 | 9,755 |
| Isle of Man | 372 | 8,989 | 2,158 | 366 | 8,785 | 398 | 9,585 | 393 | 9,439 | 342 | 8,513 |
| America and West Indies. | 3,188 | 201,243 | 13,857 | 3,450 | 215,383 | 3,628 | 227,452 | 3,470 | 216,068 | 2,689 | 165,591 |
| Scotland | 2,534 | 206,075 | 14,720 | 2,552 | 209,736 | 2,630 | 220,688 | 2,708 | 231,273 | 2,713 | 234,383 |
| Ireland | 1,119 | 60,979 | 5,560 | 1,126 | 58,650 | 1,133 | 59,155 | 1,111 | 57,104 | 1,146 | 60,226 |
| Total | 23,070 | 2,368,467 | 160,598 | 23,703 | 2,426,044 | 24,106 | 2,474,774 | 24,107 | 2,478,799 | 23,640 | 2,514,484 |
| | 1814 | 1814 | 1814 | 1815 | 1815 | 1816 | 1816 | 1820 | 1820 | 1820 | |
| | Ships | Tons | Men | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Ships | Tons | Men | |
| England | 17,102 | 2,088,204 | 131,078 | 17,346 | 2,139,301 | 17,442 | 2,152,968 | 21,473 | 2,412,804 | 155,335 | includin g Scotland + Ireland |
| Jersey | 62 | 6,794 | 643 | 69 | 7,519 | 77 | 7,992 | } | | | |
| Guernsey | 65 | 6,928 | 529 | 61 | 6,662 | 65 | 7,237 | } 496 | 26,225 | 3,775 | |
| Isle of Man | 355 | 8,897 | 2,207 | 367 | 9,300 | 369 | 9,335 | } | | | |
| America and West Indies | 2,868 | 202,795 | 14,729 | 2,991 | 203,445 | 3,775 | 279,643 | 3,405 | 209,564 | 15,304 | |
| Scotland | 2,783 | 241,578 | 17,900 | 2,863 | 254,926 | 2,958 | 263,536 | | See above | | |
| Ireland | 1,183 | 61,769 | 5,700 | 1,165 | 60,123 | 1,178 | 63,229 | | See above | | |
| Total | 24,418 | 2,616,965 | 172,786 | 24,862 | 2,681,276 | 25,864 | 2,783,940 | 25,374 | 2,648,593 | 174,414 | |

Sources: consolidated from various editions of Cobbett *Parliamentary Debates* and HoCPP Reports on Navigation and Shipping.

| Appendix 2 | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Chart showing the term served as Commissioner at the Transport Board by each Commissioner | | | |
| | Appointed as Commissioner | Served until | Post TB career |
| Chairmen | | | |
| Hugh Christian – Chairman | 4 Jul 1794 | 25 Sep 1795 | Promoted to Admiral, commanded ill fated West Indies convoy 1795. |
| Rupert George – Chairman | 25 Sep 1795 | March 1817 | |
| Commissioners – Naval Officers | | | |
| Captain Philip Patton | 4 Jul 1794 | 19 May 1802 | Rose to rank of Admiral, Became Lord of the Admiralty in May 1805 |
| John Schank | 25 Sep 1795 | 19 May 1802 | Became Rear Admiral |
| Captain James Bowen | 28 Jun 1803 | March 1817 | 25 Feb 1816 Commissioner of the Navy Board 1825 promoted to Rear Admiral |
| William Albany Otway | 25 Sep 1795 | 28 Jun 1803 | Became Rear Admiral – Commissioner of the Gibraltar Dockyard in 1804, served in Walcheren Expedition |
| Captain George Henry Towry¹ | 29 Jul 1806 | April 1808 | |
| Hon Courtney Boyle | 6 Jun 1809 | March 1817 | Resident Commissioner Sheerness Dockyard 1814-1822. Commissioner of the Navy Board July 1823 –May 1829 Promoted to Rear Admiral 26 Feb 1831. |
| Commissioners – Civilians | | | |
| Ambrose Serle | 4 July 1794 | March 1817 | |
| John Marsh | 25 Sep 1795 | 18 Sep 1798 | Appointed to VB |
| Hon John Douglas | 29 Jul 1806 | March 1817 | |
| Joseph Hunt | 18 Sep 1798 | 19 May 1802 | |
| Theo Hamilton | 28 Jun 1803 | 29 Jul 1806 | |
| Edward Bouverie | 28 Jun 1803 | 29 Jul 1806 | Obtained seat on the Navy Board |
| John Forbes | 15 Sep 1813 | 1817 | |
| William Boothby | 31 Oct 1812 | 15 Sep 1813 | |
| Commissioner – Medical | | | |
| John Harness MD | 29 Jul 1806 | 1817 | |
| Secretaries | | | |
| Alexander Whitehead | 4 Jul 1794 | 15 June 1803 | |
| Alexander Mcleay – Secretary | 20 June 1803 | Post 1817 | |

| Appendix 3 | |
|--|---|
| <i>Instructions to Agents relative to The Service of Transports.</i> | |
| Article Number | Subject |
| I | The Agent is strictly to observe all Orders from the Board |
| II | The Agent is to choose his Transport, to proceed with the convoy appointed and to follow the convoy commander's Orders. |
| III | To keep with the body of Transports. |
| IV | To keep an exact log book. |
| V | Ensure that Transports to have their Compliment of Men; and, if necessary, Application to be made to the Commander in Chief on the subject. |
| VI | Want of stores to be recorded in the log book and Account of it sent to the Office. |
| VII | Regular musters to be made of Transports, and transmitted to the Board. Weekly returns of Transports to be transmitted and to specify all Defects, Sailings etc. Returns to be made to Resident or Senior Agents. |
| VIII | The abilities of Master's for Pilotage to be inquired into; and respecting Pilots. |
| IX | In case of death of the Master the mate is to be appointed to the Command of the Transport, unless unfit. Send account to the Office of the whole Matter. |
| X | Transports under sailing Orders to be reported to the Board, matters to be reported in the Absence of an Agent. |
| XI | To mark neglect of sailing in the logbook, and so inform the Board |
| XII | Irregular Sailing to be remarked, and an Account of it sent to the office so that offenders may be mulched. |
| XIII | No Losses on detached Transports can be made good without proper certificates. |
| XIV | Transports to be properly refitted and cleaned after disembarkation of troops or stores to avoid disease and other inconveniencies. |
| XV | Surveys to be taken on great Defects and the ship to be protested against, if not able to proceed. |
| XVI | Ships requiring time to repair forward for speedy repairs. Neglects to be protested against the ship. |
| XVII | Masters abroad to procure money on credit of Owners. Agents if obliged to advance Money, are to send Masters' Bills on their owners. |
| XVIII | Unfit ships are to be ordered home, and to proceed forthwith. |
| XIX | In hiring ships abroad to have Orders from the Commander in Chief; and to follow as nearly as possible, the Practice of the Office. |
| XX | Certificates of Employment to be granted |
| XXI | Personally to attend embarkations and disembarkations. |
| XXII | Expenditure of provisions and stores to be reported. |
| XXIII | Allowance for Troops and Horses embarked. |
| XXIV | Accounts of Deaths, Desertions or absences to prevent false musters, are to be regularly set; and weekly, on Home service. |
| XXV | Complaints of neglect in victualling troops to be reported. |

Appendix

| | |
|---------|---|
| XXVI | Receipts to be taken and Accounts kept of the expenditure of the forage. |
| XXVII | Accounts of Stores to be kept and an account of Supplies made to each Transport to be sent to the Board. The King's stores to be accounted for. |
| XXVIII | To report sailing and arrival of Transports, Numbers of Troops embarked and disembarked, Quantities of stores shipped and all useful information. |
| XXIX | No private property to be received on board of Transports without authority. |
| XXX | To prevent the Straggling and Misconduct of the Transport crews. |
| XXXI | Not to admit runaway negroes into Transports. |
| XXXII | Quarterly Accounts of Disbursements to be Transmitted with Affidavits and Vouchers. |
| XXXIII | Instructions relative to money and the drawing of Bills. |
| XXXIV | Instructions relative to the Expense for Stationary, Gunpowder for signals, and candles. |
| XXXV | Travelling Charges allowed to Agents when ordered on service. |
| XXXVI | Instructions relative to Linguists, travelling charges, Boat hire, Purchases of Stores for Transports. |
| XXXVII | Three pence in the Pound to be abated from Agents pay for the widow's fund. |
| XXXVIII | Agents to wear their Naval Uniforms. |
| XXXIX | To consult and receive orders from the Commander in Chief. |
| XL | Agents afloat to receive Directions from Resident Agents though of inferior rank in the Navy. |
| XLI | No Person under the Direction of the Board to have any Concern in Transports. |
| XLII | No Fees etc to be received. |
| XLIII | Agents are not to take their Wives or Families to sea, nor to allow any persons to embark without orders. |
| XLIV | Agents distinguishing Pendants. |
| XLV | No signals to be made without leave from the senior Officer of the Convoy. |
| XLVI | All good husbandry to be used in His Majesty's Transport Service. |
| | Source: TNA, ADM,106,3096 |

| Appendix 4 Transport Office 31 Jan 1807 | | An account showing the fees, which are established to be paid at this office. | | | |
|--|-------|--|-------|-----------|------------------|
| Transport Branch | | | | | |
| Charter parties & first imprest | | | | | |
| | Tons | | Tons | Fee | |
| | | | | £..sh...d | } |
| Ships of | 100 | And under | 150 | 2...2...0 | } |
| | 150 | | 200 | 2..12...6 | } exclusive of |
| | 200 | | 250 | 3...3...0 | } half the cost |
| | 250 | | 350 | 4...4...0 | } of the stamps. |
| | 350 | | 400 | 4..14...6 | } |
| | 400 | | 500 | 5...5...0 | } |
| | 500 | And upwards | | 6...6...0 | } |
| Second & succeeding imprest | | | | | |
| | £ | | £ | | |
| If | 70 | And under | 100 | 0...5...0 | |
| | 100 | | 150 | 0...7...6 | |
| | 150 | | 200 | 0..10...0 | |
| | 200 | | 250 | 0..12...6 | |
| | 250 | | 300 | 0..15...0 | |
| | 300 | | 350 | 0..17...6 | |
| | 350 | | 400 | 1...0...0 | |
| | 400 | | 500 | 1...5...0 | |
| | 500 | | 750 | 1..11...6 | |
| | 750 | | 1,000 | 2...2...0 | |
| | 1,000 | And upwards | | 3...3...0 | |
| Final payment for hire of Ships, in part or in full charged according to the Preceding scale. | | | | | |
| Stores purchased | | | | | |
| | £ | | £ | £..sh...d | |
| If | 70 | | 100 | 0...2...6 | |
| | 100 | | 150 | 0...5...0 | |
| | 150 | | 250 | 0...7...6 | |
| | 250 | | 350 | 0..10...6 | |
| | 350 | | 500 | 0..15...0 | |
| | 500 | | 750 | 1...1...0 | |
| | 750 | | 1,000 | 1..11...6 | |
| | 1,000 | And upwards | | 2...2...0 | |
| Agents for Transports | | | | | |
| | | | | £..sh...d | |
| Appointment to a Captain | | | | 2...2...0 | |
| Appointment to a Lieutenant | | | | 1...1...0 | |
| Passing Accounts per annum | | | | 2...2...0 | |
| Passing Transports Stores Accounts | | | | | |
| | | | | £..sh...d | |
| If in the Service only 6 months | | } If under | | 0...5...0 | |
| If in the Service only 9 months | | } 250 tons | | 0..10...0 | |
| If in the Service only 12 months | | } | | 1...1...0 | |
| If 250 tons and upwards, at double the rates | | | | | |
| Source: TNA, ADM, 3774/236 | | | | | |

Appendix

| Appendix 5 The number of ships built in English shipyards in selected years from 1787 to 1815 showing the top 18 out of 73 locations. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------|------|------|--|------|------|------|------|------|------|--|---|
| | 1787 | 1788 | 1790 | Average No. built by year 1787/90 | 1795 | 1800 | 1803 | 1805 | 1810 | 1813 | Total built 1793 to 1813 inclusive | Average no. built by year 1793/1813 |
| Hull | 40 | 38 | 33 | 37 | 33 | 73 | 58 | 45 | 49 | 57 | 985 | 46 |
| London | 41 | 16 | 26 | 27 | 23 | 63 | 64 | 29 | 31 | 10 | 744 | 35 |
| Yarmouth | 31 | 22 | 25 | 26 | 35 | 44 | 42 | 39 | 30 | 18 | 738 | 35 |
| Newcastle | 33 | 30 | 27 | 30 | 29 | 47 | 50 | 22 | 22 | 41 | 677 | 32 |
| Dartmouth | 26 | 24 | 18 | 22 | 19 | 21 | 44 | 21 | 18 | 20 | 445 | 21 |
| Beaumaris | 42 | 26 | 24 | 30 | 11 | 18 | 40 | 33 | 14 | 22 | 442 | 21 |
| Whitehaven | 25 | 17 | 15 | 19 | 14 | 21 | 22 | 18 | 10 | 42 | 417 | 19 |
| Whitby | 23 | 26 | 25 | 24 | 21 | 28 | 35 | 19 | 8 | 20 | 411 | 19 |
| Liverpool | 47 | 38 | 29 | 38 | 10 | 21 | 19 | 22 | 7 | 20 | 366 | 17 |
| Dover | 20 | 17 | 15 | 17 | 10 | 26 | 15 | 14 | 3 | 3 | 352 | 16 |
| Cowes | 24 | 30 | 15 | 23 | 7 | 31 | 30 | 23 | 19 | 9 | 336 | 16 |
| Plymouth | 21 | 18 | 21 | 20 | 7 | 14 | 32 | 15 | 7 | 6 | 301 | 14 |
| Exeter | 46 | 12 | 3 | 20 | 6 | 16 | 21 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 216 | 10 |
| Southampton | 30 | 18 | 4 | 17 | 6 | 13 | 16 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 179 | 8 |
| Bristol | 23 | 18 | 4 | 15 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 10 | 126 | 6 |
| Barnstaple | 22 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 115 | 5 |
| Swansea | 23 | 11 | 4 | 12 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 4 | 106 | 5 |
| Cardiff | 23 | 21 | 15 | 19 | 1 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 28 | 1 |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Other 55 centres | 289 | 260 | 192 | 247 | 199 | 273 | 350 | 225 | 223 | 228 | 4,807 | 228 |
| Totals | 829 | 647 | 500 | 658 | 446 | 721 | 865 | 566 | 469 | 527 | 11,791 | 561 |
| Tonnage 000's | 81 | 60 | 53 | | 53 | 103 | 98 | 59 | 63 | 75 | 1,447 | |

Source: TNA, Cust,36 / 5 p 12 and for 1815 HofCPP Accounts Relating to Shipping, Custom House 22 April 1815.

Appendix

Appendices 6 and 7

Examples of format of data base:

Appendix 6 – Ships in alphabetical name order

Appendix 7 – Ships in order of date of entry into pay

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