

War, Naval Logistics and the British State

Supplying the Baltic Fleet 1808-1812

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the victualling system that distributed provisions to the Royal Navy fleet in the Baltic between 1808 and 1812, asking how it was done and with what success, measuring its performance over time. It covers the operational and strategic consequences of an improving logistical service, but also enables significant judgments to be made on the 18th century state, its performance under pressure of war, the public-private relationship, and the links between supply and diplomacy.

The transportation of provisions to the Baltic posed serious problems for naval administrators, politicians and admirals alike. This thesis shows that in practice, naval supply was conducted very effectively; operations in the Baltic were not harmed for want of provisions. The state used the resources of the private sector, particularly the market for shipping, to serve its interests. In the Baltic itself, means were found to secure provisions locally, even from countries in conflict with Britain. Sweden - forced into an unwanted war with Britain by Napoleon - was happy to supply the British though it required much discretion and diplomatic intrigue to avoid the ears of French spies.

Wide scale governmental reform, particularly the Commission for Naval Revision which reported from 1809, brought enhanced timeliness and efficiency to the victualling service. By 1810 a fleet lying in the Baltic was as well supplied as one lying off Deptford, significantly widening operational capabilities. The successful British blockade in the Baltic could not have been achieved twenty years earlier. It is argued that administrative developments created a strategic watershed, after which naval power could be more fully mobilised than ever before.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
List of Figures.....	ix
List of Tables	x
Abbreviations.....	xii
Introduction	1
The Baltic: A Forgotten Theatre	10
The Historiography of Naval Administration and the Significance of Victualling	15
Methodology	21
Supplying the Baltic Fleet.....	24
Chapter 1: Victualling the Navy and the British State, 1780-1812.....	27
The 18 th Century State.....	29
Naval Administration and the French Wars: The State Reforms Itself	33
War and Administrative Reform	43
Chapter 2: Evolution in the Navy: the Strategic Consequences of an Improving Victualling System.....	47
Victualling in the Early 18 th Century: 1683-1755.....	48
Victualling During The Seven Years War	50
The War of American Independence	56
The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars	60
Chapter 3: The Challenges of Baltic Victualling.....	66
Concerns for the Fleet: Economics and Administration	67
Previous Precedents and the Confidence of Naval Administration	74
Concerns for the Fleet: Geographical and Climatic	77
Chapter 4: Naval Administration and the Provisioning of Fleets Abroad	86

British Politics and Strategy.....	86
The Admiralty and Naval Administration.....	89
Chapter 5: The Transport Board, the Procurement of Transport Tonnage and the management of privately-owned resources	104
Contracting for Tonnage	105
The Transport Board's Relationships with Contractors.....	111
Chapter 6: Victualling the Baltic Fleet 1808-1809.....	127
The Victualling System in Practise: 1808.....	127
Early Challenges	142
A Move to Self-Sufficiency: 1808-1809.....	149
Fears Dispelled.....	157
Chapter 7: Problems and Solutions 1809-1812	162
Victualling Problems 1809.....	164
Reforming the Baltic Victualling System 1809-1810.....	177
The Victualling System Refined 1810-1812.....	188
Chapter 8: Supplied By the Enemy; Diplomacy and the Local Procurement of Foodstuffs in the Baltic.....	192
The Local Procurement System	196
Consuls, Intelligence and Victualling	201
Diplomatic Strains 1809-1810	208
1810-2: War with Sweden and the continuing supply to the Baltic fleet.....	212
Local Procurement Analysed	223
Chapter 9: The Effectiveness of Baltic Victualling: Operations and Strategy	229
Speed	230
Efficiency	241
The Commission of Naval Revision	248
Victualling, Operations and Strategy	253

Conclusion.....	268
Appendices	275
Appendix 1: Time taken to secure transport tonnage to the Baltic, 1808-1812.....	275
Appendix 2: Time taken to secure tonnage to the Mediterranean, 1800-1801	277
Appendix 3: Time taken to load victualling transports.....	278
Appendix 4: Time taken to deliver provisions to the various areas of the Baltic	279
Appendix 5: Efficiency of victualling deliveries: Bread.....	281
Appendix 6: Efficiency of victualling deliveries: Spirits.....	285
Bibliography.....	289

List of Figures

Figure 1: Europe at the Height of Napoleon's Power	2
Figure 2: Size of Baltic Navies 1720-1790	8
Figure 3: The Baltic 1808	66
Figure 4: British naval dispersal in the Baltic 1808-1812.....	69
Figure 5: Entrances to the Baltic	77
Figure 6: Naval Administration and the Provisioning of Fleets, January 1808	92
Figure 7: Naval Administration and the Provisioning of Fleets, August 1808.....	94
Figure 8: The Deployment of Henley Ships, 1800-1815	114
Figure 9: Tonnage in the employment of the Transport Board, 1807-1812	115
Figure 10: The deployment of Henley shipping, 1793-1815	116
Figure 11: Victualling Tonnage in the Baltic 1808.....	141
Figure 12: The Repatriation of Spanish Soldiers from Denmark, 1808	143
Figure 13: Water remaining on HMS <i>Superb</i> , 3 June-31 December 1808	153
Figure 14: Water remaining on HMS <i>Centaur</i> , 1 May-7 November 1808	154
Figure 15: Number of men in the Baltic 1808-1812	166
Figure 16: Amount of all Bills of Exchange drawn upon the Victualling Board, from individual stations, 1808-9	193
Figure 17: Highest and lowest price of beef delivered at Deptford 1804-1812.....	224
Figure 18: Average time taken to procure tonnage, 1808-1812.....	233
Figure 19: Delivery time to the Baltic.....	236
Figure 20: Sickness in the Baltic, July-October 1810.....	240
Figure 21: Efficiency of victualling deliveries 1808-12, Bisket Bread	242
Figure 22: Efficiency of victualling deliveries 1808-12, Spirits.....	244
Figure 23: British Volume of trade with Northern Europe, 1806-1814.....	259
Figure 24: Price of Hemp as supplied to Britain 1790-1815, from Riga and St. Petersburg.....	261
Figure 25: French Exports to Russia 1806-12.....	265

List of Tables

Table 1: Great Britain Exports 1797-1806, by region.....	5
Table 2: Constable profits, 1797	42
Table 3: Plans for the protection of trade	68
Table 4: Recommended provisions for 11,000 men for 4 weeks.....	74
Table 5: Victualling Delivery, 7 June 1808	128
Table 6: Transports hired between 17-26 July 1808	129
Table 7: Victualling Delivery, 6 September 1808	130
Table 8: Victualling Deliveries 1808	131
Table 9: Victualling Delivery, 13 June 1809	132
Table 10: Coal supplied to Royal Navy vessels, 1810.....	134
Table 11: Account of Coals delivered from on board the <i>Ann</i> , Captain Stables & Receipts.....	134
Table 12: Supplies to Royal Navy vessels, 1800	135
Table 13: Provisions to the <i>Centaur</i> from the <i>Mary</i> , August 1808.....	137
Table 14: Provisions to the <i>Centaur</i> from the <i>British Volunteer</i>	137
Table 15: Provisions to the <i>Centaur</i> from the <i>Thames</i>	137
Table 16: Transports hired in October 1808	139
Table 17: Supplies on board the <i>Triptolemus</i> victualler	139
Table 18: Transports hired 22-29 September 1808	140
Table 19: Speed of delivery to the Baltic, 1808.....	141
Table 20: Provisions at Flemish Roads, Gothenburg in October 1808.....	147
Table 21: Water compliment due vessels.....	152
Table 22: Victualling delivery, 20 November 1809.....	171
Table 23: Provisions remaining on Baltic victuallers, December 1809.....	173
Table 24: Provisions from Yarmouth, August 1809	185
Table 25: Time taken to load and arrange a convoy, 1808-1811	237
Table 26: Incidence of scurvy in the Baltic fleet, 1808-9	239
Table 27: Bread needed and delivered to the Baltic fleet, 1808-1812	243
Table 28: Spirits needed and delivered to the Baltic fleet, 1808-1812	245

Table 29: Distribution of Russian exports to European nations, 1806 263

List of Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Commission on Fees	<i>Reports of the Commissioners appointed by an Act 25 Geo. III cap. 19 to enquire into the Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites, and Emoluments which are or have been lately received into the several Public Offices...1786-8</i>
Commission of Naval Revision	<i>Reports of the Commissioners appointed for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, 13 reports, 1806 to 1809</i>
MA	Mulgrave Archive
MM	<i>Mariner's Mirror</i>
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Caird Library
NRS	Navy Records Society
NYPL	New York Public Library
SRO	Suffolk Record Office
TB	Transport Board
TNA	National Archives, Kew, UK
TRHS	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
TNDS	<i>Transactions of the Naval Dockyards Society</i>
VB	Victualling Board

Introduction

On arriving in the Belt, with a convoy of no less than a thousand sail homeward bound, it was intimated that the French Prince of Ponte Corvo, the newly elected successor to the throne, was at Nyburg, and permission to cross the Belt was demanded and obtained from the Admiral for his yacht to pass unmolested, which he did on the 14 October at the time this immense fleet was at anchor of Sproe. A scene so novel to a French General, and so interesting to his Royal Highness under the present circumstances, could not but make a deep impression, while it conveyed some idea of the wealth and power of the British nation.¹

- Sir John Ross

History has all too easily forgotten the naval war following Trafalgar. Napoleon's invasion and defeat in Russia, and the successes of the British army in the Peninsula, have detracted attention from the Royal Navy's actions following that seemingly decisive engagement. Julian Corbett recognised this early in the 20th century and spoke of the temptation amongst historians to 'ring down the curtain there and then'.² Mackesy in 1957 complained of a similar mentality, arguing that fifty years later 'the struggle at sea has generally been written as though it ended at Trafalgar, before the war had run a quarter of its course'.³ For all of these promptings, this is still the case nearly ninety years after Corbett's article. The Royal Navy's role moved increasingly away from decisive battle from 1805; sea power continued to be the keystone of British strategy, as ever the nation's major offensive and defensive force. It continued to dominate the seas around the globe, resisting Napoleon's Continental System, harassing enemy trade, supporting British forces and those of their allies from the Peninsula to the West Indies, and protecting the crucial maritime trade on which Britain depended. In doing so it made a crucial contribution to the fall of Napoleon. This period lacks the glamour so attractive to battle-focused historians, as the Royal Navy's role became more subtle though no less important.

Nowhere was this more the case than in the Baltic theatre between 1808 and 1812. Barring the ice-ridden winter months, there was a constant British naval presence under

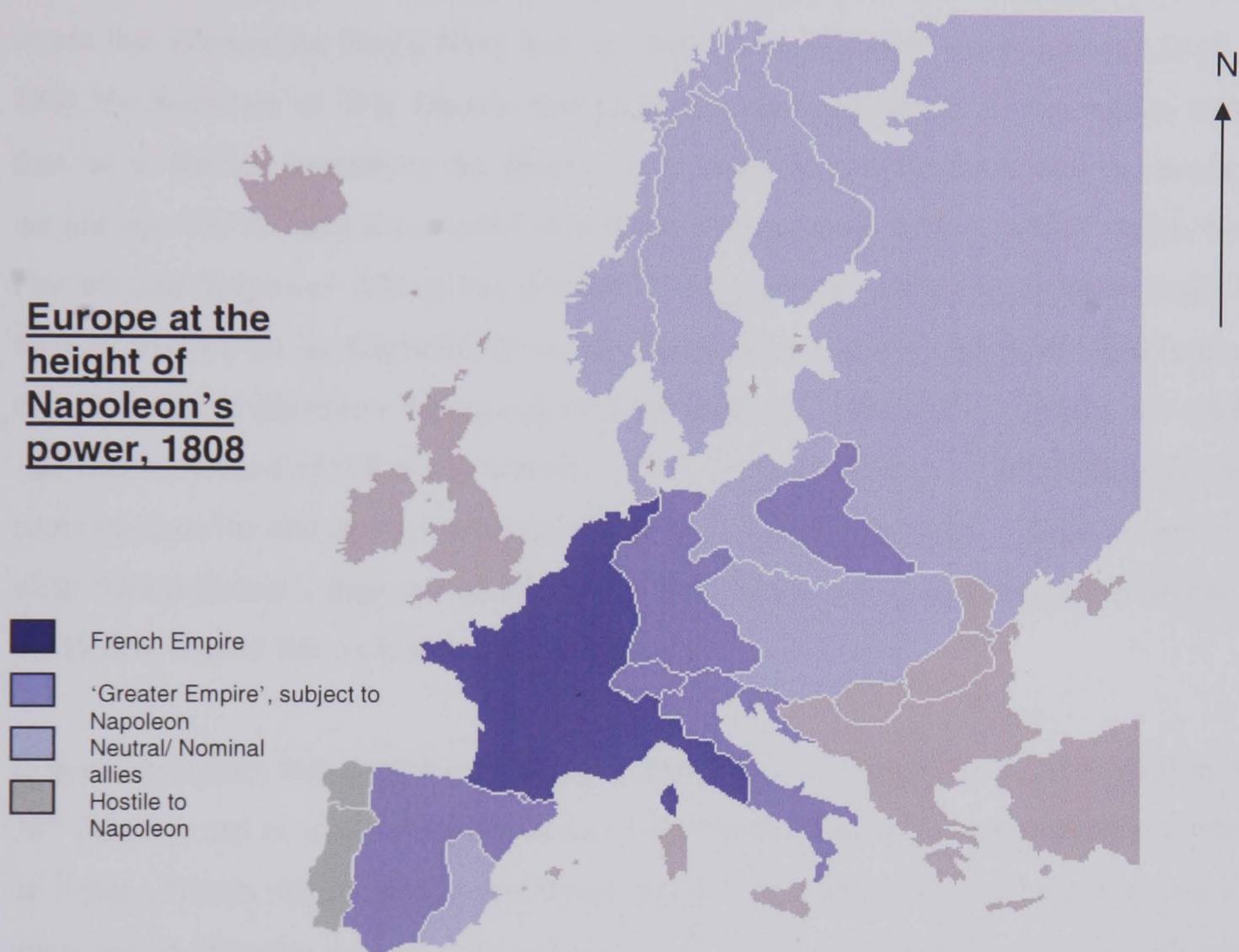
¹ John Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Admiral Lord de Saumarez, From Original Papers on Possession of the Family* (Richard Bentley, London, 1838), pp. 214-5.

² J. S. Corbett, 'Napoleon and the British Navy After Trafalgar', *Quarterly Review*, No. 237 (1922), p. 241.

³ Piers Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean 1803-1810* (Harvard University Press, 1957) p. vii.

the command of Sir James Saumarez. By 1808, virtually all of mainland Europe (Sweden excepted, and it too would join the war in 1810) was in a state of enforced hostility to Britain, as the map below shows.

Figure 1



Political hostility became economic hostility, as Napoleon set up his Continental System, a continental blockade aimed at removing British economic power from Europe. The Berlin Decree of 1806 and Milan Decrees of 1807 prohibited all trade with the British, banned all British goods, and declared any captured would be 'fair prize' and confiscated.⁴ Napoleon was in a position to wreck Britain's continental trade altogether, particularly in the Baltic where this would damage Britain the most. It was an area of vital strategic importance, firstly because of the quantity of naval stores so crucial to

⁴ Lance E. Davis and Stanley L. Engerman, *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History since 1750* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) p. 29.

Britain's military power that came from this region, and secondly as an area of huge export value for British goods.

To turn to the former, it could even be argued that the Baltic was more crucial to Britain than any other theatre, so essential to British naval power were the supplies of naval stores that allowed the Royal Navy and merchant fleets to function and maintain itself. In 1801 the Secretary of War Dundas had recognised the importance of the region, noting that 'as to Baltick operations the game is lost, which alone can make success certain, if we are not able to have a powerful fleet there the moment it is accessible'.⁵ In his book *Forests and Seapower* Albion has pointed to the pressures produced by the reliance on foreign produce for its shipbuilding needs. 'From the days when Cromwell ruled England till the battle of Hampton Roads sounded the knell of wooden ships of war', he wrote, 'the heads of the English Navy worried over its timber shortage'. The Napoleonic War came towards the end of 'two centuries of anxiety over this problem'.⁶ Kaplan sums it up well: 'Great Britain's importation of Russian flax, hemp and linen goods was essential to the British way of life, industry and economy'.⁷

It was a problem that continued unabated throughout the Napoleonic wars. During the 18th century, and in spite of Parliamentary encouragements and pressure from the Board of Trade, Britain repeatedly bought Baltic produce in preference to colonial goods and often did so at higher prices, since it cost less to transport and suffered less in shipment; the Baltic market supplied virtually all the important naval supplies except canvas, large

⁵ Dundas to Evan Nepean, Admiralty Secretary, 9 January 1801, quoted in Andrew Lambert, *Nelson: Britannia's God of War* (Faber and Faber, London, 2005) p. 192.

⁶ Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *Forests and Seapower: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy 1652-1862* (Archon Books, Hamden, Connecticut, 1965), p. 1. Albion's work is still seen as important in stressing the importance of timber as a basis of sea power. In an article revising Albion's work, R.J.B. Knight argued that Albion's wider point, that timber shortage led to failure in war, was a fragile one at best. There remained a perception and deep concern about timber shortages, especially in the early 1800's; as Knight comments, 'this is not to say that the procurement of naval stores should not have been perceived as a central problem, or that, in the Baltic region, it was never less than a cornerstone of British foreign policy'. See R.J.B. Knight, 'New England Forests and British Seapower: Albion Revised', *The American Neptune*, Vol. XLVI, No.4, (1986), pp. 221-9. For the timber supply to Britain during the 18th century, see also, Joseph J. Malone, 'England and the Baltic Naval Stores Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *MM*, Vol.58, No.4, (November 1972) and P.K. Crimmin, 'The Supply of Timber For the Royal Navy, c.1803-1830', *The Naval Miscellany Vol. VII* (NRS, 2008) pp. 191-234.

⁷ Herbert Kaplan, *Russian Overseas Commerce with Great Britain During the Reign of Catherine II* (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1995) p. 63.

masts and timber.⁸ In the 1800s the Royal Navy and Britain's merchant ships was overly reliant on Baltic supplies: hemp and iron from Riga, pitch and tar from Stockholm, and oak and deals from Danzig and Pilau.⁹ The Baltic was the primary source for timber for medium sized masts, Baltic oak for planking and Russian firs for vessels' decks. Hemp in particular was vitally important, since there were virtually no other sources for this most crucial of resources. In 1810, after Napoleon had consolidated his grip on the region, British shipping losses reached their peak, and trade in nautical supplies was badly disrupted. This was where, in Hall's words, Britain 'could suffer crippling blows'.¹⁰ After the revolt of America, Riga masts replaced American ones, though a source of supply of long-standing.¹¹ As Daniel Baugh put it, the Navy 'cared not a whit for the Board of Trade's mercantilist longings to curb the flow of bullion to Scandinavia and divert New England artisans from competition with English cloth manufacturers'.¹²

This dependence goes a long way to explain the crucial importance of a British fleet in the Baltic. The continuation of this trade prevented the navy from being starved of materials. The responsibility to protect this trade would fall on the naval commander in that region. Merchants would bring colonial goods into the Baltic, and return with naval stores. For instance, in 1809 Hood wrote to Saumarez, reporting that

I this day received a letter from the Governor of Gothenburg, requesting permission for a Mr Bror Almfelt, Merchant of that Place, to be suffered with five vessels laden with Colonial Produce and such produce of Sweden as is allowed to be exported, to pass unmolested with the said vessels to Ports of Norway, and to return with Naval Stores (Tar, Timber and Deals) without detention by any of His Majesty's ships; the said stores on arrival at Gothenburg to be sent to England under convoy.¹³

British trading interests in the Baltic were not solely based on the importing of naval stores. Indeed, Napoleon's objective in introducing the Continental System was not only

⁸ J.J. Malone, 'The British Naval Stores and Forests Policy in New England 1691-1775', (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1956) Chapters III-V.

⁹ Patrick Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade 1689-1815* (Dawson, London, 1977) p. 74.

¹⁰ Christopher D Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War 1803-1815*, (Manchester University Press, 1992) pp. 89.

¹¹ M.J. Williams, The Naval Administration of the Fourth Earl of Sandwich 1771-82 (Unpublished thesis, University of Oxford, 1962) pp. 320-1.

¹² Daniel A. Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, (Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 280.

¹³ TNA, Kew, Surrey, United Kingdom, ADM 1/8/297, Hood to Saumarez, 2 May 1809.

to reduce Britain's military power by depriving it of certain critical commodities (and in consequence enrich France), though this was one consequence that deeply worried the British government. In addition, it was to weaken the British economy by adversely affecting its export trade with Europe, leading to unbalanced trade in addition to reducing British military expenditure on the continent.¹⁴ Trade provided capital for war finance. The Baltic was the destination for a significant amount of British exports, and was thus central to Napoleon's plans to ruin British export trade. Baltic trade had increased enormously during the course of the 18th century, 'and convoys which had amounted to no more than twenty or thirty ships early in the century numbered approximately 1,000 by 1814'.¹⁵ The value of this trade is easily quantifiable. By the 1800s the Baltic was the one remaining trading route with Northern Europe. As shown in the table below, between 1797 and 1806 the value of British exports to northern Europe was consistently superior to that of other regions, in particular its nearest rivals for commerce, the West Indies and the United States.

Table 1: Great Britain Exports 1797-1806 by region, Official Values (£000)

Year	Northern Europe	Southern Europe	Asia	United States	British West Indies
1797	9,135	1,587	2,288	5,057	3,144
1798	10,139	1,405	1,146	5,580	5,198
1799	7,939	2,099	2,436	7,057	5,947
1800	14,325	3,404	2,860	7,886	4,087
1801	14,442	3,545	2,946	7,518	4,386
1802	15,015	7,752	2,930	5,329	3,926
1803	11,372	3,968	2,733	5,273	2,380
1804	12,716	3,033	1,766	6,398	4,282
1805	13,026	2,440	1,669	7,147	3,832
1806	10,533	2,678	1,937	8,613	4,734

¹⁴ Davis and Engerman, *Naval Blockades* p. 31. In evaluating Napoleon's success in terms of reducing Britain's specie supply therefore, it should be noted that he was moderately successful in achieving this; bullion at the Bank of England fell from £6.9 million in 1808 to £2.2 million in 1814.

¹⁵ Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade* pp. 43, 26. The Admiralty's convoy policy in the Baltic centred around the 1798 Convoy Act and close co-operation between the Admiralty and the Secretary of Lloyds, the unchallenged leader in marine insurance. Added to this was the ability of British merchants to continue trading with French controlled territory through neutral agents and forged papers, meant that in spite of heavy losses, the numbers of British owned merchant ships increased from 12,776 in 1792 to 19,585 in 1815. See Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade*, p. 71.

Source: B.R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge University Press, 1962) p.311

Indeed, the figures for exports to northern Europe (the Baltic) were generally double that of its nearest competitor. The Peace of Amiens between 1801 and 1802 explains the rise in northern European trade in these years, as France and Holland once again became open to British exports. However the onset of war in 1803 and the re-closing of the French, Danish and Dutch ports again left only Baltic ports in this ‘northern European’ category. In the years 1804-6 the crucial importance of the Baltic region for British exports is easily seen. A leading contemporary economist, J Oddy, wrote a *Treatise on European Commerce* in 1811. In this he confirmed that ‘the Exportation of Great Britain (till lately), of Colonial and British Produce & Manufactures to the North of Europe was more than double to all Europe put together’.¹⁶

The importance of the Baltic theatre to Britain thus emerges. Large convoys passed between Britain and the Baltic. In 1805, 11,537 merchant ships passed through the Sound, over half going to Britain.¹⁷ It was essential that the trade continued, despite the war with France. And continue it did: convoys so large that, as one Captain remembered, ‘at one time, with over 400 vessels, under charge of the *Hero*, ourselves, two frigates and a bomb, we never saw the head of the convoy from the time of leaving Wingoe Sound’ left the Baltic.¹⁸ By late 1807 British policymakers had great concerns over their trade with the Baltic nations. Denmark’s hostility could be virtually guaranteed, not least due to the pre-emptive attack on Copenhagen that same year.¹⁹ The agreement at Tilsit saw Russia enter into the Continental System, cordoning off many vital ports, centres for British trade, along the Baltic coastline. Prussia, a demoralised French client-state after its humbling at Jena in 1806, also continued to pay allegiance to France, and thus the Continental System. In 1808, only Sweden in the Baltic region remained an ally of

¹⁶ TNA, FO 22/63/7-11, 11 March 1811, J Oddy, extract from *Oddy’s Treatise on European Commerce*.

¹⁷ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 89.

¹⁸ David Bonner-Smith, ed. *Recollections of My Sea Life: From 1808 to 1830, Captain John Harvey Boteler, RN.* (NRS, 1942) p. 10.

¹⁹ In 1807 the British launched an attack on Copenhagen, aimed at removing the Danish fleet from the grasp of the French, an operation that was very successful. For the most recent account see Thomas Munch-Petersen, *Defying Napoleon: How Britain Bombed Copenhagen and Seized the Danish Fleet* (Stroud, UK: Sutton Publishing, 2007).

Britain and that country too would become an ally of Napoleon in November 1810. It was decided to send a fleet to the Baltic the following year under Sir James Saumarez charged with the protection of this British maritime trade.

The Baltic fleet under Sir James Saumarez had objectives that were crucial to British interests. In their instructions to Saumarez, the Admiralty decided that the protection of trade was his foremost responsibility. ‘Their lordships consider the security of the trade from capture or annoyance as of the first importance’ they wrote.²⁰ Ships under neutral colours would be furnished with licenses to avoid capture.²¹ Despite the Continental Blockade Sweden remained open and Gothenburg became a vital centre for British exports, which continued their journey into the Baltic under the guise of neutral goods on neutral ships, especially as the economic incentive to sabotage French prohibitions on traffic with Britain steadily increased.²² As early as 1808, the hostility to French policies was evident, as was the urge to trade with Britain. Captain Peter Paget, gaining intelligence on the north German coast wrote that: ‘The people in general appeared dissatisfied with the French, whom the Masters said took everything, and paid for nothing...they everywhere speak of the English in terms of praise, and peace is the universal cry’.²³

Napoleon’s attempt to control and prevent the British export trade through the Continental System was ultimately to fail: corrupt customs officials in the Baltic ports and the widespread use of ‘neutral’ (often disguised British) ships and papers created loopholes in the Continental System.²⁴ Added to this should be the genuine desire of the Baltic citizens and merchants to trade with Britain, and the work of the Royal Navy in protecting and convoying British merchant fleets through the hostile region. As Saumarez commented to the Admiralty in 1808:

²⁰ Admiralty to Saumarez, 27 June 1808, *Saumarez Papers*, A.N. Ryan ed. (NRS, Vol.110, 1968), p. 27.

²¹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/43, Admiralty Orders, 16 April 1808.

²² Ian R. Christie, *Wars and Revolutions: Britain 1760-1815* (Edward Arnold, London, 1982) p. 307.

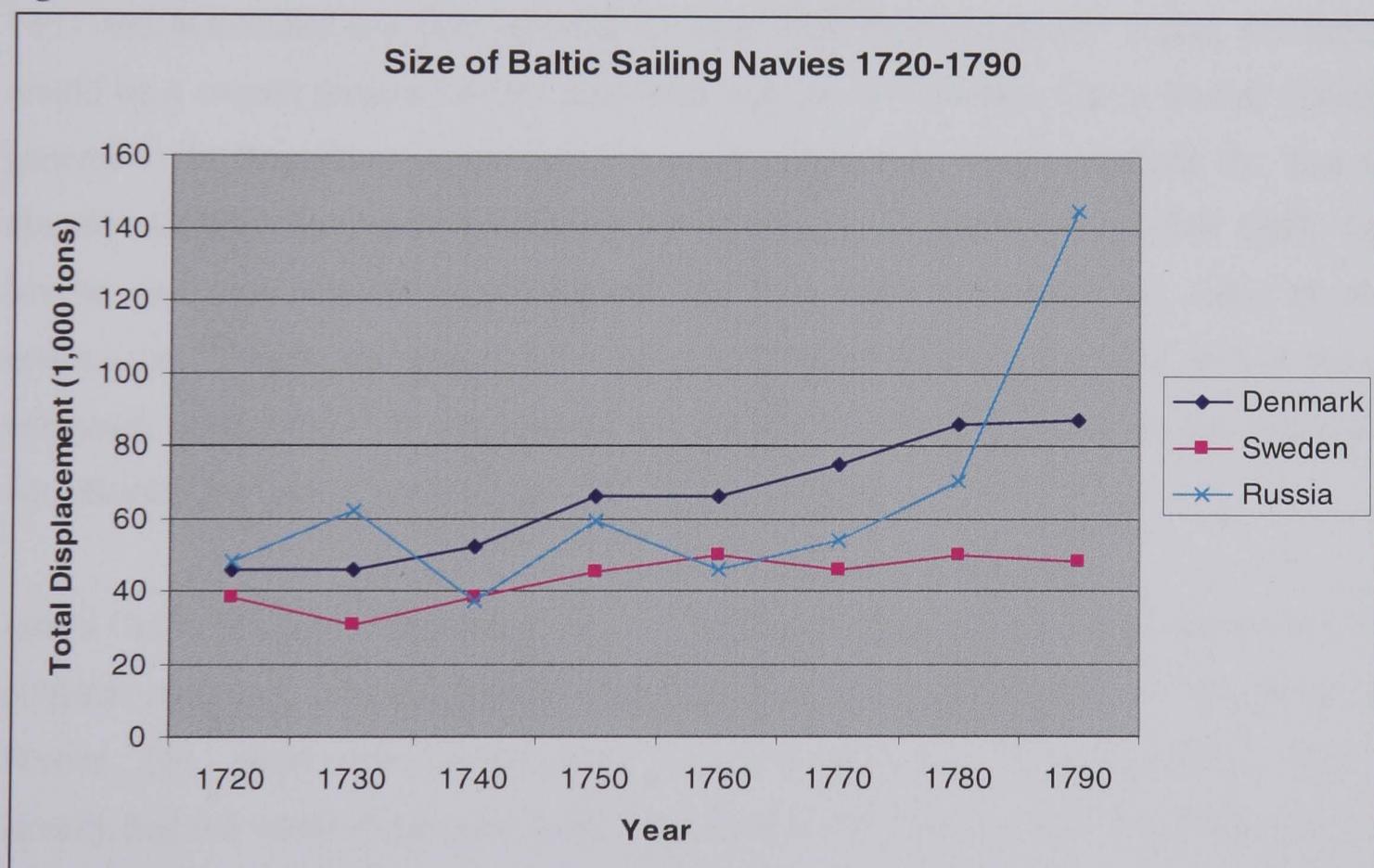
²³ TNA, ADM 1/6/352, Captain Peter Paget to Saumarez, 26 June 1808.

²⁴ Silvia Marzagalli, ‘Napoleon’s Continental Blockade: An Effective Substitute to Naval Weakness?’ in Bruce A. Elleman and SCM Paine, ed. *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-Strategies 1805-2005* (Routledge, London, 2006) p. 29. Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade 1689-1815* (Dawson, London 1977) p. 26.

The State of the war with subject to Russia, and Prussia, is maintained in a manner heretofore unprecedented. An immense trade is carried on by British merchants under his Majesty's license with the different Ports of those countries: both Nations are known to be amicably disposed towards Great Britain, and openly avowed their earnest desire to be on terms of peace, and amity, with England, as well as of their alliance with France.²⁵

The Baltic fleet was also to have further responsibilities. By 1808, the last remaining battle fleet to rival Britain was that of Russia. Increasingly during the 18th century, the Baltic took centre stage in European politics, as 'the struggle for European territories increasingly became an eastern question, a power game about a wide area stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea and Balkan peninsula'.²⁶ Given the increased importance of the Baltic region, it naturally followed that the Baltic nations would increase the size of their fleets. The graph below shows the increase in sailing navies throughout the period 1720 to 1790.

Figure 1



Source: Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America 1500-1860* (Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm Studies in History 48:1, 1993) p.297

²⁵ TNA, ADM 1/7/396-7, Saumarez to Admiralty, 21 November 1808.

²⁶ Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America 1500-1860* (Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm Studies in History, 48:1, 1993) p. 253-4.

The rise of Russia as a major naval power is evident, particularly during the 1780s. Russian seapower was closely connected with ideas of modernising the country and strengthening its ties with Western Europe.²⁷ The steady rise of Danish naval power is also shown. Britain's one ally in the region, Sweden, had been in relative decline as a major power since 1720 and actual decline since 1780. Saumarez was ordered to watch the Russian fleet and to consider an attack of the Russian arsenal at Cronstadt, 'with a view to acting offensively against them as soon as it may be possible to furnish you with adequate means for doing, without exposing Sweden, in the absence of such Naval Force, to invasion'.²⁸

More important than the fear over imports was the strategic and political threat Britain could pose to Russia. The sea control exercised by the British Baltic fleet enabled it to go on the offensive. Britain replied to the Continental System with Orders in Council in 1807 and blockaded any port refusing to trade with their merchants. Again, the Baltic would be a crucial theatre for this economic warfare. Sir Stephen Sharp, British consul-general in St Petersburg hoped that economic difficulties would persuade the Tsar to abandon his participation in the Continental System. As he wrote in December 1809, 'Let her be one year without exporting and she will really appreciate the value of our connexion'.²⁹ Thus sea power took on an offensive mantle, one that would prove ultimately successful.³⁰ It was Napoleon's fury at the official revival of Russian trade with Britain that led to his invasion of Russia in 1812.

James Cable has argued that there was no 'striking example of the use of naval force for political purposes, nor did Britain attempt to employ it as often, or on the scale, as France...[it]...made sense for Britain to engage in naval war for its own sake', since it already had the world's strongest navy.³¹ As this thesis will show, this is not the case. For

²⁷ *Ibid* p. 298.

²⁸ SRO, HA 93/6/1/43, Admiralty Orders, 16 April 1808.

²⁹ TNA, FO 65/71.

³⁰ In the Admiralty orders there were further lesser orders: to prevent the passage of troops from the continent across the Belt into Zealand and Norway. SRO, HA 93/6/1/43, Admiralty Orders, 16 April 1808.

³¹ Cable, James, *The Political Influence of Naval Force in History* (Macmillan, 1998), p. 52.

the Baltic fleet, command of the sea was not ‘incidental’ to its political aims; it was a means to ultimate political goals, the protection of its Baltic trade, in particular the naval stores so essential to the Navy itself, and the wearing down of Napoleon’s Continental System.

The Baltic Sea: A Forgotten Theatre

Given the importance of the Baltic theatre to British interests, it is remarkable that it has been ignored by historians. In the post-Trafalgar period, with isolated exceptions such as the action at Copenhagen in 1807, the attention of historians has turned landwards, concerning itself with the more glorious actions in the Iberian Peninsula, the campaigns in 1813-4 and the Waterloo campaign.³² Indeed, the Baltic region has been overlooked throughout Britain’s span as a great power. For instance, Andrew D. Lambert noted that the Baltic region had been treated as a ‘sideshow’ by the majority of scholars writing on the Crimean War.³³ Jan Glete too pointed out that syntheses of naval history and Napoleonic Wars have concentrated on the Atlantic hemisphere; ‘why there were considerable regional navies in the Baltic and Levant is not discussed and sometimes hardly mentioned’.³⁴

The absence of the Baltic region from the historical mainstream is unfortunate. Historians have often ignored or downplayed the theatre in calculations of French defeat. Rory Muir underplays the importance of the theatre; he comments that ‘the war shifted away from the Baltic’ after 1808, somehow ignoring five years of conflict, economic warfare, and on at least one occasion the near possibility of a battle-fleet action to rival any other in the French Revolutionary or Napoleonic Wars. Though he allows that the Baltic was ‘the principal theatre for British activity in the first six months of the Portland ministry’, its

³² Christopher Hall’s *Wellington’s Navy; Sea Power and the Peninsular War 1807-1814* (Chatham, London, 2004) is a notable exception.

³³ Andrew D. Lambert, *The Crimean War: British Grand Strategy 1853-6* (Manchester University Press, 1990) p. xvii.

³⁴ Jan Glete, ‘Navies and Power Struggle in Northern and eastern Europe, 1721-1814’, in Hobson and Kristansen, ed. *Navies in Northern Waters 1721-2000* (Frank Cass, London, 2004) p. 66.

importance declined in the following months.³⁵ The 1807 Copenhagen action was a crucial action of the Napoleonic War, but what followed was just as significant. Paul Kennedy in his work on the Royal Navy referred to the Baltic as a ‘peripheral’ operation.³⁶ Kirby and Hinkkanen argued in 2000 that attempts to deny British access to the Baltic were crushed by 1807, again ignoring five years of economic warfare.³⁷ These scholars fail to account for the significant investment in ships and men made by the Admiralty in the Baltic between 1808 and 1812. M.S. Anderson commented that ‘the interruption of trade with Russia was therefore for Britain a nuisance rather than a disaster’. His statement that the Continental System ‘drove home the fact that imports of raw materials from Russia, and to a lower extent exports of manufactured goods to her, were now less essential to Britain’s economy than had often been thought’, will be refuted easily.³⁸

Why the Baltic has been overlooked is mysterious. Many of the key goods were unfashionable items and much of the British export trade was re-exported produce from the colonies. The enormous importance of Baltic naval stores and export trade to Britain has been highlighted above; if these national interests were, as Anderson argues, of little importance, the decision of the British government to send a fleet numbering up to 16,000 seamen to the Baltic becomes more difficult to understand. If there were, as he advocates, efforts made by the British government to obtain large amounts of iron and naval stores before the anticipated war with Russia came, these were not enough.³⁹ In April 1808, the Victualling Board was referring to ‘the present scarcity of hemp’.⁴⁰ Hemp had been scarce in 1801, and had been a continual worry ever since. The League of Armed Neutrality of 1780 had a destructive effect on the Baltic Timber and Mast

³⁵ Rory Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon* (Yale University Press, 1996) p. 26.

³⁶ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (Macmillan, 1976), p. 133.

³⁷ David Kirby and Merja-Liisa Hinkkanen, *The Baltic and the North Seas* (Routledge, Taylor and Francis, London, 2000) p. 128.

³⁸ M.S. Anderson, ‘The Continental System and Russo-British Relations during the Napoleonic Wars’ in Bourne, K. and Watt, D.C., ed. *Studies in International History: Essays Presented to W. Norton Medlicott, Stevenson Professor of International History in the University of London* (Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd, London, 1967) p. 70.

³⁹ *Ibid* p. 71.

⁴⁰ TNA, ADM 111/187, VB Minutes, 12 April 1808.

supplies.⁴¹ Russia, Prussia, Denmark and Sweden imposed a blockade on Britain, similar to Britain's on France. It was broken a few months later by the attack on Copenhagen and the assassination of the Tsar, but 'demonstrated this island nation's vulnerability to wartime blackmail'.⁴²

In 1809, Saumarez found himself organizing the removal of pine sticks for spars, 5,188 of them in total, from the eastern Baltic back to Britain, at a time when 'a supply of so useful an article could be so readily obtained for the service of His Majesty's dockyards'.⁴³ In April 1809, Saumarez would write to the Admiralty promising to 'pay every attention' relative to 'affording protection to the Ships employed by him in obtaining Hemp for His Majesty's Service in this passage up and down the Baltic'.⁴⁴ Clearly there was still a need for naval stores. The naval stores 'interest', if it may be called that, was certainly very powerful. J Solly, the main supplier of hemp (and also staves) from the Baltic to the Royal Navy, was able to ask the Comptroller of the Navy for individual convoys for his ships, or at least that they should not be kept waiting for the accumulation of a large fleet.⁴⁵ Solly's similar (and repeated) requests of the 22 August 1809, 31 August, 8 September, 4 July 1810 suggest that his requests for special convoys were repeatedly accepted.⁴⁶

Both the Royal Navy and British merchant fleet were dependent on Baltic naval stores. To give an idea of this reliance, in 1801 for example, between 1762 and 1782, from a total of 19,172 tons of hemp imported by Britain, 18,392 came from Russia, in all 95.9%. As demand grew so did the reliance: in 1801 Britain imported 37,000 tons of hemp from

⁴¹ Williams, 'Sandwich', p. 321.

⁴² Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 93.

⁴³ TNA, ADM 1/9/33, Saumarez to Admiralty, 16 August 1809. See also TNA, ADM 1/12/209, Saumarez to the Admiralty, arranging for Victuallers use to transport Timber back to England, 2 August 1811

⁴⁴ TNA, ADM 1/8/219, Saumarez to Admiralty, 14 April 1809.

⁴⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/586/4, Isaac Solly to the Comptroller of the Navy, 8 April 1809.

⁴⁶ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1070/1-2, 1091, 1113, 1427, Isaac Solly to the comptroller of the Navy, 22 August 1809, 31 August 1809, 4 July 1810.

Russia, while over half of the navy's masts came from Riga.⁴⁷ After 1807 there was a major expansion of the navy, particularly large quantities of lower-rate vessels, many of them built in small, private shipyards: between 1806 and 1815, Britain launched 375,000 tons of shipping.⁴⁸ There was an intrinsic understanding in naval administration of the constant need for these stores. Charles Middleton, Comptroller of the Navy between 1778 and 1790, and First Lord of the Admiralty in 1805 understood this well: 'when the variety of services that are to be provided...is considered, and how much the exertion of the fleet depends on punctual and proper supplies of stores, it must be allowed that no branch of the service is of more importance than this to the public'.⁴⁹

All the evidence points to an overwhelming need for Baltic naval stores in Britain regardless of any supposed stockpiles built up before 1808. In 1809, in the words of Albion, the timber smuggled out of the hostile ports 'was hardly enough to keep a frigate squadron in repair', and this greatly concerned the British naval administration.⁵⁰ On one occasion in 1809, Saumarez skipped over the usual procedure for supplying trading licenses, such was the need for these essential commodities for the Royal Navy. With boats laden with hemp and flack awaiting licenses, he anticipated the government's orders: awarding licenses to those vessels laden with naval stores and bound to a port in Great Britain.⁵¹

Indeed, one can see Saumarez' delight when reporting Captain Martin's success in requisitioning from the enemy large quantities of naval stores in 1809, and on discovering fir trees on Nargen Island ideal for spars.⁵² By 1811, the need for naval stores was as large as ever, 'I enclose...intelligence which I have received of a considerable quantity of

⁴⁷ In 1801, the dockyards received 1,186 Riga masts over 21 inches, and a mere 198 American masts of the same size. Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Leicester University Press, 1983) p. 73. See also Kaplan, *Russian Overseas Commerce*, pp. 67, 108.

⁴⁸ R.J.B. Knight, 'Devil bolts and deception: Wartime naval shipbuilding in private shipyards, 1739-1815', *Journal of Maritime Research*, April 2003.

⁴⁹ Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Albion, *Forests and Seapower*, pp. 344-5. As previously mentioned (see fn. 7) Albion's tendency to exaggerate shortages should be noted however.

⁵¹ TNA, ADM 1/8/487, Saumarez to Admiralty, 20 June 1809.

⁵² TNA, ADM 1/8/525-6, Saumarez to Admiralty, 9 July 1809, TNA, ADM 1/8/582-3, Saumarez to Admiralty, 21 July 1809.

oak timber laying in the Island of Oesel in the Gulf of Finland intended for the use of the arsenal at Cronstadt', wrote Saumarez. 'Should their Lordships think it an object of sufficient importance to use Endeavors to have it conveyed to England, I request the Commissioners of His Majesty's Navy may be directed to send Transports furnished with proper Materials for removing Timber'. The Admiralty replied positively, asking Saumarez to make use of such victuallers, store ships for this purpose he had available for this purpose.⁵³ Needless to say, imports from the Baltic were essential. The importance of the Baltic to British officials is reflected in the size of the fleet sent to deal with the Russians, Danes and later the Swedes in that sea. Blanning has commented that the scale of naval priorities can be gauged by the distribution of the fleet itself.⁵⁴ By July 1810 there were 20 ships of the line and almost 16,000 men in the Baltic theatre, more than any other theatre barring the Mediterranean.⁵⁵

Our knowledge of the Baltic theatre is largely confined to the work of one man, A.N. Ryan, who wrote extensively, if narrowly, on Saumarez and his work in the Baltic defending British trade.⁵⁶ Saumarez was a canny and skillful operator, both operationally and diplomatically, but the scholarship stops with his diplomatic achievements and command decisions. Recently, this work has been updated and taken further by Tim Voelcker, whose work on Saumarez's role in the Napoleonic War takes our knowledge of the commander further, and displays the extraordinary lengths Saumarez went to ensure diplomatic harmony with Sweden, and the safe passage of British trade to and from the Baltic.⁵⁷ References to the Baltic operations are limited to the work of Ryan and Voelcker on Saumarez and small passages in much broader works. N.A.M. Rodger's recent

⁵³ TNA, ADM, 1/12/110, Saumarez to Admiralty, 20 May 1811.

⁵⁴ T.C.W. Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars 1787-1802* (Arnold, London, 1996) pp. 208

⁵⁵ TNA, ADM 8/95-100, Admiralty: List Books 1808-12.

⁵⁶ A.N. Ryan, 'The Defence of British Trade in the Baltic, 1807-13', *English Historical Review*, LXXIV (1959), pp. 443-466. A Ryan, 'An Ambassador Afloat: Vice Admiral Saumarez and the Swedish Court, 1808-1812', in J. Black and P Woodfine, *The British Navy and the Use of Naval Power in the 18th Century*. Ryan, *The Saumarez Papers*.

⁵⁷ Tim Voelcker, *Saumarez vs Napoleon: The Baltic 1807-1812*, (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2008). Victualling and logistics, and their strategic consequences have been largely omitted however. The same is true of Peter Padfield's chapter on Saumarez in *Maritime Supremacy and the Opening of the Western Mind: Naval Campaigns that Shaped the Modern World 1788-1851*, (John Murray, London 1999).

authoritative survey for example has attempted to redress the academic ignorance of the post-Trafalgar period but in its wider scope can afford it only a cursory glance.⁵⁸

Otherwise, the war in the Baltic between 1808 and 1812 has eluded historical scholarship. Despite a well-founded appreciation of the success with which Saumarez and the Royal Navy kept the Baltic open to British trade and impacted upon Napoleon's Continental System, the mechanics of the operations have never been examined. Only a fleet well-supplied, well-maintained, and well-supported would be able to bring British naval power fully to bear. It is in the area of logistics that the Baltic fleet's most remarkable achievements were made. The Royal Navy in the Baltic was able to supply over 16,000 men for months at a time with food three hundred miles from a friendly port. It was this operation that allowed the Royal Navy to do its crucial work in the Baltic and yet this has never been studied. Rodger notes that the most crucial developments in the period covered by his volume, 'were not naval but financial and administrative'.⁵⁹ Yet how this was borne out in particular theatres has yet to be assessed. Britain in the Napoleonic wars pursued her objectives through naval power, coalition diplomacy and the exploitation of her economic muscle.⁶⁰ All were present in the Baltic.

The Historiography of Naval Administration and the Significance of Victualling

From the 1960s onwards there has been a fundamental change in the way both naval and military history has been studied. Narrow, battle-centric studies of generals and commanders have been superseded by cross-disciplinary studies. There has been a realisation that war and military and naval institutions cannot be studied in isolation and must take account of their economic, social and political surroundings. A leading exponent of this, Daniel Baugh, hoped, 'to make a contribution to naval history by assisting those who may be prepared to study the whole range of factors that determine

⁵⁸ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: a Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (Allen Lane, 2005) pp. 557-561.

⁵⁹ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*. p. 583.

⁶⁰ Charles Esdaile, *The Wars of Napoleon* (Longman, 1995) p. 148.

success at sea'.⁶¹ That same year, a leading naval historian of the 1960s, Gerald S. Graham argued that 'to appreciate the full influence of sea power on the development of the British empire naval history has to be studied from Cabinet offices in Whitehall as well as from the quarterdeck'.⁶²

Much scholarship, in particular the work of Patrick O'Brien, has attributed Britain's success in the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France to its greater ability to harness the resources of the nation, in particular with regard to finance.⁶³ In early modern Europe, states survived if they possessed sufficient and continuous command over the financial means necessary to defend their territories and citizens against external aggression. To become more powerful required ever increasing amounts of revenue.⁶⁴ As Paul Kennedy argued, the most significant changes in military and naval fields during the 18th century were in organisation, due to the enhanced activity of the state: ship repair yards were built and administrators employed to run them. Certain western states, Britain in particular, developed a sophisticated system of banking and credit in order to pay for longer and more expensive wars.⁶⁵ Rodger too sees a vital link between finance and naval success: 'the British state's unequalled capacity to raise revenue was the indispensable foundation of sea power'.⁶⁶ Such opinions form a rich consensus among historians writing in the late 20th century. It is clear that Britain had a huge advantage in the field of

⁶¹ Daniel A. Baugh, *Naval Administration 1715-1750* (Navy Records Society, London, 1977) p. xii.

⁶² Gerald S. Graham, *The Politics of Naval Supremacy: Studies in British Maritime Ascendancy* (Cambridge University Press, 1965) p. 2. 'This comprehensive approach to the subject is', he pointed out, 'a comparatively recent development'.

⁶³ O'Brien, Patrick Karl, *Power with Profit: the State and the Economy 1688-1815* (London, 1991). Patrick O'Brien, 'The Political Economy of British Taxation, 1660-1815', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser, XLI, I, (1988) pp.1-32. O'Brien, Patrick Karl, *Fiscal and Financial Preconditions for the Rise of British Naval Hegemony 1485-1815*, Working Papers in Economic History, Department of Economic History, November 2005. See also Brewer, John, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London, 1989), and Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State in the Eighteenth Century* (Boydell Press, 2004).

⁶⁴ Patrick K. O'Brien and Philip A. Hunt, 'England, 1485-1815' in Richard Bonney, *The Rise of the Fiscal State in Europe c.1200-1815*, p. 53.

⁶⁵ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (Random House, New York, 1987) pp. 76. This thesis of financial superiority is supported by Blanning; 'to its immense good fortune the Navy had enjoyed almost a golden age of public and parliamentary support in the decade preceding 1793', Blanning, *The French Revolutionary Wars* p. 212.

⁶⁶ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 571.

finance. Raising money was one thing, how it was used another: the spending of the British state has been overlooked. How effectively were resources used?

In particular and most relevant to this thesis, the success of the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic wars is increasingly seen to depend on the area of government and administration as much as the fighting capabilities of its fleets or armies. Michael Hayden pointed to the efforts of Graham, and in particular Baugh, when he commented in 1980 that 'the recent trend in British naval history is away from narrative and analysis of tactics and strategy and towards the study of naval administration'.⁶⁷ No longer can naval history be studied solely in the form of battles and operations; no longer can it be studied in isolation from its administrative, economic and political moorings. As important as battles such as Trafalgar were, there is an increased awareness that administrative efforts in finance and logistics were crucial to Britain's ultimate success.

The pioneer of 'the New Naval History', or at least naval history that aimed to look beyond the battle-fleet and consider the administrative backbone of the Royal Navy, was Daniel Baugh. Two works, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* and a complementary volume of documents supplementing the original monograph of 1965 *Naval Administration 1715-1750* set the benchmark for this field, both in originality of his approach and the quality of the scholarship.⁶⁸ In both he traced the evolution of British naval administration in the 18th century, highlighting firstly its complexity and then its effectiveness. Baugh found that the British naval administration in the first half of the eighteenth century was 'basically sound and capable of reform'.⁶⁹ Given the obstacles facing the 18th century administrator, not least the problems of size (the Royal Navy swallowed half of public revenue) and overbearing commercial interests, British naval administration actually did sterling work.⁷⁰ Gradish considered British naval administration in the period of the Seven Years War. The records demonstrate that 'most

⁶⁷ See foreword to Stephen F. Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy during the Seven Years War* (Royal Historical Society, London, 1980) p. xii.

⁶⁸ Daniel A. Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton University Press, 1965), Daniel A. Baugh, *Naval Administration 1715-1750*, (Navy Records Society, 1977).

⁶⁹ Baugh, *Naval Administration 1715-1750*, p. xii.

⁷⁰ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, p. 6.

of the credit for this achievement [furnishing materials of war] has to be given to the naval administrators who provided the navy with the manpower and material with which to wage war'.⁷¹

Since the work of Baugh, administrative naval history has almost become a discipline in itself. The administrative and technological capacities of the Royal Navy have been examined in studies of shipbuilding, the royal dockyards, the ordnance and gun production, manning levels and overseas yards.⁷² An unpublished thesis by M.J. Williams debates the naval administration of Earl of Sandwich during the American War, and puts forward a more moderate and sympathetic argument about his time in office. 'Sandwich', he argued, 'was perhaps only second to Anson as an administrator'.⁷³ Mary Ellen Condon's thesis on the administration of the Transport Board is a valuable addition to the field, outlining the creation of the Transport Board and the benefits this brought to naval supply, the inadequacies of which had been revealed by the American war.⁷⁴ This was followed by David Syrett's work on transports in 1970, focusing on the hiring of transports during the earlier War of American Independence.⁷⁵ N.A.M. Rodger's *Command of the Ocean* is separated into chapters in which 'administration' is placed on an equal footing with 'operations'.⁷⁶

Gone are the days where a historian could argue that the British nation and indeed its administration were poorly managed and inefficient. David Hannay's comment in 1909 that the navy could 'bear its administration as a mighty river carries driftwood and

⁷¹ Stephen F. Grapish, *The Manning of the British Navy during the Seven Years War* (Royal Historical Society, London, 1980) p. 209. Grapish died before completing the book; it was finished by Daniel A. Baugh.

⁷² For example see Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, Roger Knight, 'The Royal Dockyards in England at the time of the American War of Independence', (Ph.D thesis, University of London, 1972), Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, navies and state building, 1500-1800* (Stockholm, 1993) pp .271-294, Gareth Cole, 'The Ordnance Board and the Royal Navy 1790-1815' (Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Exeter, 2008).

⁷³ Williams, 'Sandwich'.

⁷⁴ Condon, Mary Ellen, *The Administration of the Transport Service During the War Against Revolutionary France, 1793-1802* (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1968) pp. 60-61.

⁷⁵ David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War* (London, 1970). A posthumous book by Syrett was published in 2008, David Syrett, *Shipping and Military Power in the Seven Years War: The Sails of Victory* (University of Exeter Press, 2008).

⁷⁶ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean* (Penguin, 2005).

rubbish on its surface'.⁷⁷ tells us more about his opinions of contemporary government than that of the 18th century. This opinion has been since demolished, as scholars such as Baugh, Gradish, Condon and Syrett have analysed and rehabilitated attitudes to 18th century naval administration. Clear from their work is the idea that naval administration was effective and often forward thinking. There is a consensus now that the first half of the 18th Century 'marked the epoch in which the navy's institutional arrangements, under the auspice of practical experience, matured'.⁷⁸ One aspect of the naval administration that has been left alone is the victualling of seamen during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

The American War of 1776-1783 highlighted the deficiencies that remained in the victualling service. And yet during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, one finds a naval infrastructure capable of provisioning 140,000 men, many of whom were stationed across the globe. This thesis will focus on the transformation of the British victualling service during the Napoleonic War. There has never been an investigation into how the victualling services worked on an operational level during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. It has never been assessed how effective the Victualling Board was in ensuring supply to its fleets across the globe. Are there examples of operations ever being harmed by victualling failures, as there had been during the Seven Years War, or War of American Independence? Can we talk of the victualling service making a telling contribution to the Royal Navy's, indeed Britain's, ultimate success?

It is remarkable that the victualling system and Victualling Board during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars have yet to be studied with any real conviction. This is especially surprising given that in the mid-eighteenth century, victualling accounted for one quarter of the navy's expenditure. Considering that one half of all national tax

⁷⁷ David Hannay, *A Short History of the Royal Navy, 1217-1815* (London, 1909).

⁷⁸ Daniel A. Baugh, 'Naval Power: what gave the British navy superiority?' in Leandro Prados de la Escorura (ed.) *Exceptionalism and Industrialisation: Britain and its European Rivals, 1688-1815* (Cambridge, 2004) pp. 235-260.

revenue went on naval expenditure, one eighth of all revenue was to go on victualling.⁷⁹ This was as true during the Napoleonic War, when almost two-thirds of all revenue went directly on army and navy requirements.⁸⁰ Victualling was an expensive and important branch of British military power; that it has remained so long in the historical shadows is an oversight.

There have been efforts to correct this; Christopher D Hall, Douglas Hamilton and N.A.M Rodger touch on the subject, Hall concluding that ‘overall, the Navy’s victualling was handled with considerable success’.⁸¹ Detailed analysis though is beyond the scope of books on much broader subjects. Janet Macdonald has recently completed a Ph.D thesis on the Victualling Board between 1793 and 1815, measuring the Board against the idea of ‘management competence’.⁸² There have been other works: an article written by Aldridge in 1964 is the only piece of scholarship that covers the supplying of the Baltic fleet, and is tentative in its conclusions, with conspicuous use of the word ‘suggests’ and phrases emphasising the difficulty in estimating the success of the operation.⁸³ Michael Steer wrote on victualling operations during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, but his work is limited to the Channel Fleet alone.⁸⁴ Although it is agreed that Britain made huge advances in the area of naval victualling, how this was effected in particular operations, especially at a time of total war, where the nation’s resources were put to its strongest test have not been studied. For instance Condon’s study, like other such administrative studies, is limited in its scope; it remains an administrative history work, with little analysis of the Board’s work on an operational level, over an extended period of time.

⁷⁹ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, (1965), p. 52.

⁸⁰ Eric J. Evans, *The Forging of the Modern State: Early Industrial Britain 1783-1870* (Longman, London, 1996) p. 86. Given that the Navy had responsibility for feeding the army abroad, the figure of victualling taking up one eighth is as true in the 1800’s as it was earlier.

⁸¹ Douglas Hamilton, *Private Enterprise and Public Service: naval contracting in the Caribbean, 1720-1750*, esp. pp. 2-6, Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 41, Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*.

⁸² Janet MacDonald, ‘The Victualling Board 1793-1815: A Study of Management Competence’, (PhD thesis, King’s College London, 2009). This will be published as *The British Navy’s Victualling Board, 1793-1815: Management Competence and Incompetence* (forthcoming 2010, Boydell and Brewer). MacDonald is at times highly critical of the victualling commissioners’ performance.

⁸³ Aldridge, D.D., *The Victualling of the British Naval Expeditions to the Baltic Sea between 1715 and 1727* (Scandinavian Economic History Review, Vol XII, No. 2 1964) pp. 21, 24.

⁸⁴ Michael Steer, *Blockade of Brest and the Victualling of the Western Squadron 1793-1805* (Mariner’s Mirror, No.76, 1990).

It is now vital to link administrative and political history to the operational, to analyse how administrative change was effected out at sea. The interaction of administrative and operational naval history has only been examined once, with Christian Buchet's study of the Seven Years War.⁸⁵ Superior supply gave Britain the opportunity to keep fleets at sea for longer, multiplying strategic and operational capabilities. Much depended on the solidity and strength of each navy's infrastructure, and its flexibility to respond to unprecedented stresses.⁸⁶ It was in this that the Royal Navy was to have a critical advantage.

Methodology

This thesis is one part of a Leverhulme funded project investigating the victualling of the Royal Navy during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox, colleagues on the project, have focussed on the contracting side⁸⁷, while this thesis will focus on how provisions were distributed. The first question to consider is, why the Baltic? Firstly, as has been shown above, the Baltic region was perhaps more important to Britain (and certainly its navy) than any other. A discrete period was chosen to examine victualling operations in detail, where success and failure could be measured. Therefore this thesis will focus on the period the Baltic fleet was in existence, with lengthy comparisons with the Mediterranean fleet during the same wars. Again, as highlighted above, the post-Trafalgar period has been worryingly under-studied. The Baltic was a new challenge for victualling officials; consequently it is a good opportunity to judge the speed with which naval administrators learnt. The Baltic fleet's period of action, 1808-12 came just after the Commission of Naval Revision, and thus is an excellent chance to judge the reforming instincts of the British state, and its success in doing so. Victuals were the only supply needed by the Baltic fleet when on station;

⁸⁵ Christian Buchet, *Marine, économie et société: un exemple d'interaction: l'avitaillement de la Royal Navy durant la guerre de sept ans* (Paris, 1999).

⁸⁶ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 378.

⁸⁷ To be published as Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet 1793-1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State* (forthcoming, Boydell and Brewer, 2010).

ordnance and naval stores were provided during the winter months when the fleet wintered in British ports.⁸⁸ Victualling remained a steady and unceasing demand.

One factor assisting this thesis has been the large amount of archival resources available. The Admiralty records in the National Archives are extensive, many of which have never been consulted. Each government board kept rigorous accounts and daily minutes and gathered all letters sent and received. MacDonald is dismissive of the Victualling Board minutes as a source, describing them as ‘cumbersome’ and ‘little more than abstracts’.⁸⁹ On the contrary, they provide significant amounts of data, which if collected and manipulated, tell us much about the performance of naval administrators. The British Library and the Caird Library in the National Maritime Museum are similarly mines of archival information. The papers of Sir James Saumarez are housed in their entirety in the Suffolk Record Office, while the papers of the First Lord of the Admiralty between 1807 and 1809, Lord Mulgrave, are privately held but well-catalogued and accessible.⁹⁰

That said there are understandable limits. Firstly, there are small gaps in the archives due to accident. For example, the Bill of Exchange Books in the National Archives were destroyed in a fire in 1923.⁹¹ While the papers emanating from the British state are generally well kept, merchants’ accounts are less so: it has proven very difficult to locate private-sector papers. Few firms or companies operating in the 1800s are still doing so today, with the exception of Lloyd’s insurers and a few of the older banks. This explains the ease with which merchant accounts have disappeared from the historical record. Williams noted the difficulty in discovering the owners of victualling transports, as frequently only the master’s were named, and those changed fairly regularly.⁹² Fortunately, one crucial private-sector archive - that of Henley and Sons, from whom the Transport Board hired transports for much of the war - has been exceptionally useful. The John Constable papers in the New York Public Library have also shed light on the

⁸⁸ See for example, TNA, ADM 1/8, 25 March 1809.

⁸⁹ MacDonald, ‘Management Competence’, pp. 37-38.

⁹⁰ The Mulgrave Archive (MA) in Mulgrave Castle, Whitby, UK.

⁹¹ Still listed as TNA PMG/331, these records would have detailed the specific amounts paid in the Baltic for locally sourced beef. In their place, the author has had to use ships logs and occasional Victualling Board minutes, which are not as routine.

⁹² M.J. Williams, ‘Sandwich’, p. 534

contracting arrangements from Caribbean merchants to the British state. The key aim of this thesis is to measure the effectiveness of the naval administration, and therefore the British state, in a time of war. The focus will be the state's mobilisation and management of private resources rather than the merchants and ship-owners themselves. It should be stated that researching through the Henley and Constable archives has merely confirmed rather than undermined initial understanding of the power and importance of the state in late 18th and early 19th century Britain.

The focus of this thesis is on the contracting of transport vessels rather than contracting for provisions. This thesis focuses on the operational and strategic side of victualling: it is fair to say that no operation was ever hampered to due to a lack of provisions in the naval Victualling yards. However bad corn shortages were during the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, the Victualling Board always had adequate stocks.⁹³ However, the supply of transports did have (at times crippling) effects on the movement of victuals out to fleets: the focus on this side of the state's dealings with the private sector makes more sense.

Wilkinson has noted the limitation based on a survey of government records.

In the past writing on the civil affairs of the Navy has concentrated on what administrators and politicians actually said in their official and private correspondence. This highlights the problems they were facing and the decisions taken, but, just as minutes of board meetings merely record the decisions taken rather than the decision making process, this correspondence is often inadequate for an understanding of a course of action.

This thesis will, like Wilkinson's, look beyond the content of archival evidence. The text of departmental correspondence is useful, so too is the considerable body of statistical data it contains, much of which was never analysed; from this 'we can better analyse much of the statistical material upon which administrators would have made their

⁹³ MacDonald, 'Management Competence, p. 287.

decisions...to not only make us aware of what was written in the conventional way but also to look beyond and examine the logic behind decisions'.⁹⁴

The problems that remain are twofold: there is the problem of historical enquiry and the historian's trust. Cabinet decisions were made without minutes, and so researching British 'strategy' as we might call it today, is difficult. As Mackesy has noted, 'It is no easy task to discover what passed through their minds, or how they reached the decisions embodied in their despatches: often it can only be inferred from the dispatches themselves, for no record of cabinet discussions was kept, and the minutes and memoranda which survive reveal little'.⁹⁵ The second is one of historical trust. This thesis focuses more on the administrative rather than the political sphere. The majority of accounts were kept by clerks and civil servants, whose positions were not dependent on whichever party was in power. Some permanent officials were appointed by political parties, but the majority of clerks were not.⁹⁶ Their duties were to administer and organise, maintaining traditional records which were kept solely for the benefit of their organisation. As such, they had no reason to fabricate information.

Supplying the Baltic Fleet

This thesis analyses the logistical support of the Baltic fleet between 1808 and 1812, placing it rightly in its administrative and political context. Indeed, the Baltic fleet's existence dovetails nicely with Spencer Perceval's government of 1809-12, one that brought a clear sighted determination to support the war against Napoleonic hegemony. Under Perceval, the country's capacity to raise and spend revenue grew extensively. As Christie points out, expenditure began to 'soar into a new dimension...although there was nothing very novel about Perceval's fiscal policy, he found it possible to raise hitherto unexampled proportions of war expenditure by taxation without damaging credit to the

⁹⁴ Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State In The Eighteenth Century* (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2004) p. 8.

⁹⁵ Mackesy, *The War in the Mediterranean*, p. viii.

⁹⁶ Chapter 1 will cover this issue in more detail.

point at which he could not also float the loans he required'.⁹⁷ The victualling service was slowly reforming after the Commission of Naval Revision reports of 1809, and indeed the Baltic fleet itself would be one of the first beneficiaries of this. Consequently, this thesis will consider the naval administration from the Admiralty, down through the subordinate Transport and Victualling Boards, tracing the supply of provisions out to the Baltic theatre itself. It will consider relative responsibilities, the chain of command, the efficiency of logistical arrangements, the degree to which they improved over time, and how their efficiency influenced strategic, operational and diplomatic decisions.

The overall efforts of the Victualling Board are remarkable; for example, the Navy's victualling tonnage between 1803 and 1807 quadrupled, and did so again by 1812, numbering 109 vessels of 31,827 tons.⁹⁸ These are numbers unparalleled before in British naval history; provisioning the Napoleonic War was an unprecedented task. Commentaries on the worth of the Victualling Board itself are valuable, but less useful without studies of how the fleets were supplied at lower levels, down the chain of command. Questions of the efficiency of British naval victualling during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars go unanswered.

At a time when government spending is continually challenged and contested, the desire of eighteenth and nineteenth century administrators to improve the effectiveness of the state becomes all the more relevant. Indeed, in an environment in which the utility of the Royal Navy and the political uses of seapower are discussed ever more frequently, the need for logistical excellence, alongside technological change to support fighting capacity, continues to be essential.⁹⁹ There is still little known about the administrators who worked on the war effort, on whom policy and management decisions fell. Theatres distant from Wellington and Waterloo are also neglected; it is impossible to disagree with Esdaile on this point.¹⁰⁰ From the First Lord of the Admiralty down to agent victuallers afloat, the supply of the Baltic fleet is an area requiring further investigation. The

⁹⁷ Ian R. Christie, *Wars and Revolutions* (Edward Arnold, London, 1982) pp. 290, 296.

⁹⁸ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 39

⁹⁹ For instance Jeff McKnaughton, 'Searching High and Low for Innovative Solutions to Improve Naval Logistics Efforts' (*Military Logistics Forum*, Vol. 2, Issue 4 (July 2008)).

¹⁰⁰ Charles Esdaile, *The Wars of Napoleon* (Longman, Pearson Education, 1995) pp. ix-x.

campaign for ‘economical reform’ in Britain urged reductions on government expenditure, for them ‘all government expenditure was inherently corrupting’.¹⁰¹ The appropriate use of public funds continues to concern us today; such historical issues do not seem that far away.

Ultimately Britain required a flexible and stable administration, combined with practitioners who could carry out the logistical effort at sea. On this rested the whole British war effort. For all the breakthroughs in inter-disciplinary studies mentioned earlier, connections between historical sub-disciplines are still at a primitive stage. N.A.M. Rodger pointed out in his most recent work, for example, that ‘economic and agricultural historians, on one side, and naval historians on the other, have built few bridges between their subjects’.¹⁰² This thesis hopes to bridge a gap between operational, administrative and political history. In 2004, Jan Glete complained that ‘it is unfortunate that there are few modern studies of naval warfare and the political roles of sea power in the Baltic’.¹⁰³ This thesis will redress the balance.

¹⁰¹ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 476.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* p. 582.

¹⁰³ Glete, Jan, ‘Navies and Power Struggle’, pp. 66-7.

Chapter 1: Victualling the Navy and the British State, 1780-1812

It is said our constitution is not well calculated for war. I know of no reason why, but because men cannot be found to attend to business.

- Charles Middleton to Lord Shelburne, 11 September 1782.¹

Historians writing on government and administration in the 18th century are confronted with the idea of ‘Old Corruption’. The term’s source, the contemporary reformer William Cobbett, defined it as a parasitic system that taxed the wealth of the nation and diverted it into the pockets of a narrow political clique, whose control of patronage, government contracts and rotten boroughs all hit the common man hard. Historians have taken this notion and expanded it, seeing it as something more than simply social inequality. Philip Harling has commented in his work on the subject of ‘Old Corruption’, that the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars led to an enormous growth in taxes, public debt, central government agencies and ‘bureaucratic sclerosis’; in consequence the government ‘inspired serious attacks on the ostensible “extravagance” of the state & insatiable greed of its ministers’.² In other words, the efficiency of the state was called into question, in particular how it allocated resources. As Harling comments, ‘while the state had turned into a very efficient tax engine, Committee members [the 1797 Finance Committee] concluded, it was still lamentably wasteful in the manner in which it allocated public money’.³ From the 1780s there were persistent if irregular calls for ‘economic reform’. Criticism was directed against the management of public finance, with repeated parliamentary committees of accounts to examine expenditure and methods of accounting.⁴ Herein lies a paradox: how could a state where patronage, favouritism, privilege were rife, order itself to fight and win a global war in which unprecedented revenues were collected and government expenditure exceeded all previous records? The

¹ Charles Middleton to Lord Shelburne, 11 September 1782, *Barham Papers*, Vol. II, p. 66.

² Philip Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’: The Politics of Economic Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996) p. 2.

³ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 75.

⁴ MJ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain 1700-1850* (Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 516.

answer of course is that it could not. The raising and managing of exceptional amounts of revenue required an overhaul of the British state's administrative machinery.

Judging the efficiency of the 18th century British state is not an easy task. The functioning of the entire British state is too large a subject for this chapter; instead it will focus on the reforming instincts of the naval branches of government, particularly those involved in the production and movement of provisions. The Victualling and Transport Boards are interesting windows into the nature of the British state, at war and under pressure to reform. Pool has noted that even after Britain's greatest victories at sea the civil administration of the Navy suffered from 'almost continuous criticism because of its alleged corruption and inefficiency'.⁵ These are but two government departments. There is however good reason to focus solely on these institutions. In 1800 the total naval expenditure was £14,809.444, of which the victualling component came to £5,209,248 and transports £1,499,007.⁶ Between them they accounted for 45.3% of the entire naval budget. Given that the naval budget itself took up half of all government expenditure, the two Boards were responsible for a significant proportion of public spending.⁷ This chapter will argue that the British state, even before the wars of 1793-1815, was not the corrupt inefficient organisation portrayed by contemporary reformers and subsequent historians. In this it will not take too much issue with Philip Harling's excellent work on the subject. Indeed, Harling acknowledges that the late 18th century state was reforming itself, although there still remained many injustices and much corruption across government departments.

Where this thesis differs from other work on this subject is in the emphasis on the reforming tendencies of the naval departments during the Napoleonic War. The successive administrations of Portland, Perceval and Liverpool increased the effectiveness of the British war machine. The Napoleonic War was a conflict unprecedented in its scope and challenges. As such, it required a monumental effort to

⁵ Bernard Pool, 'Navy contracts in the Last Years of the Navy Board, 1780-1832', *MM*, Vol.50, No.3 p. 161.

⁶ NMM, ADM BP/21a, Navy Board to Admiralty, 18 February 1801.

⁷ That in the 18th century the Navy swallowed half of all public revenue is noted by Daniel A. Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, p. vii.

manage the means to victory. Military departments were (and indeed are) different to other governmental departments. This chapter will focus on the Victualling and Transport Boards as case studies of government competence under the pressure of war. It will argue that in these particular government bodies, changes had been made that put them ahead of their peers in other departments. Secondly, the impulse for these reforms did not, as Harling argues, derive from political fear instilled by the events of the French Revolution, or at least, not entirely. It was the escalation of the war against Napoleon that brought home to British governments that something approaching a ‘total’ effort would be needed to defeat Napoleon. Given a choice between reform or defeat, British governments unsurprisingly chose the latter.

The 18th Century State

How can we judge an efficient state? Aylmer puts forward six principal features of ‘the old administrative system’, including entry to office through purchase or patronage, lifetime tenure, the concept of offices as personal property, remuneration of these offices coming from fees and perquisites rather than fixed salaries.⁸ In a similar vein, Harling focuses on two key factors differentiating the mid-Victorian state from the fiscal military-state of 1780.⁹ Firstly, whilst the former was characterised by ‘cheap government’ and low expenditure compared to other European states, the latter was summed up by very high levels of public expenditure.¹⁰ The first judgement is clearly accurate: wartime spending gave rise to very high levels of public expenditure. Spending was £4.9 per capita in 1801 and £4.5 per capita in 1811, compared to £2.0 per capita in 1851.¹¹ The second difference was one of ‘good government’. By the mid-nineteenth century, and possibly not until the 1870s with the Northcote-Trevelyan Report, there was an

⁸ Gerald Aylmer, ‘From Office-Holding to Civil Service: The Genesis of Modern Bureaucracy’ in *TRHS*, 5th Series, part 30 (1980) pp. 91-108.

⁹ The ‘fiscal-military state’ is a concept conceived by John Brewer in his book *The Sinews of Power* that has generally been accepted by historians of the 18th century. The rising cost of war meant military endeavours required increasing higher public spending, itself requiring higher tax revenues. A state’s ability to wage war depended increasingly on its ability to raise revenue, hence the fiscal-military state. It has much in common with Geoffrey Parker’s concept of the ‘Military Revolution’ and indeed can be seen as the logical conclusion to it.

¹⁰ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 9.

¹¹ *Ibid* p. 12.

acceptance and adoption of ‘rational’ standards of administrative efficiency and of ‘lofty’ standards of public conduct by civil servants and ministers alike. This contrasted markedly with the British state seventy years earlier. Quoting Gerald Aylmer, Harling argues that the British state c.1780 was manifested in ‘an extraordinary patch-work of administrative efficiency and waste, of probity and abuse’, rather than fairly uniform standards of rational ‘good government’.¹² The second characteristic however is more debateable. The state was larger, but was it inefficient? This study provides an opportunity to assess this at a mid-way point, during the Napoleonic Wars of 1803-15.

How did Harling define ‘good government’? Echoing Aylmer’s description of ‘the old administrative system’, he argued that government and administration would not be deeply influenced by political considerations (by which he meant party-political considerations), with the appointment of state servants insulated from politics. Secondly, political office would be a position of public trust, rather than one of private property. Appointments were not sold but earned. Lastly, ‘good government’ was characterised by strict salaries, formal superannuation arrangements, and transactions of official business by the appointee in person, instead of irregular emoluments and fees.¹³

The degree to which the pre-1793 government was corrupt and inefficient has been overstated. Certainly patronage did dominate the political scene. Holmes is right to comment that ‘no government, even in wartime, was entirely innocent of patronage considerations’.¹⁴ Harling himself noted, it is easy to exaggerate the extent of government patronage.¹⁵ There was a growing tendency to appoint men on the grounds of ability, merit and experience, in other words a professionalisation of the naval departments. After 1688 professionalism and expertise began to pervade the upper ranks of departments, as Harling notes, ‘for the growing volume and complexity of public business called forth the energies of a good many talented and hard-working men’.¹⁶ In the early eighteenth

¹² Aylmer, ‘Genesis of Modern Bureaucracy’, p. 106. Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 10.

¹³ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society 1680-1730* (George Allen and Unwin, 1982) p. 244.

¹⁵ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid* p. 23.

century, the efforts of Harley and Godolphin had begun the process whereby men of business and talent were brought in to government, ahead of political appointees. The new departments created after 1680 allowed 113 commissioners at the head of 18 different Boards; ‘most of these commissioners, outside the Admiralty, the Board of Trade and the Board of Ordnance, were essentially non-political’, argued Holmes. And indeed, a 1709 investigation ascertained that there had been only two instances in the Board of Ordnance since 1683 of clerks dismissed at the whim of an incoming principal officer. In the Admiralty and Navy Board ‘the overriding pattern was one of survival, either until death or until retirement, for almost everyone except temporary clerks’, rather than political appointments.¹⁷ A permanent, professional state civil service was the result, with increased departmentalism and specialisation. The departmental nature of naval administration will be examined in Chapter 4.

‘Ability’ rather than ‘contacts’ decided appointments to a much higher degree than has often been thought. For example, the English Revenue Commissioners represented the ‘hard core’ of experience in the revenue departments of the late 18th century. As Ward argues, ‘despite all the claims of the aristocratic and political world...a considerable number of commissioners were in effect professional civil servants to whom administration provided the career of a lifetime’. It was possible for men with few advantages to rise to the top of a Government department.¹⁸

This was particularly true of naval departments. As Baugh points out, venality and neglect had been so extensive in the eighteenth century navy ‘that an administrative historian, if he did not know in advance that the British navy was by far the strongest and most consistently victorious navy of the period, could easily end with a catalogue of reasons for British naval collapse’.¹⁹ The Victualling Board in the mid 18th century was certainly not built on foundations of professionalism; in Middleton’s words it ‘provides one of the worst examples of the 18th century patronage system’, with all of its members

¹⁷ Holmes, *Augustan England*, pp. 246-7.

¹⁸ WR Ward, ‘Some Eighteenth Century Civil Servants: The English Revenue Commissioners 1754-98’, (*English Historical Review*, 70, 1955) p. 41-44.

¹⁹ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, p. 2.

'placemen to whom hard work and administrative dedication were uncongenial'. For instance, Sir Francis Stiles, Commissioner of the Bakehouse was a cultured man, whose post lay within the patronage of the Treasury and was a mere rung on a ladder. He was not, Middleton pithily observed, a man interested in baking.²⁰ The First Lord of the Admiralty Anson insisted a seafaring person be appointed hoytaker; his insistence on this point demonstrates that under normal circumstances such positions did not go to men who knew their business.²¹

It was during Anson's time that a spirit of professionalism began to enter the ranks of naval administration, as he succeeded in filling posts with persons qualified to conduct business. Wilkinson has also noted the increasingly professional proto-civil service and the implementation of more efficient bureaucratic systems.²² Men with training and experience in their particular occupation were introduced: if an employee did not live up to expectations the Board could dismiss him.²³ As Anson himself stated, in rejecting a recommendation, 'this gives me an opportunity to your Grace, that instead of adding to the useless people that are allowed in that office (if we should have a war with France), more people of business must be brought into it'.²⁴

The amount of support that ministers were able to purchase through the grant of contracts was by no means enormous. As Norman Baker noted, of the 46 men who held contracts for supplying the armed forces during the American Revolutionary War, only 18 were sitting members of Parliament (and another five close relatives of members).²⁵ Generally, these contracts were not scandalously lucrative, although as Harling notes, their average rate of profit was certainly better than that from most other investments at the time.²⁶ The total cost of sinecures and pensions were very high, annually £297,000 and £200,000

²⁰ Richard Middleton, *The Bells of Victory: The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years War, 1757-1762* (Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 110.

²¹ *Ibid* pp. 110-1.

²² Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State In The Eighteenth Century* (Boydell Press, Woodbridge, 2004) p. 102.

²³ Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy*, pp. 22, 146.

²⁴ Quoted in Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, p. 61.

²⁵ Norman Baker, *Government and Contractors: The British Treasury and War Supplies 1775-1783* (1971) pp. 216-8, 244-8.

²⁶ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 16.

respectively.²⁷ However, ‘as important as fees still were (and continued to be until the practice came under systematic attack in the 1780’s) in determining the records of office in old-established departments, those who profited from them represented, well before 1730, very much the exception to the general rule of a *salaried* profession’.²⁸ Surprisingly ‘modern’ terms of service were the norm in departments created after the Reformation, most notably the payment of decent salaries with almost no supplementary perquisites attached to them.²⁹

Naval Administration and the French Wars: The State Reforms Itself

That being said, there can be no doubt that government departments, including the naval departments were far from any definition of ‘good government’ at the start of the French Revolutionary War in 1793. The Victualling Board had been much criticised for corruption before the Wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. In 1782, there had been a lengthy scandal involving the chief clerk to the Secretary of the Victualling Board, a man named Wilkins, who had divulged confidential information to a naval agent. Lacking support from the Admiralty, George Philip Towry, at this time Secretary to the Board, was forced to reinstate him. An outraged Burgoyne resigned from the Board and wrote to Towry, ‘My good friend, I fear you are likely to have a troublesome life of it, & will I fear soon experience how impossible it is to stem the tide of jobbs & dishonesty'.³⁰ Towry, tasked with restoring the good name of the Board saw it as ‘absolutely necessary to restore the Victualling Office to the good opinion of the Public’, under no illusions as to ‘how low it had fallen’.³¹ Calls for reform of the Victualling Board in 1788 following the Commission on Fees were not heeded. Patronage was still rampant. As Wilkinson points out, ‘the Admiralty Board members were often hostage to political fortune, whereas the more minor officials within the Admiralty and the members

²⁷ *Ibid* p. 16-7.

²⁸ Holmes, *Augustan England*, p. 257.

²⁹ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 23.

³⁰ Roger Knight, ‘Politics and Trust in Victualling the Navy, 1793-1815’, *MM*, Vol. 94, No.2, May 2008, p. 134.

³¹ Knight, ‘Politics and Trust’, p. 134.

of the Navy Board could rely on more permanent employment'.³² The same was true of the Victualling and Transport Board. The letters of Lord Mulgrave, Lord of the Admiralty between 1807 and 1810, are dominated by concerns about patronage, both of naval and political appointments.³³ A typical letter read, 'From the interest which my friends have made with your Lordship to obtain me a civil situation in England, and the kind manner in which you have received their applications in my favour, I am induced once more to trespass upon your Lordship's time, by assuring you, how grateful I should ever feel, to your Lordship, should you think proper to appoint me to one of the additional Commissioners, proposed for the Victualling Board, by the Board of Revision'.³⁴ Increasingly, however, men of talent and men of business were brought in; Boyle's application was rejected by Mulgrave.³⁵

During the French Revolutionary Wars, there were five appointments to the Victualling Board of private secretaries, many of whom owed their positions to political influence, appointed as they were by the First Lord of the Admiralty. As Knight has commented, the Board did not cope initially with the expansion of the war after the Peace of Amiens. Charles Middleton wrote on becoming First Lord in 1805, 'Our naval Boards are in such a weak state, that they cannot be relied upon for either advice or execution, but I trust they may be amended. There is no lack of willingness, but we are all worn out, and more active officers must be found as opportunity offers to succeed them'. Thomas Grenville, First Lord in 1806 agreed: 'the civil departments are as it appears to me in the most wretched state: the Victualling Board cannot go on as it is, & the difficulty is to find the right frame to put in & proper persons to conduct it'.³⁶

The Commission of Naval Revision was set up in 1804, and started reporting in March 1806, with subsequent reports in the following years. The Commission was of the

³² Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State*, p. 18.

³³ MA 19-2.

³⁴ MA 20/151, Captain Courtney Boyle to Lord Mulgrave, 12 October 1808.

³⁵ However, 15 years later, and no doubt after more experience, Boyle was made a Commissioner of the Navy Board on 3 July 1823, where he served until 1829, then becoming Superintendent of Transports until his retirement in 1831. See J.M. Collinge, *Navy Board Officials 1660-1832* (Institute of Historical Research, London, 1978) p.88

³⁶ Knight, 'Politics and Trust', p. 139.

opinion that 'nothing short of an entire new system [is] likely to be effectual'.³⁷ New procedures and systems were brought in after the Commission of Naval Revision had made its recommendations. As will be shown later, the Transport and Victualling Boards were homes to constant improvement and refining of administrative procedures. These went hand-in-hand with a reformation of the entire make-up of naval administration, dissolving patronage, replacing hereditary positions with a meritocracy and replacing fees with salaries. The implementation of the reforms to the victualling system depended upon these wider ranging changes. The reforms of 1809, in particular, demonstrated that competence and merit had come to rule the respective offices.

The fundamental change was the replacement of the system of patronage with one that was more meritocratic. The Commission of Naval Revision saw the advent of professionalism in naval administration. In January 1808, JC Searle, Commissioner of the Victualling Board, wrote to the Lord of the Admiralty enquiring about a position on the Navy Board. Searle was a man of convention, very much at home in the 18th century belief in traditional progression through the ranks of the naval departments. He was to receive a shock. 'I have been informed that Commissioner Inglefield has declined the acceptance of the situation intended for him at Somerset House' he wrote, and

as the seat I know fill at this Board, has hitherto been considered as a preparatory step to the Navy Board, I should be wanting to myself, if I neglected this opportunity of soliciting your Lordship for that appointment...few Captains of any reputation in the Navy would accept the situation I now hold but for the prospect of succeeding to a better.

In 1808, he was dealing with a new world. Mulgrave's reply was terse and cutting:

I have never understood that a seat at the Victualling Board has been considered as a preparatory step to the Navy Board by my predecessors, it certainly is not my intention so to consider it, nor could I indeed in that case have proposed the appointments to the Navy Board to Commissioner Inglefield.

Merit rather than seniority was the order of the day: 'If I may judge from the numerous applications which I have already delivered, I can feel no apprehension of finding highly

³⁷ *Ibid* p. 141.

reputable officers to fill any vacancies which might arise at the Victualling Board, without any pledge on my part for their removal to better situations which must & always be distant & precarious', wrote Mulgrave.³⁸ Political influence was generally removed from the Victualling Board. Indeed, one of the consequences of the Victualling Board's lower status was that the Board had no serving MPs. One of the few political placemen who served on the Victualling Board, the Hon. Edward Stewart, fifth son of the Earl of Galloway, gave up his parliamentary seat in Scotland on the day in 1809 that he was appointed to the Board.³⁹

A combination of the Commission of Naval Revision's reports and the discovery of misdeeds by the Victualling office led to the replacement of three commissioners, creating embarrassment in Parliament. A motion was proposed by Admiral Sir Charles Pole (chairman of the earlier Commission of Naval Enquiry) on the necessity to appoint 'professional' and 'indefatigable' commissioners.⁴⁰ In 1809 the Victualling Board 'purged' itself. Elderly, ineffectual commissioners were removed in favour of younger, more dynamic – and most importantly – officials who were appointed on merit. Commissioners Marsh, Budge and Moody were all removed from service in the Board. They were fired not because of their political loyalty, but because they were deemed not to be up to the job. Robert Sadley Moody complained avidly to Mulgrave. After listing his 49 years of service, he stated with some degree of snobbery that

I found myself placed by Order of the Board of Admiralty, the Junior Member of the Junior committee in the new arrangement of the Victualling Board; a situation, which I could not possibly occupy without being degraded not only in my own Eyes, but in the opinion of the Public, particularly as two of the Gentlemen who had served as Pursers in the Navy were new Members, and, two other Gentlemen had not been three years at the Board.

³⁸ MA 20/652, JC Searle to Lord Mulgrave, 8 January 1808. It would be small comfort to Searle that in fact only five commissioners did receive a 'promotion' to the more senior Navy Board, four them being Navy officers. Searle would get a promotion, becoming Chairman of the Victualling Office 11 months later, in December 1808. See Knight, 'Politics and Trust', pp. 135, 145.

³⁹ Hon Edward Richard Stewart, M.P. Wigtown Burghs 1806-20 Jan 1809, Commissioner of the Victualling Board 20 January 1809-14 June 1813. See Roger Knight, 'The Spending and Accounting Performance of the British Victualling Board, 1793-1815', WEHC Conference Utrecht 2009.

⁴⁰ MacDonald, 'Management Competence', p. 161.

The move to bring in able and talented men (in this case pursers) put him ‘under the painful necessity of soliciting leave to retire on a Pension’. The rest of his letter went on to ask for a full salary pension, rather than three-quarters, since he has served more than the 35 years stipulated in the Order of Council respecting Superannuation of Officers and Clerks, which he argued was applicable to him. Mulgrave’s reply was typically brusque and dismissive.⁴¹

The advent of professionalism can perhaps best be seen in a letter of February 1810. James Archibald Wortley wrote to Lord Mulgrave, wishing for George Watson to succeed his uncle (Mr. Wilkie) as Agent Victualler at Malta where he had been employed over the previous six months. Mulgrave was adamant that no such privileges could be tolerated:

It is very unusual to allow officers to resign their situation in favour of their Relations, & were this the Practise with respect to Good and permanent situations, Government would find it difficult to prevail on competent Persons to undertake temporary Service, or accept appointments to small Establishments, which they are now encouraged to do in hopes of advancement, & it would be improper in the event of Mr Wilkie being...otherwise obliged to quit his station to appoint his nephew provided he were qualified, over the heads of many who have been, & now are acting in situation not permanent or so good as that of Agent Victualler at Malta.⁴²

Appointments were no longer favours, but were made on merit. Before the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, patronage dominated naval administration. It could provoke anger in certain quarters. In the years 1779 to 1781, the Comptroller of the Navy Board, Charles Middleton, wrote a series of letters to the then First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Sandwich, arguing that experience and merit should replace political favour as the basis of civil naval appointments: ‘for want of proper men to conduct the business at the ports, no expedition is used in fitting the ships’, he complained.⁴³ Increasingly frustrated at the abuses of patronage, Middleton demanded the chance to report on the ‘character’ of potential dockyards employees: as he said, ‘the spirit of faction, which has gained strength by your political system of management, would have

⁴¹ MA 22/216, Commissioner Robert Sadleir Moody to Lord Mulgrave, 1 January 1810.

⁴² MA 22/359a, James Archibald Stuart Wortley to Lord Mulgrave, 17 February 1810.

⁴³ Middleton to Sandwich, (no date) 1779, *Letters of Lord Barham*, p. 7.

been crushed by a more equitable one'. Sandwich refused.⁴⁴ But by the end of the Napoleonic War, a system was in place whereby merit rather than political favour decided appointments.

So professional had they become that the Transport Board was offered the chance to recommend reforms itself in 1811. In February 1811 it wrote to the Admiralty offering 'a statement of the order in which the various Expenditure of this office...are authorised...and their amount brought to the Credit of the Public: Likewise, whether any alteration in the method of Authorizing the Expenditure, or of examining the Accounts, could be adopted with advantage to the public service, if so, what particular alterations we would suggest, and whether any, and which of them, would require, previous to their adoption, the Sanction of Parliament'.⁴⁵ Harling himself argues that the gradual reform of sinecures, reversions and pensions between 1805-15 marked an important step in the slow transformation of the legal character of office from private property to public trust; 'the limitation of lavish irregular emoluments stemmed in a large part from a growing conviction that such emoluments were indecent'.⁴⁶ Indeed, compared with the huge amounts spent on the war, the issues of a few perceived injustices paled in comparison. As Grenville commented in 1812, it was a 'public delusion' that the abolition of a handful of sinecures and reversions would substantially reduce public expenditure. The only significant retrenchment would have to entail 'a reduction of wasteful expense in [the] army most of all, then in the Ordnance and lastly the navy'.⁴⁷ It is interesting that he mentioned the navy last; by 1812 the naval administration had been reformed to such an extent that these concerns were obsolete.

Staff remuneration changed from a system based on fees, gratuities and perquisites, to one of established salaries with regular long-service increases. In 1780 the Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts laid down the principle that public

⁴⁴ Middleton to Sandwich, 21 January 1781, and Sandwich to Middleton, 22 January 1781, *Letters of Lord Barham*, pp. 18, 19.

⁴⁵ TNA, ADM 1/3763/515-537, 7 December 1811.

⁴⁶ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 123.

⁴⁷ Grenville to Grey, 28 January 1812, Grey of Howick Papers, Durham University, quoted in Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 132.

revenue and private income should be completely separated: gratuities and fees for performing official duties should cease, as should sinecures (to be replaced by pensions). Fees and other perquisites compensated for the low level of the salaries established in the seventeenth century and not altered since: they were regarded as an ‘inflationary influence’ on the costs of the navy.⁴⁸ Abuses in the transport service were common before the institution of the Transport Board. Transports were hired not according to the tonnage of the ship, but according to the quantity of stores put on board, which method ‘opened a door to a variety of abuses’ noted the Commission on Fees in 1788. As the Commission of Naval Revision wrote years after, ‘a door was opened for very great temptations to the persons entrusted with the execution of this service’.⁴⁹

The eighth report of the Commission on Fees detailed many instances of salaries being boosted by fees, gratuities and perquisites from various sources. The accountant for cash and his chief clerk received 2s 6d per bill for despatching bills of freight and demurrage, and from 2s 6d to £2 2s for bills to tradesmen and artificers. His first and second extra clerks receive respectively 2s 6d per search for checking that masters of victuallers had accounted properly for returned casks, and 2s 6d to 5s for entering each bill of exchange. In 1798, the accountant for cash reported an average income over the previous three years of £3169 13s, of which only £120 was salary, while his chief clerk reported an average income over the same period of £1722 2s 2d of which only £60 was salary. The Commission on Fees commissioners recommended that the system of fees as part of salaries should be replaced by a salary-only system, although it was not until 1800 that their salary recommendations for the Victualling Board and its staff were put into effect.⁵⁰

Nine years later, a further commission began to report on naval administration, the tenth report covering the working of the Victualling Board. Any form of corrupt behaviour was rooted out. It stated that:

⁴⁸ Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1760-1850* (Ashgate, London, 2004) p. 31.

⁴⁹ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Ninth Report, p. 5.

⁵⁰ *Commission on Fees*, Eighth Report, pp.695-706, quoted in MacDonald, ‘Management Competence’, pp. 175, 177.

No Commissioner, Officer, Clerk, or other person belonging to the Victualling Department shall receive for his own advantage any fee, gratuity, perquisite, or emolument whatever, from nay person having, or had, any transactions with the Victualling Department', and ordered that all Victualling Office employees take an oath, supported by a bond worth three times their respective salaries.⁵¹

Every person entrusted with making purchases, 'or other expenditure of public money abroad' was to 'attest on oath...that he neither has received, nor expects to receive, directly or indirectly, any benefit whatever from such expenses', again under penalty.⁵²

In April 1808 for example, ten Victualling Board employees, including the accountant for cash, were sacked for the simple crime of receiving presents from contractors. The Lords of the Admiralty could only 'express their surprize, that the system of corruption which appears in the minutes of the Evidence...all persons against whom the receiving presents or being concerned as Agents, Brokers, or otherwise, for Contractors...in violation of their Oaths and their duty has been proved, should be immediately dismissed from their respective employments'.⁵³ This was not the practice of an inefficient government institution. Indeed, the Admiralty's anger was amplified by the fact that the offences 'should have been carried to so great an extent and for such a considerable length of time in direct violation of the regulations of this Office...without the Board having discovered it'.⁵⁴ This was an unusual event: the Commission of Naval Revision stated that 'we believe that the same highly commendable disinterestedness in the Commissioners still continues'.⁵⁵ Soon after its establishment in 1794 the Transport Board had made similar efforts to eliminate some of the abuses that still existed. One of the first resolutions passed by the Transport Board stated that no person belonging to, or under the direction of the Board, should have any property vested in transports, or share or shares of any ships or vessels employed as a transport, directly or indirectly, under pain of dismissal from office.⁵⁶

⁵¹ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Tenth Report, p. 21.

⁵² *Ibid* p. 22.

⁵³ TNA, ADM 111/187, 23 April 1808.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Tenth Report, p. 16.

⁵⁶ TNA, ADM 108/31, 26 August 1794, quoted in M.E. Condon, 'The Establishment of the Transport Board – A Subdivision of the Admiralty – 4 July 1794' (*MM*, Vol. 58, 1972) p. 82.

Competence more than political loyalty was the deciding factor in appointments and this seeped through into the Board's business. The Victualling Board had long been behind with its accounts during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The reforming Victualling Board after the Commission began targeting their backlog of accounts, partly the result of cumbersome accounting procedures, and partly the result of insufficient staff. By 1810, the Victualling Board was making quarterly reports on the progress which had been made:

resolving the arrears of accounts in this Office by employing a part of our Officers and Clerks out of the stated hours of employment of the Clerks during extra hours, and to report to their Lordships, at the expiration of every three months, the progress made in reducing the arrears of Victualling Accounts...during the last three months the employment of our Officers and Clerks out of the established hours of Office, has principally been devoted to the Cash and Store accounts, in arrear of Pursers of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels, and that the progress made in passing them, compared with former operations in a similar period, has been in the increased proportion of more than one half beyond what we were formerly able to accomplish.⁵⁷

The Board was not only improving, but catching up on previous backdated accounts.

What of victualling contracts? The 'financial revolution', as M.J. Daunton has termed it that occurred in London, created a wealthy elite of loan contractors and merchants who were allied to the state and its pursuit of war and empire.⁵⁸ 'It was inevitable', argues Harling, 'that the provisioning requirements of such a far flung and protracted war effort would furnish contractors and government officers with irresistible opportunities to commit frauds on the public'.⁵⁹ Perhaps it was likely, but not inevitable. It is certainly true that some contractors did well out of the war. John Constable, part of a network of merchants supplying British forces in the West Indies, was certainly making serious profits, though not scandalous ones. His balance sheet between August and December 1796 showed a profit of £9520 14s 1d, from an account balance of £61054 15s 6d.⁶⁰ The next year his profit or 'commission' can be seen in the table below.

⁵⁷ ADM 110/63/37-8, Victualling Board to Admiralty, 4 December 1810.

⁵⁸ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 478.

⁵⁹ Harling, *Old Corruption*, p. 76.

⁶⁰ NYPL, Constable Pierrepont Papers, Box 7

Table 2: Constable Profits 1797

'To Commission'	Amount
1 st January 1797	£1432 12s 4d
1 st March 1797	£2611
November-December 1797	\$8739.32

Source: NYPL, Constable Pierrepont Papers, Box 7. Why this calculation was done in American dollars between November and December is unclear.

Contracting was therefore a profitable business. However, the rash of contractor bankruptcies in the last years of the war, as Edward Knight and Thomas Pinkerton, to name two large merchants, were forced into bankruptcy, suggests that the Victualling Board was never browbeaten into paying over the odds.⁶¹ Ship-owners that lent their vessels to the Transport Board could stand to make a profit, though it was normally of the small and secure variety, rather than a highly profitable exercise.⁶²

Where does the Victualling Board match Harling's and Aylmer's definition of progressive government? On all three of Harling's criteria, it constituted 'good government'. The Victualling Board was not influenced by party political considerations. When commissioners were sacked, it was not because of political loyalty but because of incompetence. Political office was certainly not seen as property. Lastly, it was a Board that was characterised by strict salaries, formal superannuation arrangements with business transacted six times a week by the appointed personnel. Harling argues that 'only by 1850 can the administrative structure fairly accurately be described as a 'rational' civil service'.⁶³ Perhaps it took until the mid-19th century, or even later, for the entire civil service to match his criteria. The Victualling Board, along with much of the naval administration, was to all intents and purposes a very modern and rational institution.

⁶¹ The contracting side of victualling is the large part of a forthcoming monograph entitled *Sustaining the Fleet, 1793-1815: War, the British Navy and the Contractor State*, by Roger Knight and Martin Wilcox.

⁶² Chapter 5 will cover the hiring of victualling transport tonnage.

⁶³ Harling, 'Old Corruption', p. 24.

War and Administrative Reform

It had to be. The argument that political rather than military reasons were behind economic reform, and the attempts to make the state more efficient, has often been stated. As Harling argues, the tighter regulation of financial and administrative apparatus between 1780 and 1850 were ‘matters of chronic and often serious political controversy’. The scale of the war effort allowed an unprecedented opportunity to amass public money and patronage, and the example of the French Revolution threatened the political elite more than at any previous time, forcing government to move towards policies of economic reform, ‘to shield more and more of its authority from the critique of Old Corruption’.⁶⁴

It was the war that brought about the need for efficiency, not political pressure. As Gerald Aylmer correctly observed, war ‘was the great catalyst of administrative discontent and innovation’.⁶⁵ It is true that British governments were concerned about the example the French Revolution set for domestic unrest. There was certainly a significant increase in the coercive powers of the state. Whether there was a serious threat of subversion in early to mid-1790s is uncertain; what is certain is that the Government responded as if there was.⁶⁶ By the 1800’s the threat had receded however. There is no correlation between periods of unrest and periods of significant government reform. The major unrest experienced by Britain – the scarcity of wheat in 1795-6, 1801 and 1812-13, and the naval mutiny of 1797 – do not coincide. The impulse to reform the Victualling and Transport Boards came from the rising intensity of the war with Napoleon.

It was the war and the prospect of defeat that worried those in government more. The main concern of the tenth report of the Commission of Naval Revision’s concern was ‘the pressure of current business’: the war.⁶⁷ Britain was committed to war until Napoleon

⁶⁴ *Ibid* pp. 3-8.

⁶⁵ Aylmer, ‘Genesis of modern bureaucracy’, pp. 91-108.

⁶⁶ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 65.

⁶⁷ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Tenth Report, pp. 1-3.

was defeated.⁶⁸ Accordingly, it required unprecedeted means to win. Given a choice between efficiency and defeat, the British government naturally chose the latter. From this arose the movement towards efficiency in its military departments that was for the most part completed by 1809. More than any other factor, it was war that forced the government and administration to reform. The state was scrutinised, resulting in radical bureaucratic change in naval administration, as demonstrated above. As the threat to the country evolved, so did the measures to deal with it. The state was looking for efficiency and stepped in where it did not exist.

Lastly, efficiency was also needed to maintain the credit-worthiness of the fiscal-military state.⁶⁹ At a time when the collapse of public credit would spell ruin for the British state (and it nearly did in 1797 when fears of foreign invasion caused a collapse in confidence and a run on the banks), the British government was always keen to demonstrate its efficiency, as can be seen in its responses to the various enquiries into naval and military administration. The Commission for Naval Revision should also be seen in this light. War forcing administrative change was nothing new. In the 1680s and 1690s there was a drive for greater administrative efficiency, especially in revenue raising and collection, 'its mainsprings arising from a rejuvenated Treasury. A strengthening of central authority, the impact of war, and a fundamental change in attitudes towards public service in England came together to bring this about'.⁷⁰ It was from this that the 'fiscal-military state' as described by John Brewer arose. The military and naval administration was quick to reform.

As Holmes has argued of the 1680s, 'the second development in point of time, and one which far more spectacular effects on career opportunity in all three branches of the

⁶⁸ The issue of whether the Napoleonic Wars were 'total' or merely the largest of all the 18th century limited wars is hotly debated. Recent scholarship such as David A. Bell's *The First Total War* (Bloomsbury, London, 2007) tends towards the former. It is not the place here to discuss it in detail, since it is an argument that depends as much on definition and semantics as on historical argument. 20th century maxims of total war such as confiscation of property were alien to the 18th century mind. However, conscription, and seemingly unlimited political objectives were first seen in these wars. Let it simply be said that the Napoleonic Wars were more 'total' than anything seen before, but less total than the later wars of the 19th century in 1861-5 and 1870-1.

⁶⁹ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 517.

⁷⁰ Holmes, *Augustan England*, pp. 241-2.

state's service, was the twenty years of warfare which ensued during the quarter century between 1689 and 1713'. Between 1706 and 1711, there was a constant army size of over 120,000, and in December 1688 there were 100 ships of the line. As Holmes comments, 'nothing to compare with such a force had been mustered by any previous generation'. In other words, war had forced British government to extend itself: 'to organise, equip and direct such armed forces, and to raise and administer the revenue for a military and naval budget that was eventually five times as large as James II's, called not only for a much larger and more complex executive than that of 1688 but for a new attitude towards the officials who composed it'.⁷¹

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Just as in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, the state during the Napoleonic Wars responded to unprecedeted challenges with reforms that changed aspects of the British state. Esdaile has commented that Britain 'brought down Napoleon without any fundamental reformation in either Britain's way of making war or her system of government'.⁷² While this is true in a general structural sense, it neglects the wide-ranging reforms brought in to win the war by the naval administration. There was no 'British Revolution', nor a change from parliamentary control. The British State was not an inert institution, obsessed with notions of privilege and patronage. In a war that placed unprecedeted strains on Britain, the naval departments of British government, especially in the last years of the war, were able to reform itself to fight a conflict of some magnitude.

Ascribing the changes of 1809 to Benthamite influence is at best doubtful. Like all naval departments, the Victualling Board operated on the principle of collective responsibility, rather than the individual responsibility urged by Samuel Bentham, with all correspondence being signed by a minimum quorum of commissioners.⁷³ As Morris points out, after 1805, 'Benthamite thinking went underground'. As he comments, 'there

⁷¹ Holmes, *Augustan England*, p. 242.

⁷² Charles Esdaile, *The Wars of Napoleon* (Longman, 1995) p. 143.

⁷³ MacDonald, 'Management Competence', p. 168.

is no evidence that Barham either sympathised with Bentham's ideas for reform or understood the system he hoped to promote'.⁷⁴ It seems clear that the impulse came not from fear of revolution, but fear of defeat. It was the challenge of war that implemented reform.

Daunton argues that 'the Whigs in the 1830's were in many ways completing the work of Burke and Pitt rather than embarking on a new radical attack to destroy 'Old Corruption''.⁷⁵ It was the reforming tendencies of the Portland, Perceval and Liverpool administrations, faced with perhaps the first 'total' war in British history that should take the credit for reforming the naval departments. Improved efficiency of the Victualling Board did not happen for its own sake, but was part of a wider investigation into improving the machinery of government so that it could fight the war against Napoleon. In 1782 Middleton complained that men could not be found for business. This was no longer the case by the 1800s.

⁷⁴ Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, pp.175, 185. Roger Morriss has traced the reform of naval administration to the influence of Samuel Bentham, the son of Jeremy Bentham, who was made Inspector General of the Naval Works in 1796. Previous historians such as A.V. Dicey identified 'the period of Benthamism or individualism' as 1825-70, though Henry Parris believed such thinking was 'highly misleading' noting the contrasts between nineteenth century laissez-faire with Benthamist utilitarianism. Morriss attempts to 'relocate the beginnings of that "revolution in government" to the late 1790's' and to attach it to Samuel rather than Jeremy Bentham. By Benthamism, he meant individual responsibility, the centralisation of financial control, motivation of the workforce by the desire to rise in class, and the optimism of performance by education. Such changes would generate a meritocracy. Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁵ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 517.

Chapter 2: Evolution in the Navy: the Strategic Consequences of an Improving Victualling Service

The want of timely supplies...at several times...greatly obstructed those Designs, which otherwise might have been carried on with greater Advantage to the Publick.¹

- Josiah Burchett, 1703

Various scholars, notably Aldridge, Baugh, Buchet, Gradish, N.A.M. Rodger, and M.J. Williams have written positively of the victualling achievements of the Royal Navy during the 18th century.² These works concentrate on specific periods or individual wars: what is missing is a consideration of the linear improvements in the victualling service from the 1740s to the Napoleonic War. At various junctures the ability of the naval administration of Great Britain to provision fleets in foreign waters improved incrementally, culminating in the efficient and timely service provided in the last years of the Napoleonic War. This improvement was not reliant on technology. The ships, transports, preservation materials available to the Victualling Board in the 1800s were for all intents and purposes the same as those used in the 1740s. The evolution of the victualling service was the consequence of systemic and administrative change: this chapter will trace these developments through the 18th century through to 1808. The rest of the thesis will judge how far the Napoleonic War witnessed the culmination of these developments.

Throughout the 18th Century there were very rarely shortages of victuals in British Victualling storehouses. The victualling service's ability to provision its fleets and squadrons around the globe rested on its *distribution* of foodstuffs. M.J. Williams noticed two major problems of 18th century victualling that were 'almost insoluble'. Firstly, there

¹ Burchett participated in the naval administration of William III (reigning from 1650-1702). Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* p. 373. As Baugh comments, Burchett's comments were undeniably accurate.

² D.D. Aldridge, 'British Naval Expeditions', Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*. Baugh, *Naval Administration*. Buchet, *Marine, économie et société*. Gradish, *Manning of the British Navy*. N.A.M. Rodger, 'The Victualling of the British Navy during the Seven Years' War', *Bulletin du Centre d'Histoire des Espaces Atlantique*, Bordeaux, 1985, pp. 37-54. M.J. Williams, 'Sandwich'. Rodger stated that 'British naval victualling is a remarkable story of rising standards, making ever extended operations possible', Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 366.

was the problem preserving provisions. Improvements in packing and processing occurred, but not enough to remove the problem of perishable foodstuffs, until the invention of canning in the 19th century. The second problem was transport. In Williams' words, writing of the American War, 'in general it can be said that shortcomings in the Victualling Service were not due to failure to purchase or contract for sufficient provisions...provisions were, in the event, furnished in abundance, but delay often occurred in getting transports'.³ Thus major victualling delays were problems of logistical means rather than issues devolving from contracting. This focus of this thesis is the victualling service, the system by which provisions were distributed. By the time of the Napoleonic War how far had problems of distribution been solved? Were they really, as Williams argued, 'insoluble'? As the century went on, changes in the victualling service meant the range of operations available to the fleet increased. Advances in this area meant naval power became more efficient, with fleets less likely to lose naval strength as ships returned to port to re-victual. The supply system would provide a difference between victory and failure. If the provisioning system excelled, a fleet or squadron was able to pursue its objectives. If the system failed and a fleet was forced to leave its station British naval strategy and sea-power was undermined. The evolution of the victualling service corresponded directly with the increasing effectiveness of British sea-power.

Victualling in the early 18th Century: 1683-1755

The Victualling Board was first established as a distinct department of the Admiralty in 1683. Throughout the first half of the 18th century, and indeed for large periods afterwards, it would grapple with the problems of supplying men on foreign stations. Problems of food preservation at sea were impossible to solve given the state of such technology. Early in the 18th century there was a high rate of wastage. William Jenkins, the chief dairy product supplier to the navy during the 1740s provided over 200,000lbs of butter & over 400,000lbs of cheese: 23,000lbs of butter and 48,000lbs of cheese were condemned in the Baltic.⁴ This was more than 10%, a remarkable amount of waste.

³ M.J. Williams, 'Sandwich', pp. 533-6.

⁴ Aldridge, 'British Naval Expeditions to the Baltic Sea', p. 25.

Stores however were never the main problem. An even larger problem was the operational issue: once a fleet was on station, there was no certainty that, assuming ships were initially victualled for between four and six months, re-victualling could be carried out at that period. After this period there was no administrative infrastructure to keep ships at sea supplied. A ship's time at sea could be measured by the food they took with them. After this had been consumed, the vessels returned to port, often limiting, or in the worst cases severely harming a fleet's operational viability. On one occasion in August 1717 for instance all but ten ships were sent back from the Baltic to enable the remaining ships to maintain a 'whole allowance' of victuals.⁵

As Britain entered the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) the naval administration would be confronted by a further problem: administrative inefficiency. Logistical distribution was a systemic problem and the movement of supplies and stores across the globe would be a challenging and occasionally impossible task. This was further weakened by problems of management: even assuming resources could be distributed there was no guarantee that what was sent would be a well judged or accurate amount. Clerks worked from reports that were out of date; consequently calculations of spoilage and supply were inaccurate and unreliable. As a result, administrators learnt to provide more than enough and to accept waste as an unavoidable consequence of preparedness.⁶ Wastage of provisions, administrative inefficiencies and faults in the provisioning system would therefore connive against naval operations.

Daniel Baugh has outlined the improvements the victualling services made during the war of 1740-48. The Victualling Board took great initiative in anticipating the needs of various squadrons. The government office did remarkably well in answering sudden demands (helped by a dynamic London food market, and Irish beef and butter), and stood ready to fill gaps in the army's victualling arrangements.⁷ Facilities at Portsmouth and Plymouth were expanded, which made them the two most important out-ports after

⁵ *Ibid.* Victualling difficulties were surmounted by a degree of local provisioning, though as the Baltic fleet of 1808-12 found later, this was limited to a few foodstuffs, all of which were extortionately expensive.

⁶ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, pp. 444, 449.

⁷ Baugh, *Naval Administration 1715-1750*, p. 406.

Deptford. Not only would this enable the Royal Navy to distribute higher volumes of provisions, the location of both south-coast ports enabled them to play a significant role in supplying fleets blockading French northern and western ports. The proximity of closer victualling out-ports meant re-provisioning could be completed much more quickly. Baugh comments that 'it is striking how seldom, during the war of 1739-1748, they altered plans or postponed their moves because of inadequate victuals'.⁸

Problems of victualling were magnified when distributing victuals to squadrons and bases overseas. Fleets cruising in foreign waters were victualled through local contracts. This was limited by politics and geography. The increasing number of ships in service added to victualling difficulties, as the war escalated. As Baugh commented, 'with the expansion of overseas operations the challenges of distance and climate grew more formidable'.⁹ The problem of communication over wide distances, and problems securing transport tonnage impacted upon the victualling system. At times there was a dearth of shipping available for government hire, without which supplies could not be transported. victualling commissioners complained that shipping was hard to get. This was not because potential shipping was not available: government was slow in adjusting its rates and terms of hire to meet wartime market conditions.¹⁰ As we will see, this was not a problem limited to the 1740s. Despite some improvements in the victualling service, the naval administration could not yet guarantee timely arrivals of foodstuffs at ships, and admirals and captains continued to complain of bad provisions and to worry about future supplies. Ships or fleets could not act independently of their supplies.

Victualling During the Seven Years War

During the Seven Years War victualling standards continued to rise, as the naval administration of Britain grappled with the problems of distributing provisions. Stephen Grapish re-emphasised the insoluble problems Williams spoke of, but was otherwise

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 374.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 406.

¹⁰ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, pp. 441-2.

complimentary of the provisioning service. As he argued, the Victualling Board were ‘dedicated and conscientious men who were remarkably successful in raising the standards of naval victualling in a day and age when the technology of preparing and preserving victuals in their original state for prolonged periods was virtually non-existent’. Gradish is ultimately positive about the Victualling Board: ‘on the whole, the picture that emerges of the Victualling Board is favourable’, he argues, though follows this with the slightly more circumspect, ‘certainly they were not totally incompetent and corrupt’.¹¹

Victualling efficiency was improved. The proportion of victuals condemned shrank drastically: for Bread only one pound in every 294, and for beef only one pound in every 1,691 was condemned.¹² Calculations of supply became more exact. Ships were given four months of rations: enough to sustain a fleet for that period but not too much that provisions would go off and thus be wasted. In 1756, Admiral Boscawen wrote that ‘This ship has know been at sea twelve weeks, which is longer than I ever knew any first-rate ever at sea...at the beginning of the Spanish War our cruisers would not keep the sea above a fortnight, till one or two of them were broken for it, now three months is but a common cruise’.¹³

During the Seven Years War, the key aim of naval strategy was to keep a strong battle-fleet off the French Atlantic coast for as long as possible. British strategy centered around the Western Squadron which could cover the English Channel and Atlantic ports: the naval ports of Brest and Rochefort in particular, but also the commercial ports of Le Havre, St Malo, Nantes and Bordeaux.¹⁴ This blockade required constant vigilance, to imprison the French fleet and attack French mercantile commerce; it had to be continuous

¹¹ Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy*, p. 146.

¹² *Ibid* pp. 144-5.

¹³ Kemp, ‘Boscawen’s Letters to his Wife, 1755-56’ in Lloyd, *Naval Miscellany* IV, p. 248.

¹⁴ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 264. Michael Duffy, ‘The Establishment of the Western Squadron as the lynchpin of British Naval Strategy’ in Michael Duffy ed. *The Parameters of British Naval Power, 1650-1850* (Exeter, 1992) pp. 66-81.

to be effective. The onset of disease was the main determinant of the length of a cruise.¹⁵ For the fleet to remain on station they would require provisions greater than the four months worth of provisions they left port with. Early in the war, the navy had yet to organise a system whereby fleets outside victualling ports could be regularly supplied without simply returning to port. As a result a force of at least one and a half times that of the squadron at sea was required so piecemeal detachments could be made for repairs and refreshment.¹⁶ This meant that a significant proportion of ships of war available would be engaged in re-victualling at any given time, rather than serving operational or strategic functions. It was an inefficient use of naval force.

During the Seven Years War, occasions when fleets were forced to abandon operations due to poor logistics were common. Two of Hawkes's cruises in 1755-6 barely lasted two months.¹⁷ Anson, although aware of the risk involved in raising the blockade, was forced to leave his station in 1758. Given the perilous shortage of provisions for his fleet he had to grasp any expedient to preserve the health of the crew. He sent a large minority of his fleet back to port due to scurvy, with the intention of allowing them to restore their strength. otherwise, they 'will be destroyed and the ships in the end will become useless'. They were not home long enough: in August the fleet had almost one thousand sick on board, half of these ill with scurvy and fever, and the worst affected ships had to be sent home again, reducing the strength of his squadron by three vessels.¹⁸ Operations continued to be seriously affected by victualling shortfalls, with the result that the blockade was periodically broken.

The victualling service improved from 1759. There were developments in packing and processing of victuals, with production of naval victuals centralised in the major ports in

¹⁵ Michael Duffy, 'Devon and the Naval Strategy of the French Wars 1689-1815' in Michael Duff, Stephen Fisher, Basil Greenhill, David J. Starkey, Joyce Youngs, ed. *The New Maritime History of Devon: Volume I From Early Times to the Late Eighteenth Century* (Conway Maritime Press, London, 1992) p. 188.

¹⁶ Baugh, 'Naval Power', p. 250.

¹⁷ Duffy, 'Devon and the Naval Strategy of the French Wars 1689-1815', p. 188.

¹⁸ Anson to Shelburne, 16th July 1758, William L. Clements Library, Shelburne MSS, Vol. 137 p. 91, cited in Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy*, pp. 137-8.

Portsmouth, Plymouth and Deptford.¹⁹ That year, the decision was taken to transport fresh victuals such as beef and vegetables to seamen on board the Western Squadron, without which the Squadron could not have maintained such a constant and effective blockade of the French Atlantic ports. As Hawke wrote in 1759, ‘the relief of the squadron depends more on the refreshment of the ships companies the cleaning of ships’.²⁰ From May 1759 the Admiralty instructed the Victualling Board to arrange to have supplies of fresh beef available at Torbay for re-victualling. By July there were two transports carrying live cattle and sheep to the blockading fleet.²¹ On the 2 August 1759, the Admiralty ordered four transports to carry live cattle out to Hawke’s fleet.²² Ships were sent from Portsmouth and Plymouth to re-victual and refresh their crews, including a steady flow of fresh victuals.²³

The strategic consequences of this were significant. For the first time ships could remain on station regardless of the state of their provisions: no longer would they need to return to port every few months. Even a partial conquest of the provisioning process could ensure the success of a blockading fleet. Dr James Lind, a leading advocate of the use of citrus fruit for the prevention of scurvy described a fleet during the Seven Years War:

Of about twenty ships of the line, and ten or more frigates, in which were embarked about fourteen thousand men. On the day of action, many of those ships and men had been above six months from Spithead; notwithstanding which, there was...twenty sick in all...It was hardly ever known before that ships could cruise in the Bay of Biscay much above three or four months at a time, without having their men afflicted with scurvy. An exemption from which was entirely owing to this fleet having been well supplied with fresh meat and greens.²⁴

In a similar vein, he wrote again in 1759, ‘it is an observation, I think, worthy of record – that fourteen thousand persons, pent up in ships, should continue, for six or seven

¹⁹ Christian Buchet, ‘The Development of Victualling Board Bases in London, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham and Dover, 1701-1763 (TNDS, 4, 2008) pp. 53-68.

²⁰ Hawke to Cleveland, 4 August 1759, cited in Richard Middleton, *The Bells of Victory: The Pitt-Newcastle Ministry and the Conduct of the Seven Years War, 1757-1762* (Cambridge University Press, 1985) p. 124.

²¹ TNA, ADM 2/525/546, 19 July 1759.

²² Admiralty to Victualling Commissioners, 2 August 1759, John B. Hattendorf, R.J.B. Knight, A.W.H. Pearsall, N.A.M. Rodger, Geoffrey Till, ed. *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* (NRS, Vol. 131, 1993) p. 442.

²³ TNA, ADM 111/19/426-7, May 1759.

²⁴ Gradiš, *The Manning of the British Navy*, p. 167-8. Daniel A. Baugh, ‘Naval Power: what gave the British Navy its superiority?’, pp. 235-6.

months, to enjoy a better state of health upon the watery element, than it can well be imagined so great a number of people would enjoy, on the most healthful spot of ground in the world'.²⁵ Logistical breakthroughs brought strategic dividends. The Victualling Board's 'greatest achievement' during the Seven Years War was the resupplying ships of the Royal Navy in the Bay of Biscay, enabling Hawke to fight the battle of Quiberon Bay, and to closely blockade Brest for six months, an 'unprecedented strategy', one not repeated until the French Revolutionary Wars.²⁶

It is important to put this in context; these were still very primitive moves. There were still huge problems in shipping and distributing the victuals. A Victualling Commissioner reported that the master's inability to navigate, a want of manning and damages sustained loading and unloading (threatening the master's profits) meant that 'almost all the masters of the victualling vessels...had come to him in a body and requested their discharge'.²⁷ Syrett comments that during the Seven Years War, the Victualling Board 'was able to procure shipping required to transport all the provisions required by the crews of the ships of the Royal Navy'.²⁸ Yet, supplies shipped could only be a small proportion of the necessary total. Proximity to the ports of Plymouth and Portsmouth meant provisions could be sent to the Channel fleet, but to stations further away this became a much more imposing challenge. In the mid eighteenth century, transporting victuals was limited to fleets in home waters, and also to the summer months. Bad weather and insufficient shipping forced seamen to rely on a standard diet during the winter months.²⁹ In the Americas and West Indies, supply remained the sum of what could be carried on board ship, and what could be bought locally. Here the Victualling Board continued to organise local merchants to supply provisions to ships stationed overseas.

²⁵ James Lind, *An Essay on the most Effectual Means of Preserving the Health of Seamen* (3rd edn 1779), in Christopher Lloyd, ed. *The Health of Seamen* (NRS Vol. 107, 1965) p. 121.

²⁶ Syrett, *Shipping and Military Power in the Seven Years War: The Sails of Victory* (University of Exeter Press, 2008) p. 55.

²⁷ Admiralty to Victualling Commissioners, 2 August 1759, *British Naval Documents 1204-1960*, p. 442.

²⁸ Syrett, *Shipping and Military Power in the Seven Years War*, p.55. See also Andrew Lambert, *Warfare in the Age of Sail 1650-1850* (Cassell, London, 2000) p. 122.

²⁹ Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy*, pp. 167-169.

Baugh has commented that in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, victualling problems regularly bothered commanders at sea, whereas in the eighteenth ‘they rarely became major difficulties for anyone but the administrators’.³⁰ Problems remained however, albeit for clerks and commissioners instead of admirals and captains. And indeed, commanders never stopped worrying about their supplies. ‘In sum’, Gradish wrote, the Victualling Board’s actions during the Seven Years War were ‘an essential ingredient in the establishment of the supremacy of British sea power during the latter half of the Seven Years War’.³¹ He recognised however, that the Seven Years War was a ‘period of consolidation’, though one where ‘unmistakable signs of change were in the air...a harbinger of a future time when the nation as a whole would be more totally committed to the business of waging war’.³²

During the Seven Years war, operations were carried out that could not have been done forty or twenty years before.³³ The British navy never experienced the desperate food shortages of the kind that so often forced French squadrons to return home.³⁴ In 1746 the French launched an expedition to North America that was beset with victualling disasters. The commander, D’Envilie was forced to take out all the supplies he needed with him, including sufficient victuals for the return voyage. On arriving in Santa Maria on the other side of the Atlantic, provisions on several vessels were already starting to diminish. Remarkable amounts of victuals were condemned, while 40% of the fleets’ naval strength failed to reach Chibouctou. Much of this was down to victualling failure: on *Le Mars* half the crew perished from bad food, while on board *Le Northumberland* more than 50 men were dying daily at one point. Storeships were not organised for the 380,400 supplementary rations being prepared at Rochefort.³⁵ France suffered from shortages of merchant shipping.³⁶ France did not have the administration or the finance to support such operations. Delays and undelivered cargoes did not stem from the appearance of

³⁰ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, p. 374.

³¹ Gradish, *The Manning of the British Navy*, p. 171.

³² Ibid, pp. 209, 211.

³³ Baugh, ‘Naval Power: what gave the British navy superiority?’, p. 235.

³⁴ Ibid p. 247.

³⁵ James Pritchard, *Anatomy of a Naval Disaster: the 1746 French Naval Expedition to North America* (McGill-Queens University Press, 1995) pp. 61-2, 111, 117.

³⁶ Jonathan R. Dull, *The French Navy and Seven Years War* (University of Nebraska Press, London, 2005).

enemy ships on the French coast, but from the financial collapse of the government: even the navy's largest contractor could not remain immune from the financial disasters that befell the service in 1759.³⁷ Dull too notes the huge financial problems facing the French monarchy, meaning naval administration was often in arrears, and payments to suppliers were often delayed.³⁸

Even when these problems were surpassed, France did not have the logistical infrastructure to support fleets at sea. In 1761 Martinique was captured by a British force under Rodney. A relief force had been sent from France under Rear-Admiral the comte de Blénac-Cordon, but he reached Martinique the day after it fell, and spent the next six months immobilised at Cap François, immobilised by sickly crews.³⁹ The Royal Navy and British naval administration was clearly ahead of its major rivals. However, 'until the disasters of the war for American Independence, few Englishmen saw the need, and fewer still felt the inclination, to reform a navy which, for all its faults, was the acknowledged mistress of the seas'.⁴⁰

The War of American Independence

Success in the Seven Years War covered up the deficiencies that remained with the victualling service. It took the prospect of defeat against the Americans to shake Britain and her naval administrators into action. British strategic problems in this war were complicated by the unprecedented administrative and logistical problems arising from the necessity of supporting a great army and naval force in the Western Hemisphere.⁴¹ The twin aspirations of timeliness and efficiency would be much sought after.

During the American war, the Victualling Board was still struggling with wastage. The Agent Victuallers in Cork and Rotherhithe respectively, Marsh and Cherry rejected and

³⁷ James Pritchard, *Louis XV's Navy, 1748-1762: A Study in Organization and Administration* (McGill-Queens University Press, Kingston and Montreal, 1987) p. 183.

³⁸ Dull, *The French Navy and Seven Years War* pp. 113-4.

³⁹ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 284.

⁴⁰ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, p. 505.

⁴¹ David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War: A Study of British Transport Organisation* (Athlone Press, London, 1970) p. vii.

condemned large quantities of provisions delivered by contractors as being unfit for human consumption. On one occasion in 1780, Cherry reported that one contractor had failed to deliver 54,920 pounds of beef and 229,767 pounds of butter for the last convoy of the year.⁴² By and large though, the production of foodstuffs was never an issue operationally.⁴³ The main challenge was in distributing provisions around the globe.

Victualling success clearly depended on an adequate transport system. Where transports were available, or where inadequacies could be offset by local provisioning, fleets could be supplied, operations could be maintained. However, the regularity with which complaints were made demonstrates that victualling from a discrete, centralised location had yet to be mastered. M.J. Williams wrote that 'it is clear that there were shortcomings in the victualling system under Sandwich. There were delays and supplies fell short from time to time. Yet the great difficulties of supplying foreign stations in the days of sail must be remembered. Vital factors were the provisions of adequate transport and convoy escort, to say nothing of favourable winds. Delays through failure to meet any of these requirements might result in great loss through provisions becoming rotten'.⁴⁴ That these problems remained throughout much of the war is an indictment of the naval administration's performance. Delays caused by convoy and transport provision could be overcome.

Transport procurement was a slow and laborious task. As Syrett put it: 'ordinary business concerning the transport service moved through the hierarchy of British government in a sluggish and inefficient manner...weeks and in some cases months might be required to resolve simple problems relating to the transport service'.⁴⁵ He details many examples of delays in transport and victuals. In 1779 a convoy requested by the Navy Board on the 5 June 1779, was only loaded and ready by 4 September 1779. The speed with which a convoy was secured was even slower. That same example of 1779 did not receive its

⁴² *Ibid* p. 150.

⁴³ The contracting side of victualling during the American War is covered admirably in Norman Baker, *Government and Contractors: British Treasury and War supplies, 1775-83* (University of London Historical Society, 1971).

⁴⁴ M.J. Williams, 'Sandwich', p. 567.

⁴⁵ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, pp. 12-15.

convoy until the 24 December 1779, despite reminders being sent. Similarly, in 1780 another issue in securing an escort resulted in further delays in months.⁴⁶ The problem was not one of technology, or indeed of a more widespread global shortage of mercantile tonnage, but of management: as the Navy Board observed in 1782, ‘if all the shipping in Europe was employed in the service of the Army they would not prove sufficient, under this kind of management’.⁴⁷ By 1782, the Navy Board did not have the tonnage to meet the logistical needs of 1783.⁴⁸

Further evidence of the Navy Board’s struggle completing its primary duties comes with its reluctance to take on the army provisioning. In 1778 it wrote:

we find that the great increase of the navy, and equipment of the fleet, which there is in appearance will be further extended, together with the having the heavy load of the transport service upon this office, there now being now near 78,000 tons of shipping under our directions, renders it impossible to undertake the management of a business if such variety and uncertainty in addition to it, without prejudice to His Majesty’s affairs, and subjecting them to disappointments and inconveniences more especially in our department as commissioners of the navy which no consideration can lead us to hazard.⁴⁹

It was nevertheless, given the responsibility the following year. That the responsibility was given to the Victualling Board early in the Napoleonic War is a relevant judgement on each Boards perceived capability.

Throughout the American Wars there were also consistent failures to provide warships promptly to escort out-ward bound convoys. ‘Several times during the years 1779-1780’, wrote Syrett, ‘the [Navy] Board saw months of preparation and labour wasted by the failure of the naval vessels required to escort the convoy to appear at the appointed time and place’.⁵⁰ As a result operations were greatly affected by failures of naval administration. In 1779 there were victualling problems with the Channel Fleet, particularly with water. Portsmouth, the nearest watering port, could not meet Admiral Hardy’s demands. The most serious problems involved the victualling of the West Indies

⁴⁶ *Ibid* p. 156.

⁴⁷ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 180.

⁴⁸ *Ibid* p. 162.

⁴⁹ NMM, ADM/B/195, 16 January 1778, quoted in Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 133.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* p. 154.

squadron, with many complaints levelled at Blackburn, the West Indies contractor. He himself complained that his victuallers had been delayed for nearly six months at Spithead, awaiting order. ‘Hence’, wrote MJ Williams, ‘it is not surprising that in February 1780, Hyde Parker was complaining of shortages of provisions’.⁵¹

Naval administration had failed to learn from Hawke’s experience in 1759, whereby regular shipments of provisions to a blockading force could keep it at sea without the need to return to port. As a result, the continual or ‘close’ blockade was removed as a strategic option. Lord Howe commented that ‘stationing a large fleet off the coast of France was a very improper and hazardous measure’, as crews became sickly, and ships battered by the elements. ‘A station off Brest’, he concluded, ‘was a dangerous station, and should not be taken but upon great emergencies’.⁵² A close blockade would not be adopted until scurvy had been conquered, in the 1800s. Hawke himself, having pioneered the close blockade and logistical system to support it, found this frustrating. As he wrote to Geary. ‘six weeks is long enough in all conscience...I wish the Admiralty would see what was done in former times’.⁵³

Despite the preference for ‘open blockade’ the Channel Fleet continued to suffer from lack of provisions, with sometimes detrimental effects on naval capabilities. Geary, in command of the Channel Fleet, left for sea on 8 June 1780. By the end of August 2,000 seamen were suffering from scurvy.⁵⁴ He was compelled to return to Spithead. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Sandwich, feared for strategic ramifications: the loss of another convoy ‘would occasion such distress to this country that no-one can tell the consequences it might have’. Scurvy broke out again in the Channel in the summer of 1781, with Admiral Darby forced to sail to Spithead. He was sure to see two convoys from Charleston and the Leeward Islands safely home first, as well as a fleet of East

⁵¹ M.J. Williams, ‘Sandwich’, pp. 553-4.

⁵² Piers Mackesy, *The War For America, 1775-1783* (Longman, London, 1964) p. 193.

⁵³ Christopher Lloyd and Jack L.S. Coulter, ed. *Medicine and the Royal Navy 1200-1900: Volume III, 1714-1815* (E & S Livingstone Ltd, Edinburgh and London, 1961) p. 126.

⁵⁴ ‘Admiral Francis Geary’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. 21. H.C. Matthew and Brian Harrison, ed. (OUP, 2004) p. 687.

Indiamen out before doing so, ensuring that British interest did not suffer.⁵⁵ Still, it was a further example that the naval administration could not yet ensure the supplies of a fleet operating in the English Channel, let alone further afield. The following year, 1781, there were complaints from Sir Edward Hughes of scurvy in the East Indies. Rodney on the Leeward Islands however had the benefit of local contractors, Blackburn, supplying 50% of provisions in the West Indies in 1780, wrote that ‘no Fleets were better supplied with good and wholesome provisions’ during 1780-1.⁵⁶ However, ‘there was an uncomfortable gap in the provisioning of the American squadron between July and October’. Admiral Graves complained his Agent victualler was ‘slenderly provided with provisions’ due to the scarcity of transports of any kind at home in 1781.⁵⁷ The tardy delivery of provisions would plague the Navy until the end of the war.⁵⁸

The victualling system had failed to learn from earlier conflicts. During the Seven Years War a force one and a half times a squadron’s strength was required so that piecemeal parts of it could return home for victualling. Such inefficiencies of naval strength were repeated between 1776 and 1783. Middleton was of the opinion that blockading ‘squadrons should consist of such a number of ships as would admit that a fourth or third part of each of them should be able to go into the nearest port to refit, to victual or to store; and the remaining three-fourths or two-thirds should be of such force as still to have a decided superiority over the enemy’.⁵⁹ The principle of regular and timely delivery of foodstuffs by transports to blockading fleets had yet to be instituted.

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

This would change as Britain once again entered a war with France. There were two key developments at the beginning of the Revolutionary War that improved the victualling system. Firstly the Transport Board was re-instigated, taking responsibility for the entire

⁵⁵ Mackesy, *The War For America*, pp. 357, 397.

⁵⁶ M.J. Williams, ‘Sandwich’, p. 557.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 562.

⁵⁸ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 150.

⁵⁹ Middleton to Philip Patton, 2 June 1794, *Letters of Lord Barham*, II, p. 386.

transport service for the army, navy and ordnance. It was created at the prompting of Middleton, by now Lord of the Admiralty. Not having a Transport Board ‘operated so much on the mind [of Middleton] that it induced him to submit to Mr Pitt, the absolute necessity there was for its existence’; and Pitt ‘was so convinced of it as immediately to put it into execution’, wrote Dundas.⁶⁰ Its appearance allowed that Board to concentrate on its own area of expertise: procuring tonnage from the merchant sector. It is interesting that the naval departments were felt the best to manage these crucial logistical developments, a sign that the naval administration was ahead of its civil and military counterparts. With the creation of a Transport Board many of the abuses revealed by the Commission on Fees were eliminated, the most important being the competition among the different boards for tonnage. Instead, the Victualling, Ordnance and Navy Board would apply to the Transport Board, whose sole duty was the hiring of transports from the merchant community.⁶¹ As Morriss has commented, ‘rationalization was true of all victualling and transportation undertaken by the Treasury, secretary of state, Admiralty, Ordnance, and other government departments after 1794’.⁶² In a further rationalisation, the Victualling Board took on the duty of supplying the army. As the Admiralty explained, ‘it was considered that the service would be ‘performed with greater advantage to the public...than in any other war’.⁶³ It promised new economies since the Victualling commissioners could engage for army supplies with contractors who supplied the navy.⁶⁴ From this point on the provisioning of military forces abroad would be the responsibility of the Victualling Board.

The second major development in the provisioning service during the French Wars was the institution of provisions distributed by regular transports to fleets at sea. The policy of provisioning from a centralised location was replicated across the globe during the

⁶⁰ Melville MSS 1044, f.107, National Library of Scotland, quoted in M.E. Condon, ‘The Establishment of the Transport Board – A Subdivision of the Admiralty – 4 July 1794’, *MM*, Vol. 58, 1972, p. 79.

⁶¹ In 1806, with the demise of the Sick and Hurt Board, the Transport Board would be given responsibility for Prisoners of War and naval hospitals. Mary Ellen Condon, ‘The administration of the Transport service during the war against Revolutionary France, 1793-1802’, (Unpublished Ph.D., London, 1968). Condon, ‘The Establishment of the Transport Board’, p. 82.

⁶² Roger Morriss, ‘Colonization, Conquest, and the Supply of Food and Transport: The Reorganization of Logistics Management, 1780-1795’, *War in History*, No.14 (2007), p. 322.

⁶³ TNA, ADM 109/102, 24.

⁶⁴ Morriss, ‘Colonization, Conquest, and the Supply of Food and Transport’, p. 321.

French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. This was a move towards a more efficient use of naval strength. By using fleets of transports to supply fleets in foreign waters, no warships would be wasted transporting provisions, or returning to port to re-victual. Centralised, remote supply was not a universal policy: fleets in the East Indies and West Indies would continue to be supplied using local contractors.⁶⁵ The majority of fleets would be supplied from British out-ports. Remote supply removed fleet dependence on local politics and climates that could not be guaranteed, and allowed victualling decision making to be centralised in London. As we have seen, remote supply was nothing new: during the Seven Years War, the Channel fleet had been supplied by in this method. In the 1750s, it was beyond the administrative and managerial capacity of naval administration to continue this remote system of provisioning at larger distances from British out-ports. By 1795, fleets in the North Sea, the Channel, the Mediterranean, the Cape, the Brazils, North America and periodically in the Baltic (in 1801, 1807 and 1808-12) were provisioned in this manner, with fleets of transports travelling from Deptford, Portsmouth and Plymouth. Fleets would not be reliant on local provisioning, not always possible in politically unstable or geographically unsuited regions. Fleets would no longer need to return to port.

Torbay took on an important role in the provisioning of the Channel Fleet with vessels completing there on their way to blockading stations. In 1805 plans were announced that Falmouth would become the base for ships coming from Ushant to complete (it was closer to Brest). It was evident that a more efficient system would be required. As in 1755 when Hawke's squadron had received convoys of victuallers, once again fleets of transports were arranged from Plymouth to sustain the blockading squadron.⁶⁶ From 1805 and the institution of the 'close blockade' ships were only to come into port when weather forced them to. The 'close blockade' differed from the previous form, entailing the placement of warships within sight of the respective coast or port to ensure the immediate interception of any ship entering or leaving. It was both the most effective and

⁶⁵ There were economic as well as logistical reasons for this. With an abundance of local supplies it made both economic and operational sense to cut out the delays that accompanied victual distribution and obtain supplies locally. An abundance of local supplies could not always be guaranteed though.

⁶⁶ Steer, 'Victualling of the Western Squadron', pp. 309-314.

the most difficult form of blockade to implement. Difficulties arose because the blockading ships needed to remain continuously at sea, exposed to storms and hardship. No longer would ships be forced back to port to re-victual. Significantly, this meant that squadrons would no longer have to allow for up to a third of their strength to be absent from their station as they picked up provisions. Such an advance in the victualling service was instrumental in allowing the ‘close blockade’ to be executed.

The success or failure of victualling operations would therefore depend on the success with which these convoys of victuallers could be organised. This would not be a given during the following years. There continued to be instances where victualling delays did obstruct strategic designs, such as at the Cape in 1796. The Royal Naval administration did not immediately comprehend or deal with the challenges posed by the unprecedented scale or extremity of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. During the Peace of Amiens provisions failed to reach Malta and scurvy and debility resulted in seamen’s deaths.⁶⁷ Delays in provisioning and water contributed to the disastrous Walcheren expedition of 1809.⁶⁸ In 1804, the Channel fleet was forced into Torbay, providing as it did the best chance of resupply.⁶⁹ The battle of Trafalgar was prompted by Nelson being forced to send six ships of his squadron away for provisions and water, leaving him an inferior number of ships, and inadvertently drew out the combined French and Spanish fleet.⁷⁰

Fortunately for Nelson, this gave him the opportunity to fight a decisive battle; victualling shortfalls rarely had such positive results. In 1807, in the most politically damaging example of victualling arrangements influencing operations, Sir Richard Strachan was forced off his blockading station off Rochefort because of a lack of victuals: such was the fall-out from this that the incident was presented to Parliament. The first concerns for the fleet came on 11 December as Admiral Lord Gardner warned that ‘at this time the Line-of Battle Ships have not more than Eight Weeks Provisions on

⁶⁷ Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory* (Allen Lane, London, 2005) p. 443.

⁶⁸ Gordon C. Bond, *The Grand expedition: the British invasion of Holland in 1809* (Athens, Georgia, 1979) pp. 145-6.

⁶⁹ Duffy, ‘Devon and the Naval Strategy of the French Wars 1689-1815’, p. 188.

⁷⁰ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 537.

board'. Sir Richard Strachan wrote on the 1 December that 'we failed with the hope of falling in with the Victuallers, which I concluded would have sometime past left Plymouth'. The *Superb*, *Spencer* and *Cumberland* were sent to Rochefort to replace the ships forced off station as a relief force, but it arrived too late to prevent the French fleet escaping from port. The 'State and Condition' of the squadron of 21 December noted that the *Impeteux* and *Donegal* had only fifteen and nineteen days bread left, while the *Emerald* and *Raleigh* had only nineteen and twenty two tons of water remaining. The *Colossus* and *Mediator* were delayed in setting off from Deptford, as reported on the 31 December, not to sail until the 6 January. The supplies would not arrive until the 16 January, by which time it was too late. As Strachan reported, 'since the *Mediator* left the Squadron, I have used my utmost exertion to regain our station of Chasseron, but Strong North east winds have prevented our getting to windward. This morning the *Attack* gun-vessel joined us, making the signal that the Enemy had put to sea. She had a Transport with Provisions under convoy, and has seen us to leeward this two days past'.⁷¹ In other words, the fleet having to leave station to find the *Mediator*, had allowed the French fleet to escape. Four months after these problems, and two months after it was presented to Parliament, the Baltic fleet set sail for the Baltic.

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Naval administration proved very successful at overcoming so called 'insoluble' problems. There is a clear correlation between advances in the victualling system and increasing operational and strategic capabilities. As the logistical support for fleets improved, they were able to remain at sea for longer periods, at distances further from Britain than had been attempted before. As Baugh argues, 'all in all, the rise of the Victualling department may have had more impact on the success of British arms than any other administrative development since the time of Pepys'. An evolution of the means available transformed the operational and strategic ends that could be attained. At times it was a slow development. Baugh comments that 'in the early years of the

⁷¹ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, 1808 (103) *Papers Presented to the House of Commons Relating to the State and Condition of the Squadron Employed off Rochefort under the command of Sir Richard J. Strachan*, printed 15 March 1808 No.9-59, 16, 18, 35, 28, 44, 46, 56, 59.

eighteenth century...the Victualling department was still putting its house in order'.⁷² Clearly the improvement of the victualling service was incremental. Advances, particularly with the Channel fleet during the Seven Years War were not implemented across all squadrons. Fleets in the American War suffered from this inability to learn from previous developments. Much had been learnt by the time of the Napoleonic War. Systematic developments enabled fleets around the globe to be supplied. Problems in 1807 hinted that arrangements for provisioning had not yet reached perfection. Incidents such as Walcheren and Strachan's leaving of his station were however isolated events, but explain why commanders continued to worry about their supplies. Delays and inefficiencies would continue to affect operations. This would not suffice in the wars against Napoleon, where the necessity of a full-scale international war raised the bar of administrative competence far higher. As naval administrators turned their attention to victualling fleets in early 1808 they would discover further challenges. There would be good reasons to doubt the viability of provisioning a Baltic fleet.

⁷² Baugh, *Naval Administration 1715-1750*, pp. 406, 402.

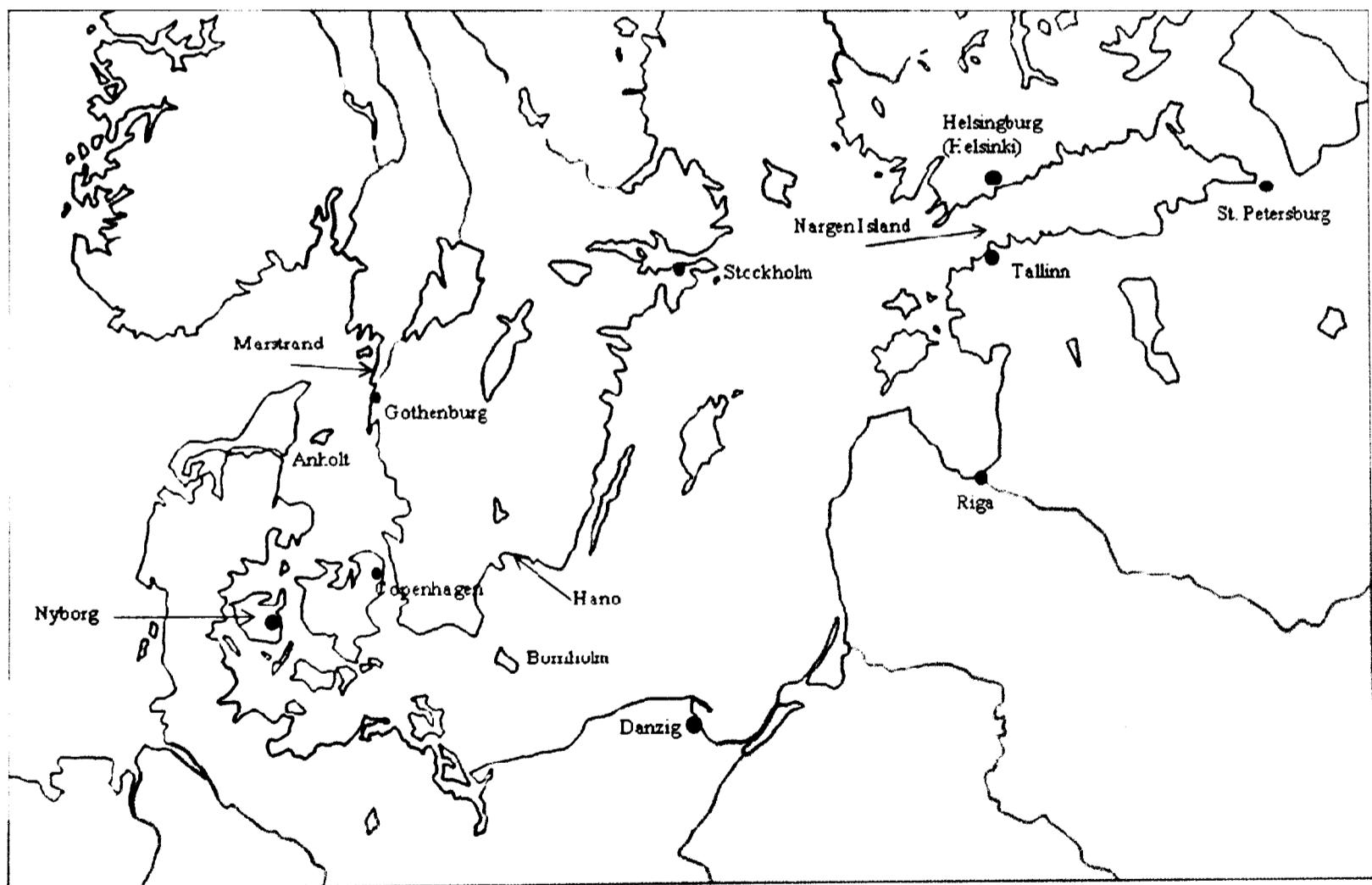
Chapter 3: The Challenges of Baltic Victualling

This station affords much greater anxiety than the Channel Islands and I may add than any other station I have hitherto been upon and its being so perfectly novel in all respects makes it the more interesting.

Vice-Admiral Sir James Saumarez, 8 July 1808¹

Saumarez' anxiety a mere two months after entering the Baltic was based on the knowledge that the Baltic Sea was one of the most formidable commands. It was not as far from home ports as other foreign fleets, for example in the East Indies. However the difficulty of commanding a fleet in the Baltic was not solely based on distance. The Baltic Sea would provide challenges that exacerbated the natural test of moving industrial amounts of provisions over long distances.

Figure 3: The Baltic 1808



¹ SRO, SA 3/1/2/1, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 8 July 1808.

There had not been a British fleet in the Baltic since 1727 (Nelson's brief voyage in 1801 aside) and Saumarez was faced with a considerable challenge to ensure the provisioning of his fleet; with inadequate charts, in unknown waters, all the while surrounded by hostile states and with a supply line open to attack from Danish gunboats. At the same time Saumarez was aware of the vulnerability of his opponent's supply lines. In 1809, he deliberately set out to attack the Russian enemy's logistics, 'having stationed the *Defence* and *Bellephron* in Makiloto Bay for the purpose of interrupting the supplies of Provisions passing along the coast of Finland for the use of the Russian Troops in Aland'.²

Concerns for the Fleet: Economics and Administration

There were serious concerns for the Baltic fleet's ability to provision itself. One anonymous officer, calling himself 'Observator', wrote to Mulgrave, then the Lord of the Admiralty, at the outset of the Baltic operation to express his fears for the fleet. He was clearly a man who had spent much of his career with the Victualling Board and is therefore someone whose views were taken seriously, as Mulgrave's acknowledgement indicates. As he wrote,

No man can be more attached to His Majesty's Service with more respect than myself the veneration I hold every measure in which has proceeded to from the Board you have the Honor to preside at. It is animated with the welfare of my country, and that no cause of importation might appear from a want of foresight to the various necessities of the Ships and Vessels employed in the Baltic, that I now very respectfully address your Lordship, and as I profess to have some knowledge of the Victualling of Ships from having spent many years in that service I trust I may be allowed to presume on that point.³

This illustrates the prevailing opinion; that the victualling of the Baltic fleet was to be a feat more challenging than any other station. Speaking of the recent logistical problems suffered by Sir Richard Strachan's Squadron when off Rochfort, he mentioned that this was 'a collected force', which despite its concentration in one place 'from a source of information I cannot make known was much in want of Provisions and Water, which it is

² TNA, ADM 1/9/7, Saumarez to Admiralty, 16 August 1809.

³ MA 20/30, 'Obervator' Anonymous writer) to Lord Mulgrave, 13 July 1808.

true were sent, but from what cause I am not informed did not arrive until too late'. This made him especially worried for the Baltic fleet: 'from this circumstances I cannot suppress my anxiety when I look to the Ships in the Baltic, and employed on such detached services from each other, blockading the coasts of Holstein, Jutland, the Island of Zealand and the different Islands near it, the indispensable necessity of timely supplies being sent from here to that quarter'.⁴

He was right to be concerned. The dispersal of the Baltic fleet was indeed a serious obstacle. In 1808 for example, there were ships at Gothenburg (Flemish Roads), in the Sound, in the Belt, at the entrance of the Great Belt, off the Skaw, off Christiansand and in the Gulf of Finland, with other ships in convoys to Karlskrona and Stockholm.⁵ Indeed, even the ships in the Sound and Belt were dispersed over large distances, often on separate duties, as the below plan for the protection of trade illustrates.

Table 3: Plan for the protection of Trade

Station	Line	Frigates	Sloops	Gun Brigs
Cruizers – on the South Shore of the Baltic from the Gulf of Livorna to Colberg in Prussia		1	2	
Intermediately between the above cruisers and Point of rendezvous in Sweden			3	
Off the Rendezvous			1	1
In the Port of Rendezvous to give Instructions				1
Off Bornholm and Eartholm			2	1
Off Rugen				1
Between Moen & Falsterbo		1	1	1
To receive Convoys from the Belt between Femeren and the Frindelen, and to take convoys from the point of Rendezvous to Nyborg	2	1	2	1
	2	3	11	6

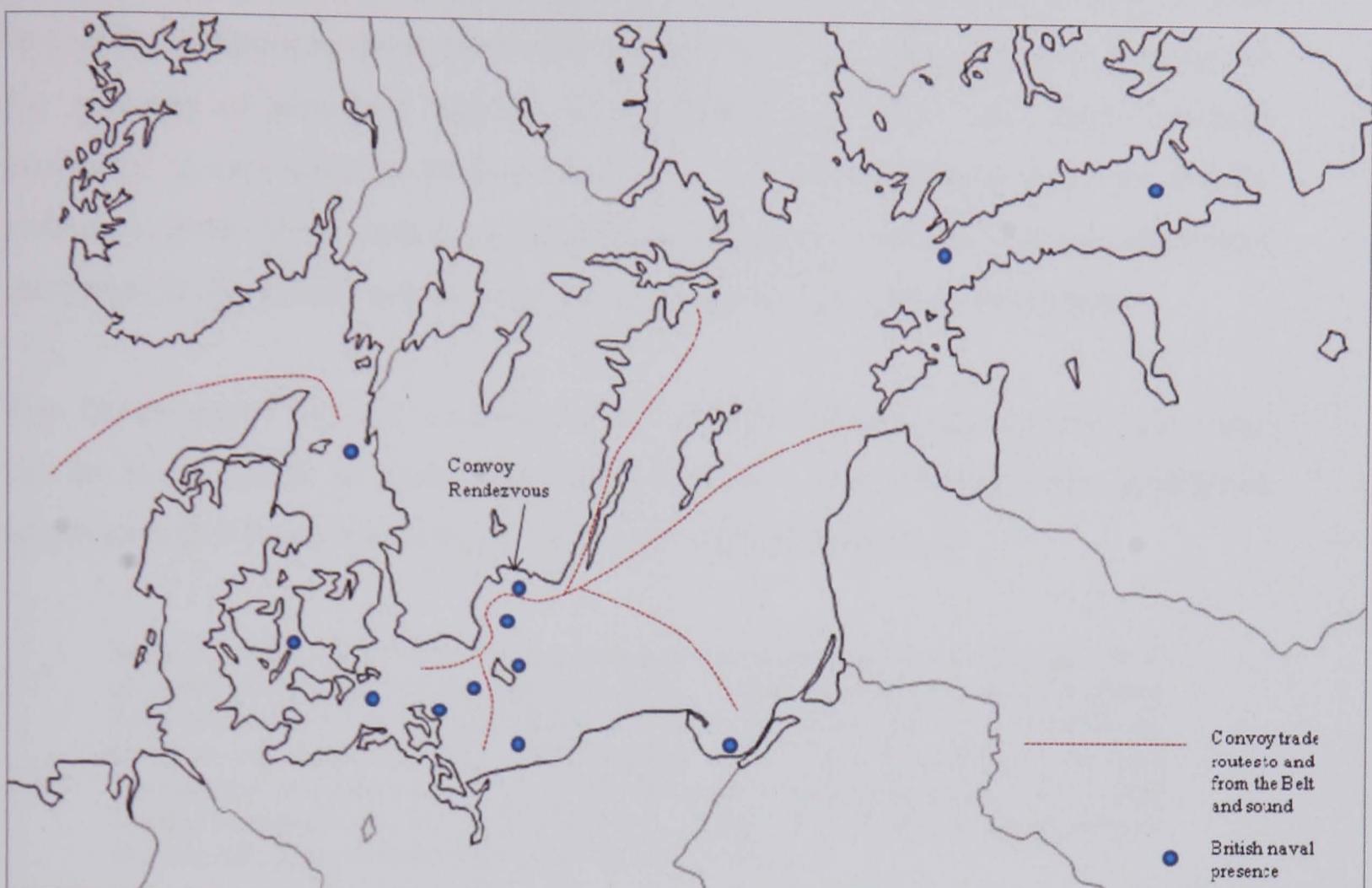
Source: SRO, HA 93/6/1/697, Plan for the protection of trade, Keats to Hood, 6 May 1809.

Figure 4 demonstrates the dispersal for the protection of trade in the Sound and Belt.

⁴ MA 20/30, 'Obervator' (Anonymous writer) to Lord Mulgrave, 13 July 1808.

⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/115, Fleet disposition, 24 May 1808.

Figure 4: British naval dispersal in the Baltic 1808



The anonymous writer was not alone in fearing for the fleet. After one year's service in the Baltic, the physician to the fleet warned measures would need to be taken 'to prevent from their suffering by Scurvy, which the quality of the water, and the humidity of the atmosphere, in that climate so much encourage'.⁶ Saumarez himself anticipated problems as the fleet moved to the peripheries of the Baltic Sea, particularly in 1809. 'Apprehension of the great difficulties that will exist, in keeping up the supplies of the Squadron when in the upper parts of the Baltic', he wrote; 'I cannot too early draw the attention of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to that important object'.⁷

The 'Observator' left Mulgrave in no doubt as to the potential consequences. 'I am aware the large ships are fitted out for 5 months' he wrote, 'but when it is considered the small Vessels are numerous and provisioned for much less time, the will sooner cry out for relief, and if they should unluckily not happen to be on the station, to be supplied from

⁶ TNA, ADM 1/8/265-6, Dr. Jamison to Saumarez, 23 April 1809.

⁷ TNA, ADM 1/8/310, Saumarez to Admiralty, 10 May 1809.

the large ships, their wants will be magnified in a London newspaper and afford a good subject for an Editor to throw his invectives, besides when the large ships are reduced to the necessity of affording supplies the general want will become rapid, therefore precaution is very early to be purchased, and as there are many months yet to look forward to in the Baltic supplies eventually must be sent'.⁸ Not only is this an interesting prediction, it also reveals politics being increasingly guided by popular opinion.

The 'Observator's' fears for the Baltic fleet did not end there. Sweden could supply water but not bread, spirits or wine, while the fleet's sheer size would consume prodigious quantities which it was not certain could be procured in Scandinavia.

Sweden is unable to afford the necessary supplies our Ships are accustomed to have, & of the same quantity. Bread especially being of an extreme coarse quality, Spirits exported from this country chiefly Prize Brandy, and very dear, Wine from the Mediterranean hardly any to be got, these my Lord are material Articles, and in Victualling of the most consequence: the other parts are material and entitled to due consideration which I must respectfully entreat may be considered in time; Water can be supplied from Gothenburg river, or other parts of Sweden that need not be considered.⁹

Saumarez' provisioning efforts would face the hostility of the surrounding states. It was common practice for naval fleets to procure supplies locally when on distant stations. Throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, naval squadrons in the East Indies and West Indies used sea provisions contractors who were paid to supply all of the fleet's victualling needs. With Russia, Prussia and Denmark all hostile to Britain, securing sea provisions contracts for all varieties of foodstuffs would be impossible. As the anonymous writer observed, only Sweden remained on friendly terms, a country not known for its vast quantities of arable land. Nor did it have the agricultural infrastructure to cope with the demands of a Royal Navy fleet numbering thousands of men.¹⁰

⁸ MA 20/30, 'Obervator' (Anonymous writer) to Lord Mulgrave, 13 July 1808.

⁹ MA 20/30, 'Obervator' (Anonymous writer) to Lord Mulgrave, 13 July 1808.

¹⁰ Indeed, Sweden did not have enough grain to supply its own population. Sweden, so dependent on grain from north Germany, was devastated when this supply was cut off by the British blockade in the Baltic. George Foy, a British businessman and agent in Stockholm, wrote to Saumarez in 1811, reporting Sweden's intense happiness that Saumarez had allowed the grain trade to continue under special license, that he had 'occasion to see Baron D'Engestrom very often now, and in a conversation with him to day, he desired me to say that His Government is most gratefully sensible of the value of Your Excellency's humane motive in granting the licenses in question to allow the trade with Pomerania... This years' Crop of Grain has almost entirely failed in Sweden, at least in the greater part of the country, and consequently

Throughout the conflict in the Baltic, a Royal Naval squadron arriving would double the population of nearly all Swedish ports, including the second largest city of Gothenburg, with a population of only 12,000.¹¹ The Swedish historian Ingvar Anderson wrote that ‘according to calculations, about three-quarters of Sweden’s population was directly employed in agriculture at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Yet farming was still based largely on medieval methods’. This had become evident when Sweden lost the grain-producing Baltic provinces at the Peace of Nystad in 1721.¹² From the 1790s there were attempts to resolve these problems, but they had not been resolved by Saumarez’ arrival.

Indeed, Sweden was dependent on supplies from northern Germany for subsistence. After receiving a letter from Mr. Christopher Fay, Agent for Victualling from Norway at Gothenburg, wrote in 1809 ‘representing the distressed situation of his Country for want of Provisions’, it was ordered that ‘all British Cruizers [were] to suffer all Vessels laden with Provisions destined for Norway, to proceed free and unmolested’.¹³ In November, 40 licenses were granted for importing cargoes of grain into Norway.¹⁴ As Glete has pointed out, the Baltic region was ‘to a large extent a sparsely populated region unsuitable for large scale military operations on land. Large armies could not be maintained through local resources and had to supplied from outside’.¹⁵

In other theatres such as the West Indies and Mediterranean, commanding naval officers had the benefit of merchant contacts built up around repeated British naval involvement in the region. On arrival in the Mediterranean in 1800, Keith’s Agent Victualler could write to him that ‘it has been the prevailing practise before...for the ships to take live bullocks aboard which they slaughtered themselves’. Commanders and administrators

these indulgencies, whilst the season admits of getting grain into the Country from the Baltic Ports, are of the greatest importance’. SRO, HA 93/6/1/1874, Foy to Saumarez, 5 September 1811.

¹¹ Stockholm was the one exception with a population of 70,000. The Baltic fleet would rarely visit Stockholm however.

¹² Ingvar Andersson, *A History of Sweden, Translated from the Swedish by Carolyn Hannay* (Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1955) pp. 297-9.

¹³ TNA, FO 22/60/9, Barrow to Bagot, 26 September 1809.

¹⁴ TNA, FO 22/60/21, Office of Committee of Privy Council for Trade, to William Hamilton, 30th November 1809.

¹⁵ Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations*, p. 295.

stationed in the eastern Mediterranean, could draw upon decades of seafaring and provisioning knowledge of the area. In May the Agent Victualler in Port Mahon, James Yeo, wrote to Keith that, 'it has always been a practise to put three or four Galleons [sic] of Brandy into the Syracuse Wine to make it keep in summer, whereas the Masala wine will keep in any climate and any length of time'.¹⁶

Knowledge of local conditions, merchants, and victualling practices were invaluable in the Mediterranean; they were absent in the Baltic. As Nelson himself found in his brief voyage through the Baltic in 1801, the last British fleet to enter the Baltic had been in 1727, since when ships of the line had become larger, with greater draught of water and had more numerous crews. Knight points to the consequent inconveniences for Nelson; when Admiral Totty arrived to reinforce Nelson, he found vessels 'in want of fuel and cannot purchase any, as their bills are non-negotiable', whilst the governor of Bornholm refused to supply the British ships moored off the coast with vegetables. Cattle were eventually supplied from Danzig, though there were difficulties and delays. Nelson, an astute organizer as well as a celebrated tactician, kept a firm financial hand on victualling matters; 'it must be noted that the lowest price & best provisions must both combine', he urged when in the Baltic. Aware of the problems he had encountered, and in a letter that can be read as a warning for the Baltic fleet that would arrive seven years later, he commented on Baltic provisioning, 'such iniquity, I fear, has been going on in Denmark that the victualling must look out before they pay the horrid bills'.¹⁷ The inclusion of an Agent Victualler with the fleet in 1808 suggests that the Victualling Board had paid attention to Nelson's experiences.

The limited provisions that had in 1801 been procured locally proved to be of inferior quality. 'It was afterwards found' it reported in 1801, 'that the Hides and Tallow from being too long kept on board (notwithstanding all possible means were adopted and ordered by the Commander in Chief and Rear Admiral Totty) were generally, when returned to Mr Booth, stinking, full of maggots and so very offensive as to be complained

¹⁶ NMM, KEI/L/2/68-9, James Yeo to Keith, 10 May 1800.

¹⁷ Knight, *Pursuit of Victory* pp. 395-6.

of as a nuisance, by the orders of the Stores contiguous to that in which they were lodged, which obliged him to dispose of them, for one third of what they would have fetched, had they been returned in good condition; and that the Cattle, from unforeseen and unavoidable causes, owing to the weather, and their having, with a scarcity of hay, been kept on board ship longer than was at first imagined, naturally experienced a diminution in their Weight'.¹⁸ This was about ship-board management rather than problems with the victualling system. In addition however, problems procuring good quality provisions existed as Saumarez' fleet entered the Baltic. The Consul in Elsinore, Charles Fenwick, confirmed this in April 1808: 'provisions do not appear plenty in the last mentioned Provinces [Holstein, Schleswick, Jutland, Funen]. I even think I remarked a scarcity of Bread which is proved by this circumstance'. On the subject of beef he complained that 'the Danish Government had collected much, and forbid the exportation'.¹⁹ Procuring supplies locally would be difficult, and for the majority of foodstuffs, Saumarez's fleet would have to rely on supplies from Britain.²⁰

The 'Observator' reminded Mulgrave of the victualling problems that existed in 1807. 'The fleet under Admiral Gambier at Copenhagen altho' victualled a sailing from England with 5 months provisions were from unforeseen circumstances put at 2/3 allowance of Bread about 2 Months after their arrival and shortly after that the Capitulation of the City, this is an evident proof that resource should be sent early to guard against every necessity and the stigmas of opposition', he wrote. With this in mind, he urged Mulgrave to arrange for supplies to be sent out immediately, especially given the huge number of men to be fed. 'From the enquiries I have made and information received', he wrote, 'the number of Men employed in the Baltic on board ships amount to at least 11 thousand, this is an alarming number to take care of, and on whom a careful eye should be directed. Your Lordship may not be aware of the quantity of Provisions necessary to revictual the ships for 4 weeks, at the rate of 11,000 Men Daily'. True to

¹⁸ NMM, ADM DP/21, 20 October 1801.

¹⁹ TNA, FO 22/58/98-99, Charles Fenwick to George Canning, 28 April 1808.

²⁰ Sea provisions contracts could not be brokered; however Saumarez did manage to secure the supply of some individual species from Sweden, namely fresh meat. Local procurement, even if on a limited level, helped supplement the deliveries from Deptford. Indeed, the supply continued even after Sweden had declared war on Britain after 1810. This episode will be covered fully in chapter 7.

form, he included what he thought would cover the fleet, acknowledging that this was merely ‘a stubborn fact’.²¹

Table 4: Recommended provisions for 11,000 men for 4 weeks

Bread	308,000 lbs	Or 2744 cwt
Beef	88,000 lbs	22,000 4lb pieces
Pork	88,000 lbs	44,000 2lb pieces
Flour	66,000 lbs	
Suet	11,000 lbs	
Butter or Sugar	16,500 lbs	
Spirits	19,236 Galls	Or 226 Puncheons
Pease	1,375 Bushels	
Oatmeal	1031 bushels	
Sugar in line of oatmeal	16,500 lbs	
Rice or cheese	33,500 lbs	

Mulgrave’s response did not hint of a man completely in control, merely noting on the back of the letter, ‘I hope this is already taken care of’.²²

Previous Precedents and the Confidence of Naval Administration

And yet, as war with Russia became a certainty, the Admiralty was confident in its abilities to permanently provision a fleet in the Baltic. Mulgrave was bombarded with information concerning the Baltic fleet, so much so that at one point he was forced to reply that ‘with respect to the Baltick Service I consider every consideration relating to it as closed’.²³ For example, in March he had been advised that Uarberg Harbour in the Cattegat, being little frequented ‘may be a very useful rendezvous & refuge to the small Cruizers employed on that station, and particularly for transports’.²⁴

²¹ MA 20/30, ‘Obervator’ Anonymous writer) to Lord Mulgrave, 13 July 1808.

²² MA 20/30, ‘Obervator’ Anonymous writer) to Lord Mulgrave, 13 July 1808. This no doubt had been followed up by an unofficial communication with the adjacent Victualling Board office in Somerset House (more on unofficial communication in Chapters 4 and 5).

²³ MA 20/318, Lord Mulgrave to Rear Admiral Essington, 4 May 1808.

²⁴ MA 20/211, John Coulson to Lord Mulgrave, 20 March 1808.

Partly his responses were down to frustration, but his refusal to go along with many of his contemporaries' fears for the victualling of the Baltic fleet derived from his awareness that such operations would be possible. The Admiralty was confident in the knowledge that similarly scaled operations had been done before, albeit in different circumstances. Periodically, throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, a fleet of up to 20,000 seamen had been provisioned in the Mediterranean Sea. The Mediterranean was similar to the Baltic in many ways; both were insular seas, in which British naval forces found themselves surrounded by hostile shores. In both, the provisioning of British seamen would not only be an administrative challenge but also a task involving diplomatic skill and economic awareness. British naval activity in both was concerned primarily with the protection of British trade which was of paramount importance. In both theatres, the naval war would cease to be defensive: it was in Portugal, through the Mediterranean, and in the Baltic especially that the Continental System would first be attacked and ultimately defeated.²⁵

The Mediterranean fleet commanded by Lord Keith between 1800 and 1802 faced Britain's sternest challenge to naval superiority during the Napoleonic Wars, and was beset with challenges of isolation and insecure supply lines. Keith and his squadron were responsible for maintaining the blockade, transporting and supplying amphibious operations under General Abercromby in the Levant and also co-operating with the Austrian army under General Melas in northern Italy. Keith would proclaim early in his Mediterranean tenure, that 'they declare that they cannot take Genoa without me, nor feed their army on the coast'.²⁶ Keith's ability to victual his forces, as well as the Austrian army for much of the campaign, was of vital importance to its success.

The Mediterranean was therefore a useful precedent for those planning the provisioning of the Baltic fleet. As in the Baltic a small proportion of supplies would be sourced locally; flour and wheat from Egypt, fresh beef from Naples and Leghorn (now Livorno), and water from the Beys (governors) of northern Africa. Keith wrote to Hibil Sarlasty,

²⁵ James Davey, 'Within Hostile Shores: Victualling the Royal Navy in European Waters during the Napoleonic Wars', *The International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 21 No. 2 (December 2009).

²⁶ NMM, ELL/139, Keith to Minto, 10 May 1800.

British vice-consul, Tetuan, requesting a supply of water for the fleet; asking whether he would ‘wait on the governor and request that my fleet, now very large may take water at Mazari, Mazah, and any other places where we can get it’.²⁷ Three victuallers, with a combined tonnage of 1,196 tons, were employed conveying cattle from Leghorn to Minorca.²⁸ A slaughterhouse was set-up in Lisbon for the purpose of victualling the Navy in the Mediterranean.²⁹

However, the majority of supplies needed in the Mediterranean came from Britain. The system for the remote supply of provisions was in essence very simple and was similar in all European theatres. The Commander in Chief, in this case Lord Keith, would tell the Admiralty of his forthcoming needs. The Admiralty would then inform the Victualling Board of the fleet’s requirements who would then organise the manufacture of the said amount, whilst ordering the Transport Board to secure the necessary tonnage. This supply system which was in place in the Mediterranean throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars would be repeated in the Baltic from 1808 through to 1812 and characterised the logistical base for all major British naval operations in stations close enough to Britain to be supplied from the victualling bases there. In the Mediterranean, for example, between February 1801 and January 1802, there were three huge shipments, each containing over 3,000 tons of provisions, sent from Portsmouth to Gibraltar.³⁰ From here, permanent victuallers with a combined tonnage of over 10,000 relayed these provisions across the Mediterranean, in particular to the focal point of victualling operations, Minorca.³¹ Secure in the knowledge that similar numbers of seamen to those that would be stationed in the Baltic had been adequately provisioned, the victualling officials were confident of their ability to provision a fleet in the Baltic.

²⁷ NMM, KEI/L/23/1, Keith to Hibil Sarlasty, 22 July 1799.

²⁸ NMM, KEI/L/1/143-5, TB to Keith, 8 March 1800.

²⁹ NMM, KEI/L/23, Keith to James Yeo, 8 January 1800.

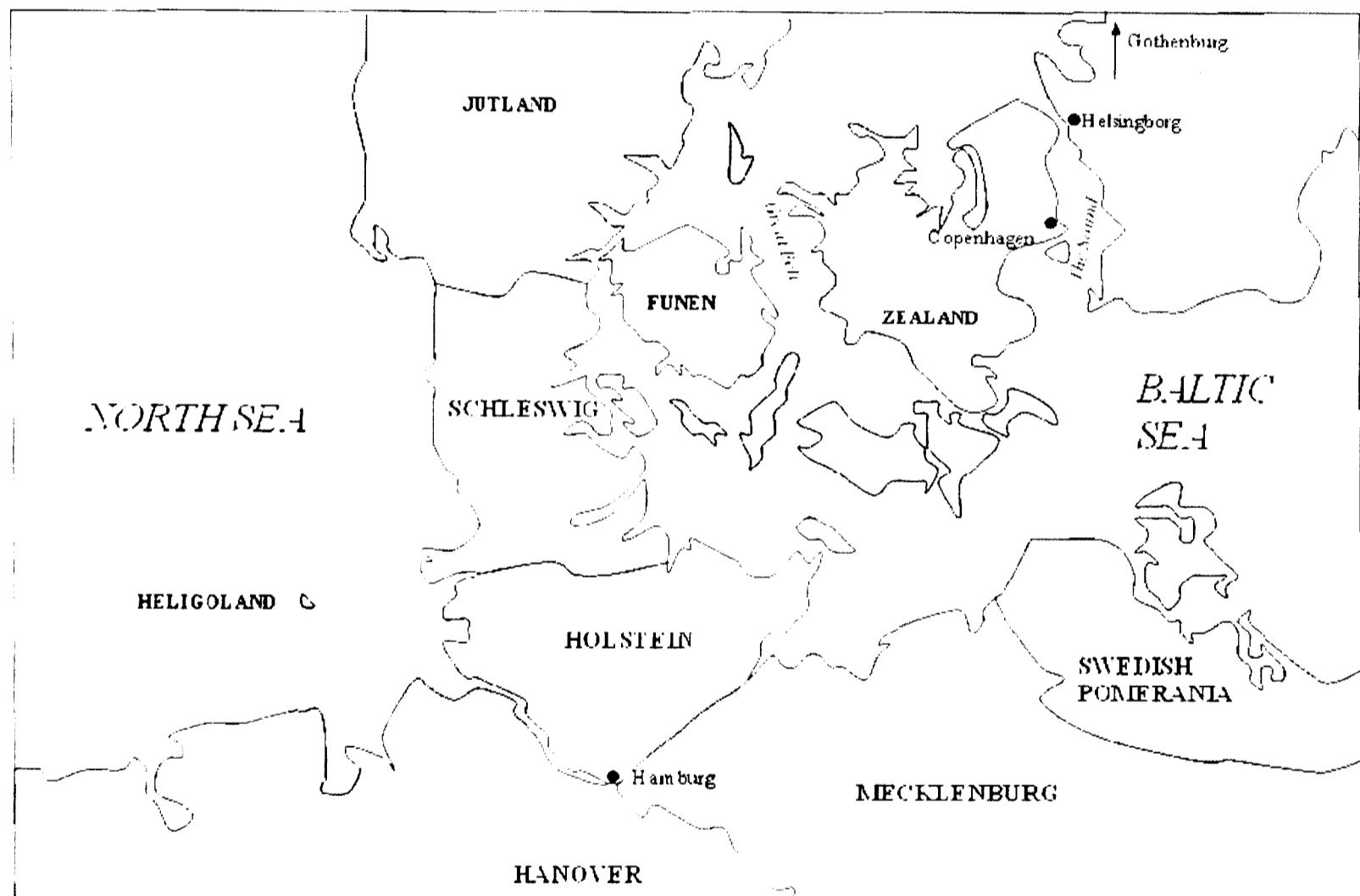
³⁰ TNA, ADM 111/159, 160, VB Minutes. There was one Victualling ‘delivery’ of this size on February 10 1801, 9 June 1801 and September 1801 (there was a following delivery on the 14 April 1802, see TNA, ADM 111/163).

³¹ NMM, KEI/L/1/143-5, TB to Keith, 8 March.

Concerns for the Fleet: Geographical and Climatic

Victualling the Baltic fleet would prove a much tougher task than in the Mediterranean for a number of reasons. The Victualling Board and Admiralty officials appear over-confident if we consider the other challenges that they faced. Firstly, there were the supply routes to the Baltic. There were two routes from the North Sea to the Baltic, through the Sound and through the Belt.

Figure 5: Entrances to the Baltic



The Sound was the traditional maritime route, being a shorter and quicker passage than the Belt. However, the narrow waters, likelihood of calms and proximity to Danish ports made the passage particularly vulnerable to attacks of Danish gunboats. Denmark was in a position to wreak havoc on the Baltic fleet's supply lines; indeed the Danish threat to British shipping in the Baltic was one of the key reasons for the Baltic fleet's existence.

Between the years 1808 to 1812 British shipping, victuallers and transports struggled to pass through the Sound. Privateer craft based at Copenhagen constantly harassed any passing shipping. Even ships of the line vulnerable in a calm. Captain John Harvey Boteler recounted how the ‘the *Africa*, 64, got a terrible mauling at the hands of the Danish gunboats, who caught her in a calm. There was a whole fleet of boats, she unable to get shot at them...and in this condition the fleet was fired at for two or three hours, the ensign shot away more than once; in fact it was down so long the Danes declared she had stuck, and claimed her as a prize. The breeze fortunately sprung up, and the ship got her anchor up, and the fight soon ended, and the Danes rowed away well satisfied with their work’.³² Just as a convoy in January 1809 was lost in the Malmo Channel, the following year in July 1810 Danish gunboats captured 47 merchant vessels off the Skaw. Saumarez’ supply lines were thus at worst precarious, at best unreliable.

This was a frustration for Saumarez, ‘particularly when the Intricacy of the passages of the Belts and Sound are considered and the various obstacles thrown in the way by the numerous Flotillas of the enemy’.³³ Strongly supported convoys could make the passage through the Sound, especially once the threat of Danish gun boats and privateers had been neutralised. Saumarez wrote in 1809 that ‘in consequence of the great Risque, and Danger, attending Convoys passing thro’ the Belt, I have judged it most advisable to send directions to Wingo Sound to the Captains and Commanders of any of His Majesty’s Ships or Vessels charged with convoys, to proceed thro’ the Sound *or* Great Belt according as the state of the wind and weather may render it most advisable’.³⁴

Ships passing into or from the Baltic therefore passed through the Great Belt instead which, although less dangerous, meant a slower passage. The Belt was unknown waters for most of the fleet’s captains. A fleet in the Mediterranean could benefit from decades of Royal Navy action within its coastline; the waters were well known to those who navigated it. In the Baltic however the hydrography of the area was still being surveyed. Rear Admiral Keats, a veteran of the 1801 and 1807 campaigns and a man chosen

³² Bonner-Smith, *Captain John Harvey Boteler*, pp. 13-14.

³³ TNA, ADM 1/7/398-405, Saumarez to Admiralty, 21 November 1808.

³⁴ TNA, ADM 1/8/431, Saumarez to Admiralty, 31 May 1809, [italics added].

because of his experience of the reason, pressed for continual mapping to be done, as ships passed through the Great Belt. ‘As it is deemed of national Importance to obtain the most correct knowledge of the Navigation of the Great Belt’, he wrote in a memo to his subordinates:

the Several Captains and Commanders are desired to combine that object as much as circumstances will permit with the important one of their instructions, and neglect no opportunity of Sounding and laying down the different rocks and shoals as well by land marks...noting leading marks for the fair channel where they can be laid down, the rise, strength and set of tides, influence of the wind...and it is believed a more correct chart than any hitherto in use, may be made from the survey and remarks.³⁵

Shallow and rocky, the Belt was dangerous to navigate.³⁶ Crowhurst estimates that, ‘in consequence it was not unusual for ships to take up to six weeks to pass through the Belt’.³⁷ In truth, provisions moved much faster. Even at the height of victualling problems in 1809, it was never the transportation of the victuals that was problematic. One typical convoy of victuallers sailed from the Nore on the 13 June, arrived in the Belt on the 1 July 1809 and then reached Saumarez in the eastern Baltic (Nargen Island) on the 21 July.³⁸ Six weeks is therefore an exaggeration. However the threat to British supply lines was consistently to be a problem.

The voyage through the Great Belt was no less threatening than the Sound, with large numbers of gunboats based at Nyborg and other Danish ports. Captain Graves, of the *Brunswick*, wrote to Saumarez in August 1808, after only a few months of action in the Baltic, that ‘the increasing force of the enemy’s Gunboats render it absolutely necessary that convoys should be very strongly protected’.³⁹ Captain John Harvey Boteler observed the difficulty of convoying large numbers of vessels through the Belt, ‘we were mostly employed conveying large bodies of merchant vessels through the Great Belt, and arduous service; the passage was swarming with privateers and row-boats’.⁴⁰ Rear Admiral Keats warned his captains that, ‘it is my direction that the Ships and Vessels

³⁵ TNA, ADM 80/145, Keats, Memo, 16 September 1808.

³⁶ Albion, *Forests and Seapower*, p. 164.

³⁷ Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade*, p. 74.

³⁸ See convoy of *Curlew*, TNA, ADM 7/791/118.

³⁹ TNA, ADM 1/6/401-2, Captain Gates to Saumarez, August 3 1808.

⁴⁰ Bonner-Smith, *Captain John Harvey Boteler* p. 10.

under my orders in the Belt are kept in readiness for action at the Shortest notice, that the most vigilant look-out be established, and in calms and light winds that guard be showed especially in those directions that is may be more particularly requisite to guard against surprise from'.⁴¹

Adverse currents also hampered ships passing through the Sound and the Belt, sometimes delaying communications and individual voyages for weeks. In July 1808, Saumarez wrote to his wife, reporting that he was 'proceeding thro' the Great Belt, but such is the contrariety of Currents that with a fresh breeze and favourable, we scarcely make any progress'. A year later he would again write

A favourable breeze brought us to the Entrance of the Baltic but here I fear we are likely to be detained by the adverse currents which are so strong that even with a fresh breeze we can make no way against them, and we have been obliged to anchor at different times – it is very trying to our Patience, anxious as I have [been] for some time to join the ships in the Baltic; a large Convoy is following us under the same predicament, and I wish only a few of the wealthy Merchants were on board to witness the causes of the delay to their Trade – without so unreasonably ascribing it to the negligence of Officers.⁴²

Captain Graves of the *Goliath* wrote to Hood in 1808 speaking of the difficulty in passing through the Belt. 'I cannot help expressing the great degree of embarrassment I feel', he wrote, 'in the responsibility that will attach itself to me, in going through the difficult navigation of the Belt without Pilots'.⁴³ Even beyond the Sound and Belt there were further dangers. A number of French corsairs operated continuously during the period from bases on the south coast of the Baltic.⁴⁴

It is easy to forget now but geographical factors played a huge role in 18th century, in particular the extreme difficulty in making progress against the wind.⁴⁵ Prevailing westerly winds made entering the Baltic easier than leaving it. And indeed, ships travelling in either direction could spend days waiting for suitable winds. This could

⁴¹ TNA, ADM 80/145, Keats, Memo, 15 September 1808.

⁴² Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 8 July 1808, 24 May 1809, Voelcker, *Sauamrez vs. Napoleon*, p. 46.

⁴³ NMM, MKH/110, Captain Puget, HMS Goliath, to Hood, 17 May 1808.

⁴⁴ A.N. Ryan, 'The Defence of British Trade with the Baltic 1808-13', *English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXIV (1959) p. 449.

⁴⁵ N.A.M. Rodger, 'Weather, Geography and Naval Power in the Age of Sail', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.22, No.2, (1999), p. 178.

delay victuallers and putting at risk the whole fleet. Saumarez wrote in 1808 that ‘the contrary Winds have prevented these last five weeks the arrival of the Victuallers I expected from England with the Provisions for the Squadron under my command. It was not until four days since that they have been enabled to join Rear Admiral Sir Samuel Hood off Moen Island, and I waited here for those supplies in order to proceed off Hango Add and join the Squadron of His Swedish Majesty’.⁴⁶

Both the Sound and Belt were treacherous routes, for different reasons, and to different extents. Mistakes made in 1808 were not repeated in 1809. In late 1809, Saumarez contemplated the relative merits of sending merchant ships under only a light convoy, to ensure their arrival in Britain. As he commented to the Admiralty, he wondered:

whether under the present circumstances of the Season I am of opinion His Majesty’s Ships may with safety be sent upon this service...I do not consider it in the safety of His Majesty’s Ships appointed for the protection of the Trade and those stationed in the Belt to defend them against the Attack of the Danish Gun Boats, that they should be ordered to remain in the Baltic to a later Period, particularly after the disastrous events that occurred last season, when so many of His Majesty’s Ships were lost, and others exposed to imminent *Danger*, besides the number of valuable Vessels which were wrecked and fell into the hands of the enemy.⁴⁷

It was always to be a difficult choice between the threat of the enemy and the threat from the climate. The Baltic Sea, not known for its serenity, made victims of many ships. In 1808, a convoy was lost in the Sound when trying to force its way through the ice. In 1810, the *Minotaur* was wrecked returning from the Baltic. In 1811 the last convoy to leave the Baltic was hit by a storm, with the loss *St George*, *Defence* and *Hero*. This ‘Melancholy Fate’, as termed by A.N. Ryan, shocked the nation: ‘the deaths of 2,000 men of the Baltic fleet were a loss heavier by far than those suffered in any of the great sea-battles of the Revolutionary or Napoleonic Wars’.⁴⁸

Depending on the weather, the last convoys would leave the eastern Baltic by early October to avoid winter storms and the sea freezing over. Every winter the Baltic would freeze over for between two to three months bringing further problems, as the majority of

⁴⁶ SRO, HA 93/6/1/237, Saumarez to Baron de Rajalin, 5 August 1808.

⁴⁷ TNA, ADM 1/9/306-7, Saumarez to Admiralty, 7 December 1809.

⁴⁸ A.N. Ryan, ‘The Melancholy Fate of the Baltic Ships in 1811’, *MM*, Vol.50, No.2, (May 1964), p. 131.

the fleet sailed back to English Ports, leaving a number of smaller ships to be victualled in dock in the Baltic. ‘The proportion must be calculated for the time it will be necessary for the large Ships to remain in the Country’, wrote George Hope, anticipating the winter months ahead in the Baltic, ‘and for the number of smaller vessels that may be kept out during the winter months’.⁴⁹ On the one hand, this meant that the fleet returning to Britain could rest, and re-victual, before heading back to the Baltic the following spring. On the other, it left a considerable challenge of timing to the Commander in Chief. Should he return early, ensuring his fleet’s safety from storms and ice, or should he risk the latter, in the hope of ensuring every last merchant ship could be convoyed home? Such decisions weighed heavily with Saumarez and his written conversations with Baltic merchants would often take an exasperated tone as the year neared its end.

Dealing with the ice during those winter months lead to further victualling problems. Keats spoke of ‘the impediments arising from the Season’, in particular ‘the difficulties I experience in providing the Ships with Provisions and water especially’.⁵⁰ Talking of a convoy, Captain Bathurst reported that HMS *Magnet* had run aground, and that he was ‘sorry to say that the whole got so entangled in the ice as not to be able to get through’.⁵¹ The process of removing a ship from the ice is recounted well by Boteler:

It was getting rather late in the year when we returned to Wingoe Sound, and I well remember thrashing through the ice, occasionally brought up by it, and our having capstan bars over the bows to save the copper: all the fore part of the ship was covered with ice, the ropes so frozen as with difficulty to run through the blocks. However, we got into Wingoe, in perfect smooth water, and one morning there was a sort of film over it, and by the evening thick ice had formed, and next morning the ship was hard and fast in ice five or six inches thick...I don’t know how long we were frozen up, but I recollect the fun of clearing a transport of provisions with our boats on skids. In the end we were relieved by ice-saws, sent I believe from England. We set to work, and by cutting our squares of ice, which with the capstan bars, handspikes, and hooks we shoved under ice on either side, till we made a canal, and warped the ship to open water outside.⁵²

⁴⁹ TNA, ADM 1/6/382, Captain George Hope, Memo, 1 August 1808.

⁵⁰ SRO, HA 93/6/1/458, Keats to Saumarez 28 December 1808.

⁵¹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/477, Captain Walter Bathurst to Bertie, 7 January 1809.

⁵² Bonner-Smith, *Captain John Harvey Boteler*, pp. 39-40.

Victuallers too would be vulnerable, such as when the *President* victualler was lost in December 1809.⁵³ The loss of a victualler could cause serious problems for isolated fleets. Dixon wrote that 'I am seriously concerned to acquaint you that the *President* Vict. One of two under the escort of the *Osprey* & considerably the largest was wrecked on the night of the 11th during a very heavy Gale of wind...she sailed upon the Rocks & in a very short time was dashed to pieces'. The *Theo* victualler arrived with the *Osprey* and entered port also in great peril. Dixon sent information detailing the quantities of provisions left in the Baltic, leaving it to the Admiralty to judge whether or not a further supply should be sent out.⁵⁴ The following year, Captain Honeyman of the *Ardent* reported 'the loss of the *Jean Transport*', and asked for another to replace it 'without delay, in order that the Island of Anholt may not suffer from this accident...we have to request you will forthwith provide us with another Vessel, capable of conveying to Anholt a supply of Provisions to the extent of about 180 tons'.⁵⁵ These problems with victualling were compounded by the fact that there was no naval base in the Baltic. The Mediterranean benefited from a number of British bases in particular Gibraltar on its western edge, and Port Mahon in Minorca, where victualling operations were centred. Alongside their lack of precedents to guide them, Saumarez' Baltic fleet did not have the luxury of British naval ports. Moreover, the Victualling Board had been able to transport fleets of victuallers through the Bay of Biscay to Lisbon, but had never attempted the same through passages as dangerous as the Great Belt. As Ryan argued, 'the want of a base in the Baltic was not as serious as had been the want of a base within the Mediterranean; but it had its inconveniences and perils'.⁵⁶

There would also be problems securing tonnage to transport provisions to the Baltic fleet. As we will see in Chapter 5, the victualling system was dependent on hiring tonnage to transport provisions. James Thornton, the agent in South Shields for Henley and Sons, ship-owners who chartered their ships out to the British government agent, wrote of the difficulty he had had in securing tonnage to go to the Baltic in September, particularly

⁵³ TNA, ADM 1/9/349, Dixon to Saumarez, 16 December 1809.

⁵⁴ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1227, Dixon to Saumarez, 14 December 1809.

⁵⁵ TNA, ADM 110/62/390, VB to the TB, 24 September 1810.

⁵⁶ Ryan, 'Melancholy Fate', p. 131.

places away from the main commerce routes. 'I have used every Endeavour to get [a] Vessel at our Port and the Neighbouring Ports without affect, Money will not tempt them to go to the Anholt to discharge Cargo this day of the year' he wrote. The climate and the likelihood of being taken by Danish gunboats were huge disincentives for ship-owners deciding whether to allow their vessels to travel to the Baltic. Thornton went on to say that a friend of his 'did write for vessels there and offered 50/ ton to load scotch coals... I hope we shall have answer tomorrow or Sunday, I still flatter my self that money will tempt some of them in Scotland'.⁵⁷ Indeed, two days later the agent believed he had found a vessel to go, but was informed that 'I am sorry to say I have received letters from Leith that the owners of the Ship Christian as advised to you 24th have refused to let her go to the Anholt... Gentlemen, I am doubtful shall not get vessel to carry coal direct to the Anholt that use every means I can till I here from you to the contrary'.⁵⁸ Two weeks later after considerable delay, the *Ann* came forward to supply the necessary tonnage, but even then on the condition that it would go to Gothenburg first and indeed at some price: 'I am to be paid the sum of one hundred Pounds per keel in full on the safe delivery of the Cargo' recorded the ship owner.⁵⁹ Providing transport tonnage for Baltic operations would require careful management between 1808 and 1812.

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The challenge for the Victualling Board in supplying the Baltic fleet was considerable. Mulgrave may have underestimated the challenge when he hoped provisioning arrangements were in order in July 1808 but the Victualling board was certainly sure of its ability to transport large amounts of victuals to a foreign fleet. It was confident in its ability to forge new victualling contacts, especially with Britain's allies the Swedes. Yet problems deriving from the geography, weather and climate would influence Baltic provisioning throughout the 1808-1812 period, as this chapter has demonstrated, and chapters 6 and 7 will also show. The challenges facing the Baltic fleet in 1808 in ensuring regular and quality provisions must not be underestimated nor forgotten in any analysis

⁵⁷ NMM, HNL 13/17 f.7 22 September 1809.

⁵⁸ NMM, HNL 13/17 f.10, 29 September 1809.

⁵⁹ NMM, HNL 13/17 f.11, 9 October 1809.

of its success. It is important that we consider the challenges faced by the Baltic fleet since they greatly influenced victualling decision taken throughout 1808 to 1812, but particularly in 1808 and 1809. The task would be taken up by the commanders in the Baltic, in particular Sir James Saumarez. More importantly it was be taken up by the naval administration of Great Britain, and it is to the naval administration that this thesis will turn to next.

Chapter 4: Naval Administration and the Provisioning of Fleets Abroad

Every neglect of service since I have been in office has originated in London. If the public officers on whose orders every preparation and movement depends, are not diligent, regular and punctual, it is of little consequence what your admirals and generals are.

- Charles Middleton to Lord Shelburne, 11 September 1782¹

The importance of a well-functioning naval administration to ships at sea was not lost on Charles Middleton, a man who spent much of his career reforming the civilian branch of the Royal Navy. As he witnessed during the American war of 1776-83, there was little advantage having ships and fleets on active service if the infrastructure to support them was inadequate. The victualling of the Baltic fleet, as indeed of any fleet, rested on the naval administration that supported it. This chapter will examine the system that executed victualling operations putting them in the context of British government.

British Politics and Strategy

At the head of government was the Cabinet, the executive branch comprised of members of the legislature, the House of Commons and House of Lords. It was here that ‘strategy’ (as we would today term it) was determined. It was a cabinet decision to send a fleet to the Baltic. Once there it would be maintained by the naval administration. 1808, the year in which the Baltic fleet came into existence, also marked a much broader movement to ratchet up the British war effort. The Duke of Portland was at the head of this new ministry, though as Dixon has noted, ‘he did not regard personal parliamentary activity as one of his obligations’.² An increasingly ill man, Portland’s lack of force enabled his ambitious ministers to take on more responsibility, bringing increased organisation and drive to British war planning. In particular, George Canning the Foreign Secretary and Lord Castlereagh at the War Office took control of the war against France.

¹ Charles Middleton to Lord Shelburne, 11 September 1782, *Barham Papers*, (London, Navy Records Society, 2009), Vol. II, pp. 66-67.

² Peter Dixon, *Canning: Politician and Statesmen* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976), p. 107.

It is true that there was no stated coherent government strategy. J. Steven Watson was correct to argue that the Portland government ‘had no cabinet policy but staggered along like a motor firing intermittently on different cylinders as first one then the other of its members took the initiative’.³ However, Portland’s ministers did inject a new fervour and drive into the handling of the war. Castlereagh well understood the demands of a war unprecedented in scale and importance. The war, he noted in 1807, was ‘no longer a struggle for territory or for point of honour, but whether the existence of Great Britain as a naval power is compatible with that of France’.⁴

The government’s first initiative, the attack on Copenhagen and seizure of the Danish fleet, was both ambitious and ruthless. As Hilton has written, ‘what was breathtaking about the measures of 1806-7 was not the mutually assured destruction but the extent to which both countries [Britain and France] were prepared to trample on the sovereign rights of other countries’. The blockade of Europe was heightened. Britain, in Hilton’s words, ‘hugely raised the stakes in the economic war’, as proposals to interdict every European port from which British ships were excluded were planned and executed.⁵ Castlereagh brought new vision to the War Office. On finding only 12,000 troops available as he took office, he began to increase the size of the army. 30,000 men were taken from the militia and trained as first-rank troops. The system of transports was improved, so that what force existed could be made available for rapid service wherever it might be needed.⁶ Portland’s government determined to follow up the attack on Copenhagen by landing an expeditionary force in Europe. Canning briefly considered opening up an offensive front in Denmark, but became less enthusiastic following Sir John Moore’s failure in Sweden.⁷ It eventually went to Spain, beginning Britain’s involvement in the Peninsular War.

³ J. Steven Watson, *The Reign of George III 1760-1815*, (Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 444.

⁴ Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad & Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 212.

⁵ Hilton, *England 1783-1846*, pp. 212-3.

⁶ Watson, *Reign of George III*, p. 454.

⁷ Sir John Moore, sent with his army to Sweden to assist their war against Russia, managed to offend the Swedish king so much he was arrested, and forced to return to Britain. Watson, *Reign of George III*, p. 457.

By 1811 the war policy of the Perceval government (which had replaced the Portland administration in 1809) had become even firmer. While they ‘groaned at the cost of keeping the British and Portuguese forces on this basis of perpetual war, but they had resolved to bear it. They had at last put away from the mirage, which had beckoned on all their predecessors, that the French might be beaten by one great and sudden masterstroke’.⁸ Perceval refused to give in to those arguing for economic reform. ‘We cannot without absolute reduction of army, or navy, make any such saving as would justify this expression’, and absolute reductions were impossible under the circumstances.⁹

A government determined to wage war at a new level depended on the success of its departmental administrative system. David Syrett commented that anyone studying British administration is ‘immediately struck by inordinate delays that attended the implementation of military decisions reached by cabinet’. Secretaries of state put the Cabinet’s plans into execution and kept government administration working: they alone had the power to coordinate the actions of various departments.¹⁰ The Cabinet determined strategy, while it fell to the Foreign Office, the War Office, the Board of Ordnance and the Admiralty to execute it. The Secretary of State for War had also to try to work with several authorities who enjoyed great independence, and ‘most of which were of doubtful efficiency; namely the Board of Ordnance, the Transport Board, and the Commissary General’.¹¹ The Admiralty oversaw subordinate boards with differing responsibilities: the Victualling Board, the Transport Board, the Navy Board, and the Ordnance Board.

As Hilton has noted, ‘the co-operation achieved between such fiercely independent bodies as the Foreign, War and Home Offices, and the undertaking of operations keeping them secret, and if necessary shredding files, all required sophisticated planning’.¹² That this was sometimes lacking should not be surprising, Bartlett for one emphasising that ‘it

⁸ Watson, *Reign of George III*, pp. 488-9.

⁹ Perceval to Wellesley, Jan 1810, BL Add. Ms. 37295, quoted in Philip Harling, *The Waning of ‘Old Corruption’: The Politics of Economic Reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996) p. 133.

¹⁰ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 5.

¹¹ CJ Bartlett, *Castlereagh* (Macmillan, London, 1966) p. 52.

¹² Hilton, *England 1783-1846*, pp. 85-6.

was no easy matter to keep the cumbrous machinery for the conduct of the war in motion, and to synchronise its working for the speedy equipment and despatch of British expeditions to the Continent or overseas. It was not surprising that delays and deficiencies in equipment frequently occurred, though he did note that on the whole expeditions were assembled and despatched relatively quickly, especially while Castlereagh was in office, 'once the cabinet had made up its mind to act'.¹³ Indeed, the Duke of Portland's government was particularly adept at enforcing the departmentalism. As Perceval wrote, 'it is not because the Duke of Portland is at our head that the Government is a Government of Departments, but it is because the Government is and must be essentially a Government of Departments that the Duke of Portland is at our head'.¹⁴

The Admiralty and the Naval Administration

Once a strategic decision had been made, its implementation fell upon naval administration. The decision to arrange a victualling shipment to a fleet was the Admiralty's. The Admiralty was the highest level of naval administration. Headed by the First Lord of Admiralty, and made up of commissioners, the Admiralty was the political arm of the navy, the sole representative of the navy in Cabinet. If the navy had a role in forming national strategy it was in this capacity. Aside from Cabinet decisions, it governed the naval branch of government, issuing orders on operational and tactical matters. Most of its work was routine: as Wilkinson argues, 'the Admiralty was not necessarily a weak body but...its powers and responsibilities were quite limited and its capabilities for effecting change or directing policy were very restricted'.¹⁵ Decisions of strategy came from Cabinet, with orders emanating from the Secretary of State for War. The Admiralty's role was the operational arm: assigning ships and captains in line with the orders of Cabinet, issuing orders for ship movements, assigning convoys, recruiting

¹³ Bartlett, *Castlereagh*, p. 53.

¹⁴ Watson, *The Reign of George III*, p. 444.

¹⁵ Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State*, p. 21.

(and impressing) and confirming appointments. The formal duties of the Admiralty were as follows:

to consider and determine upon all matters relative to Your Majesty's Navy and Departments thereunto alluded to belonging; to give directions for the performance of all services that may be required in the Civil or Naval branches thereof; to sign by themselves or their secretaries all orders necessary for carrying their directions into execution, and generally to supervise and direct the whole naval and marine establishment of Great Britain.¹⁶

The Admiralty merely executed, rather than originated, national strategy. Its link with the Treasury conformed to the submission of estimates and accounts to Parliament. It had further, minor administrative roles: paying off ships, purchasing prizes, dispensing with accounts, organising court-martials. The naval officer's point of contact with home, with the government, with the civil branch of the navy was always through the Admiralty. It was through the Admiralty they received their orders and instructions, and sent their despatches.¹⁷ Grievances concerning the navy were sent to the Admiralty. This was true of victualling complaints; annotating a letter sent describing abuses in the contracting for staves, Mulgrave wrote, 'Keep', but noted 'his charges of abuse in the Conduct of the Victualling Board should be addressed to the Admiralty Board collectively'.¹⁸

The Admiralty was not a stranger to criticism. Throughout the 1770s and 1780s, it had come to be known as a department where delays were common place.¹⁹ Middleton complained of the 'sluggish manner in which business goes through the Admiralty'. 'It is needless to remind your lordship of the many remonstrances I have been under necessity of making from time to time of the notorious remissness in official correspondence'.²⁰ The division of duties among clerical staff had not been devised by any coherent plan but had grown up haphazardly as the staff itself grew in response to the increase in paper

¹⁶ Williams, 'Sandwich', pp. 15-16.

¹⁷ Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State*, p. 20.

¹⁸ MA 22/9, W Budge to Lord Mulgrave, 13 January 1810.

¹⁹ Mackesy describes the Admiralty as both 'united and formidable' and 'wayward and independent', also commenting on its over-centralisation. Mackesy, *War For America*, pp. 15, 19, 163-5.

²⁰ Middleton to Sandwich, 15 September 1779, G.R.T. Barnes and Lt. Cdr. J.H. Owen, ed. *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich*, Vol.3 (NRS, 1936) p. 181. Middleton to Sandwich, *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich*, Vol.4 (NRS, 1938) p. 371.

work. As such, in wartime, 'the machinery began to get clogged'.²¹ Although the Admiralty constituted the political arm of the navy, departmentalism in the naval administration meant that different boards had different responsibilities unaffected by political changes in the Admiralty. A sudden change in the membership of the Board did not disturb the navy's business.

The main departments subsidiary to the Admiralty were the Navy Board, the Victualling Board, alongside the Transport Board, and the Ordnance Board. The Admiralty had seniority over the subordinate boards, appointing commissioners for each. Each was subordinate to the Admiralty, and although the boards were similarly ranked, the relative longevity of each department influenced its status. For example, the newest, the Transport Board, which had been re-established in 1794 after a half century's absence, lacked the standing of its neighbours. The oldest, the Navy Board, was largely left to its own devices. Although the senior body, the Admiralty's control over the Navy Board was 'often meaningless', since the Navy Board was left to its own expertise: 'to avoid a situation where the amateurs of the Admiralty were directing the experts in the Navy Board'.²² The Navy Board administered the dockyards, contracted for and administered all naval stores and equipment except for ordnance, food and medicines and, before 1794, transport. It was also responsible for ship design, compiling the estimates that the Admiralty would submit, the payment of wages and appointing dockyard personnel. The Navy Board was made up of professional men, frequently naval officers or shipwrights.²³ Like the colleagues in the Admiralty, the Navy Board had not always been considered the most effective branch of government. Middleton complained in July 1779 that 'as it now stands I cannot be one hour absent while the [Navy] Board sits'.²⁴ Studies, such as that by M.J. Williams, have shown that in providing the Navy with naval stores, it was actually largely successful.²⁵ In this, the Navy Board and Victualling Board communicated with

²¹ Williams, 'Sandwich'. p. 18.

²² Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State*, p. 23.

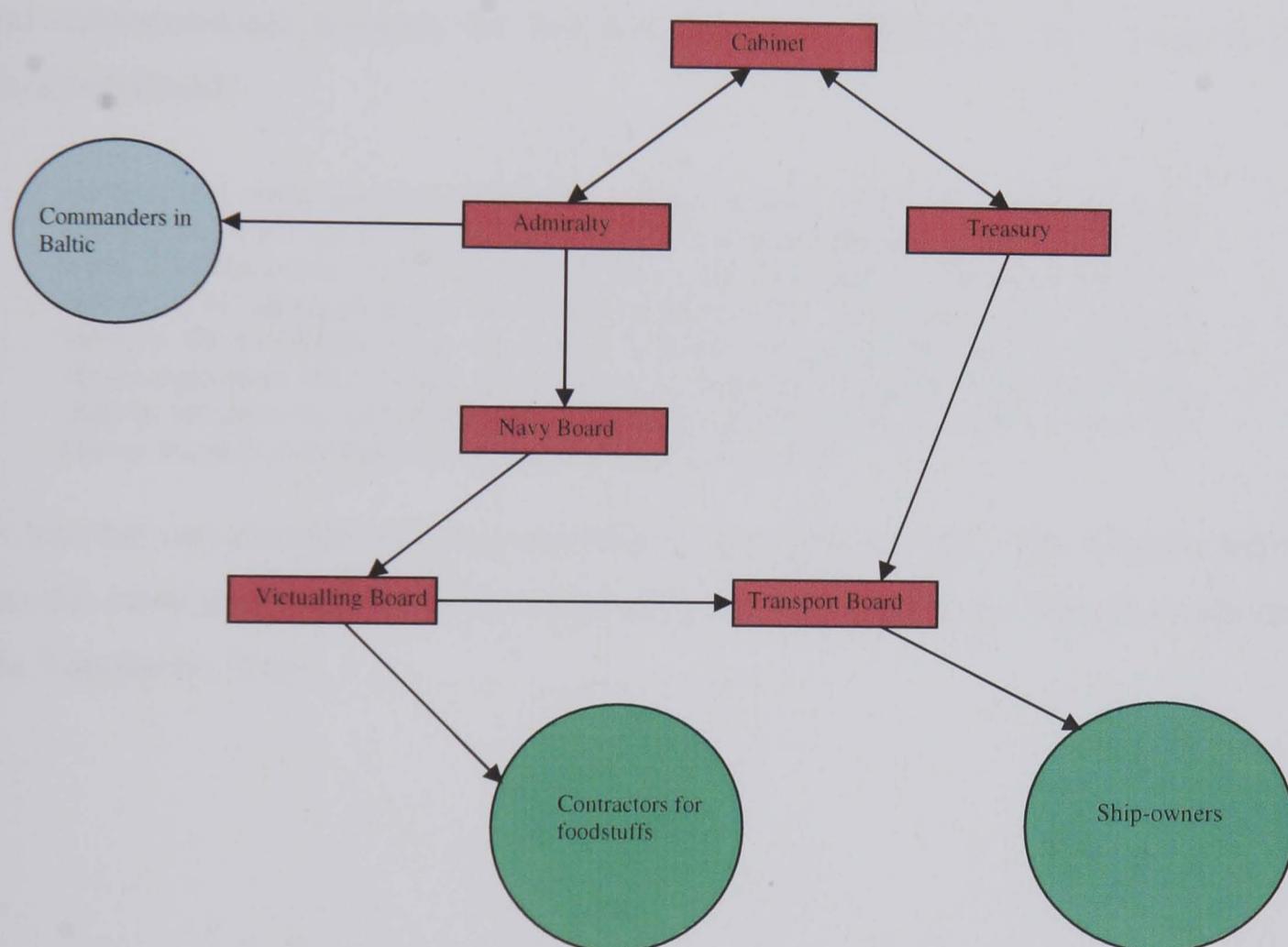
²³ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 20.

²⁴ Middleton to Sandwich, 9 July 1779, *Sandwich Papers*, Vol. 3.

²⁵ MJ Williams stated that 'from the point of view that their primary task was to supply the Navy, they could scarcely have done more'. As the Navy Board themselves wrote in 1782, 'our magazines are so fully supplied that we shall have difficulty in finding room for what is already ordered'. Williams, 'Sandwich'. pp. 325, 328.

each other directly and, as the newer department, ‘the Victualling Board was part of the naval establishment and considered to be inferior in rank to the Navy Board’.²⁶ The business of the Victualling Board was ‘to provide, either by contract or otherwise, all the Provisions, and also certain Stores, required for Your Majesty’s Navy; arranging and distributing the whole to several ports and places at home and abroad’.²⁷

Figure 6: Naval Administration and the Provisioning of Fleets, January 1808



The Admiralty were in contact with commanders’ needs and requirements, the Victualling Board with merchant contractors who provided foodstuffs. Earlier in the Napoleonic War, the Navy Board had conveyed much of the correspondence between the Admiralty and Victualling Board, as shown in the diagram above. As such, all orders and correspondence between these two passed through the Navy Board. The onset of war in 1793 however witnessed an increase in the scale and responsibilities of other naval

²⁶ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 9.

²⁷ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Tenth Report, p. 4.

departments, particularly the Victualling, Ordnance and Sick and Hurt Boards. On top of this was the creation of the Transport Board in 1794, with sole authority over the hiring of tonnage. There was also a pressing wartime need to speed up inter-departmental communication.

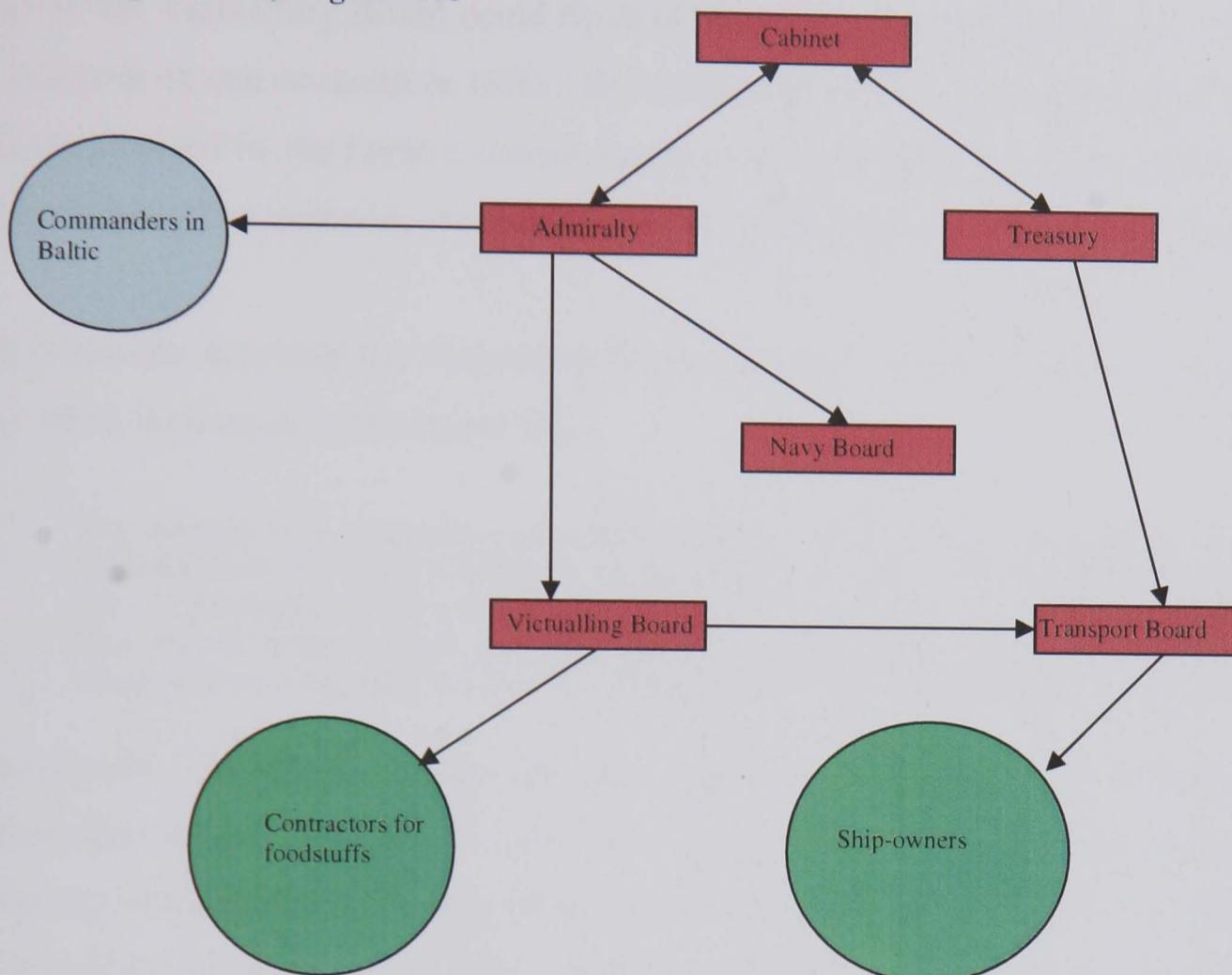
The Navy Board's role in the provisioning process was seen to serve only to slow down victualling arrangements. In July 1808, three months after Saumarez had sailed for the Baltic, the Admiralty ended this labourious practice, advising that from this point on, direct correspondence between the two was necessary. 'Whereas', they wrote to the Victualling Board:

we have had under our consideration the practise hitherto adhered to, by this Board, of causing the orders and directions, issued for Victualling His Majesty's Ships and Vessels, when Commissioned, and Fitted and refitted, and completed for Foreign, or Channel service, to be conveyed to you through the medium of the Navy Board. And it being our intention for the purpose of giving celerity to the Victualling of Ships and Vessels under the circumstances above stated, that in future our orders for the supply of their provisions, shall in all cases be addressed immediately to your Board; and you are...to cause the utmost dispatch to be used, in carrying the same into effect.²⁸

This was but one example of naval administration reforming itself. The diagram below shows the naval administration, concerning the provisioning of fleets, throughout the rest of the Napoleonic Wars.

²⁸ TNA, ADM 2/154/448-9, Admiralty to the Victualling Board, 12 July 1808.

Figure 7: Naval Administration: the Provisioning of Fleets, August 1808



There were two ways in which provisions could be ordered to a distant station. Initially, in 1808 and 1809, the Admiralty would receive a request from a Commander in Chief for provisions. For example, a letter of the 16 August 1809 from Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez, requested that a supply of Provisions of all species for twelve thousand men for two months could be sent out to the Baltic ‘as speedily as possible, for the use of His Majesty’s Fleet under his Command in the Baltic’.²⁹ In addition, the Victualling Board oversaw victualling demands, and took on greater responsibility for ordering and managing shipments of foodstuffs. By 1810, it was the Admiralty and Victualling Board, who by paying attention to the state of provisions in the Baltic, were deciding and organising victualling shipments themselves.

Orders for the provisioning of a fleet always came from the Admiralty. Often a shipment of victuals would be requested by an Admiral by letter, to which the Admiralty would

²⁹ TNA, ADM 111/192, 11 September 1809.

respond by ordering the Victualling Board to arrange the necessary amounts. While this order to the Victualling Board could be done by letter, it was sometimes done verbally, for example on one occasion in 1809, ‘The Chairman having represented that he has been verbally directed by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, to cause a further supply of Provisions to be forthwith sent out for the use of His Majesty’s Ships in the Baltic’.³⁰

The Admiralty informed the Victualling Board of a fleet’s needs. To give an example, in May 1809, they wrote to the Board that:

Vice Admiral Sir Js. Saumarez, Commander in Chief of the Baltic hath in his letter to our Secretary of the 10th Instant submitted the expectation of sending out to him in the Great Belt...a proportion of Provisions of all species, for two months, for twelve thousand Men; We do hereby require and direct you to give the necessary orders accordingly: letting us know when the Vessels which you may employ on this service, may be ready.³¹

Occasionally, when discussing specific supplies of individual foodstuffs, some commanders would write directly to the Victualling Board, leaving it to that board to gain Admiralty acquiescence. ‘Having taken into consideration your letter to our Secretary’, the Admiralty wrote in August 1809, ‘the Copy of one which you had received from Rear Admiral Dixon, requesting supplies of Live Oxen, and Vegetables for the use of His Majesty’s Ships under his orders in the Great Belt; We do hereby require & direct you, to send out to the said Rear Admiral, with as little delay as possible a supply of Potatoes & Onion for the use of the ships under his command, for two Months’.³²

It was crucial to have either Admiralty or Treasury authorization to arrange a shipment of provisions: the hierarchy of naval administration was clear. On one occasion in August 1809, the Transport Board wrote to the Victualling Board, requesting that the latter would ‘immediately supply Provisions for 20,000 Men for one month, for the use of the Infantry and Cavalry Transports in the Scheldt; and stating that they will provide conveyance thereof whenever this Board shall report to them the quantity required’. The Victualling Board was adamant that Admiralty authorisation must be secured first. They wrote to the Transport Board in reply that ‘there is not any instance of Provisions being furnished by

³⁰ TNA, ADM 111/192, 16 August 1809.

³¹ TNA, ADM 2/156/185-6, Admiralty to VB, 19 May 1809.

³² TNA, ADM 2/156/441-2, Admiralty to VB, 19 August 1809.

this Department, and sent out of the Kingdom without the immediate directions of the Lord Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, His Majesty's Secretaries of State or the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty'. The Victualling Board were not simply sticklers for procedure. They did propose a compromise, 'in order that no time may be lost in the execution of the service mentioned in their letter', they acquainted the Transport Board that 'the Tonnage required for the Provisions in question will be equal to 1,200 Tons, and that the necessary orders will be given to our officers to have the Provisions in readiness to be shipped on board the vessels that may be appropriated to receive them, the moment we receive the requisite authority for supplying the same'. Higher authority had to be received first. The Treasury order for the same came through on the 31 August.³³

The Victualling Board officials could be very deferential to the Admiralty, even when they had better access to victualling information than their overseers. A letter from Rear Admiral Dixon in 1809, representing that the Squadron under his command had only three months' provisions remaining and requesting that a further supply of two months provisions of all species would be sent out soon, prompted diffidence rather than an assured response. The Victualling Board wrote to the Admiralty and requested 'such directions thereon as to their Lordships may appear expedient; stating however at the same time that two months Provisions for the whole of the squadron under the command of Sir James Saumarez, the Commander in Chief in the Baltic have recently been forwarded in Victuallers from Deptford...with which Shipments it is probable Rear Admiral Dixon was unacquainted at the time he made his application'.³⁴ Again, it was felt necessary to gain Admiralty authorisation when sending out deliveries. It should be remembered that the Admiralty's power over the Victualling Board was not merely bureaucratic. Since Victualling Board commissioners were appointed by the Admiralty, deference on the part of Victualling Board officials should not strike us as surprising. Certainly the Victualling Board was an obedient servant to the Admiralty: in 1811 they wrote that 'the arrangement formed for sending out supplies to the Baltic Fleet at periods fixed upon by the commander in Chief, has been grounded upon an order from the Lord's

³³ TNA, ADM 111/192, 26 August 1809.

³⁴ TNA, ADM 111/192, 13 October 1809. The Admiralty's reply arrived three days later, stating that no further supply was needed, see TNA, ADM 111/192, 16 October 1809.

Commissioners of the Admiralty' and, 'we cannot presume to deviate from it, nor is it for us to question its propriety'.³⁵

Authorisation aside, the Admiralty was happy to leave the Victualling Board to its expertise in the area of provisioning. Its orders appear less dictatorial, delegating authority to officials who knew their business. By 1810, it was common practice for commanders to write directly to the Victualling Board; the absence of virtually any Victualling Board correspondence in the Admiralty 'in-letters' is testament to this.³⁶ In 1809, a request by Saumarez for four weeks' provisions for his fleet, was given a simple 'refer to Vict. Bd.' Admiralty notation.³⁷ Writing directly to the Victualling Board saved time, and enabled the Victualling Board to demonstrate its specialist knowledge and expertise with minimal Admiralty interference or friction.

The main tasks in administering the provisioning system were in the hands of the subordinate Boards, in particular the Victualling Board and Transport Board. The responsibility for organising the victualling of the Baltic fleet would be shared by the two boards. The Victualling Board was responsible for the production of foodstuffs, either through its victualling yards, for example at Deptford, or by securing contracts with merchants to supply the necessary amounts of provisions. They obtained year long estimates for the provisioning requirements up to a year at a time and were responsible for producing and contracting for these amounts. In August 1808 the Victualling Board requested the Admiralty to estimate the number of men 'intended to be provided for' the following year, so that they could have sufficient warning to direct such supplies of beef and pork to be procured.³⁸ The organising of shipments of victuals to fleets in home and foreign waters was therefore just one of many important tasks (albeit a crucial one). Also important was the constant management of contracts for all varieties of foodstuffs. The Victualling Board could not produce the huge quantities of provisions needed to supply the 140,000 seamen in service and turned to the private sector to furnish them.

³⁵ TNA, ADM 111/199, 13 June 1811.

³⁶ Correspondence between Saumarez and the Admiralty is conspicuous in its absence from Admiralty in-letters from the Baltic, for example TNA, ADM 1/12.

³⁷ TNA, ADM 1/9/215-6, Saumarez to Admiralty, 7 November 1809.

³⁸ TNA, ADM 1/154/506, Admiralty to the VB, 4 August 1808.

On receiving an order from the Admiralty to provide provisions for a fleet in foreign waters, it was the Victualling Board's responsibility to work out the amount needed to provide for a fleet for a given period of time. There were two things the Board looked at when calculating the amount to send out. Firstly, there was the number of men on the station, with supplies sent out accordingly.³⁹ For example in 1808, Saumarez transmitted a request for provisions to complete the fleet under his command 'beyond the time for which they are at present victualled, and requesting that the same may be sent out as soon as can be made convenient'. Aside from the request, it was left to the Victualling Board to work out the specific amounts needed by the fleet. Victualling decisions were therefore, for the most part, centralised in London.

There was an assumption that the Victualling Board had better access to information and could judge the wider picture better than commanders at sea. In this case, the Board replied to Saumarez, 'advising him of the quantities of Provisions &c. which we had caused to be shipped on Board the twelve victuallers therein named...in addition to the supply previously forwarded for the like service, as stated in our letters to him of the 21st June last and 4th ultimo, which we apprehend will be sufficient to carry on the Victualling, calculated at 11,000 men...to about the middle of December next'.⁴⁰ The Victualling Board made careful calculations as to what was needed, aware of the perils that could come from either over-supply or under-supply. The former was considered wastage, and to a naval administration obsessed with avoiding wastage was very much frowned upon. The latter would result in the starvation of a fleet, with consequent ramifications for operational (and therefore strategic) viability.⁴¹

Secondly, there was the examination of reports of the state of provisions in each fleet which could override all other calculations if it appeared that a fleet was in desperate want. A letter of September 1809 highlights this. The chairman of the Victualling Board, 'having reported to the Board that on examination of the last state of the Provisions on

³⁹ There were quarterly lists made up by the Admiralty, detailing the number of ships and men on each station around the world. These lists now make up TNA, ADM 8 in the National Archives, UK.

⁴⁰ TNA, ADM 111/188, 22 August 1808.

⁴¹ The efficiency of the Victualling Board, and how successfully the Board judged this dilemma, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

Board the Baltic Fleet, dated the 28th ult. it appears expedient that a further supply of Flour, Raisins and suet, should be forthwith sent out, for the use of the said squadron'. The Board was continually assessing the state of provisions in their distant fleets and covering any potential oversights. In this case, it was ordered that the quantities of those articles mentioned were to be forwarded to the Baltic: 72,000 lbs of flour, 12,000lbs of raisins and 6,000 lbs of suet, each calculated with regard to the fleet's needs.⁴²

Once an order to provision a foreign fleet was received, the Victualling Board would then request the necessary tonnage for its delivery from the Transport Board. The Transport Board was located in Dorset Square.⁴³ As such, it was a thirty minute walk from the Victualling Board offices in Somerset House on the Strand to the Transport Board offices; close enough to ensure letters could be exchanged daily, but crucially just far enough to preclude much in the way of verbal communication and decision-making. All Victualling Board correspondence with the Transport Board was therefore written. So while this was in no small part to ensure official business could be substantiated and minuted in case a board's activities came into question, it was also a geographical necessity.

The Transport Board's domain was the delivery of all stores worldwide, not just food provisions. In 1809 the Transport Board's duties were listed as 'the hiring and appropriating of ships and vessels for the conveyance of troops and baggage, victualling, ordnance, barrack, commissariate, naval and military stores of all kinds, convicts and stores to New South Wales', with many other smaller services'.⁴⁴ This would take place on government owned ships, but much more commonly on hired vessels or 'freight', which were paid relative to their tonnage to transport victuals to the fleet. Just as the Navy Board had done before the hand-over of control of transports, the Transport Board controlled the owners and the masters of ships through the 'power of the purse', to use

⁴² TNA, ADM 111/192, 11 September 1809.

⁴³ This is now Cockspur Street, running into eastern Pall Mall, and is not to be confused with the Dorset Square near Paddington. See John Tallis' *London Street Views 1838-40* (London Topographical Society reprint, 2002) p. 85.

⁴⁴ *Commission of Naval Revision, Ninth Report* p. 9.

Syrett's phrase.⁴⁵ The Board would withhold a major part of a vessel's freight until its charter had been completed. If it was breached, a fine would be placed on the freight of the offending ships. Irregular or negligent acts were reported, while the Transport Board would be informed when a ship separated from its convoy; compensation could then be awarded. Just like their colleagues in the Victualling Board, the Transport Board relied on mobilising resources from the private sector to organise the vast amounts of transport shipping needed to fulfil the British state's needs. The Board's trials and tribulations in doing so will be the focus of the next chapter.

The Transport Board tried to maintain a spirit of fierce independence from the Admiralty and its subordinate naval boards. This has since confused historians. Morriss for example argues for the Transport Board's relative independence: 'although nominally subject to the Admiralty, the Transport Board possessed an authority that was independent of the existing naval boards and derived directly from the king through his secretary of state. So far as the management of transports were concerned, the Admiralty took a secondary, if not subordinate role'.⁴⁶ Cabinet orders could devolve directly on to the Transport Board, as in 1794 in which Transport Board reminders are deemed to be orders to the Admiralty. However, it is wrong to read too much into the Transport Board's tone. That the Transport Board felt it necessary to 'remind' the Admiralty of these particular orders when applying for a convoy was not an example of independence, more a function of 18th century naval administration letter format than bureaucratic superiority. That the Transport Board 'had already directed the masters of transports where to embark [and] ordered its own local agents to manage these embarkations', was again the Transport Board fulfilling its designated duties rather than undermining the Admiralty. The 'dependence' of other government departments on the Transport Board did not give that Board 'an authority that seems to have exceeded its apparent subordination to the Admiralty'.⁴⁷ If there was a dependence it was a mutual dependence, as one cog in a machine depends on another. Indeed, the fact that the Transport Board informed the

⁴⁵ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 37.

⁴⁶ Roger Morriss, 'Colonization, Conquest, and the Supply of Food and Transport: The Reorganization of Logistics Management, 1780-1795' *War in History*, No.14, p. 317.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 317, 322.

Admiralty that transports were ready for a convoy, rather than ordering a convoy, hints at their respective authority.

It is certainly true that the Transport Board tried to emphasise its independence from other naval departments. In 1811, it wrote to the Admiralty stating that only over naval concerns were they to be considered to be in the naval hierarchy: ‘the services relating to the Transport Department are placed, by Patent, under the authority of the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury, and those which have reference to sick and wounded seamen and Prisoners of War, under the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty’.⁴⁸ The distinction was important, for the Transport Board always emphasised its link to the Treasury rather than with the Admiralty (this explains the direct line on the diagram above between the Transport Board and the Treasury). When asked if there were any reforms that could be implemented ‘with advantage to the public service...and whether any, and which of them, would require, previous to their adoption, the Sanction of Parliament...’ the Boards only recommendation was bitter swipe at the Admiralty:

The only alteration upon which it appears to us necessary to obtain the sanction of the Legislature, is the following. According to the Act...25 George III, Cap.31, the Navy Board only are authorised to pass the Accounts of the Victualling Board with the treasurer of the Navy. The accounts of this office with the treasurer of the Navy have hitherto been passed in the same manner, by order of the Lords of the Treasury, but as there seems an Impropriety in the Commissioners of the Navy passing accounts of an office with which they have in fact nothing to do, we deem it proper to submit to their Lordships the Fitness of this Board being authorised to pass their own Accounts with the Treasurer of the Navy, the propriety of which measure we have indeed been given to understand, the Commissioners of the Navy are likewise about to submit to the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty’s Treasury for adoption.⁴⁹

The Transport Board’s desire to remove itself from its subordinate position in the naval hierarchy indicates more clearly than anything else that it was very much part of it. While it certainly attempted to distance itself from the Admiralty, helped by the direct link to the Treasury and its other duties hiring for the Ordnance Board and the army, when it came to the organisation of victualling shipments to the navy, the Transport Board was very much one of the subordinate boards to the Admiralty. The Admiralty issued the formal orders for victualling the fleet, the other boards complied. The Victualling Board,

⁴⁸ TNA, ADM 1/3763/515-537, 7 February 1811.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

having requested the necessary tonnage from the Transport Board, was free to complain to the Admiralty if it showed any negligence in the duty of procuring tonnage. Indeed, the Victualling Board appears to have taken some relish in doing so, so often were their complaints. A letter to the Admiralty in September 1808 was written

for the information of their Lordships, that upon the receipt on the 6th inst. of their Lordships abovementioned directions, we, on that day, applied to the Transport Board requesting they would cause us to be furnished with all possible expedition, with proper Vessels for the conveyance of the Provisions we were directed to send out for the aforesaid service; to which application not any reply has hitherto been given to us by the Transport Board.⁵⁰

This was the first of many letters of complaint, throughout the period 1808-12. It should be stated that in hiring tonnage from a mercantile sector reluctant to hand shipping over to the government (and forgo the lucrative trades in the Indies) the Transport Board had one of the most challenging jobs in naval administration.

The Admiralty would again be involved when transports were ready to sail; on being told by the Victualling Board that the ‘delivery’ was ready, it was the Admiralty’s responsibility to organise a convoy. Victualling transports were generally added to trade convoys heading to the Baltic. Important deliveries could be assigned their own convoy however.

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The supply of provisions would therefore require no little coordination between the two boards; indeed, all victualling arrangements were conducted between the Victualling and Transport Boards. Only in dire circumstances would the Admiralty be forced to intervene. During the first two years of the Baltic fleet’s existence, imperfect cooperation between the two would lead to severe problems in the victualling system and intervention from above. The problems that Middleton complained of in the 1780s were not yet fully solved by 1808. In the same letter to Shelburne with which this chapter began, Middleton complained he had endeavoured to enforce reform ‘by every means in my power, for

⁵⁰ TNA, ADM 110/58/239/41, VB to Admiralty, 16 September 1808.

these four years past, but nobody will understand it'.⁵¹ Twenty years later the importance of the naval administration to British power was feeding through. Pitt's steady investment in the naval establishment throughout the 1780s, and the various commissions into the efficiency of all of Britain's military departments highlighted a growing understanding of the importance of the governmental boards to the British state. Williams wrote of the administrative system in the 1780s thus: 'Sandwich then was at the head of an Administrative System, the customs and rules of which were already deep rooted in tradition. It was a system which was formidably thorough, conscientious and conservative, imbued with the notion that the utmost care and economy must be preserved in the expenditure of public money. Inflexibility was characteristic of all parts of the system. Fear of departing from precedent, of acting without due authority governed nearly all officers and officials'.⁵² As we have seen the naval administration that was responsible for provisioning foreign fleets during the Napoleonic Wars were instinctive reformers. The transfer of authority to the Victualling Board and Transport Board was a rationalisation of the victualling service. Each could concentrate in their areas of expertise.

It would be the failures of the Transport Board that placed the greater strain on the victualling system. It is wrong therefore to say, as Morriss does, that 'hire, dispatch, return and reuse became a regular, generally trouble-free routine until 1816 when the Board was dissolved'.⁵³ This is inaccurate given the huge transport shortages faced in the Napoleonic War. The trials of the Transport Board will be analysed in the next chapter.

⁵¹ Charles Middleton to Lord Shelburne, 11 September 1782, *Barham Papers*, Vol. II, p. 66.

⁵² Williams, 'Sandwich'. p. 40.

⁵³ Morriss, 'Colonization, Conquest, and the Supply of Food and Transport', p. 318.

Chapter 5: The Transport Board, the procurement of transport tonnage and the management of privately-owned resources

The professional knowledge of the members at that Board would prevent purchase of hire of improper vessels; and the competition being removed, the tonnage wanted would be obtained at a fair and reasonable rate, by several Boards bidding against each other, the price will be raised, and vessels unfit for the service frequently engaged.¹

- Commission on Fees, 1788

The Transport Board, re-created in 1794 after a seventy year absence, was intended not only to remove competition between the other boards, but also to rationalise the whole system of procuring transports. Britain's disparate empire had always required transport services: before 1794 each naval board, be it Victualling, Ordnance or Navy, had secured its own tonnage. Following the problems securing tonnage during the American war, and with the arrival of a new conflict in 1792, the Transport Board was brought back into existence, largely at the prodding of Charles Middleton, at the time Comptroller of the Navy.² Its central task was the procurement of transports for the use of the other government departments, both army and navy. The British state, not owning enough tonnage meet the demands of wartime, harnessed the assets of the mercantile private sector, contracting with merchants for the hire of vessels.

A delay in securing tonnage would have huge consequences for the victualling system. Fleets in foreign waters, such as in the Baltic, depended on the Transport Board's ability to secure a constant supply of transports on which the essential provisions could be shipped. As in the 1780s, the majority of ships contracted to the Navy entered under charters which ran for an indefinite period of time. As Syrett wrote of the 1780s, the success of the British war effort depended to a considerable degree on the ability of naval administration to charter sufficient shipping on a long-term basis.³ It is not the purpose of this study to consider the full challenges that faced the Transport Board, only to consider

¹ *Commission on Fees*, Fifth Report, vol. VII, p. 190.

² M.E. Condon, 'The Establishment of the Transport Board – A Subdivision of the Admiralty – 4 July 1794', *MM*, 58, (1972), p. 73.

³ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 77.

their part in the victualling system. As with their colleagues in the Victualling Board, the success of the British war machine would depend in no small part on the success with which the Transport Board could harness the resources of the private sector. Its relationship with the ship-owners and merchants that provided the ships will be the focus of this chapter, analysing how and with what success the Board procured and managed its transports. This chapter will outline how the Transport Board contracted for tonnage and how it adapted to changing circumstances.

Contracting for Tonnage

There were two forms of transport freight. Firstly there was short-term transport procurement for particular services. Secondly there was long-term shipping with transports hired for specific periods. The latter, the long-term transports, were the backbone of the Transport service. They were termed ‘Transports on Tonnage’, that is vessels hired at a certain rate per ton each month, and ‘Transports on Freight’.⁴ However, short-term, specific hires could make up for temporary shortages in transport tonnage. These were of particular importance to the Board since they were a means of increasing the amount of tonnage available at short notice. During times of high transport demand, these were common means by which transport tonnage could be raised in the short-term. The Board’s ability to secure short-term tonnage gave it huge flexibility.

Short-term specific hires could be beneficial to the merchant. With the transport only being hired for the outward journey, it would free up vessels to return with a valuable cargo on board. Alternatively, they could be organised to bring back supplies for the navy. The introduction has shown how transports could be used to bring back naval stores from the Baltic after serving their use as victuallers. They could also return with victualling stores for general use in the victualling yards. In 1811 for example, the Board arranged that ‘it will be more to the advantage of this Department to be furnished with Transports for the conveyance of the eight hundred Tons of Provisions to Rio de Janeiro

⁴ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Ninth Report, p. 9.

than to have such Provisions sent out on Freight, by reason we purpose having the vessels loaded back with Rice'.⁵

The process by which transports were procured was similar, whether for short-term or long-term hire. The Ninth Report of the Commission of Naval Revision, reporting in 1809, stated that when transports were wanted, the demand was usually signified by sending notice to Lloyds Coffee House, 'where Ship Owners and Brokers continually resort'. Current rate of hire were already established.⁶ The Board then awaited tenders. An unsent tender lies in the Henley records and provides an example of how this was organised:

We beg leave to offer to your Honble Board our ship *Anna* 226 Tons, Register Measurement, lying at Union Stairs Wapping for a Regular Coppered Transport at six months certain at the rate of Twenty Five Shillings per ton per Kalendar Month and to be subject to all the rules and conditions of the usual printed Charterparty. We beg leave to observe that this vessel is adapted for the service of your Honble. Board, having Heights in her Hold and 'tween decks, and also that she is in complete readiness for any voyage she may be ordered upon (saving the extra stores requisite in the Transport Service).⁷

Both the Victualling Board and Transport Board had links with the merchant community. On the 9 September 1809 for example, the Transport Board wrote to James Henley, asking that 'I am commanded by the Commissioners for Victualling His Majesty's Navy, to request your attendance at the Board on Monday morning at 11 o'Clock'.⁸ The following day, after the meeting, the Henleys submitted a tender to supply the island of Anholt in the Baltic: 'we beg leave to tender to send a vessel to the Island of Anholt with a cargo of Coals fit for the lighthouse there, quantity not less than 60 Chaldrons and no more than one hundred Chal.'. No doubt the Board had hinted at a price that was likely to be found acceptable. The Henleys tendered for 'freight over sea, Duty at Six pound ten shilling per Chal. Five days to be allowed for the quantity...In case the vessel

⁵ TNA, ADM 111/191, VB to TB, 24 April 1811.

⁶ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Ninth Report, p. 10.

⁷ NMM, HNL 14/5 f.10 (no date).

⁸ NMM, HNL 13/17 f.3, 9 September 1809.

is...detained damages at the rate of three pound sterling per day, the days to be taken from alongside at the expense of the government'.⁹

How much this suggests preferential treatment for certain ship-owners is hard to judge. It is unlikely to say the least that their meeting was related to anything other than the prospective tender. Certainly the Henleys were well known to the Transport Board and had a lengthy history of supplying the Board with shipping. It was logical for the Board to patronise merchants it knew to be reliable and had a proven history of delivering what was needed. As such, the Transport Board's courting of the Henleys amounts to intelligent management of the mercantile sector for their own ends. Some ship-owners were powerful men, with contacts in government. On one occasion, several of Isaac Solly's ships were detained in Swedish ports, prompting much fury in London. It testifies to Solly's influence, and to Britain's need for hemp that Canning instructed his consul in Sweden 'relative to the detention in the Ports of Sweden, of several ships & their property' to 'desire that you will make the necessary Representations to the Swedish Government on this subject, and use every exertion in your power to procure the Release of the ships in question'.¹⁰ That Solly's influence went as high as the Foreign Secretary should not be surprising. The next day, Canning attached a list of the ships employed by Mr Solly bringing Hemp from Russia to this Country for the use of His Majesty's Navy, desiring that Merry, the Minister at Stockholm, would 'use your utmost Endeavours with the Swedish Government to procure the immediate Release of such of these ships as may have been detained in the Swedish Ports, and that you will do everything in your power to protect the whole of them from any molestation in the prosecution of their voyage to England'.¹¹

Once tenders had been received and accepted, the ship in question was examined. The Transport Board wrote a report in 1811 outlining the procedure. 'When a ship that has been tendered to the Board for a Transport, has passed the Regular Surveys, jointly made by the Inspecting and Surveying Officers, as to her fitness and has been reported by them

⁹ NMM, HNL 13/17 f.4, 12 September 1809.

¹⁰ TNA, FO 73/50, Canning to Merry, 10 November 1810.

¹¹ TNA, FO 73/50, Canning to Merry, 11 November 1810.

to the Board, complete in all respects on the part of the Owners, a Charter Party is prepared, and executed by the owner, or his agent'.¹²

The Board expected a high quality of ship. Hall argues that transports were sometimes not ideal for service: General Sir John Moore grumbled about the unwieldy nature of the convoy taking his troops to Sweden in 1808.¹³ The Transport Board strove to ensure only high quality shipping was used. It was written into the contract that the shipowner did

promise and agree, that the said Ship or Vessel be strong, firm tight, staunch, and substantial, both above water and beneath, and shall and will sail forthwith as may be directed (Wind and Weather permitting), equipped, fitted, furnished and provided with Masts, Sails, Sail-Yards, Anchors, Ropes, Cords, Tackle, Apparel...and shall not have less than tow Bower Anchors and Cables, and One Stream Anchor and Cable, all in good Condition, and shall have all proper Sails, and a complete Set of smaller Sails.¹⁴

And it is certain that the Transport Board took this issue very seriously. On one occasion in 1813, after insisting on a specific quality of ship, Henley was forced to withdraw one of his ships. As he explained, 'the repairs required by your Surveyor to be done to my ships Economy being made to a much greater extent that I could possibly be aware of, I must beg to decline engaging her in the transport service'.¹⁵

A ship would have to be manned to designated levels, with five men and a boy for every 100 tons, four carriage guns, with twenty rounds per gun, and a secure magazine. They insisted that no risks would be taken over the health of the transport seamen, ensuring that victuals, furnaces, pumps and cooking utensils were on board for the crew.¹⁶ Again, this was taken very seriously, particularly by the masters and agents for transports. The order book of one remains, and reveals the lengths ship masters would go to ensure the well-being of their crews.¹⁷ Lieutenant Philip Lamb, principal agent for transports in the Mediterranean in 1799, was adamant that all that could be done, was done. No stores or

¹² TNA, ADM 1/3763/515-537, 7 February 1811.

¹³ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 43.

¹⁴ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

¹⁵ NMM, HNL 14/5, f.8, 27 August 1813.

¹⁶ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

¹⁷ The point will be made much more strongly later in this thesis, that captains of vessels were resolved to ensure the health of their men through insisting on good quality and reliable victuals. It was equally true of transport masters.

provisions were to be delivered from the Transports ‘without my knowledge’. ‘The Transports Sea Stock of water’, of which the *Ann* was merely one, was ‘to be kept constantly complete and the ships in every other respect perfectly Ready to Proceed to sea on the shortest Notice, there crews and Stores to be kept constantly complete’.¹⁸ Such efforts were not in vain: in December 1801 it was ordered that ‘every Transport in this port is to put ready for sea with all possible dispatch & the masters are to report to me immediately they do so’. There was a clear threat if this was not done. ‘Those refitting are to use every exertion’, he wrote, ‘as, if they are not fit to proceed when ordered they will be discharged from service’.¹⁹

The Henley Papers provide an example of a long-term contract, and bears much similarity to the Navy Board ‘standing contract’ for hiring transports from 1776.²⁰ In September 1810, the vessel *Harry Morris*, with David Smith as master, entered into the transport service and served in the Baltic. Michael Henley ordered David Smith that ‘you will report to the Resident Agent for Transports at Yarmouth, the ship is to be put in pay as a three months Transport on her arrival and approval at Yarmouth. We trust you will proceed to Yarmouth as soon as you can. You are for the Fleet in the Baltic, or elsewhere in the Baltic as may be ordered’.²¹ It was accepted into the Transport Service on the 8 October 1810.²² The contract entered into was lengthy and detailed. The most important issue was the agreement to mutual advantage; in the words of the contract it was

covenanted, concluded, and agreed upon this Fourth Day of September...the Commissioners for conducting His Majesty’s Transport Service &c. for and on behalf of His Majesty, on the other Part, in the manner following; That is to say, the said Michael Henley and Son, for and on behalf of themselves, and all and every one of the owners of the said Ship of Vessel, have granted, and to Hire and Freight...to continue in Pay for Three Months Certain...all such Soldiers, Horses, Women, Servants, Arms, Ammunition, Provisions Stores, or whatever else shall be ordered to be put on board her, and proceed therewith to such Port or Ports as shall be required.²³

¹⁸ NMM, HNL 34/30 f.1, 3 September 1799, 25 December 1800.

¹⁹ NMM, HNL 34/30 f.1, 3 September 1799, 25 December 1800.

²⁰ See Admiralty to Victualling Commissioners, 2 August 1759, John B. Hattendorf, R.J.B. Knight, A.W.H. Pearsall, N.A.M. Rodger, Geoffrey Till, ed. *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* (NRS, Vol. 131, 1993) pp. 448-451.

²¹ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.10 5 September 1810.

²² NMM, HNL 1/20, f.13, 8 October 1810.

²³ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

Specific costs were built into the contract. For example, Michael Henley purchased 150 chaldrons at the rate of fifty one shillings per chaldron, with specific allowances for miteage, lighterage and portage, which was accepted by the Victualling Board, to be paid in ninety day bills.²⁴ Once the contracts were signed, the ships entered the government service.

Once in the pay of the Transport Board, the ship was under that board's control, and could be used for a variety of purposes required by the British State. One typical contract stated that

the said Master shall and will receive and take on Board the said Ship or Vessel, from Time to Time, such a Number of Soldiers, Horses, Provisions, Powder, Provender, or any Kind or Sort of Naval Victualling Stores, Recruits, and whatever else there shall be Occasion for, for the Service of His Majesty, as he shall be directed and required, and as he can reasonably stow and carry...under Convoy, as the said Commissioners, or the Officer in Chief whose command he shall be under, shall order and direct, landing and delivering the same accordingly.²⁵

Essential was the practice of giving, signing, and keeping Bills of Lading (specific receipts for ships) and other indents for supplies received on Board and the acceptance that they were accountable for the same. A log-book of the wind and weather was kept. At the end of the service, this would be delivered to the Transport Office, 'upon Oath, if required', together with all orders and instructions that he received.²⁶ The *Freedom* was a transport in the Baltic between April and December 1808. Its records and receipts remain, listing many receipts for supplies bought during 1808. Also kept for the ship's and owner's records were wage accounts, portage bills and receipts for dues.²⁷

When under contract, and when sent to a fleet, the transports came under the orders of the Commander in Chief. As such, they could be ordered wherever they were needed. John Stables, Master of the *Ann* of Leith, reported that he left the port of Leith laden with ninety-six tons one hundred-weight of coals for the Island of Anholt. On arriving at Gothenburg he applied to the Commander in Chief, Sir James Saumarez, for a convoy to

²⁴ TNA, ADM 111/187, 11 June 1808.

²⁵ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

²⁶ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

²⁷ NMM, HNL 59/81 f.2-31 April-December 1808.

Anholt, when he received orders from him to stop in Hawke Roads, Gothenburg to supply the Royal Navy ships on that station, ‘the quantity of twenty-four Tons, sixteen hundred weight one quarter and twenty pounds of coals by weight and also the further quantity of Forty six Chaldrons and Thirty Bushels of Coals by measure as appears by the receipts hereunto annexed’. Later under the orders of Captain Reynolds of His Majesty’s ship the *Tribune*, ‘and also by verbal orders from Admiral Dixon’s captain’, he applied to Captain Barclay of His Majesty’s ship *Minotaur* for instructions, ‘which he received and in conformity thereto sailed from Gottenburgh on the ninth day of January last for the port of Leith with the remainder of the coals on board’.²⁸ Once signed, a merchant vessel was for all intents and purposes a government vessel.

The Transport Board’s relationship with Contractors

What were the incentives for contracting with the Transport Board? Wartime shipping profits outside government service could be large. Hall states that it was ‘hard to stop civilian owners taking advantage of the nation’s needs to make inflated profits’.²⁹ In a time of unprecedented commercial prosperity, it was more advantageous for a merchant to put his ship to a trade than let it to government.³⁰ This being true, the question should be asked, why did any enter government service? In practice, the fear of capture played a part in a ship-owner’s decision and could encourage him to enter into government service. For the Transport service to procure shipping, they were forced to enter the open market and offer freight rates which could compete with those in civilian carrying trade.³¹ Given the risk of capture, particularly prevalent in the Baltic with Danish gunboats a constant risk through the Sound, the safe, steady profits available with the Transport Board were attractive. This did not necessarily mean however that the sole incentive was financial. Added to this was the small amount of effort that went into managing a ship in the pay of the Transport Board. As Simon Ville has noted, ‘the Henleys saw advantages

²⁸ NMM, HNL 13/17 f.22, 14 April 1810.

²⁹ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 41.

³⁰ Mary Ellen Condon, ‘The Administration of the Transport Service During the War Against Revolutionary France, 1793-1802’ (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 1968) p. 3.

³¹ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 78.

in diversifying by employing some vessels in the transport Service and some on commercial ventures. One of the chief advantages of the service was a guaranteed income in return for very little day-to-day management by the owner'.³²

Being insured for any loss was an added benefit. Ships in the Transport service would sail at the risk of the government, with the Transport Board compensating the owners for any damage sustained by hostile action. Ship-owners were happy to let ships to the Victualling Board, since they could make money and protect their investment.³³ Though there was an inquiry into any given claim, with potential negligence on the part of the master investigated, compensation was regularly awarded. At the time a ship was engaged as a transport, her value was estimated jointly by the surveying officer, shipwright officer, and storekeeper. It was a condition of the contract that if she was captured by the enemy during her time of service, her value would be paid by Government. If a capture took place, the master would detail all the circumstances of the case. A certificate was also required from the commander of the convoy under whose protection she may have been, stating his opinion of the master's conduct. If the fault was the master's, determined 'sea-risk', then the Board could withhold compensation. By sea-risk, they meant 'all accidents which may rise on that head are at the charge of the Owners, who either injure their ships or take the risk upon themselves'.³⁴ If upon investigation it appeared that the ship was unavoidably captured, and that no blame could be attached, a Bill of Sale was made out and the ship passed into the property of the crown.³⁵ In both June and July 1809 the treasury ledgers note that occasions on which payments listed at 'the value of ship were made'.³⁶ Payment such were paid on average of about once a month.

³² Simon Ville, 'The deployment of English merchant shipping: Michael and Joseph Henley of Wapping, ship owners, 1775-1830', *Journal of Transport History* Vol. V, (1984) p. 22. Ville emphasises the considerable flexibility of the Henley's deployment. Although Ville's analysis focused on an economic history of the shipowners themselves, his figures are also very useful once applied to this study.

³³ Syrett, *Shipping and Military Power*, p. 55.

³⁴ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Ninth Report, p. 10.

³⁵ A deduction was made for wear and tear, at a rate of eight shillings per ton per annum. TNA, 1/3763/515-537, 7 February 1811.

³⁶ TNA, ADM 20/324, June and July 1809.

A merchant chartering his ship to the transport service would be both insured, and able to make a profit with limited work needed. And although the potential profits were not as great as in some of the Indies trades, nonetheless it is certain that the Henley made profits. The Henley's could also be paid though the Baltic winter, a time when their ships could not hope to carry trade there. The *Ann* carried coals to Anholt in 1811. The Transport Board paid the following to Henley and Son: £437 2shillings and 10pence for the freight of a cargo of Coals from Leith, intended for Anholt, and a further £205 and 16shillings for demurrage after allowing ten days to unload, from 25 November 1809 to the 13 January 1810 (being 49 days at 4 guineas per day as per their agreement). Added to this was the charge for the coal, amounting to £101 exactly including duty, commission and stowage charges. The total owed was therefore £763 18 shillings and 10 pence. Scribbled on the back of this is their account, listing their expenses, including the mentioned £101 for coal and a further £614 and 10 shillings, for example for re-freight charges. The total owed by Henley was thus £728 10 shillings. This left Henley and Son with an overall profit of (£763 18s. 10p - £720 10s.) £35 8 shillings and 10 pence.³⁷ It should be said that part of the freight had not been delivered, hence the relatively low profit.

A more typical example is the ship *Ceres*. The following year, this vessel also transported coals to the Island of Anholt and completed the contract fully. On October 1st 1811 they 'billed' the Victualling Board for the sum of £858 and 18 shillings, for the freight of 254 chaldrons delivered to Anholt at £3 5 shillings per chaldron amounting to £825 and 10 shillings, a further £32 for 8 days demurrage at £4 per day, and £1 and 8 shillings for pilotage. Henley's costs amounted to £139 12shillings and 4pence for the coal itself, and £522 9 shillings and 4pence for freight costs. Total costs (£662 1 shilling and 8pence) subtracted from total debits (£858 18 shillings) left a profit of £196 16 shillings and 4pence for Henley and Son over a period of three months.³⁸ This was a more typical level of profit. As such, it was not excessive, especially compared to the lucrative trades being sought in the Indies, but it highlights the relatively small but reliable profits that could be

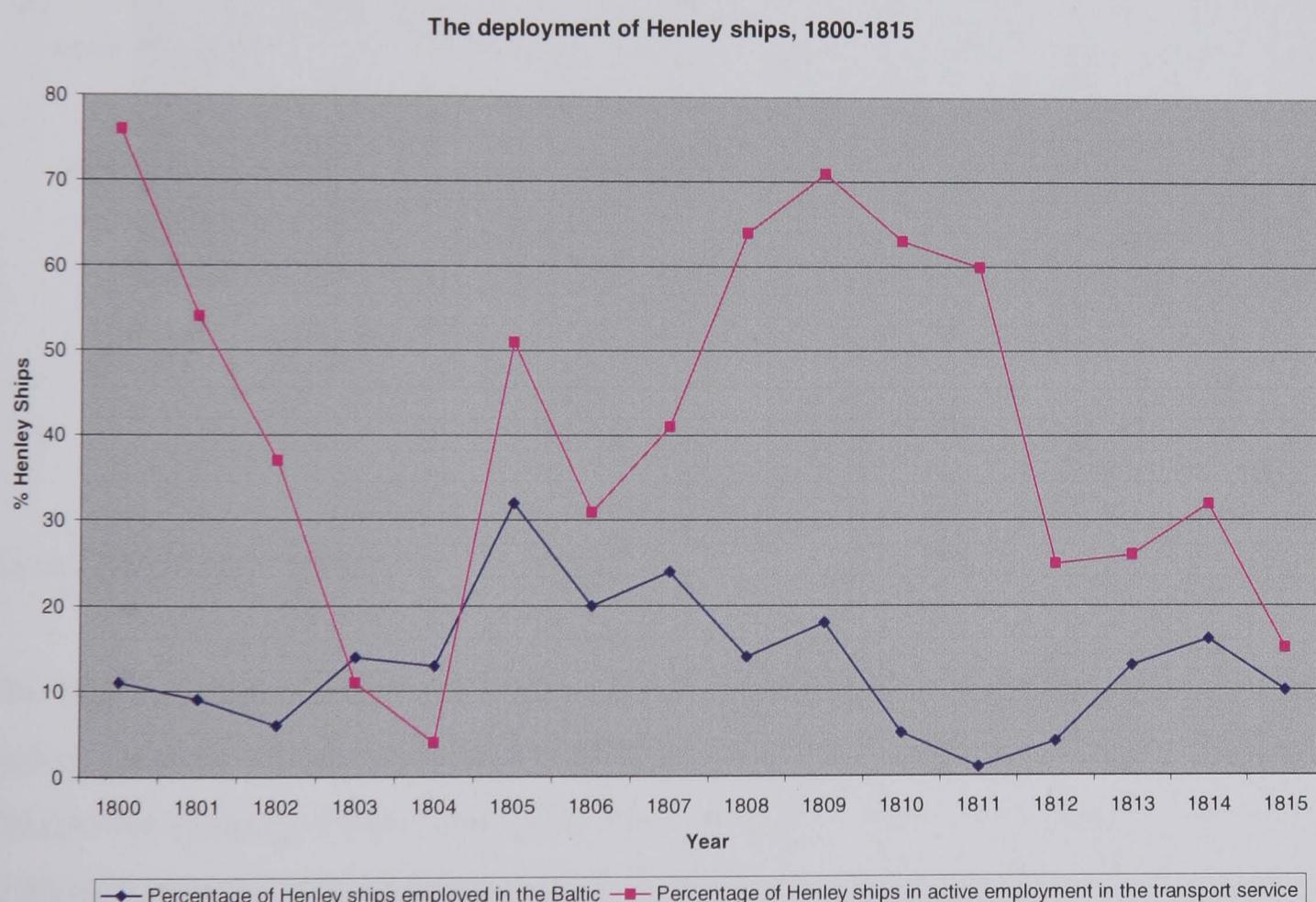
³⁷ NMM, HNL 13/17, f.25-6, 2 April 1810.

³⁸ NMM, HNL 13/23 f.10, 14-15, 26 July 1811, 31 July 1811, 1 October 1811, 5 November 1811.

made by a ship in government service.

It is clear that profits were made. It was also likely that the war meant a number of ships were forced out of their regular trades and were thus made available for the transport service. Using Simon Ville's figures, we can see the same is true for the Baltic between 1808 and 1812. During the years in which the Baltic was 'closed' (at least in theory) to the British, the reduction in the percentage of Henley ships in the Baltic is very low, particularly in 1810 and 1811, the years in which Britain suffered its biggest mercantile losses. Concurrently, the number of Henley ships employed in the transport service has a plateau during the year 1808 to 1811: many of these were employed in the Peninsular campaign.

Figure 8



Source: Ville, 'Deployment of English merchant shipping', p. 25.

The Transport Board attempted to provide enough shipping for all the state's needs and achieve this at the best possible price. The first obviously took precedence. There were

times of increasing demand, as Britain's global commitments rose throughout the war. Below is a graph showing the full tonnage employed by the Transport Board between the years 1807-12. The data is collected from the Transport Board out-letters which are irregular; unfortunately there is no data for 1811. However, the rise in transport tonnage from 1807 is clear, as is the peak in during late 1808 and 1809.

Figure 9

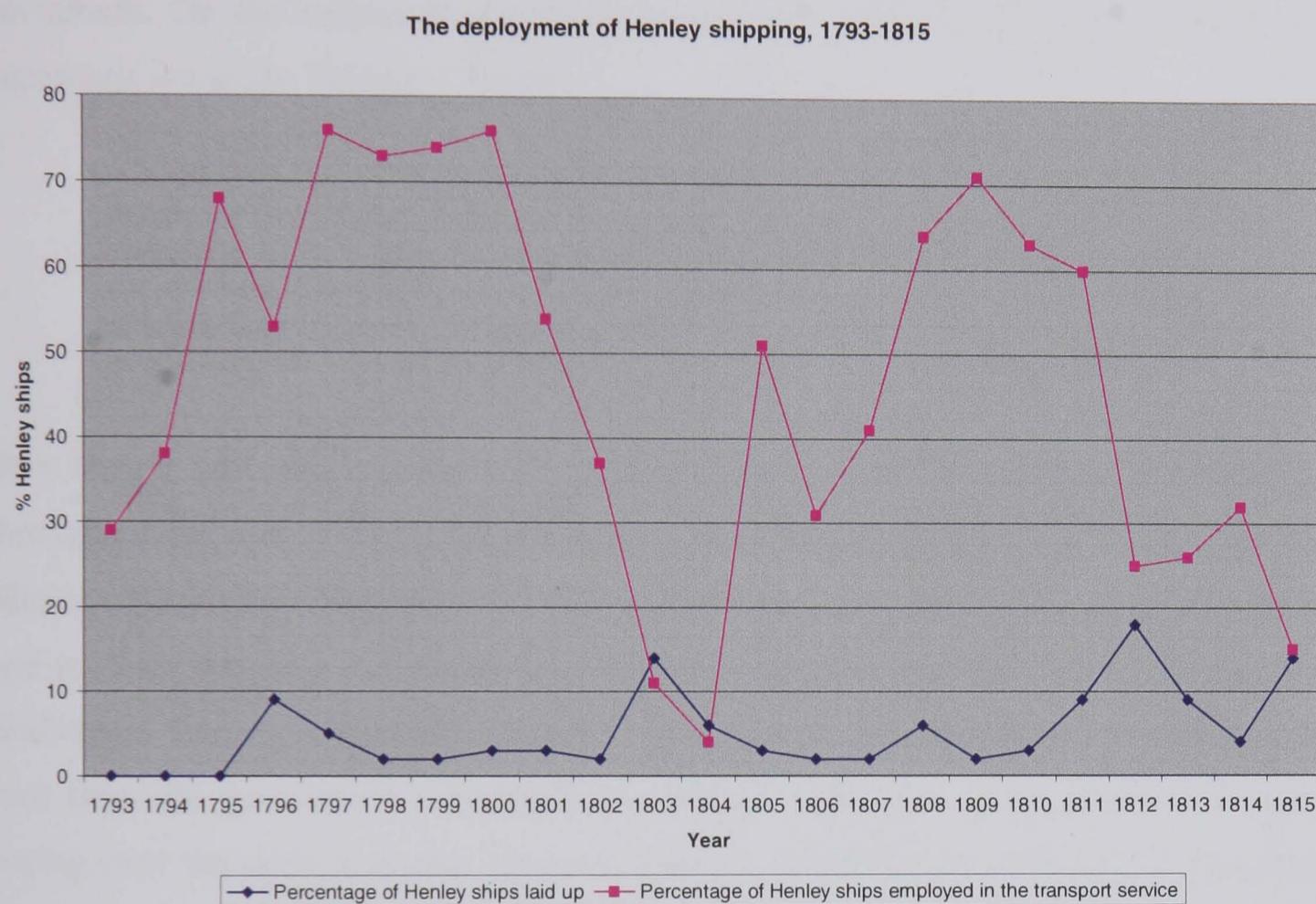


Source: TNA, ADM 1/3754-62.

This peak was the result of expanding global commitments, including a rise in the Baltic region, creating a huge demand for transport shipping. In the graph below, the rise in demand for shipping for the transport service in 1809 is shown by the peak in the number of Henley ships in active employment in the transport service, and the small amount laid up. Only by 1812, when Henley vessels were laid up for 18 per cent of the time, did the

figure increase, in Ville's words, 'a reflection of the reduced demand for government transports'.³⁹

Figure 10



Source: Ville, 'Deployment of English merchant shipping', p. 25.

The relative security of a government contract (as opposed to mercantile trade) would respond to a raw financial incentive from government. When there existed a great demand for shipping, the Transport Board would raise the freight rates, hoping to encourage more shipping. We have seen that the transport service was not an unattractive option for ship-owners. Raising the financial incentive by increasing the freight rate was a tried and tested method for procuring extra tonnage. Was the Transport Board forced into paying over the odds however? Merchants could charge increasingly higher prices as Britain became more desperate for tonnage, for example in 1809. Can we therefore talk of Britain's merchant shipping holding the state to ransom?

³⁹ Ville, 'Deployment of English merchant shipping', p. 24.

The merchants could dictate a price. However, there were enough ships in the British merchant fleet for there to be a proper market of shipping: the government depended upon managing this market to secure all its shipping needs. In 1807 and again in early 1810 the Transport Board's freight rates reached remarkable levels of 25 shillings per ton per month. On the subject of conveying provision to the fleet in the Baltic, it will be necessary, wrote the Transport Board,

to increase the rate of hire, to twenty five shillings per Ton, per month, for three months certain, which is the rate of hire you have given for some time past, in cases of emergency; we have taken the same into consideration, & do hereby require and direct you, to procure the Tonnage which may be required for the service in question, on the most reasonable terms in your power, in sufficient time to load the vessels of the period specified in your letter for the Transport of Provisions for the Baltic Fleet accordingly.⁴⁰

This freight rate (the monthly rate paid per ton by the Transport Board) continued throughout the rest of 1810. In November, the Transport Board declared that 'the said Michael Henley and Son, their Executors, Administrators, or Assigns, shall be allowed and paid for the Hire and Freight of the said Ship or Vessel, the sum of Twenty Five Shillings a Ton, each Kalendar Month'.⁴¹ It is clear that London merchants were doing well from the government's spiralling demands.⁴² However, as the above letter hints, paying over the odds in a time of emergency was a well-accepted means of negotiating one's way out of huge shortage. The raising of freight rates to encourage further chartering of shipping was a well-established procedure for raising extra tonnage: it was already a well-regarded means of increasing transport capacity. In 1775, with the onset of the American War of Independence, the freight rate was 9s shillings per ton, raised to 11 shillings in January 1776. In February 1776, it was raised again to 12 shillings 6d. By this means, the transport service was able to hire an extra 7010 tons of shipping.⁴³

⁴⁰ TNA, ADM 2/158/115-6, Admiralty to TB, 19 April 1810.

⁴¹ NMM, HNL, 13/20 f.8.

⁴² Freight rates reached their highest point in the Napoleonic Wars in 1813, when it reached 30s. See TNA, ADM 108/24/53, 3 December 1813.

⁴³ David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, pp. 91, 99. In November 1780 the freight rate was again raised to 12 shillings and 9d. Again in May 1782, raised to 13 shillings 9d per ton, the 'highest price ever given by the Board'. The naval administration made a clear link between raising rates and securing more tonnage.

Throughout the war against Revolutionary France there continued to be huge problems securing tonnage. There were three expeditions that crossed the Atlantic between 1793 and 1797, the second of which took 30,000 soldiers. The victualling needs for these expeditions were extensive, requiring 3,500 tons of flour, 1735 tons of Salt pork, 434 tons of salt beef and 186 tons of butter. As Michael Duffy has noted, the demand ‘brought the British war machinery almost to breaking point’.⁴⁴ These expeditions were seriously delayed by a lack of transports. The freight rate, previously static during the 18th century was increased by two thirds during an eight year period of the French Revolutionary war.⁴⁵ Freight rates reached their peak in the Napoleonic War. In April 1807, Castlereagh permitted the Board to raise the rates to 20 shillings and 25 shillings per ton for vessels hired for three and six months respectively. Total hire rose from 115,157 tons in April to 167,734 tons by July.⁴⁶

Merchants lending ships to the Transport service had other advantages. There were geographic constraints that could be added to a contract. Henley and Sons were keen to limit their ships and masters to European waters. Thus the following condition was written into the contract. The Transport Board would, ‘hire and Freight the said vessel, to the said Commissioners, to receive on Board, at such Port or Ports as shall be directed, in the European Seas but not to the Eastward of the Rock of Gibraltar’.⁴⁷ What must be remembered is that in all of the Transport Board’s contracting with the private sector, the contracts were weighted in the favour of the Transport Board to a remarkable degree.

Payment for freight by the Transport Board was done on credit. The government always insisted on six month’s payment being reserved, ‘to enable Government to indemnify itself for any claims which it may have upon the owners’.⁴⁸ No ship hired was paid month by month, being paid only a proportion of what was owed during its service. As the Transport Board made clear in 1811, in a response to an Admiralty request for ‘a

⁴⁴ Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: the British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War against Revolutionary France* (Oxford University Press, 1987) p. 191.

⁴⁵ Condon, ‘The Administration of the Transport Service’, p. 3.

⁴⁶ Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War*, p. 42.

⁴⁷ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810. Although it should be added that Henley’s did at one point have ships in the West Indies trade.

⁴⁸ *Commission of Naval Revision, Ninth Report*, p. 11.

statement of the order in which the various Expenditure of this office...are authorised', it explained that a bill was issued for two months hire, payable 90 days after the initial date by the Treasurer of the Navy. After the ship has been in service for six months, a further payment of two months' hire was made, provided a certificate under the hand of an Agent for Transports could be produced, stating that she was still employed, complete in men and stores and fit for the service in which she is engaged. An additional bill for two months freight was issued at the end of ten months. Payments for two month's hire were repeated. This meant that after a transport had been in service for fourteen months, a 'reserve of six months' Pay' was kept up, a deposit to cover any stores belonging to the Government being lost or damaged during the course of the service. This ensured that Government had the means of indemnification for any time lost, whether through neglect of the master or crew, or from inability of the ship for performing the services on which she may have been employed.⁴⁹

When a ship was discharged from service the owners were required to produce certificates from the necessary departments, as evidence of their having accounted for all government stores and cargoes supplied to them by the Victualling, Ordnance or Navy Boards, before the balance of freight remaining due was allowed to be paid. Only when these certificates had been handed in, considered by the sub-Accountant and the General Accountant, and then laid before the Board for approval and allowance, was a Bill made out for the balance due.⁵⁰ The Transport Board ensured this was written into every contract. For example, the contract for a Henley ship in 1810 stated clearly that

After the said Ship or Vessel shall have been in the Service Three Months, and the said Michael Henley and Son, or the Owners or Master shall have produced to the said Commissioners a Certificate, to the Effect contained in the Margin hereof, from the Commanding or Senior Officer of His Majesty's Ships, or Agents for Transports, under whose Orders and Directions such Ship or Vessel shall happen to be...Ship or Vessel, shall have and receive a Bill of Imprest, made out and registered for One months Freight More, and after the said ship or Vessel shall have been in the service for Six months, and the Said Michael Henley and Son or the Owners, or the Master of the said Ship or Vessel, in behalf of the Owners shall have produced to the said Commissioners, a like Certificate thereof, as before the said Michael Henley and Son shall have and receive and Bill of Imprest, made out and registered for Two Months Freight more; and a further Payment of

⁴⁹ TNA, 1/3763/515-537, 7 February 1811.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Two Months, at the end of Ten Months; and a Payment of Two Months whenever Eight Months shall be due, leaving always at least Six Months Pay in Arrear for the Security of the Government.⁵¹

The Transport Board thus deferred payment, allowing them to run the transport service on credit. While the ship was in service, it was the Transport Board that held the power. If a ship on short term service was delayed because of a naval order, for example from a Commander in Chief, the Transport Board allowed for ‘Interest on Transport-Office Bills added thereto for the Number of Tons abovementioned, for so long a time as the said Ship or Vessel shall be continued in His Majesty’s Service’. In September 1809 the Board agreed to pay the owner of the *Ann*, ‘if detained more than ten days after arrival in discharging the Cargo to be paid four guineas per day demurrage’.⁵²

However, this could work the other way, and with much stronger penalties. Negligence on the part of Masters or ship-owners meant ships could be mulcted. It was agreed in the contract between the respective parties, ‘that upon the Loss of Time, Breach of Orders, or Neglect of Duty, by the said Master being made appear, the said Commissioners shall have free Liberty, and be permitted to mulct (fine), or make such Abatement out of the Freight and Pay, as shall be adjudged fit and reasonable’.⁵³ The *Ann* was ordered that ‘the Master does engage to proceed immediately with the Provisions under-mentioned, Wind and Weather permitting, and to make the best of his Way thither, on the Penalty of having Four-pence per Tun a Day abated from his Freight Bill, in Case of any Neglect or Delay on his Part’.⁵⁴

This was a serious issue. By March 1811, the *Harry Morris* reported to the notary public in Portsmouth. It had served its Baltic portion of service as contracted: the vessel *Harry Morris* of London had passed all of the Transport Board’s criteria, and had laden at Shields with a cargo of coals and bound to Anholt. It arrived at Yarmouth and received orders from the Resident Agent there to proceed to this part to join the convoy for

⁵¹ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

⁵² NMM, HNL 13/17 f.11, 9 October 1809.

⁵³ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

⁵⁴ NMM, HNL 34/30, f.3, 5 May 1800.

Lisbon.⁵⁵ In this latter capacity it had disappointed the Board. The *Harry Morris* had missed the convoy to Lisbon and Henleys and Son was mulcted of part of its fee. Two seamen had deserted, the master had not caught the wind and the ship had missed the Lisbon convoy. The Henleys were not paid while it waited for the next convoy. Added to this, they were fined for having a vessel undermanned.⁵⁶ The Transport Board was unimpressed, writing to Michael Henley and repeating their intention to ‘stop the Pay, and to charge a Mulct against the Transport Harry Morris...[the Transport Board]...see no reason to alter their decisions in this case’.⁵⁷

The Transport Board would remember this indiscretion. Three months later the *Harry Morris* once again tendered to serve for the Transport Board. On the 4 June, the Board wrote to Henley, ‘in return to your letter of the 1st Instant, offering to fit the Harry Morris, 240 tons, three months Transport for a six months Coppered Ship; I am directed by the Board to acquaint you, that she is not approved of for a six months Coppered Transport’.⁵⁸ Partly this was due to the lower demand for transport tonnage. As we have seen, 1809 saw the high point of tonnage requirement but this demand had receded slightly by 1811. However, although there was no overriding need for tonnage, and the Transport Board could select its preferred ships, it is interesting that it should turn down this particular Henley ship. Indeed, the Transport Board continued to hire other Henley ships: for example, the *Ceres* and the *Grape* in 1811.⁵⁹ Although the Transport Board was often needy, it refused to be browbeaten into accepting incompetence in its service.

The Transport Board was prepared to penalise ship-owners who lent their ships. Such orders came from the very top of government. Perceval, the Chancellor and later Prime Minister, had in 1808 highlighted, the ‘very many delays, and not a few

⁵⁵ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.18, 16 March 1811.

⁵⁶ NMM, HNL/13/20, 16.

⁵⁷ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.19, 18 March 1811. Six months later, the TB actually reduced the Mulct, charging compensation only for the five days the Henley ships had cost them: ‘the Board are pleased to remit, to five days, the Mulct imposed upon the *Harry Morris*, Coal Transport; that being the time actually lost to Government by her not sailing under the *Hotspur’s* Convoy for Lisbon’. NMM, HNL 13/20, f.24, 5 November 1811.

⁵⁸ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.21, 4 June 1811.

⁵⁹ NMM, HNL 13/23, f.3 25 June 1811.

accidents...occasioned by the desertion, indiscipline, and want of Seamanship – both of Masters and Men in the Transports...I believe this is the constant complaint on every occasion when a large body of Transports is employed'.⁶⁰ The neglect of a master could absolve the board of any responsibility to buy the vessel. In early 1810, the news of the loss of the *President* victualler in the Baltic broke in London. Rear Admiral Dixon wrote to the Transport Board, complaining of the misconduct of the master of the *President* victualler, 'in consequence if his having gone to England without waiting upon him to give an account of the disaster...Let a copy thereof be delivered to the Accountant for Stores, in order that the impropriety of the Master's conduct may be strictly investigated before any Certificates be granted to enable the Owners to receive payment of the Freight. And acquaint the Rear Admiral therewith, thanking him for the communication'.⁶¹

The transference of risk onto the merchant was made clear by the Commission of Naval Revision. The storekeeper signed a bill of lading, and provided blank receipts to the master of the vessel, for respective pursers to sign as provisions were handed over to Royal Navy ships. These receipts were transmitted immediately on the transport's return, accounting for the whole cargo, and were answerable financially for any discrepancy.⁶² The Transport Board could be forgiving: it was in the Board's interest, after all, not to anger potential future lenders of freight. When the *Ceres*, another Henley ship, reported problems unloading its carriage on the Island of Anholt, the Transport Board was more understanding. 'The *Ceres* delivered one Boat's load as three Chaldrons of Coals, after which the whole of the Boats belonging to the Island were employed in delivering Bricks and Tiles from the *Philesia* Transport that no Boats came to the *Ceres* till after the *Philesia* had delivered her cargo, which was about the 7th or 8th day of September'. There were clear time limits in the charterparty (contract) that the ships were following. The *Ceres* was required to lay at the Island of Anholt for the purpose of discharging its cargo

⁶⁰ MA, 19/29.

⁶¹ TNA, ADM 111/194, 12 January 1810.

⁶² *Commission of Naval Revision*, Eleventh Report, p. 74.

for eighteen days after it arrived.⁶³ The Board did not mulct on any delays in this instance.⁶⁴

The Transport Board's relative power becomes more evident if the post-hire period is considered. The key and most ambiguous part of the contract lay in stating that the ship's duties after its term of service. For example, the *Harry Morris* was

to continue in Pay for Three Months certain, and after that, for so long Time as they the said Commissioners shall require; and until they, or Agents authorised by them, shall give Notice of Discharge; such Notice of Discharge to be given at Deptford or Portsmouth, as may be most convenient for His Majesty's Service, and after the Ships arrival in one of those places.⁶⁵

The ship was contracted to the Transport Board, but after its period in service could be continued in the transport service with or without the ship owner's consent. This was nothing new. It had been the case during the American War and during the French Revolutionary War. Syrett noted that during the war against America 1776-1783 a ship-owner could not withdraw his vessel without the consent of the Board. Indeed, as he argues it 'undoubtedly hindered the chartering of additional vessels', since, once word had spread that chartering a vessel with the transport service was 'tantamount to economic bondage', it became even harder to secure new tonnage.⁶⁶ There was no confiscation of shipping.⁶⁷ As Syrett has pointed out, to be truly effective, the government would have needed to prevent, or at least limit, the tonnage being absorbed into 'non-essential civilian commerce', as indeed occurred in the Second World War. As he comments, 'a government controlled war economy was beyond the comprehension of the eighteenth century mind'.⁶⁸ That aside, the Transport Board had continued to insist on including the clause controlling the withdrawal time in contracts. The *Ann*, secured for the Transport Board in 1800, had a similar clause, 'to Hire and Freight let the said ship or

⁶³ NMM, HNL 13/23, f.3, 25 June 1811.

⁶⁴ NMM, HNL 13/23, f.17, 27 June 1811.

⁶⁵ NMM, HNL 13/20, f.8, 4 September 1810.

⁶⁶ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, pp. 102-3.

⁶⁷ As argued by Patrick K. O'Brien, 'Merchants and bankers as patriots and speculators? Foreign commerce and monetary policy in wartime, 1793-1815' in John J. McCusker & Kenneth Morgan, *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 274.

⁶⁸ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 105.

Vessel, to the said Commissioners, for so long a Time as they the said Commissioners [for His Majesty's Transport Service] shall require; and until they, or Agents authorised by them, shall give notice of discharge'.⁶⁹ This was as close to commandeering as the 18th century naval administration was prepared to go. Such was the power of mercantile interest, and indeed the threat that other merchants would be dissuaded from entering into the service in the future, that the Transport Board was reluctant to use these powers to the fullest extent.

That said, once on a station, a transport could be retained there indefinitely. In practice, there was little sense in this being done in the Baltic. Dependent on supplies *from* England, keeping transports in the Baltic made little sense. In other theatres, such as the Mediterranean, this was practised. On 12 December 1799, Keith wrote explaining that he had 'directed the two Victuallers named in the Margin [*Lord Nelson, Amphitrite*] to be dispatched to Lisbon for the supply of such of His Majesty's Ships in the River Tagus as may be in want of Provisions'. He did state that after unloading them, they would 'proceed to England under protection of the first Convoy'.⁷⁰ This suggests that Keith was sensitive to concerns of contract length. However, the resident agent for transports in the Mediterranean, William Day, writing to Keith, stated 'should your lordship think it right to send Transports to the Tagus; I have to request that your lordship will be pleased to direct that one or two may be sent with them that I may detach them with the different divisions of transports as the service may require'.⁷¹ Clearly, keeping transports beyond their time was loophole taken advantage of many times. The *Friton*, *William & Mary*, and *Zephyr* transports were kept at Minorca employed in conveying cattle from Leghorn. A further 1,842 tons of transport shipping was kept at Minorca as victuallers, 1,713 at Palermo, and 2,355 kept at Gibraltar.⁷²

⁶⁹ NMM, HNL 34/30, f.2, 16 June 1800.

⁷⁰ NMM, KEI/L/23/121, Keith to Matinger, acting agent victualler, 12 December 1799. Keith also wrote a week later, ordering that 'I have to desire that you will proceed without delay to clear such of the Transports as it may be advisable to return to England' under the protection of convoy. NMM, KEI/L/23/146, Keith to Mottley, 21 December 1799.

⁷¹ NMM, KEI/L/1/5, Day to Keith, 12 December 1799.

⁷² NMM, KEI/L/1/143-5, TB to Keith, 8 March 1800. See also Davey, 'Within Hostile Shores'.

In 1800 Keith instructed Lieutenant Lamb, by now the resident ‘Agent for Transports and Victuallers’, that he would soon ‘have occasion in a very few weeks to embark at Leghorn for Minorca, about four thousand five hundred men and three thousand horses with the necessary baggage and stores’. He desired that he would go about ‘refraining thither, as many Transports and Victuallers as will be fit for this purpose...or, if these should not be a sufficient number, all that can possibly be cleared and fitted for this service’. Need overcame maxims of early 19th century property rights. Keith made it clear that ‘it is not my intention that any are to be hired’.⁷³ The Victualling Board condoned this practice, stating in July 1800 stating that that ‘the Victuallers hired for the purpose of transporting Provisions to the Mediterranean, are invariably taken up on monthly pay’ after their terms. ‘for the purpose of their being removed to such Ports, and at such times as the Commander in Chief may direct’.⁷⁴ This was not commandeering by name: however it was certainly a blurring of the line between state and private property.

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The Transport Board thus proved adept at managing the resources of the private sector for its own ends. Using higher freight-rates and ensuring that the ship’s procurement could be extended after the length of the contract, the Board took an increasingly large number of vessels into the transport service in the years 1807-12. It should be remembered that loaning a ship to the Transport Board was a more secure option than pursuing the more lucrative and more dangerous mercantile trades. To continue to procure freight, the Transport Board found it necessary to raise the freight rate to unprecedented levels for this essential service.

The procurement of transports was a crucial part of the provisioning chain. Naval administration had two levels of concern during the Napoleonic Wars. Firstly, could they get it done, and supply what was needed? Secondly, could they provide it at the cheapest possible price? For the Victualling Board, the first was never an issue: they would spend the war attempting to achieve the best possible price for their efforts. For the Transport

⁷³ NMM, KEI/L/24/207-8, Keith to Lamb, 17 April 1800.

⁷⁴ TNA, ADM 111/156, 11 July 1800.

Board, the supply of transports could be a cause for concern. The Transport Board was anxious to avoid paying over the odds: it would be wrong to suggest economy was not an objective. However, this desire could be overridden by a more basic need, the chronic want of transport tonnage. The rise in freight rates to 25 shillings demonstrated that, at times, the Transport Board did become desperate and economy was put on the back burner. As such, problems of supply could impact on the victualling system in a way that was never an issue for the Victualling Board. This thesis will now look at the administrative developments between 1808 and 1812 for the supply of the Baltic fleet in which problems hiring tonnage would have considerable impact.

Chapter 6: Victualling the Baltic Fleet, 1808-1809

In October 1808 Vice-Admiral Sir James Saumarez visited the Swedish squadron and witnessed first hand the devastating consequences of an ineffective victualling system. ‘On board their ships’, he informed the Admiralty, ‘I found 1500 Sick all much affected with scurvy, accompanied with dysentery, low fever, and a few Catarrhal complaints...all apparently sinking under general debility and despondency; in many instances amounting to insanity, which too frequently terminated in the unhappy sufferer committing suicide...’. The situation was worse on land: ‘in their hospitals I found 3864 suffering under similar disease’, he continued.¹

The poor health of the Swedish forces is a measure against which the efforts of the Royal Navy to supply itself through the Napoleonic Wars can be judged. Employed in the same Baltic region as the Swedish Navy, how was it that the British seamen stationed there did not come to suffer from such problems? A monthly return of sick and wounded on board the Baltic squadron at the end of 1808 found only four cases of scurvy amongst over 11,000 seamen, compared to forty five cases of rheumatism and thirty two cases of Venereal Disease.² This is made all the more impressive when one considers the challenges of distance, geography and politics Chapter 3 outlined.

The Victualling System in practice: 1808-1809

In 1808 there were four deliveries of victuals to the Baltic fleet. The Victualling Board was always faced with a dilemma: the more deliveries it made, the fresher the food would be, while spreading the risk of transport loss at sea. They could not very well send out victuallers every few weeks, however, as such an arrangement would be both expensive and an administrative nightmare. They settled for economies of scale: though that term is

¹ TNA, ADM 1/7/278-80, Saumarez to the Admiralty, 16 October 1808.

² TNA, ADM 1/8/38. Of the four cases of scurvy, three were on board the *Prometheus*, which had spent the second half of the campaign in the eastern Baltic, the furthest from supply.

perhaps anachronistic, the principle was well understood, hence four large deliveries in 1808. Each delivery provided victuals enough for two to three months.

The first was ordered on 7 June 1808. The order came from the Admiralty to ‘provide with all possible expedition a proportion of Provisions of all species for two months for the squadron of His Majesty’s Ships and Vessels in the Baltic reporting to their Lordships Secretary when the said Provisions are ready’. The following was ordered, enough to feed 11,000 men for two months:

Table 5: Victualling Delivery, 7 June 1808

Bread	5500 Bags [616,000lbs]
Spirits	38500 Gallons [385000lbs]
Beef	22,000 pieces of 8lbs [176,000]
Flour	132,000 pounds
Raisins	22,000 lbs [all lbs unless stated]
Suet	11,000
Pork	44,000 pieces of 4lbs [176000lbs]
Pease	2,750 bushels [154000lbs]
Oatmeal	2,062 bushels, 4 Gallons [115512]
Sugar	33,000
Butter	33,000
Cheese	66,000
Vinegar	5,500 Gallons [55,000]
Tobacco	22,000 lbs
Lemon Juice	38,500 lbs
Sugar for Lemon Juice	38,500 lbs
Coals	171 Chaldrons, 4 Bushels [344960]
Candles	1027 dozen lbs
TOTAL	2,430,796lbs or 1215 tons

Source: TNA, ADM 111/187, 7 June 1808. To enable comparisons to be made, I have converted Bags and Gallons to pounds.

The Victualling Board then wrote to the Transport Board ‘for the requisite Freight to the extent of 1600 tons, and to the Commander in Chief’.³ Over the following weeks, the Transport Board secured tonnage for this service, reporting to the Victualling Board as each was contracted. Thus, after the order of the 7 June, the Transport Board wrote on the

³ TNA, ADM 111/187, 7 June 1808.

8 June, 15 June, 17 June, 21 June and 25 June 1808 reporting the state of the transports secured.⁴

On the 15 July 1808 a second shipment was requested, again for two months' provisions.⁵ The Victualling board received orders from the Admiralty to bring about a shipment of foodstuffs, calculated to provide, 'all species, for two months, for the Squadron of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels employed in the Baltic'. They then wrote immediately to the Transport Board for the necessary tonnage, requesting the Transport Board 'will cause us to be immediately furnished with proper Vessels for the conveyance thereof, to the extent of 1600 tons'.⁶ The Victualling Board assembled the necessary victuals at Deptford, while the Transport Board secured the necessary tonnage. On the 19 July they wrote that they had chartered the following transports: the *Adventure* of 146 tons, the *Sisters* (181), the *Lively* (138), the *Margaret* (160), the *Addington* (163), the *Favourite* (125) and the *Betsey* (194), and that 'they are now at Deptford in readiness to load'.⁷ Five other transports had earlier been appropriated, and the full tonnage needed had been secured. The transports procured to carry the victuals to the Baltic are listed below, giving the dates by which they were loaded with provisions.

Table 6: Transports hired between 17-26 July 1808

Lading	Vessel Name	Master's Name
17 July 1808	<i>Active</i>	R Williams
17 July 1808	<i>Industry</i>	D Lindsay
18 July 1808	<i>John & Francis</i>	J Aaron
18 July 1808	<i>Harmony</i>	E Humphries
19 July 1808	<i>Diana</i>	J Collins
25 July 1808	<i>Adventure</i>	P Middleyand
25 July 1808	<i>Betsey</i>	R Parker
25 July 1808	<i>Favorite</i>	W Clarke
25 July 1808	<i>Margaret</i>	R Richardson
23 July 1808	<i>Lively</i>	W Batho
26 July 1808	<i>Addington</i>	N. Parnell

⁴ TNA, ADM 111/187, 8 June, 15 June, 17 June, 21 June, 27 June 1808.

⁵ TNA, ADM 111/188, 15 July 1808.

⁶ TNA, ADM, 110/58/44, VB to TB, 15 July 1808.

⁷ TNA, ADM 111/188, 19 July 1808.

26 July 1808	<i>Echo</i>	J Stewart
Source: TNA, ADM 110/58/100-1, Victualling Board to Transport Board, 28 July 1808.		

These, fully loaded, then made their way to the Baltic under convoy, arriving in late August.

There was a delivery of a similar size and tonnage ordered on 6 September arriving in late October. This was another shipment of two months' provisions of similar quantities to the previous two deliveries. The only major difference was the amount of fresh meat sent out.

Table 7: Victualling Delivery 6 September

	15 July order	6 September order
Beef	22,000 pieces of 8lb	11,000 pieces of 8lb
Pork	44,000 pieces of 4lb	22,000 pieces of 4lb

Source ADM 111/188, 15 July 1808, 6 September 1808

This difference can be explained by the large amount of local procurement of fresh meat in the Baltic that will be the focus of Chapter 8. Although Sweden could provide few other staples of the seamen's diet, live oxen and fresh beef were available from Britain's Scandinavian ally.

Otherwise, these were standard deliveries. Transports were procured on 17 September, 20 September and 28 September.⁸ There was an urgency to this delivery: 'it being a great importance that the Provisions directed by Minute of the 6th instant to be put on warrant for the Baltic should be shipped with every possible dispatch', to such an extent that 'the Superintendent do cause every exertion to be used to that end'. This included causing the necessary pease to be shipped without waiting the operation of Kiln drying'.⁹

⁸ TNA, ADM 111/188, 17 September 1808, 20 September 1808, 28 September 1808.

⁹ TNA, ADM 111/188, 21 September, 1808.

A final delivery was ordered by the Admiralty on 23 September. On this date, the Victualling Board received orders from the Admiralty to cause ‘two months Provisions of all species, in addition to the Provisions now shipping for the use of the Squadron now employed in the Baltic to be shipped and held in readiness at the Nore’. They then wrote immediately to the Transport Board for the necessary tonnage, ordering, ‘we have to request you will cause us to be furnished with proper vessels for the conveyance thereof to the extent of about 1500 tons’.¹⁰

There were four main victualling deliveries, all of them transporting between 1300 and 1600 tons of victuals. Indeed we can calculate the total tonnage of victuals transported to support the 11,000 men stationed in the Baltic for a year:

Table 8: Victualling Deliveries, 1808

Date Delivery ordered	Total Transport Tonnage	Number of Transports	Victuals carried
7 June	1655	9	1600
15 July	Not known	18	1600
6 September	1647	9	1300
22 September	1506	8	1500
TOTAL SHIPPED		44	6000 tons

Source: TNA, ADM 1/3755-6, TNA, ADM 110/58-9.¹¹

Each shipment carried exact amounts of provisions for the fleet for the given number of men on station. Victualling Board officials, knowing the number of men to be provided for, worked out specific amounts for a specific time. The decisions were taken on an informal basis at daily meetings. In the Victualling Board out-letters is a document from 1809, detailing the precise calculations made by that Board for the provisioning of the Baltic fleet, with amounts of each species calculated to last for specific periods:

¹⁰ TNA, ADM 110/58/259/60, VB to TB, 23 September 1808.

¹¹ Compiled using TNA, ADM 1/3755-6 for transport detail, TNA, ADM 110/58-9 for the VB and Admiralty orders.

Table 9: Victualling Delivery, 13 June 1809

Species	On board five Victuallers which have been completed, and have sailed from Deptford	Which will serve 12,000 Men this number of days	To be shipped on board two Victuallers to complete the above 12,000 Men two months as directed by Admiralty Order of the 19 th May 1809	Total Number of days Provisioned for
Bread, Cwts	3459	32	24	56
Spirits, Gall	28952	38	18	56
Beef, Ps 8 lbs	16576	38	18	56
Flour, lbs	99384	38	18	56
Raisins, lbs	16779	38	18	56
Suet, lbs	8280	38	18	56
Pork, Ps 4lbs	33072	38	18	56
Pease, Bush	2017	37	19	56
Oatmeal, Bush	1516	37	19	56
Sugar, lbs	24710	38	18	56
Butter, lbs	24795	38	18	56
Cheese, lbs	49780	38	18	56
Vinegar, Gall	4126	38	18	56
Tobacco, lbs	16509	38	18	56
Lemon Juice, lbs	29008	38	18	56
Sugar for Lemon Juice, lbs	29078	38	18	56
Candles, Doz.	744	37	19	56

Source: TNA, ADM 110/60/90-1.¹²

As the Victualling Board later minuted, the accountant for stores ‘having prepared and laid before the Board an Account of the quantity of Provisions remaining in the several Stores at Home and abroad’, would then go on to show ‘the number of Days the same

¹² TNA, ADM 110/60/90-1, 150-1, ‘A Statement of the Provisions sent to the Baltic and of those under orders for that station...’ VB, 13 June 1809.

will serve the Men Victualled at the respective stations'.¹³ As such, a detailed system of receipts and note-taking was practised, with Saumarez keeping a strict eye on provisions. For example, in May 1808 he sent a memorandum observing that 'several of the weekly accounts of the squadron sent to the Commander in Chief having been very incorrect which has rendered it impossible to ascertain the quantity of each species of provisions on board'. He then directed that 'the Captains and Commanders of the squadron pay particular attention to filling up the different columns as follows. In the Column for Beef is to be expressed the no. of weeks remaining of that article, allowing it to be served agreeably to the standing orders of half flour half beef. The no. of weeks flour is to be marked in the same manner. In the column of Suet and Fruit the no. of weeks of each is to be expressed in the separate columns'.¹⁴

The masters of the respective transports kept the receipts on delivering the provisions they carried to the fleet. The master was told to collect all his papers together, including owner's accounts and receipts of the supplies delivered. On taking command of troops on the Island of Anholt in late 1809, the efforts of Captain Edward Nicholls in securing provisions from the Victualling Board gives an excellent picture of the seriousness with which the board took the constant receipt taking. The Victualling Board minutes note a letter from Nicholls, 'requesting to be furnished with Instructions for his future guidance in accounting for the Provisions &c under his charge'. The board transmitted in reply a printed copy of the 'General Instructions' given to the Pursers of other ships and vessels in the Royal Navy, desiring that

He will conform to the regulations therein required to be observed, in all cases...and that he will be very particular in obtaining all the requisite Vouchers for the purchases of Provisions &c which he may at any time make as required by those instructions...acquaint him that he may continue to draw upon us for the proportion of three hundred men; but not to consider the same as an absolute grant, but only as a temporary allowance until the passing of his accounts in this Office, when the expenses he shall actually have sustained can be clearly ascertained. Desire therefore, that he will cause a daily account to be kept of the Expenses to which he may unavoidably be subjected in providing necessaries for the use of his Garrison.¹⁵

¹³ TNA, ADM 111/195, 1 May 1810.

¹⁴ NMM, MKH 112, General Memo, 6 May 1808.

¹⁵ TNA, ADM 111/193, 9 November 1809. It should be mentioned that Nicholls did not prove up to this task. In 1811, Lieutenant G Champion, Commander and Purser of the Snipe Gun Brig, wrote to the

The *Ann*, contracted to supply coal to the Baltic fleet, had receipts as follows, listing the amounts of the quantity of coal delivered, to the relevant ships, with the relevant amounts. Few of these receipts remain since they were rarely kept once their use had served. However a few have remained in the records to give us an idea of how such book-keeping was done. This example is from 1810.

Table 10: Coal supplied to Royal Navy vessels

Purser of RN ship (unless stated)	Ship	Date	Tons	Chaldrons
John Ross	<i>Tartar</i>	15 November	5/4	
Manley	<i>Lynx</i>	16	6	
Reynolds (lieut.)	<i>Hero</i>	18	6	
John Philips (Master)	<i>Idas</i>	22	1	
Page	<i>Ruby</i>	18		5
Urquhart	<i>Kite</i>	29		2 1/2
Penny	<i>Tribune</i>	5 December		4
Sam Crew (Master)	<i>Basilisk</i>	14	1/4	
Dyer	<i>Gluckstadt</i>	15	3/4	
Thomas Reeve	<i>Dictator</i>	15		7
Walter Mary	<i>Phoebe</i>	15		2 3/4
Gily	<i>Nemesis</i>	19		2
Page	<i>Ruby</i>	23		3
Penny	<i>Tribune</i>	28		6
Wild	<i>Cruiser</i>	4 January		5
Woodbine (steward)	<i>Avenger</i>	5	2	
Nicholson	<i>Minotaur</i>	5		3 1/3
John Ross	<i>Tartar</i>	6		4
Child	<i>Woodlark</i>	7		2
19 No.				

Source: NMM, HNL 13/17 f.17 14 April 1810.

Indeed, the specifics amounts were recorded:

**Table 11: Account of Coals delivered from on board the *Ann*, Captain Stables & Receipts
Supposed Weight**

Captain/ Admiral	Ship	Ch.	Bu.	To.	HW	Qu	lbs	To.	HW	Qu.	Ibs

Victualling Board ‘representing that in examining the Victualling Book of the Island of Anholt, during the time Major Nicholls had the Command, he finds several mistakes therein; with the Report thereon of the Accountant for Stores’. The VB confirmed the ‘errors alluded to’. TNA, ADM 111/198, 8 January 1811.

Capt. Hope	Tartar						5	5		
"	Lynx						6			
"	Ardent						6			
"	Idus						1			
Adm. Dixon	Ruby	5		6	11	1				
"	Kite	2	18	3	5	2	14			
"	Tribune	4		5	5					
"	Basilisk						1	5		
"	Gluckstadt							15		
"	Dictator	7		9	3	3				
"	Phoebe	2	12	3	1	1				
"	Nemesis	2		2	12	2				
"	Ruby	3		3	18	3				
Cpt. Reynolds	Tribune	6		7	17	2				
Adm. Dixon	Cruizer						2	11	1	20
"	Avenger						2			
"	Minotaur	3	12	4	7	2				
John Ross	Tartar	4		5	5					
J. Watts	Woodlark	2		2	12	2				
		41	6	54	0	2	14	24	16	1
								78	17	0
										6

Source: NMM. HNL 13/17 f.17 14 April 1810.

In the Henley papers there exists one package of receipts for ships in the Mediterranean in 1800 rather than the Baltic, yet the principle was the same. In the table below we can see the intricate layers of bureaucracy behind each victualling delivery.

Table 12: Supplies to Royal Navy vessels, 1800

Date	Ship	Where	What
8 Sep	<i>Revenge</i>	Malta	Bread (23,520lbs)
8 Sep	<i>Venus</i>	Malta	Bread (6,944lbs), Beef (84 eight lbs pieces), Pork (106 4lbs pieces)
8 Sep	<i>Fowler</i>	Malta	Bread (6,984 lbs), Beef (84), Pork (106)
8 Sep	<i>Borillo</i>	Malta	Bread (6,944lbs), Oatmeal (46 Bushels), Beef (126), Pork (159)
8 Sep	<i>Boyne</i>	Malta	Bread (6,944), Beef (84), Pork (106)
8 Sep	<i>Doncaster</i>	Malta	Beef (168) Pork (212)
8 Sep	<i>Severn</i>	Malta	Bread (2,352), Vinegar (63 gallons), Flour (522lbs), Pease (8 Bushels),

			Oatmeal (11 Bushels, Pork (106), Beef (84)
9 Sep	HM Stores	Malta	Bread (91,280), Beef (3,780), Pork (5,035), Flour (25,184 lbs), Suet (5,160lbs), Pease (526 Bushels), Oatmeal (379 Bushels), Vinegar (1,094 Gallons)
9 Sep	???	Malta	Wine (695 gallons)
24 October	<i>Store of James Yeo, Agent Victualler</i>	Port Mahon	Water Butts (43), Water Hogsheads (6), Water Barrels (3), Iron Hoopa (473)
12 February 1801	<i>Apollo Transport</i>	At Sea	Wine casks and Iron Hoops
13 Feb	<i>Kent</i>	Marmaris Bay	Flax Weights (400lbs)
20 Feb	<i>Ajax</i>	At Sea	Hemp
30 March	<i>Foudroyant</i>	Aboukir Bay	Wine (27,690 gallons), Rice (39,824lbs), Sugar (6,824lbs), Oil (4,738 gallons), Pease (89 bushels), then a few v. small amounts of others.
14 May	<i>Amcheren</i>	Aboukir Bay	Stores, Woade
18 June		Aboukir Bay	Wood
27 June		Aboukir Bay	Wood
19 July	<i>Polly Transport</i>	Aboukir Bay	Rice (50lbs), Sugar (30lbs), Rum (12 gallons) Pease (1 Bushels), Oatmeal (1 Bushel), Raisins (20lbs)
25 September	<i>William Bruce Transport</i>	Aboukir Bay	Oatmeal, Raisins, Vinegar
25 September	<i>William Bruce Transport</i>	Aboukir Bay	Bread (12,483lbs), Rice (3,554 lbs), Pork (344), Beef (38), Wine (829 gallons), Flour (1149 lbs) Bread Bags (616)
15 December	Stores	Minorca Victualling Office	Bread (1,916), Beef (42), Pork (80), Pease (16 bush. And five gallons) Wine (198 gallons), Vinegar (65 gallons) Iron hoops

Source: Table constructed from 22 receipts from individual ships which had taken supplied from the *Ann* victualler, each signed by the purser. NMM, HNL 34/30 f.4-26, 5 May 1800.

Exact quantities taken from transports were sometimes recorded in the captain's log (though frustratingly not all the time). For example, the *Centaur* recorded that on 6 August 1808 it had received the following from the *Mary* Victualler:

Table 13: Provisions to the *Centaur* from the *Mary*, August 1808

Flour	6914 lbs (in 20 Bags)
Rum	1032 Gallons (in 12 Puncheons)
Cheese	371 lbs
Butter	325 lbs (in 5 Firkins)
Candles	66 Doz.
Bread	4368 (in 39 Bags)

From the *British Volunteer* Victualler it had received further supplies:

Table 14: Provisions to the *Centaur* from the *British Volunteer*

Bread	61040 lbs (in 545 Bags)
Flour	11806 lbs (in 34 Barrells)
Raisins	2086 lbs
Pease	249 Bushels
Oatmeal	184 Bushels
Beef	1368 Pieces of 8lb, 2240 4lb pieces
Suet	960 lbs
Rum	3416 Gallons
Butter	2948 lbs
Lime Juice	47 Cases
Tobacco	1946 lbs
Coals	14 Chaldrons

Source: TNA, ADM 51/1824. Log of the *Centaur*, 6 August 1808.

On 6 October, while moored in Karlsrona Harbour it received from the Transport *Jane* 1101 8lb pieces of beef and 800 4lb pieces of pork. From the *Thomas and Sarah* it received 64 bushels of oatmeal in 4 casks, from the *Diana* 12,768lbs of bread and from the *Thames* victualler:

Table 15: Provisions to the *Centaur* from the *Thames*

Bread	9632lbs
Spirits	1730 Gallons
Suet	360 lbs
Butter	1515 lbs
Cheese	2180 lbs
Flour	4086

TNA, ADM 51/1824, Log of the *Centaur*, 6 August 1808.

Each shipment of provisions was checked on arrival, to see whether the amount receipted for was the amounted on board. Where they did not match, or where receipts or invoices were missing, the Victualling Board were quick to investigate. Mr Waller, Agent

Victualler in the Baltic and Gothenburg, wrote on 20 August, observing that the invoice for the beef, pork and suet in the *Favourite* victualler was not sent, and that the *Betsey*'s Bill of Lading specified an incorrect amount. While the invoice specified nineteen hogsheads of sugar for Lemon Juice, being 10,640 pounds, only ten hogsheads, 5,600 pounds, were on board. In the *Favourite's* Invoice 3141 pounds of tobacco was inserted, whereas there was none in the bill of lading. The board ordered that the superintendent signify to the Officers concerned 'the Board's disapprobation of their conduct in the instance alluded to', and called to the attention of those officers 'to this most unfortunate part of their duty, any future neglect of which will oblige the Board to adopt efficient measures to remedy the same'.¹⁶ It demonstrates the board's ruthlessness with any disparity or mistake, when a receipt for a small amount of provisions, which in the grand scheme of the Victualling Board's duties was fairly small, could incur such disapprobation. Furthermore, it also shows Smithson Waller in a good light, since it was he that spotted the error.

Delays in the victualling process were generally the result not of Victualling Board mistakes, but problems in securing tonnage. With regard to the delivery ordered on 6 September, the Victualling Board questioned the delay. 'The vessels with which you have furnished us in consequence of our letter to you of the 6th Inst. for the conveyance of Provisions to His Majesty's Ships in the Baltic', wrote the Secretary of the Victualling Board three days after first inquiring, 'being insufficient to take the whole of the said Provisions, we have to request you will provide us with another Vessel for that Service of about 200 tons Register'.¹⁷ The shipment from the order on 22 September also had problems securing the necessary tonnage. 'Not any vessels having yet been appropriated for the reception of the Provisions intended to be sent out for the supply of His Majesty's Ships in the Baltic, as mentioned in our letter to you of the 23rd ult.', wrote the Victualling Board with increasing frustration, 'and the orders we are under for the shipment of the said Provisions being of a very pressing nature, we have to request you

¹⁶ TNA, ADM 111/188, 10 September 1808.

¹⁷ TNA, ADM 110/58/263, VB to TB, 26 September 1808.

will provide us with the requisite Vessels without a moments loss of time'.¹⁸ The tonnage was secured, in the victuallers listed below.

Table 16: Transports hired in October 1808

Dates of Bills of Lading	Vessels Names	Masters names
7 October 1808	<i>Alert</i>	G Strand
7 October 1808	<i>Jane</i>	W Hodgson
8 October 1808	<i>Baltic</i>	J Thomson
8 October 1808	<i>Joseph</i>	J Dickenson
11 October 1808	<i>Mary</i>	J Gardner
12 October 1808	<i>Hannah</i>	J Henderson
13 October 1808	<i>Flora</i>	W Salter
14 October 1808	<i>Thornton</i>	R Sacke

Source: VB to TB, 17 October 1808, TNA, ADM 110/58/328-9.

On reaching the Nore made its way under convoy to the Baltic, arriving in the western region in mid November. Below we can see an example of what one transport could hold. This was the *Triptolemus*, which loaded on the 1 September 1808 for the Baltic. Every quantity of provision was measured to supply forces for particular periods:

Table 17: Supplies on board the *Triptolemus* victualler

Beef lbs	Pork lbs	Biscuits lbs	Spirits Gallons	Register tonnage	Tonnage on board
80640	46064	107072	5123	224	185.75
12.25 days	12.25 days	21.2 days	24.25 days		

Source: TNA, ADM 109/106, 'Statement of Provisions shipped on board the undermentioned Victualler, showing the number of days it will supply 5,000 men at the usual rations'.

Delays could lead to much antagonism between the Victualling and Transports Boards, with the Admiralty receiving letters absolving individual departments of blame. A delay in an earlier shipment of victuals, ordered on 6 September 1808, led the Victualling Board to lay the blame solely at the door of their Transport colleagues. 'We beg leave to acquaint you', they wrote to the Admiralty:

¹⁸ TNA, ADM 110/58/277-8, VB to TB, 1 October 1808.

for the information of their Lordships, that upon the receipt on the 6th inst. of their Lordships abovementioned directions, we, on that day, applied to the Transport Board requesting they would cause us to be furnished with all possible expedition, with proper Vessels for the conveyance of the Provisions we were directed to send out for the aforesaid service; to which application not any reply has hitherto been given to us by the Transport Board. But in a personal communication this morning between one of our members, and the Chairman of the Transport Board, we learn that a part of the tonnage will be appropriated immediately: As however it may not be prudent to delay the forwarding of this supply beyond the middle of next month, and as the Transport Board may not be able to furnish the remainder of the Tonnage in the due time

However they did add a more forgiving postscript, that ‘the omission of the insertion in our weekly return of unexecuted orders, of their Lordships directions of the 5th inst. arose entirely from inadvertence: but in all future returns we will take care that such directions from their Lordships, whilst unexecuted, shall be duly inserted therein’.¹⁹ On the 3 October these transports were ready, with the victuallers below lading.

Table 18: Transports hired 22-29 September 1808

Dates of Bill of Lading	Vessels Name	Masters Names
22 September	<i>Trafalgar</i>	T Thompson
23 September	<i>Britannia</i>	P Alman
24 September	<i>Jenny</i>	A Suter
24 September	<i>Concord</i>	E Otway
25 September	<i>Rose</i>	G Harvey
25 September	<i>Ann</i>	J Flight, mate
25 September	<i>Syrens</i>	W Rye
26 September	<i>Gibraltar</i>	G Gibbon
29 September	<i>Peter</i>	J Gilbert

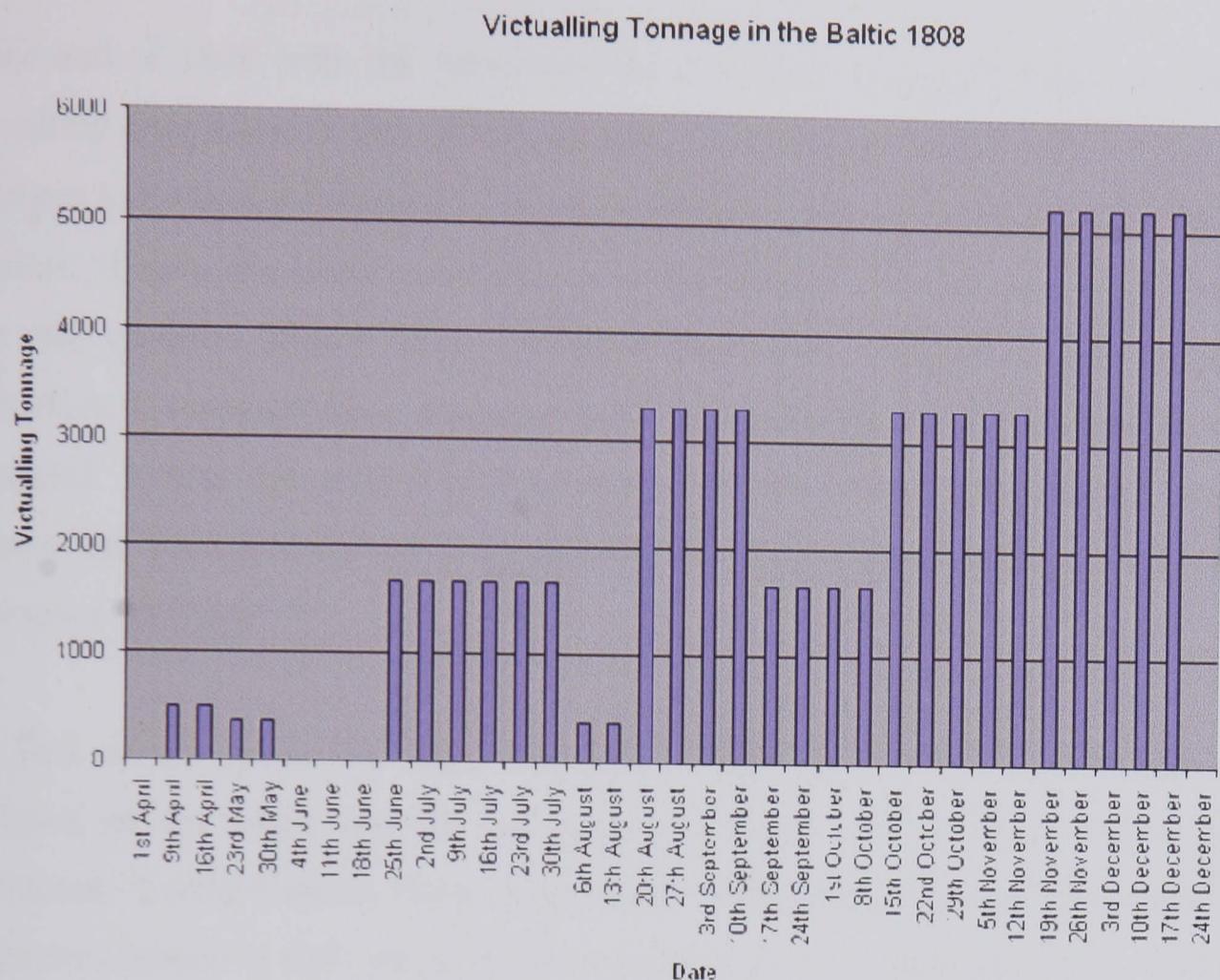
Source: VB to Admiralty, 3 October 1808, ADM 110/58/283-4.

In Figure 11 below the full transport tonnage used to supply the Baltic fleet in 1808 can be seen. There were four distinct ‘deliveries’ of supplies to the Baltic fleet. Orders for the supply to the Baltic were given by the Admiralty on 7 June, 15 July, 6 September 1808 and a final shipment was ordered on 22 September, to see the ships remaining in port in the Baltic through to the melting of the ice the following spring.²⁰ Between shipments, a small number of Victuallers remained as store ships in the Baltic; on the above graph a constant amount of victualling tonnage, periodically swamped by victualling deliveries, can be seen.

¹⁹ TNA, ADM 110/58/239/41, VB to Admiralty, 16 September 1808.

²⁰ TNA, ADM 2/154/453, TNA, ADM 2/155/23.

Figure 11



Source: TNA, ADM 1/3755-7, TNA, ADM 2/154-156, TNA, ADM 110/58-60.²¹

Ascertaining the time taken is therefore possible. During 1808, it took an average of 51.33 days from the Admiralty order, to the victuals arriving with the fleet at the southern entrance to the Belt and Sound, near Hano and Karlskrona, an impressively short time.

Table 19: Speed of delivery to the Baltic, 1808

Admiralty Order	Date Arrived at Hano/ Bornholm	Time Taken
7 June	25 July	49 days
15 July	22 August	36 days
6 September	<i>Data not available</i>	
22 September	1 December	69 days
		51.33 days

22

²¹ This graph was constructed using TNA, ADM 1/3755-7 to construct overall victualling tonnage, TNA, ADM 2/154-156 to ascertain Admiralty orders, and then TNA, ADM 110/58-60 to gain knowledge of the VB's actions.

Early Challenges: 1808-9

At the end of 1808, both the Admiralty and Saumarez had good reason to consider the victualling operations of that year a success. Certainly in August a delay in a transport shipment had worried Saumarez, demonstrating the concern all commanders had for their supplies. ‘I have the honor to inform your Excellency’, he wrote to a Swedish notary, ‘that the contrary Winds have prevented these last five weeks the arrival of the Victuallers I expected from England with the Provisions for the Squadron under my command. It was not until four days since that they have been enabled to join Rear Admiral Sir Samuel Hood off Moen Island, and I waited here for those supplies in order to proceed off Hano’.²³

The lack of provisions did effect operations, albeit in a small way, notable the brief detention of the *Mars* and *Africa*, having to travel out off their station to collect provisions. ‘I send Captain Hope the account of the distribution of provisions made, of which the *Centaur* is full’ wrote Hood to Saumarez. ‘The *Mars* and *Africa* return to their stations immediately. The detention of the *Brunswick* and *Edgar* I hope you will...write Admiral Keats by the *Eralus* of my intentions that such other victuallers may follow as may be necessary for the *Implacable* & *Goliath* thought the *Centaur*’s supply will I hope be all that may be necessary until your orders arrive’.²⁴

Hood too complained to Saumarez of shortages, as supplies took longer to reach the eastern Baltic. ‘You will be informed that the Two Victuallers that have joined me. I had hopes that the Freedom would have been one of them as there is a material deficiency in the supply, particularly bread. Neither the *Edgar* nor *Brunswick* having arrived, it is my intention to take such Provisions as possible in the *Centaur*. The cause of the delay of those ships I imagine from Admiral Keats’ detour...I shall be ready for anything and this

²² For a more detailed analysis of victualling timeliness throughout the period 1808-1812 see Chapter 9, pp. 230-240.

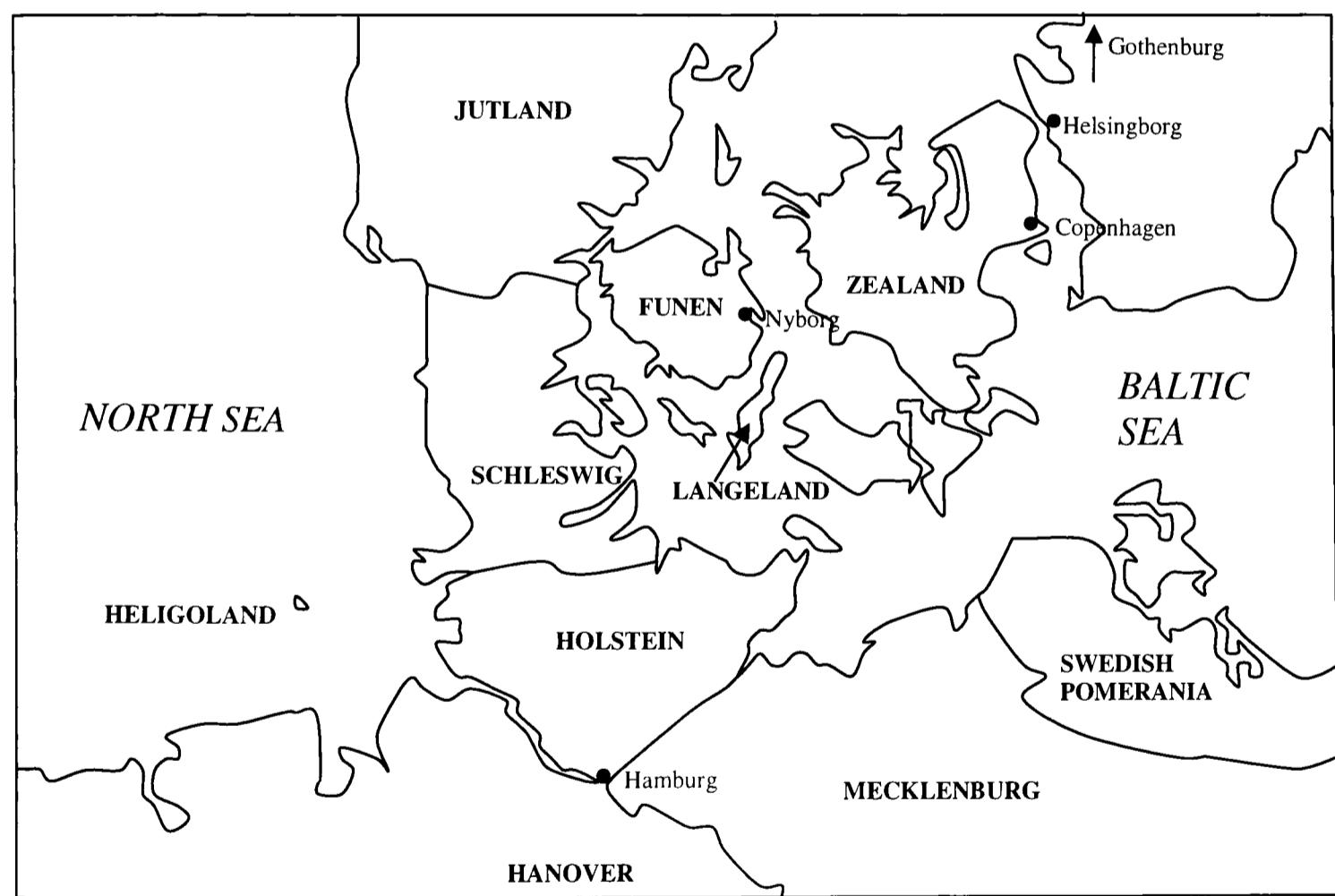
²³ Hano is on the southern tip of Sweden near Karlskrona. SRO, HA 93/6/1/237, Saumarez to Baron de Rajalin, 5 August 1808.

²⁴ SRO, HA 93/6/1/235, Hood to Saumarez 6 August 1808.

wind is now favourable for the other victuallers if they are on their way'.²⁵ As Hood's testimony reveals, the delays had been exacerbated by 'Admiral Keats' detour', namely the sudden need to provide provisions for a Spanish army numbering 10,000 men. This whole episode demonstrates the remarkable flexibility the victualling system provided, rather than its mismanagement.

In August 1808 Saumarez was ordered to assist in the removal of a Spanish army from Denmark, and organise its transportation back to the Iberian Peninsula, to join the nationalist revolt there against French rule.²⁶ The operation placed a strain on a new and untested supply system, adding ten thousand soldiers to the number to be fed, to all intents and purposes doubling the complement of mouths to feed in the Baltic.

Figure 12: The Repatriation of Spanish Soldiers from Denmark, 1808



²⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/234, Hood to Saumarez 5 August 1808.

²⁶ For a full account of this operation see James Davey, 'The repatriation of Spanish soldiers from Denmark, 1808: The British Government, Logistics and Maritime Supremacy', in *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 74, No. 4 (October 2010).

The troops were retrieved from the Danish port of Nyborg then taken to the Island of Langeland, south east of Funen, which as Keats explained, ‘is a productive island and where they could support themselves till transports were ready’.²⁷ A convention was entered into between the Spanish commander, La Marques de Romana and the governor of the island guaranteeing non-hostility and a sufficient supply of provisions provided by the island, which was fertile enough to produce it, albeit for only a few weeks. Most important was a plentiful supply of water.²⁸

The island of Langeland was not to be as productive as Keats had hoped; he was to face significant victualling problems when dealing with this unforeseen operation. Indeed, the whole operation is a good case-study of the Royal Navy’s ability to victual its men faced with sudden demand. On 1 August Saumarez was informed that there were sufficient provisions for fifteen weeks for the number of men in the Baltic Squadron, that is until 13 November. Both Keats and Saumarez were aware that 10,000 extra mouths to feed would reduce this dramatically, the latter noting, ‘the scarcity supply of Provisions for so unexpected additional force.’²⁹ On 8 August Keats found it necessary to introduce two thirds rationing. The following week, as the troops remained on Langeland, despite its fertility relative to other islands, Keats was forced to reduce this to half rations for bread and spirits. There were severe concerns as to the British ability to feed their new charges. The Commandant of Langeland informed the British that ‘in his opinion the Island cannot afford subsistence for more than a fortnight for his Army’.³⁰ This was repeated by Keats, who now realized that Langeland was not the agricultural haven for which he had hoped and he knew informed Saumarez that ‘it seems that the Island is not capable of affording Provisions for more than two or three weeks at furthest’.³¹ With some optimism, he hoped that ‘every one will chearfully [sic] submit to this necessary

²⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/6/423-4, Keats to Saumarez, 5 August 1808.

²⁸ TNA, ADM, 1/6/454, Keats to Admiralty, 13 August 1808. TNA, ADM 1/7/15, Keats to Saumarez, 13 August 1808. TNA, ADM 80/145, Keats Order Book, 16 August 1808.

²⁹ TNA, ADM, 1/6/382, Memo to Saumarez, 1 August 1808, signed George Hope (Capt.). SRO SA/3/1/3/1, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 20 August 1808.

³⁰ TNA, ADM 1/6/386-7, Keats to Saumarez August 4 1808.

³¹ TNA, ADM 1/7/15, Keats to Saumarez, 13 August 1808.

reduction', having, 'the strongest reason to believe it will only be requisite to continue it a very few days'.³²

This was said in the knowledge that the Victualling Board had already planned to redress the shortage. On 6 August Saumarez ordered two victuallers from Gothenburg to tide Keats over and wrote to London requesting 'directions as they may deem advisable for Victualling the Spanish Troops should we be so fortunate to succeed in extricating them from their present situation'.³³ 'In the mean time', wrote Saumarez, 'I have asked the two army Victuallers at Gothenburg to proceed to join Rear Admiral Keats in the Belt and I request their Lordships will be pleased to give such directions as they may deem advisable for Victualling the Spanish Troops should we so fortunate to succeed in extricating them from their present situation'.³⁴ Despite the Baltic victualling system still being in its formative stages, the Board demonstrated remarkable flexibility in adapting to the challenge of an extra 10,000 mouths to feed. Immediately, two victuallers were ordered from Gothenburg to tide the soldiers over. Saumarez wrote, 'I hope the two army victuallers ordered from Gothenburg will soon arrive, they contain provisions for ten thousand men for six weeks, Bread, Spirits, Beef and Pork and I hope other articles will be sent from England with the Transports applied for the conveyance of the Spanish Troops'.³⁵

He need not have worried: a fleet of victuallers was already set to leave London. The Victualling Board had shown considerable efficiency and confidence in the success of the operation. They organised and sent a shipment of eighteen victuallers which arrived a mere two weeks after rationing had been introduced.³⁶ Two weeks after the letter was written a shipment of eighteen navy and army victuallers arrived in Langeland which in

³² TNA, ADM 80/145, Keats Order Book, 8 August 1808. TNA, ADM 80.145, Keats' Order Book, August 20 1808.

³³ TNA, ADM 1/6/399-400, Saumarez to Admiralty, 6 August 1808.

³⁴ TNA, ADM 1/6/399-400, Saumarez to Admiralty, 6 August 1808.

³⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/264, Saumarez to Keats, 17 August 1808.

³⁶ The need to feed the unexpected Spanish army explains the need for four deliveries of victuals from Deptford in 1808, especially the two so close together, on the 6 and 22 September. The former was aimed largely at replenishing the huge amounts of the previous delivery (the 15 July) that had been consumed by over 9,000 Spanish soldiers.

Keats' words placed 'us quite at ease on the subject of Provisions', and enabled him to end the rationing.³⁷ They were cutting it close, but it again demonstrates how the Admiralty and its subordinate boards were capable of responding to immediate events, and more than adequately providing for them.

Certainly there were still victualling problems, particularly at the end of the year, as the majority of the fleet began its migration back to British ports for the winter. Rear-Admiral Dixon complained to Keats in December 1808 that 'the River [the Göta Älv] is Frozen and we can get no more Water'. Further to this, a supply of provisions had arrived, enabling Dixon 'to complete all the ships to 25 January, and I have gone to Two thirds allowance of Bread from this day...I am getting very low in Spirits and other Provisions'.³⁸ Keats himself repeated victualling problems; 'If the weather which we have had for this week past is the usual for the Season, it is time to quit the Belt...I am also under some embarrassment on the score of Provisions, the ships, notwithstanding I took what I could from the *Mars* on her passage down [back to Britain] and...tho' it is now a fortnight since I sent to Gothenburg, no Victualler or Sloop with a temporary supply has yet made its appearance'.³⁹

This apparent shortage is something of a mystery. We can certainly be sure it was perceived rather than real. Saumarez wrote of how he would:

direct Rear Admiral Keats to remain at Marstrand during the Winter, for the purpose of protecting the Trade of His Majesty's subjects, and of His Ally the King of Sweden; holding himself, and the ships, and vessels under his orders, in constant readiness to cooperate with the Swedish fleet...causing him to be supplied with such stores of all species as can be spared from the Ships which are ordered to England; leaving all provisions ordered for the supply of the Ships under my command, at the disposal of the Rear Admiral.⁴⁰

The Royal Navy fleet stationed in the Baltic, having been on active service for six months, surrounded by hostile shores, and with a precarious supply train through the Sound and Belt, was as well supplied with provisions as if it had been in a home port. An

³⁷ TNA, ADM 1/7/56-7, Keats to Admiralty, 22 August 1808.

³⁸ TNA, ADM 1/7/461-2, Dixon to Keats, Wingo Sound, 1 December 1808.

³⁹ TNA, ADM 1/7/476-7, Keats to Admiralty, 12 December 1808.

⁴⁰ TNA, ADM 1/7/343-4, Saumarez to Admiralty, 29 October 1808.

account of the victuallers lying at Flemish Roads, near Gothenburg on 25 October 1808 (a mere month before Keats wrote his letter), found a fleet not merely satisfactorily provisioned, but excellently provided for, with over 900,000 lbs of bread, 20,000 gallons of wine, 30,000 gallons of rum and almost 100,000 pieces of pork and beef. The table below shows the full account of provisions with the Baltic fleet at the end of October 1808.

Table 20: Provisions at Flemish Roads, Gothenburg in October 1808

Species	Amount
Bread	961,264 lbs
Wine	20,914 gallons
Rum	36,290 gallons
Beef	33,268 pieces
Pork	59206 pieces
Flour	177,116 lbs
Suet	16,620 lbs
Raisins	32,264 lbs
Pease	5,257 bushels
Oatmeal	3,504 bushels
Sugar	52,430 lbs
Butter	12,964 lbs
Cheese	34,302 lbs
Sugar and Butter	32496 lbs
Cocoa in Cheese	25,270 lbs
Vinegar	13,238 gallons
Tobacco	45,419 lbs
Lemon Juice	76,464 lbs
Sugar and Lemon Juice	58,520 lbs
Lemon Juice Bottles	19,110
Candles	1798
Boxes of Candles	299
Bisket	6797 bags
Coals	384 chaldrons

Source: TNA, ADM 1/7/343-4.⁴¹

⁴¹ TNA, ADM 1/7/343-4, ‘an account of the provisions &c on board the undermentioned Victuallers lying in Flemish Roads, Gothenburg, October 25th 1808’. The Victuallers were *Favourite, Industry, Atlas, Addington, Margaret, Jane, Thomas & Sarah, Diana, Echo, Active, Trafalgar, Britannia, Jenny, Concord, Rose, Ann, Syren, Gibraltar, Peter*.

Some of this would have been used by the returning fleet. However, there would have been vast amounts left for the small number of ships remaining in the Baltic. For example, the 961,264lbs of bread would have been enough to supply a fleet of 10,000 men for 95 days. Given that there were 10,144 men in the Baltic in November, and 6,578 in December, and assuming that they had used the supply in the victuallers for the whole of this period (itself very unlikely), that would still have left 453,026lbs of bread for the wintering Baltic fleet which numbered a mere 2,365 men.⁴²

By the end of December, these provisions had been located, enough to see Keats and his small squadron that remained in the Baltic through the winter. ‘As the *Superb* is nearly watered and complete in Provisions’, he confirmed to the Admiralty only a week after writing his initial letter of complaint, ‘I shall remain off the Wingo [the Royal Navy’s station off Gothenburg] for the present, dispatch Victuallers and Duplicate Orders to recall them, and proceed perhaps in the *Superb* myself to their relief, if advisable’.⁴³ The victuallers dispatched, the temporary victualling problem had been solved. Indeed, the small force that remained through the winter of 1808-09 was more than adequately provisioned.

Indeed, early the following year, as the ice melted and the Baltic once again opened up to trade and the Royal Navy, Hood reported to Saumarez on the remaining provisions and stores in Gothenburg. He found 35,850 lbs of Bread, 21,049 pieces of Beef, 8,008 pieces of Pork: a surprising amount left after a grueling winter.⁴⁴ Indeed, the Victualling Board minutes show a large surplus of provisions left over from the winter. In April 1809, the Transport Board wrote to the Victualling Board, stating that it had been reported to them that five victuallers had been ordered back to England appearing that ‘their cargoes are nearly complete’ and requested to be informed what orders were to be given respecting

⁴² These calculations are based on one man requiring one pound of bread per day. Even with the Baltic fleet using the victuallers to their maximum, the 10,144 men based in the Baltic throughout would have used 304,320lbs, the 6,578 men based there in December would have used 203,918. Thus, from the initial 961,246lbs, there would have been, at worst, 453,026 remaining. A basic calculation suggests that this was enough to supply 3,000 men for 151 days: more than enough.

⁴³ TNA, ADM 1/7/520, Keats to Admiralty, December 31 1808.

⁴⁴ TNA, ADM 1/8/279-80, Hood to Saumarez, ‘Remains of Provisions and Victualling Stores on board the Flora Transport, Hawke Roads, Gothenburg’ [signed Graves, Agent for Transports], 29 April 1809.

them. The Victualling Board noted that since the first four had already arrived at the Nore, they ordered that the said Victuallers proceed to Deptford and deliver their cargoes into Store.⁴⁵ Clearly, there had been no shortage of provisions over the winter.

That a fleet could have access to such a large amount of victuals, having already been at sea for six months, demonstrates the remarkable contribution an effective victualling system could make to a fleet, in pursuance of its objectives, both operational and strategic. Perhaps most importantly, as important for operational effectiveness, was the huge amounts of lemon juice transported to the Baltic; 76,464 lbs of it, a further 58,520 lbs mixed with sugar, and a further 19,110 bottles of the anti-scorbutic. The Royal Navy's ability to move such remarkable quantities - particular one that prevented scurvy - to support their forces was crucial to the fleet's continuing operational capability.

A Move to Self Sufficiency: 1808-1809

As the fleet re-entered the Baltic in April 1809, victualling officials could look back on 1808 as a relative success. There had been minor delays and some problems with provisioning, but nothing to hamper operational effectiveness. The victualling system that had been chosen had done its job. Indeed, the system had shown impressive flexibility, particularly with the unforeseen demands of a 10,000 strong Spanish army foisted upon it.

Keats was happy, as was the Admiralty. At the end of 1808, the physician to the fleet, Dr Jamison, suggested sending out a further supply of vegetables to combat the onset of scurvy. As he wrote,

From the length of harassing, and detached service the Crews of His Majesty's Ships *Superb*, *Brunswick*, *Dictator*, *Salsette*, *Lynx*, *Prometheus* and *Tartarus* have endured; which has deprived them of necessary vegetable refreshment to essential to remedy and check the peculiar disposition this climate and its bad water has to induce Scurvy...and understanding that this country cannot afford our squadron indispensably requisite

⁴⁵ TNA, ADM 111/191, 3 April 1809.

supplies of fresh vegetables during the winter, to suppress the growing and dangerous influence of scurvy. Under these circumstances I cannot delay making known to you my fears, that should the crews of any of the Ships before mentioned be necessitated to suffer the severity of the winter here, there are strong reasons to dread that we must lose a number of valuable lives...From this statement I must beg leave to submit to your consideration the expediency of either requiring occasional supplies of vegetables from England, or recommending the ships I have particularly to be delivered as soon as possible by healthy fresh ships, which would prove the most happy means to preserve health.⁴⁶

Jamison was paranoid after seeing the state of the Swedish fleet. He need not have worried, as the superior supply system continued to support the Baltic fleet. Neither was the Admiralty concerned, despite having meetings with Saumarez over the winter of 1808-9. In the Admiralty's reply a few months later, his request was refused. 'I have received and laid before my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, your letter of Yesterdays date, inclosing one from Dr Jamison, Physician to the Fleet under your command' they wrote, and must 'acquaint you that they do not think it necessary to put any vegetables on Board the *Gorgon*, as the fleet must in a short time be supplied on their station, with what may be necessary'.⁴⁷

~

The naval administrators and Saumarez began to plan for the future. The winter months when Saumarez was back in London provided an opportunity to meet and discuss where improvements for the next year could be made. It provided an opportunity to correct mistakes and failures and refine the victualling system. This happened every winter. In 1809 for instance, the Victualling Board reported that the Admiralty were attempting to reduce the number of ships carrying provisions to the Baltic. Fewer, larger ships would be used. It was recorded in the minutes that 'it is the desire of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that the said Provisions be conveyed in as few Vessels as possible; and that Vice Admiral Saumarez has *verbally expressed* a wish to the same effect to the Chairman; and request they will let us know whether it is in their power to appropriate to

⁴⁶ SRO, HA 93/6/1/460, Dr Jamison to Keats, 28 December 1808.

⁴⁷ SRO, HA 93/6/1/628, Admiralty to Saumarez, 27 April 1809.

the said service Vessels of a greater tonnage than those they have engaged'.⁴⁸ Much victualling planning was done verbally, and therefore was left out of the minutes. Although there is no written evidence therefore, we do know that these personal conferences took place, and that improvements were made. Again in the winter of 1810, the Chairman of the Victualling Board, wrote that '*in a conference he has had with Sir James Saumarez* upon the subject of the mode it may be expedient to adopt for furnishing the supplies in question, it was agreed that it would be necessary to send out four months Provisions of all species for fifteen thousand Men, and that the same should be forwarded in moieties'.⁴⁹

The Admiralty authorised a special convoy to transport victuallers to the Baltic, following a request from Saumarez. This was instituted in May 1809: 'In answer to your letter of the 10th instant requesting that a proportion of Provisions of all species for two months for twelve thousand men may be sent in two or three victuallers under a special convoy to the Great Belt; I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to acquaint you that directions have been given accordingly to the Victualling Board' wrote the Admiralty to Saumarez.⁵⁰ A capture of a port was discussed, where victuallers could be protected. An unsigned memo on the strategic situation in the Baltic, probably written by Saumarez, recommended the capture of the Eartholmes on the southern tip of Sweden, to remove a nest for enemy privateering and also to provide a safe depot for store ships and victuallers, as well as a place for convoy rendezvous, in the event of Swedish ports being shut.⁵¹

The first half of 1809 saw the Baltic fleet attempting to secure self-sufficiency for the most important species of all: water. The water procurement issue had been on the commanders minds throughout 1808. Saumarez was so concerned that he set out a 'weekly expense of water which is not to be exceeded on any account', based on the size of a ship. A weekly return of the expense and remains was to be sent to him every

⁴⁸ TNA ADM 111/191, 26 May 1809, [italics added].

⁴⁹ TNA, ADM 111/194, 31 March 1810, [italics added]. For more on the decision to change to 'moieties', see chapter 7, p. 175.

⁵⁰ SRO, HA 93/6/1/763, Admiralty to Saumarez, 19 May 1809.

⁵¹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1248. For the authenticity see Voelcker, *Saumarez vs. Napoleon*, pp. 86-7.

Monday morning with the report of sick for the Commander in Chief's information.⁵²

This was laid out thus:

Table 21: Water complement due vessels

Complement	Tons of water
738	21
640	16
590	15
534	14 $\frac{1}{2}$
491	14
264	7
175	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
121	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
95	3
78	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
50	1 $\frac{1}{2}$

Source: NMM. MKH 112. General Memo, no date but certainly May-June 1808.

A reliable water supply had been a crucial factor in the decision of where to winter the remaining vessels of the Baltic fleet. It was important to leave a portion of the fleet in the Baltic so that there would be ships on hand to protect the first merchant vessels as the ice melted the following spring. Over-wintering was only possible because of the supplies that were organised. Keats wrote to Saumarez that

I have been induced for the following reasons to order all the ships and victuallers back to Hawke Road, Gothenburg. Because, except with favorable winds it is not possible to get out of the Port, should it become necessary; Because I could not command a supply of water...In Hawke Roads I believe I can make sure of a supply of water...I should deem it under dubious circumstances preferable to be frozen up, in a situation in which I am certain of my supplies; and from which, in the case of a reverse, I should have perhaps less difficulty to extricate myself, than from Marstrand.⁵³

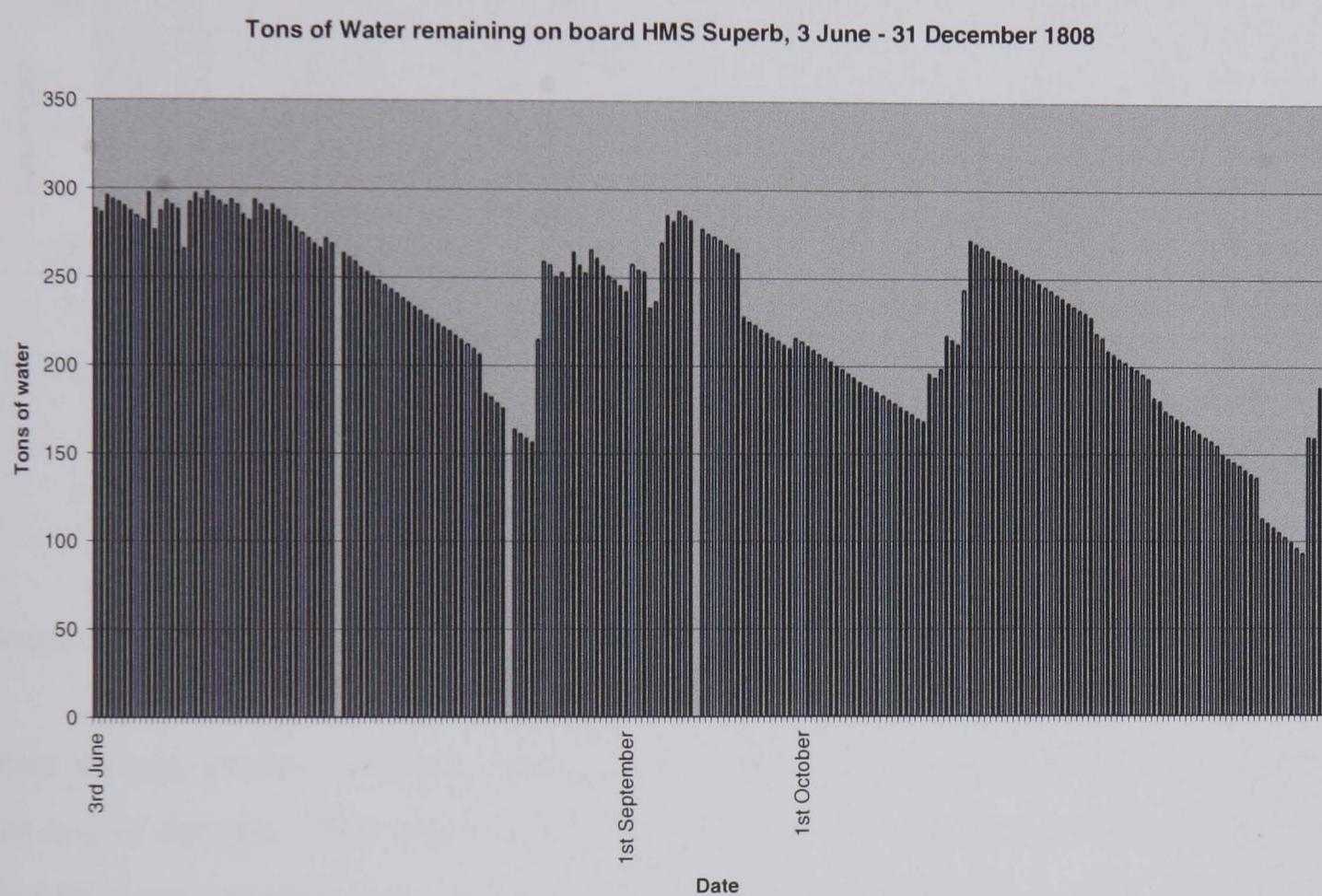
From the detail in the captains' and masters' logs, we can assess the water remaining on board specific ships. For each day, the captain or master listed the amount of water

⁵² NMM, MKH 112, General Memo, no date but certainly May-June 1808.

⁵³ SRO, HA 93/6/1/454, Keats to Saumarez, 25 December 1808.

remaining on ship, allowing us to collate the data. The graph below shows the water remaining on board HMS *Superb* between June and December 1808. The *Superb*, whose duties involved sailing the Sound and Belt protecting convoys and trade, rarely let her water reserves fall below half. The swift re-watering of the ship as she entered a port is notable, as is the steady decrease as she moved away on service.

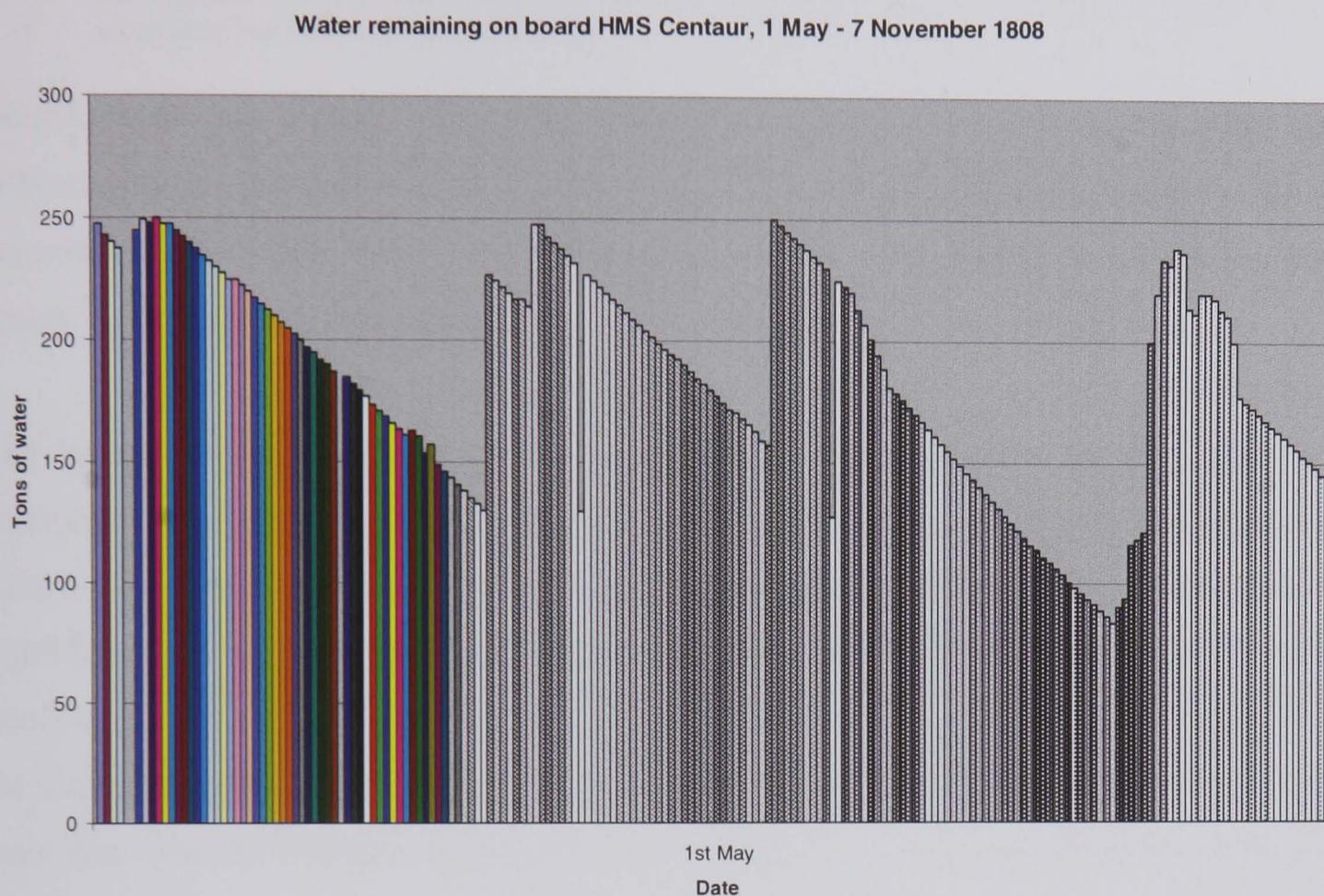
Figure 13



Source: TNA, ADM 52/3798.

Ships on more detached service were forced to run it closer however. Below is a similar graphic for HMS *Centaur*, in the eastern Baltic:

Figure 14



Source: TNA, ADM 51/1825.

Here we can see the *Centaur's* water supplies moving under the 100 ton level, towards the end of the year. This was a natural consequence of its service: sailing for the most part far from watering ports, it did not have the same opportunities as the *Superb* to re-water regularly.

Water was thus never far from a commander's mind. Keats had stated in February 1809, 'and if, as has been reported, Sailing Tanks have been established in England, I think one or two of light draught of water, carrying from 70 to 100 tons water, would not only be peculiarly serviceable, but would be the means of saving a very considerable expense in the course of the summer'.⁵⁴ This proposition came to nothing, but the issue remained. There were concerns over future supplies of water in May 1809, when 83 men were captured watering on the Danish coast. Captain Honeyman of the *Ardent* recounted that

⁵⁴ TNA, ADM 1/8/79, Keats to Admiralty, 25 February 1809.

On the morning of the 19th Instant while a party of Officers and Men were completing the wood and water of His Maj. Ship under my command, they were surprised by a considerable body of the enemy: in consequence of which, the persons named in the accompanying list were taken prisoner.⁵⁵

Indeed, there was a clear link between operational options and victualling. ‘The only difficulty in the protection of the Trade being continued in the Baltic appears to be the watering of the Ships, should the ports of Sweden be shut against us which we have reason to expect must ultimately arise’, warned Hood.⁵⁶

The Island of Anholt at the entrance to the Baltic was captured in May 1809 and garrisoned, ensuring a constant supply of water for those in the western Baltic, though there was no vegetation. In his orders for 1809, Saumarez was ordered to ‘investigate the lighthouse on Anholt, examine islands of Bornholm and Eartholm for potential occupation, ‘as a Commercial Depot, or Naval Station’.⁵⁷ Water on board the vessels in the Baltic was always on the Admiralty’s mind. A crucial part of their orders for 1810 were that ‘you are to take every means in your power for securing to the ships under your command an ample supply of water, and to take the most effectual means to preserve the health of their respective crews’.⁵⁸ In early 1809, Saumarez decided that ‘the acquisition of this Island [Anholt] will prove of considerable Importance in furnishing Supplies of Water to His Majesty’s Fleet and affording a good anchorage to the Trade of the Country in coming or going from the Baltic’.⁵⁹ One of Saumarez’s captains later wrote of his impressions of Anholt and its strange propensity to dispense large amounts of fresh water. ‘We first went to Anholt, a small sandy island with a lighthouse’ he wrote. ‘The peculiarity of this sandy island was, that fresh water was to be had at any part, even within twenty yards of the sea, we had only to sink an empty flour cask in the sand and it would instantly be filled, and with this contrivance ships would complete their water’.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ TNA, ADM 1/8/393-5, Captain Honeyman, *Ardent*, to Saumarez, 28 May 1809.

⁵⁶ TNA, ADM 1/8/282, Hood to Saumarez, 29 April 1809.

⁵⁷ SRO, HA 93/6/1/43, Admiralty Orders, 16 April 1808.

⁵⁸ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1318/1, Admiralty to Saumarez, 8 May 1809.

⁵⁹ TNA, ADM 1/8/360, Saumarez to Admiralty, 20 May 1809.

⁶⁰ Bonner-Smith, *Captain John Harvey Boteler*, p. 15.

'In other respects', Saumarez warned, 'it can be of little use being a low sandy island with scarcely any vegetation whatever'.⁶¹

Anholt would therefore take on a crucial role for the British fleet in the Baltic, making up for the lack of naval bases on the size of Port Mahon or Gibraltar in the Mediterranean. Saumarez wondered about the 'the expediency of a Force being ordered from England for the Garrison of Anholt', also accounting for the Stores in the Island at the time of capture, together with a list of its inhabitants...'⁶² He was delighted to see that 'the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty had been pleased to give orders for a Party of Royal Marines consisting of one hundred & fifty men with a proper Complement of officers to be sent to the Island of Anholt to be under the command of Captain Nicholls of the Marines. whom their Lordships intend shall be left in the Command of that Island...having made particular Enquiry relative to the means of defence required to be adopted for securing the Island of Anholt during the Winter Season...'.⁶³ The Victualling Board also took on responsibility for the island's inhabitants and an Admiralty order of September 1809 requested,

whereas we think that you shall provide & send out to the Island of Anholt for the use of its inhabitants, consisting of about 100 Persons, a proportion of Provisions of all species including Wine and Spirits for six months, the same to be consigned to the Governor of the Island & forwarded by the Ships intended to convoy the supplies for the...We do hereby require & direct you, to give the Necessary Instructions for the said provision being issued in the proportion which is usual to His Majesty's Troops, their Wives and Children, when embarked on board Transports.⁶⁴

The garrison, in addition to the inhabitants, demanded victuals for a further 500 men, dealt with by individual shipments from Deptford.⁶⁵

In the western and upper Baltic a different source of water was needed. The town of Danzig was investigated, to gain intelligence on its suitability as an anchorage for merchants and whether it would supply wood and water; it was estimated that fifty

⁶¹ SRO, HA 93, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 19 May 1809.

⁶² TNA, ADM 1/8/371-7, Saumarez to Admiralty, 23 May 1809.

⁶³ TNA, ADM 1/8/456, Saumarez to Admiralty, 8 June 1809.

⁶⁴ TNA, ADM 2/156/545-6, Admiralty to VB, 15 September 1809.

⁶⁵ See for example the delivery of the 30 July 1810, TNA, ADM 2/158/433-4, Admiralty to VB.

barrels a day could be easily supplied.⁶⁶ The Island of Gothska Sanod near Gotland was found to ‘afford an abundant supply of water to His Majesty’s Ships under my command when it cannot be more conveniently obtained from the Swedish Ports’, by Captain Forest.⁶⁷ Saumarez also discovered water on Nargen Island and was delighted to discover that ‘by having persevered in digging Wells in different parts, the island was ‘likely to afford sufficient for all the squadron’.⁶⁸ The Baltic fleet would not have to worry about water supplies from 1809 onwards.

Fears Dispelled

By the end of the first year of Baltic operations, initial fears had been allayed. The fleet had become self-sufficient in water. Problems of political hostility and geographic factors had been overcome by a supply system that left a ship in the eastern Baltic as well supplied as one in a British port. At no point had operations been drastically affected by victualling shortages. There had been temporary shortages, on occasion lasting as much as two weeks. The victualling service to the Baltic fleet at this point was by no means perfect. The occasional unavailability of transports for example had brought delays. However, it had reacted well to sudden demands, such as the sudden need to feed a Spanish force. In 1809 there were improvements, as the fleet moved towards self-sufficiency in water.

The victualling of the fleet was a key factor in determining operations; the route used for convoying trade across the Baltic was arranged so that convoys would assemble at Hano Bay where masters could obtain supplies of fresh water.⁶⁹ Gothenburg, too, became another pivot for the organisation of much of the Baltic commerce. The Admiralty used the port as the administrative centre to which consular reports could be sent from Elsinore

⁶⁶ TNA, ADM 1/8/435-6, Captain Martin, *Implacable*, to Saumarez, 31 May 1809.

⁶⁷ TNA, ADM 1/8/499-500, Saumarez to Admiralty, 29 June 1809.

⁶⁸ TNA, ADM 1/8/548, Saumarez to Admiralty, 13 July 1809.

⁶⁹ Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade* p. 74.

and other Baltic ports, commanders being informed of the movements of enemy or hostile shipping.⁷⁰

The relative ease with which the Royal Navy had set up a logistical chain contrasted greatly with the neighbouring Swedish fleets' ill-health, made clear by Saumarez's visit to the Swedish fleet in late 1808 when he witnessed the terrible deprivations and disease. Such was the difference between the supply of the Swedish and British fleets that Rear-Admiral Keats worried, 'I apprehend some difficulties, on the part of the Swedish Government, to admit our men to associate with, or live near, the Swedish Seamen, fearing jealousies and discontents might arise from the superior pay and nourishment of the English Seamen'.⁷¹

British commanders by 1808 were well informed of the causes and prevention of scurvy. 'I have daily, since my arrival here devoted my best attention to promote the recovery of the numerous Swedish Sick Seamen on Board their Ships, and in their hospitals on shore', Saumarez wrote to the Admiralty. The Swedes, he informed them:

having no antiscorbutic remedies on board their fleet at sea, except vinegar, that they had stopped the allowance of spirits...Scurvy is itself the most debilitating disease, the human body or mind is subject to, and vinegar when the disease is present can never cure it, and if used largely will always increase the evil, in these instances, it diseased the bowels, and scurvy is always ready to fix on any port in a state of irritation, and its aggravating influence, and great tendency to ...prove fatal in two or three days...I strongly recommended a nourishing diet with a free use of vegetables and fruit and Port wine as far as the nature of their complaints would admit of". Fortunately, "the Swedish Admirals and Captains of the Fleet have paid the most marked attention to all my suggestions for the re-establishment of the health of their Fleet, and the means I have recommended to prevent future calamity.⁷²

The difference between the health of the British and Swedish forces cannot be explained solely by a knowledge or ignorance of the causes of scurvy.⁷³ Indeed, a comparison

⁷⁰ This intelligence network will be covered in detail in chapter 8, pp. 201-207.

⁷¹ TNA, ADM 1/7/447-52, Keats to Admiralty, 27 November 1808.

⁷² TNA, ADM 1/7/278-80, Saumarez to Admiralty, 16 October 1808.

⁷³ Jamison, the physician to the fleet was awarded the Swedish Royal Order of Wasa in the Spring of 1809, as he wrote due to the distinguished approbation they have received from the Royal College of Physicians of Stockholm, 'His Highness the Duke of Sudenmenia Regent of Sweden, has requested Mr Merry our Minister late at His Court, to procure my most gracious sovereign permission to allow me to accept some distinguishing mark of His favour, in the service I had rendered the Swedish Nation in the line of my profession...occasioned by the spontaneous but unanimous recommendation of the Admirals and officers

between Britain and Sweden is instructive; the disparity in the respective health of the two sets of seamen was also to do with the supply systems. Glete, the leading proponent of national comparisons between 18th century navies argued that ‘the experiences of the 18th century show that the naval bureaucracies which had been established as part of the fabric of new strong states were not smooth instruments in the hands of political leaders of these states...this inability of bureaucracies meant the political leaders – parliament and king – had to try and solve the problems together with innovative officers and technicians more or less in conflict with the institutions’.⁷⁴

Swedish victualling administration certainly suffered from this. The Swedish naval diet was full and hearty. Lieutenant Ross wrote to Saumarez about the types of provisions with which Swedish seamen were supplied: ‘all the Ships companies are allowed a Gall of Corn Brandy, at 7 Bread & Butter or Bread & Herrings alternately for breakfast, at noon peasesoup with Beef & Pork...which appears a very wholesome meal, there bread is black but good...they are allowed vinegar with their full meat, and as much as they can eat of everything. the water is indifferent but they have as much as they can use’. Anti-scorbutics however were conspicuous by their absence, with the result that ‘12000 sick have already been sent home in 3 ships and those still remain, 858 part of which are about to go home in Gustaf 3. 3/4 of those are afflicted with Scurvy the progress of which seems to have been considerably checked by the effect of Lime Juice and Sugar supplied by the British Squadron. It must be difficult to say what would most effectively remedy their present distress as the officers say that the people live as they have always been accustomed to do, but I think that allowing less salt provision might have a good effect’.⁷⁵ Whereas the British had gained an understanding of how scurvy could be prevented, the Swedish navy had not.

of their fleet, and the united memorials of the Royal Universities of Lund and Upsel in my favour, placing the highest value on the truth and correctness of all my professional opinions & advice relative to their sick...During my anxious exertions in favour of the distressed sickly state of the public servants of the Swedish nation, in instructing their Medical Men into the nature of the Disease prevailing, its treatment, which proved so successful when had recourse to, and the means which proved able to avert the progress of contagion’. MA 21/399, Jamison to Mulgrave, 29 May 1809.

⁷⁴ Glete, *Navies and Nations*, p. 415.

⁷⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/330, Lieutenant Ross to Saumarez, 11 September 1808.

Problems within the Swedish fleet were not solely an issue of diet however. The Swedish navy did not have the infrastructure or logistical systems to support fleets at sea. As a short distance fleet, Sweden had little experience of long voyages and were consequently ill-prepared for the blockade of Russian ports. They had not made the same logistical improvements Britain had during the 18th century. The superior supply system of the British was the difference: ‘after a careful examination I am decidedly of opinion that Scurvy, of the most obstinate and dangerous nature threatens the safety of the whole fleet’ wrote Saumarez’ surgeon.

In order to account for the introduction of this unfortunate complaint it will be necessary to mention that in the months of January and February last their ships were fitted out, and have since that period, continued at sea without having received any regular supplies of Fresh Provisions, and the greater part, consisting of Country farmers in general accustomed to live on vegetable diet, fully explain the origin and cause of their present state.

In other words, it was not simply the medical issues but the logistical deficiency that had left the Swedish fleet stricken in port. As the surgeon continued, ‘the rapid progress which this disease is making cannot fail to cite the greatest alarm, as already twelve hundred men have been sent to the hospital...all those means which our service points out – both for the cure and prevention of this formidable evil (consistent with the situation of both fleets) have been suggested and first put into practice with the utmost alacrity, by the Physician and Surgeons, many of the latter I am sorry to say are exhausted from fatigue...The present proportion of lime juice with which they are supplied is insufficient to affect a radical change’.⁷⁶ There would be devastating results for Swedish operational viability, as Saumarez described it, ‘a melancholy proof of the inefficiency of those ships and their inability to have kept the sea’.⁷⁷

While the Swedish fleet, sailing just outside its own ports was devastated due to its inferior supply system, the Royal Navy fleet under the command of Sir James Saumarez was never faced with such problems. A poor victualling system left Sweden prey to the Russian military advance: in 1809 it signed a peace treaty from a position of great

⁷⁶ SRO, HA 93/6/1/333, Valentine Duke, Surgeon RN, to Saumarez, 12 September.

⁷⁷ Saumarez to Pole, 21 November 1808, Ryan, *Saumarez Papers*, p. 55.

weakness. The naval fortress of Sveaborg that had undergone considerable investment by Sweden was handed to Russia, a strategic advantage that Russia would benefit from for the rest of the 19th century. Andersson argued that the war with Russia in 1808 ‘revealed many weaknesses in civil and military administration’.⁷⁸ Not least was the over-centralisation of Swedish command.

The Royal Navy however could provide all the necessary provisions regardless of distance, climate or military opposition. As we have seen, in October 1808, after six months at sea, the Baltic fleet could call upon 76,464 lbs of lemon juice, a further 58,520 lbs mixed with sugar, and a further 19,110 bottles of the anti-scorbutic.⁷⁹ It was supply that made the ultimate difference; as Brian Vale has recently commented, the widespread distribution of lemon juice was only achieved when supply problems were overcome.⁸⁰ Lemon juice is but one contributor to a seaman’s healthy diet; the remarkable amounts of meat, bread and vegetables transported were the lifeblood of the Baltic fleet, ensuring a healthy and fully-functioning squadron. The movement of large amounts of victuals across such remarkable distances, and through such treacherous passages of water, is all the more impressive when one considers this was completed with such efficiency in the first year of Baltic operations. In 1809 however, fundamental changes in government strategy and administrative overload would provide the most stringent challenges to victualling the Baltic fleet.

⁷⁸ Ingvar Andersson, *A History of Sweden*, Translated from the Swedish by Carolyn Hannay (Widenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1955) p. 307.

⁷⁹ TNA, ADM 1/7/343-4, ‘An account of the provisions &c on board the undermentioned Victuallers lying in Flemish Roads, Gothenburg’, October 25 1808.

⁸⁰ Brian Vale, ‘The Conquest of Scurvy in the Royal Navy 1793-1800: A Challenge to Current Orthodoxy’, *MM*, Vol. XCIV, No.2, (May 2008) pp. 160-75.

Chapter 7: Problems and Solutions 1809-1812

The weather is still very cold for the season, but the men very comfortable and healthy – it is impossible for a fleet to be more healthy than that at present with me.¹

- Sir James Saumarez, 5 June 1809.

In early 1809, after a successful first year of operations, Saumarez had every reason for confidence. The Admiralty, too, believed that early fears over the ability to provision the Baltic fleet had been unfounded. In April 1809 the Agent Victualler in the Baltic, Smithson Waller, was removed from service. This dismissal derived not from corruption or incompetence. There was a precedent for removing incompetent officials: David Heatley, Agent Victualler in Lisbon had been charged by the Victualling Board in 1801 with negligent behaviour, and for failing to send home his accounts. ‘The want of these various accounts and vouchers’, wrote the Victualling Board to Heatley, ‘for so long a period, at the same time that it reflects the highest discredit upon you, had involved the Department in the most serious consequences’.² If anything, Waller’s removal was a result of the success of the victualling system in 1808. Waller was seen as an expensive and unnecessary luxury in the Baltic. Previously the purser on the *Prince of Wales*,³ he had been appointed by the Admiralty in April 1808, charged with, ‘procuring and sending of supplies of Cattle, Fresh Beef, Vegetables &c for the squadron intended to be employed in the Baltic’, allowing him a salary of ‘Four Hundred Pounds per Annum’.⁴

Indeed, Waller appears to have been an excellent Agent Victualler, making his removal in the spring of 1809 all the more peculiar. Keats himself was unsure as to the role of Waller, often describing him as a naval storekeeper rather than an agent victualler. While asking for directions concerning transports, one of which was laden with timber, Keats wrote to the Admiralty, ‘respecting them to the senior officer that may command in this port, or to the Naval Store-Keeper W Smithson Waller, as I hope to leave this place

¹ SRO, SA 3/1/2/1, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 5 June 1809.

² NMM, ADM DP/31, 8 April 1801, NMM, ADM DP/21, 7 May 1800, VB to Heatley.

³ TNA, ADM 111/187, VB Minutes, 2 May 1808. Indeed, after leaving his position as Agent Victualler to the Baltic fleet, he returned to the *Prince of Wales*. TNA, ADM 111/194, 6 February 1810.

⁴ TNA, ADM 111/187, VB Minutes, 4 April 1808.

tomorrow for the Belt'.⁵ Indeed, he was not confident in Waller's ability to manage even this simple task. Again in September he sent around a memo to his captains, stating that 'it is my direction, that all Demands for Provisions and Naval Stores are transmitted to me for my approval, before they are sent to the Agent Victualler, or Naval Storekeeper'.⁶ Keats' distrust appears harsh: Waller was dedicated, reliable and precise with his accounts. The only criticism this author has found of Waller from either the Admiralty or the Victualling Board occurred in 1808, when the Board inquired of Mr Waller, 'to let us know very particularly why one clerk would not be fully sufficient for the purpose: and why he took out two clerks with him from England without any previous communication with us'.⁷ This small indiscretion aside, he appears to have been a competent official. It is likely that Keats' negative opinion was transmitted to the Admiralty through unofficial channels, perhaps during the private winter conversations.⁸

In early 1809 Waller found his services redundant. 'Having taken into consideration your letter to our Secretary of yesterday's date', wrote, the Admiralty, confirming his removal:

stating that Mr Smithson Waller, whom we had directed you to appoint your Agent in procuring, and sending off supplies of cattle, fresh beef &c, for the Baltic Fleet has arrived in England, requesting to receive our directions as to your continuing Mr Waller in his present appointment: We, not deeming Mr Waller's service to be any longer necessary. do hereby require and direct you, to discontinue him, as your agent on the service aforementioned.⁹

The news would have been of some comfort to Keats, who was clearly not an admirer of Waller's talents. However, his removal in early 1809 is symptomatic of the Admiralty's over-confidence in the realm of Baltic victualling.¹⁰ The first year had gone well, in spite of gloomy predictions. The Admiralty and Victualling Boards had persuaded themselves that the victualling problems faced in December 1808 in the few remaining ships left in

⁵ TNA, ADM 1/7/172, Keats to Admiralty, 9 September 1808.

⁶ TNA, ADM 80/145, Keats, Memo, 4 September 1808.

⁷ TNA, ADM 111/188, 23 July 1808. As will be shown later, if there were mistakes regarding the receipts from Baltic victualling, they were the fault of purasers rather than Waller. See pp. 200-1, 246-8.

⁸ See pp. 150-1.

⁹ TNA, ADM 2/156/107-8, Admiralty to VB, 25 April 1809.

¹⁰ One potential reason is that Waller, as a reliable purser, was needed as a purser on the *Prince of Wales*, the vessel he was employed on before and after his Baltic service. Between 1809 and 1810 the *Prince of Wales* was in Chatham repairing without a captain; perhaps an experienced purser, who knew the ship well, was required to assist in this process. See *Steel's Navy List 1809-1810*.

the Baltic, had been easily countered, coming as they did from misplaced victuallers outside Gothenburg, rather than any systemic problems. The system for provisioning the Baltic fleet had worked well and there were no reasons to think things would be different in 1809. The concern of Keats and Dickson in late 1808 hinted at the fine line that existed between victualling competence, and a provisioning disaster. 1809 however, would witness a greater strain on the victualling system, one that stretched it almost to breaking point.

The increased demand for victuals manifested itself in other ways. More supplies were procured locally in 1809 than in 1808. The system of local procurement centered around the purchase of provisions with Bills of Exchange, charged against the Agent Victualler at that port. Bills of Exchange drawn upon the victualling Board from the Baltic increased from £19,144 in 1808 to £40,863 in 1809.¹¹ This alone would not be sufficient to deal with the greatly increased demand and strain placed upon the Baltic victualling system in 1809. This chapter will initially outline the fundamental changes that impacted so heavily on the victualling system. It will then analyse the temporary failures of the provisioning service, explaining how and why they occurred, before describing what measures Saumarez and the Victualling Board took to remedy them. Saumarez and the Victualling Board were therefore to face the most daunting challenge to the safe victualling of their fleet, without an Agent Victualler; it is impossible to avoid the question of how much an Agent Victualler could have assisted the victualling effort in 1809. Certainly it did not make provisioning any easier.

Victualling Problems, 1809

In late 1808, Keats began to call for a more aggressive approach in the Baltic, and subsequently for more ships. ‘As our plans of defence must be formed on those of attack, and proportioned to the efforts of the enemy’, he wrote,

but on the supposition that his efforts will be doubled next year, and that that which we have employed here this year has not been adequate to the Service; besides the Ships of

¹¹ TNA, ADM 110/61.

Line it may be found requisite to keep off Helsingborg, there should be a Division consisting of Four or five Ships from 64 (of lightest draught of water) to 32 guns, with three of four smaller vessels, stationed from Falsterbo to Landscrona, expressly for the protection of the Malmo passage...I have formed my estimate upon a supposition that the Enemy's force will next year be double what it has been this.¹²

In particular, and having spent much of the previous year there, he called for more warships in the Belt; 'my apprehension for the safety of the Trade arises more from the want of a sufficiency of Cruizers in the Baltic, to keep Privateers from interrupting the ships in their passage from the Russian and Prussian Ports to Carlsrona, than from any other cause'.¹³ Saumarez agreed: in his first two months in the Baltic in 1809, he constantly petitioned the Admiralty for more naval forces to be sent out to the Baltic:

I propose to proceed without Delay off Carlsrona, where I expect to fall in with the Rear Admiral [Keats], and I shall anxiously hope for the junction of such further Force from England as their Lordships may have thought proper to place under my orders, the present Force both of Line of Battle Ships and Heavy Frigates, being way inadequate to the important Services incident to this station.¹⁴

Talking of the last convoy which had sailed to England, he wrote that 'the whole consisting of about one hundred and sixty sail...It is not without considerable anxiety that I find myself impelled to order so numerous and important a convoy to sail from the Baltic with so few ships for their Protection, but the attention required for the security of the Trade that is daily assembling off Carlsrona from the Southern Ports of the Baltic, together with the other important Services required upon the station, will not admit my placing a greater Force under the orders of Sir Richard Keats'.¹⁵

The importance of the Baltic theatre is clearly shown by the Admiralty's positive response to their calls. August and September 1809 saw more ships in the Baltic than at any other point in the Napoleonic War. This also meant that there was a significant rise in the number of men that would need feeding. The graph below demonstrates the difference in the peak numbers of men stationed in the Baltic. During the summer of 1808, there were just under 12,000 men to be victualled in the Baltic. During the summer of 1809, this had risen to over 16,000, and during one month to over 17,000.

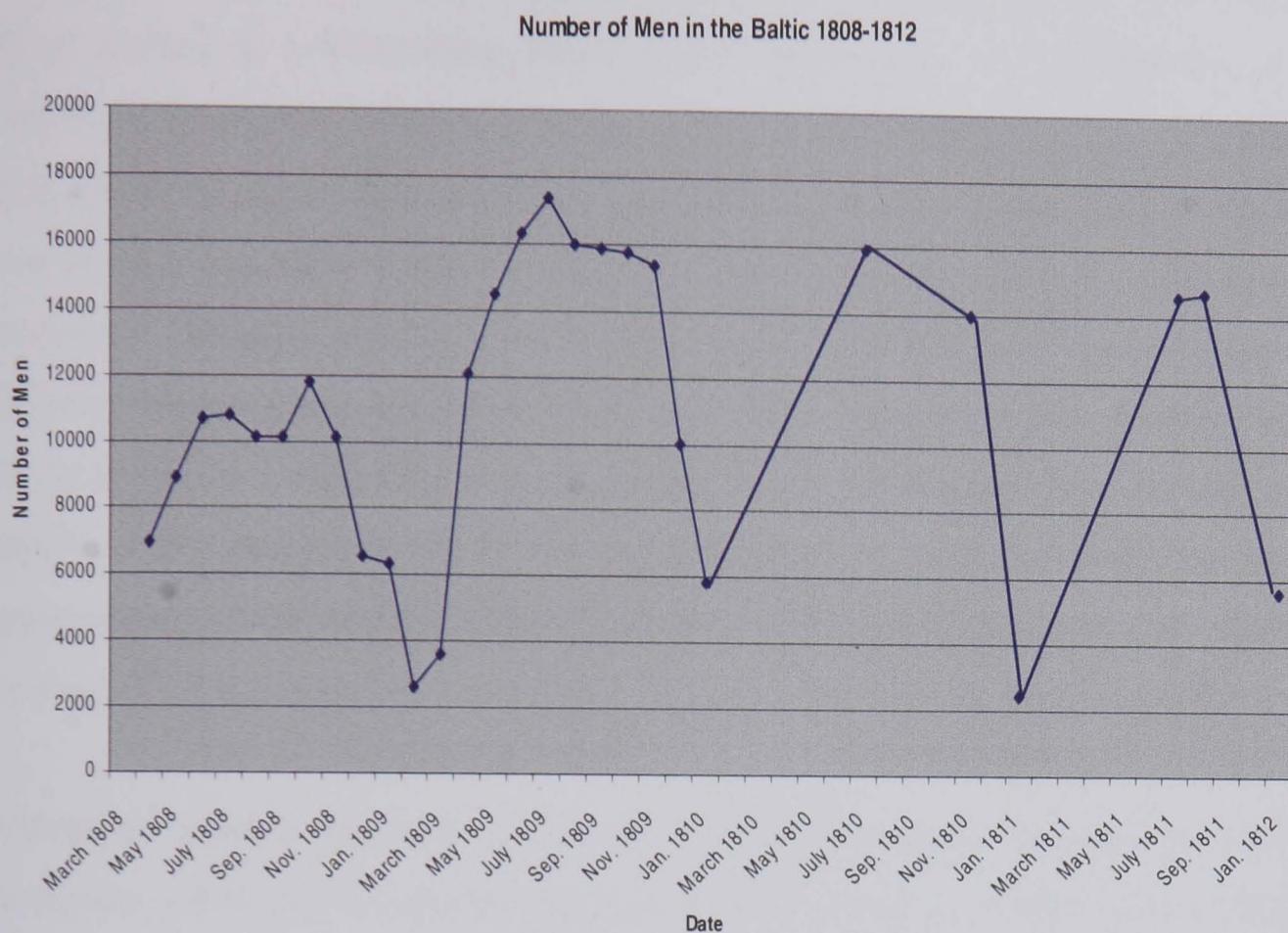
¹² TNA, ADM 1/7/447-52, Keats to Admiralty, 27 November 1808.

¹³ TNA, ADM 1/7/444-6, Keats to Admiralty, 26 November 1808.

¹⁴ TNA, ADM 1/8/416, Saumarez to Admiralty, 30 May 1809.

¹⁵ TNA, ADM 1/8/449-50, Saumarez to Admiralty, 4 June 1809, ADM 1/8/449-50.

Figure 15



Source: TNA, ADM 8/95-199. The Admiralty lists from 1810 were recorded quarterly rather than monthly, explaining the fewer data points on the graph between 1810 and 1812.

This rise in manning alone was not a problem for the victualling service. We have seen that the victualling system was responsive when dealing with sudden and increased demands. Yet, there were other problems, again arising from changing objectives in the War Office that exacerbated the problem of extra seamen to feed. The increased size of the Baltic fleet came as the British cabinet began to ratchet up the war effort under the premierships of Portland and then Perceval. It was in 1809 that the expedition to Walcheren set out, and the British commitment in the Peninsular increased. This thesis is not the place to discuss the Walcheren expedition; this has been done expertly already.¹⁶ The expedition would bring serious problems for the victualling system, not solely in the Baltic but especially there.

¹⁶ See Gordon C. Bond, *The Grand Expedition: The British Invasion of Holland 1809* (University of Georgia Press, 1979).

Walcheren led to a severe shortage of transports, both in the Baltic and the Mediterranean.¹⁷ This was partly a self inflicted problem. In April 1809, the Transport Board replied to a Victualling Board letter, stating that 'in consequence of the great number of Transports ordered to be discharged from the Service, they have it not now in their power to appropriate regular transports for the conveyance of Provisions therein mentioned, intended to be sent to Rio de Janeiro, without interfering with other pressing services'.¹⁸ Months later the Transport Board was struggling to provide the necessary shipping for the transport service. This had been recognised by July; a letter 'representing the necessity of forwarding without further delay, the Provisions to be sent out for the supply of His Majesty's ships in the Mediterranean...they are under the necessity of appropriating to the present Expedition all the Transports they can now possibly bring forward'.¹⁹

Walcheren placed increasing demands on the transport tonnage procurement. In November 1809, the Walcheren operation was accounting for 86 transport ships, with a total tonnage of 23,153.²⁰ An Admiralty order to provide and send out 'with as little delay as possible' provisions for 25,000 men for one month of all species for the ships and vessels in the Scheldt saw transports organised within three days.²¹ The needs of other stations went on the back burner. With so many transports tied up in this venture, procuring tonnage and freight for Baltic deliveries became a much more challenging task. For example, a small delivery ordered on the 16 August had to wait until the 6 September for the sole transport needed to be procured by the Transport Board.²² Attempts were made to cut down on transport usage. In September 1809, the Transport Board 'directed Vice Admiral Wells to provide conveyance to Anholt for the twenty five or thirty Tons of

¹⁷ During the Parliamentary enquiry into the failings at Walcheren, the chairman of the Transport Board, Sir Rupert George, answered questions levied against the administration for not launching the expedition earlier in the year when the weather would have been more favourable. This would have been impossible, he argued, and emphasised the difficulty in procuring the huge amounts of shipping required by the expedition - requisitioning of neutral ships had even been considered - sufficient shipping could not be provided until July 1809, months later than had been expected. See Bond, *The Grand Expedition*, p. 145-6.

¹⁸ TNA, ADM 111/191, 24 April 1809.

¹⁹ TNA, ADM 111/192, 11 July 1809.

²⁰ TNA, ADM 1/3759, 12 November 1809.

²¹ See VB minutes, TNA ADM 111/192, 22 August 1809.

²² TNA, ADM 111/192, 6 September 1809.

Provisions' mentioned in the Board's letter to them 'on board such Ship of War as may be appropriated to take charge of the Baltic Convoys', and not on a transport.²³ Keats had urged the appointment of an Agent of Transports as early as February 1809. 'I have of course felt it in my duty to remedy or at least to endeavour to remedy, abuses wherever I have me them...and I would certainly recommend an Agent of Prisoners and of Transports being appointed'.²⁴ Captain Thomas Graves was belatedly appointed as an Agent of Transports, yet this was not soon enough and the summer of 1809 witnessed the first major victualling failures of the war in the Baltic.²⁵

The victualling system and timings continued along similar lines in 1809 as in 1808. Saumarez's first request for provisions came on 10 May 1809. Using a speedy sloop, by 19 May it had reached the Admiralty, which then ordered the necessary victuals, this order arriving with the Victualling Board the following day, which then ordered the respective transport tonnage.²⁶ Transport tonnage was secured on 25 May, 10 June and the 15 June.²⁷ A second smaller shipment of provisions was ordered on 16 August 1809, and a third on 6 September. This was following a request from Saumarez calling for further supplies of provisions, sent on 25 August. Again the Transport Board began to procure tonnage, interestingly appropriating larger transports and therefore requiring fewer. The transports procured were all at least 300 ton ships, as opposed to the previous year, when transports to the Baltic were rarely more than 200 tons. Economies of scale were thus brought in. This delivery of provisions arrived in the western Baltic on 18 October.²⁸ Thus, the time difference between Saumarez ordering supplies, and those supplies arriving, was less than two months. The speed which naval administrators could

²³ TNA, ADM 111/192, 28 September 1809.

²⁴ TNA, ADM 1/8/39, Keats to Admiralty, 10 February 1809.

²⁵ How official Graves' role as Agent for Transports is unclear however. A 'Return of Officers in His Majesty's Navy who are employed as Agents for Transports', compiled in February 1811, lists the various agents at Gibraltar, Malta, Grenada, Martinique, Halifax, the Cape of Good Hope, along with assorted home ports, but does not mention one for the Baltic. See TNA, ADM 1/3762/77-80, 4 February 1811. A similar return, for October 1812, also fails to list an Agent for Transports in the Baltic, see TNA, ADM 1/3763/427, 1 October 1812.

²⁶ TNA, ADM 2/156/185, see Saumarez to Admiralty, 10 May 1809, Admiralty Order, and TNA, ADM 110/60/1, VB to TB, 20 May 1809.

²⁷ TNA ADM 111/191.

²⁸ See TNA, ADM 1/9/76, 192.

receive and deal with a victualling order from a commander was in this case less than a month.²⁹

There were two occasions when provisioning problems arose. In June the cumulative effect of increased seamen numbers upon a victualling system not yet flexible enough to support it contrived to bring about massive delays in distributing provision. Again towards the end of the year, delays in sending transports would cause concerns for the Baltic fleet. Convoys of victualling deliveries continued to make impressive time from Deptford to the western Baltic. Saumarez described the arrival of a convoy of victuallers in July 1809: 'His Majesty's ship *Defence* with the Four Victuallers named in the Margin [*Commerce*, *Tucker*, *Symmetry*, *Brunton*], joined me on the 18th Instant and the *Tribune* on the following Day...The supply of Provisions brought by the Victuallers will compleat His Majesty's Ships within the Baltic till the latter end of September'.³⁰ These victuallers had sailed from the Nore on 13 June, arrived in the Belt on 1 July 1809, reaching Saumarez in the eastern Baltic (Nargen Island) on the 21 July.³¹ The time taken from the Nore to the western Baltic was a mere 18 days, and only 39 days to reach Nargen Island further east.

Instead, and for the first time in the Baltic, major victualling problems were the result of faults in the victualling service, rather than occasional accidents, or unexpected demands. The Transport Board's difficulties in securing tonnage, and fundamental problems in the Victualling Board system for remote supply combined to bring severe problems to the Baltic fleet. Saumarez was deeply concerned, and was certainly greatly inconvenienced. 'Not having received any accounts of any Victuallers being on their way from England for the Squadron, make me most particularly anxious for their arrival', he wrote to the Admiralty in June.³² A major victualling shortfall, as he well knew, could have devastating effects for his operational viability.

²⁹ As Chapter 5 has demonstrated, the Victualling Board in 1809 was beset with problems securing tonnage for the distribution of victuals.

³⁰ TNA, Saumarez to Admiralty, 21 July 1809.

³¹ See convoy of *Curlew*, TNA, ADM 7/791/118.

³² TNA, ADM 1/8/499-500, Saumarez to Admiralty, 29 June 1809.

As the victualling system began to break down, the subordinate Boards began to report to the Admiralty, distancing themselves from blame. ‘Having been pleased by their Order of the 19th inst. to direct us to send out, with as little delay as possible’, wrote the Victualling Board to the Admiralty,

a supply of Potatoes and Onions, for the use of His Majesty’s ships under the command of Rear Admiral Dixon in the Great Belt, and finding it impracticable at this time to procure Freight, on any terms for the conveyance of the said Vegetables, we have to request you will move their Lordships to signify to us whether there is a probability of our being enabled to forward about eighteen or twenty Tons of the aforementioned articles by any of His Majesty’s Ships.³³

The problems securing tonnage are all the more remarkable when one considers that this was for only a small amount of foodstuffs that needed transporting. In 1809 the strain on the victualling system began to worry the commanders in the Baltic. In July the Captain of the *Ruby* moved his squadron off station in search of a victualling convoy; ‘being given to understand that the Victuallers for the Fleet were in the Convoy’, he wrote,

I lost no time in joining it, and having this morning ordered the Victuallers each alongside their respective Ships, have completed the *Ruby*, *Majestic*, *Vanguard* and *Ardent*, to Six Months Provisions, except Butter and Cheese, Flour and Suet, of the former, to two months, the latter to Four, and have to inform you that I shall return immediately with the *Ruby* and *Vanguard* to Sproe, leaving the *Majestic* to accompany the convoy on, the moment the wind will permit.³⁴

That he was willing to go out of his way in search of victuallers demonstrates the worries commanders had over provisioning. It was a rare example of victualling problems directly acting to the detriment of operations. The shortage of victuals in the Baltic became even more apparent towards the end of the year. Saumarez was worried about his supply line, and the consequent effect. ‘As the Ships to be left upon this station for the Protection of the Trade to the 1st December are very short of Provisions’, he wrote in November, ‘I request their Lordships will be pleased to give Directions that a supply of the articles mentioned in the enclosed may be sent as speedy as possible to Hawke Roads, no Victuallers having arrived since the supply sent out in the vessels named in the margin

³³ TNA, ADM 110/60/285-6, VB to Admiralty, 22 August 1809.

³⁴ TNA, ADM 1/8/506-7, Captain of the *Ruby* to Saumarez, July 1 1809.

[*Blessing, Hawke, Henry*] which had been very inadequate to the Demand of the Squadron'.³⁵

The Commander in Chiefs' fears were soon transmitted to the Admiralty. The secretary of the Admiralty, John Barrow, passed on the Admiralty's anxieties on 11 September, inquiring as to 'when the Provisions will be ready which were ordered for the Baltic Fleet by their Lordships Order of the 16th ult.' The Victualling Board was quick to blame the Transport Board. 'Acquaint their Lordships' they replied, 'that upon the receipt of their Order of the 16th ult. directing us to provide the Provisions therein mentioned, we applied to the Transport Board for the requisite Freight for the conveyance thereof, and that the Transport Board having now furnished us therewith, we are proceeding in the loading of the Provisions, with the utmost dispatch'.³⁶

Problems procuring transport tonnage continued to plague the victualling system. At the end of the year, the Victualling Board again wrote to the Transport Board pleading for tonnage to be secured quickly:

There being an urgent and pressing need for a quantity of Provisions being forwarded with the utmost expedition to Hawke Road Gothenburg for the use of His Majesty's Ships under the command of Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez; we have to request you will provide us with a suitable Vessel to convoy the same without a moments delay, observing that the Tonnage of the Provisions is about three hundred and fifty tons.³⁷

The following month, victuallers were sent. The final victualling delivery of 1809 was ordered on 20 November, the following amounts were to be sent out to the Baltic fleet.

Table 22: Victualling Delivery, 20 November 1809

Bread	1375 Cwt
Spirits (without wine)	14,437½ gallons
Beef	5,500 pieces of 8lbs
Flour	33,000lbs
Suet (without Raisins)	5,500
Pork	11,000 pieces of 4lbs
Pease	687 bushels

³⁵ TNA, ADM 1/9/215, Saumarez to Admiralty, 7 November 1809.

³⁶ TNA ADM 111/192, 12 September 1809.

³⁷ TNA, ADM 110/61/57-8, VB to TB, 20 November 1809.

Oatmeal	515 bushels
Sugar	8250 lbs
Butter	16,500 lbs
Cheese	33,000lbs

The tone of the minute is far less alarmist than its letter to the Transport Board, noting only to 'write the Transport Board for the requisite Freight, to the extent of 350 Tons'.³⁸ It is possible that the Victualling Board chose to underplay the seriousness of the victualling difficulties for the sake of its minutes. There are many other examples of the Victualling Board being prepared to highlight deficiencies, especially when the blame could be laid at the door of the Transport Board. More likely was that the alarmist tone used was the only way to get the Transport Board to move speedily. Clearly, their methods worked: three days later, the two transports *President* and *Flora* had been provided for service by the Transport Board for the service.³⁹

The harsh realities of navigating to the Baltic were made clear, with direct repercussions on the victualling system. Dixon, remaining on the station through the winter, wrote to Saumarez reporting the unfortunate fate of the transports. 'I am seriously concerned to acquaint you that the *President* Vict. one of two under the escort of the *Osprey* & considerably the largest was wrecked on the night of the 11th during a very heavy Gale of wind, on the Tisleraes...she sailed upon the Rocks & in a very short time was dashed to pieces...*Theo* Vict. Arrived with the *Osprey* & entered the port both in great peril. I beg to enclose for your information the Quantity of Provisions remaining in the two *Floras*, I leave it to you to judge whether or not a further supply should be...sent out'.⁴⁰ By December, there were severe victualling shortages. Below is an account of the victuals available in the Baltic in December 1809. These amounts would clearly not be enough to last through the winter.

³⁸ TNA, ADM 111/193, 20 November 1809.

³⁹ TNA, ADM 111/193, 23 November 1809.

⁴⁰ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1227, Dixon to Saumarez, 14 December 1809.

Table 23: Provisions remaining on Baltic victuallers, December 1809

	1st Flora Victualler	2nd Flora Victualler
Bread lbs	9296	27440
Rum Gal.	1415	4621
Beef lbs	1826	1848
Flour lbs	33057	11088
Raisin lbs	3927	
Suet lbs	3354	1800
Pork 4k pieces	3144	3692
Pease Bags	113	230
Oatmeal	548	172.4
Vinegar Gall.	2236	
Tobacco lbs	8129	
Lemon Juice	12667	
Butter, Cheese lbs	32 Days	5566

Source: TNA, ADM 1/9/306-7.⁴¹

Indeed these amounts are similar to the remnants of the previous winter's provision which were discovered by Admiral Hood in April 1809. For example, the two *Floras* carried 36,736 lbs of bread; the previous April, 35,850 lbs of bread, remained after a grueling winter.⁴² Given that 6,000 men were to remain in the Baltic through the winter, this would clearly not be enough. To be precise, the 35,850 lbs of bread would last the remaining 2,800 men planned to be in the Baltic for a mere 13 days.

The naval administrators moved quickly to limit the damage. The Transport Board immediately found new transports to replace the quantities lost on board the *President*. 'In consequence of the loss of the *President*, 278 tons, Hawke Road, Navy Victualler', wrote the Transport Board to the Admiralty 'that we have been under the necessity of appropriating, in her room, the *Williams*, 349 tons, Mediterranean Navy Victualler, and *Mary*, 122 tons, which are laden and ordered to the Nore; and we request you to move their Lordships to appoint such convoy for their protection to Hawke Road as they may

⁴¹ TNA, ADM 1/9/306-7, 'An account of Provisions remaining on board the 1st and 2nd *Floras*', the two remaining victuallers in the Baltic in December 1809', 14 December 1809.

⁴² TNA, ADM 1/8/279-80, Hood to Saumarez, 'Remains of Provisions and Victualling Stores on board the *Flora* Transport, Hawke Roads, Gothenburg' [signed Graves, Agent for Transports], 29 April 1809.

think proper'.⁴³ This was completed a mere eleven days after the actual incident. Taking into account the time delay for the news to travel to London, this was a remarkably fast. Once again the victualling system had proved attempt at reacting quickly to potentially disastrous circumstances.

The victualling problems of 1809 were not limited solely to transport shortage. A retrospective letter written in 1811 from the Victualling Board described this well and is worth quoting in full:

We have to acquaint you that as the arrangement formed for sending out supplies to the Baltic Fleet at periods fixed upon by the Commander in Chief, has been grounded upon an order from the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty we cannot presume to deviate from it, nor is it for us to question its propriety; the more especially when we consider the great inconvenience to which the Baltic Fleet was subjected in the year 1809 from the want of the arrival of supplies in due time, occasioned not only by delays which probably were unavoidable, but also by many of the King's Ships having sailed very short of the quantities of Provisions they were expected to take out, a circumstance against the recurrence of which it is not in our power to provide.⁴⁴

The problem was not simply one of a shortage of transport tonnage therefore, as the above letter makes clear. The Victualling Board, for all its attempts to place the blame on the Transport Board's head, was also at fault. That many Royal Navy ships were leaving port short of the quantities of provisions expected was particularly worrying for the Victualling Board. It had always been the way that ships assigned to Channel Service were usually victualled for four months, East Indies eight, whilst ships heading to medium-distance stations, such as in Africa, West Indies and North America, were provisioned for six.⁴⁵ The Baltic was perhaps in a curious position; certainly it was for victualling planners. Saumarez was used to six months provisions. In April 1808 he wrote to his wife that 'I am well equipped for a six months cruise'.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Victualling Board was less clear on the standard amount of victuals a Baltic fleet should possess on leaving port. On one occasion in August 1808 the commissioners wrote to the Admiralty that:

⁴³ TNA, ADM 1/3759, TB to Admiralty, 25 December 1809.

⁴⁴ TNA, ADM 110/64/11-2, VB to TB, 13 June 1811.

⁴⁵ Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole*, p. 431.

⁴⁶ SRO, HA 93, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 18 April 1808.

the Provisions which have been shipped by this Department, in pursuance of their Lordship's orders of the 7th June and 15th July last, for the Squadron of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels employed in the Baltic...will in our opinion be sufficient to carry on the Victualling of the Squadron, calculated at 11,000 men, presuming that the Ships when they left this country had on board a proportion equal to 4 months consumption, to about the middle of December next.⁴⁷

Other ships leaving to join the Baltic fleet in May 1808 were ordered to be supplied only, 'to as full a proportion of all species as they can stow'.⁴⁸ A Victualling Board minute recorded an order that other ships on their way to the Baltic should be 'completed at Yarmouth to five months of all species including Wine and Spirits'.⁴⁹ In August 1808, the Victualling Board made a calculation for 11,000 men 'presuming that the ships when they left this country. had on board a proportion equal to four months consumption'.⁵⁰ Clearly, commander and administrator had differing ideas about what constituted the correct victualling reserves.

These problems within the Victualling Board's remit were not isolated incidents. Both the sloops *Diligence* and *Alonzo* had severe problems assembling provisions at Chatham in early 1809. The Captain of the *Diligence* wrote apologetically to Saumarez:

In answer to your order of the 12th inst: I have to acquaint you that it is uncertain when the Sloop under my command will be ready to Drop down the river, in consequence of the uncertainty of our being supplied with water and Provisions, I sent a demand to the Victualling Office for Casks and Water, to stow our ground tier on the 3 April and it is not complete yet; I have had a demand in that Office for six months Provisions, several days, and it is quite uncertain when we shall be supplied with them, although I have attended every day in order to hasten them.⁵¹

The Captain of the *Alonzo* too complained about poor provisioning; 'this Majesty's ships has been detained in consequence of a want of Stores and Provisions at the Victualling Office, and them having received orders to supply those Line of Battle Ships fitting here first; I have received the greater part of my sea provisions and to morrow I expect the remainder...'.⁵²

⁴⁷ TNA, ADM 1/7, VB to Admiralty, 22 August 1808.

⁴⁸ TNA, ADM 111/187, 13 May 1808.

⁴⁹ TNA, ADM 111/187, 23rd May 1808.

⁵⁰ TNA, ADM 111/188, VB to Saumarez, 22 August 1808.

⁵¹ TNA, ADM 1/8/227, Captain Smith, *Diligence*, 13 April 1809.

⁵² TNA, ADM 1/8/223, Captain Barker, *Alonzo*, 13 April 1809.

Indeed, into the winter of 1809-10, problems at the Victualling Board continued, as ships in the Baltic waited impatiently for their supplies. ‘We have received’, wrote the Victualling Board to the Admiralty, ‘your letter of the 26th inclosing a copy of one which the Right Honorable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty had received from Vice Admiral Wells representing that for the reasons therein mentioned the *Edgar*, *Cerberus*, and *Grampus*, cannot be brought forward with dispatch, for want of a supply of Provisions and water’.⁵³

Clearly, the victualling system was struggling to function as well as it had done the year before. It should be emphasised that 1809 was not a story of continuous provisioning disasters. Shipments did get through to Saumarez, if occasionally the margin was cut fine. In neither June or December, when victualling deliveries were seriously delayed, was Saumarez forced to abandon any of his key objectives; he continued to blockade the Russian fleet, he continued to protect British trade and he continued to assist the Swedish navy against the Russian forces. There were instances of the Victualling Board operating more than competently. In November, the Victualling Board was acting as it had the year before, anticipating demands and doing its best to respond to them. ‘We received your letter of the 10th instant, transmitting copies of a Letter...from Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez’, they wrote to the Transport Board in November 1809:

requesting that a supply of the articles thereinmentioned may be sent as speedily as possible to Hawke Road...we beg to acquaint you...that having received a letter from the Vice Admiral to the same effect, we had previously the receipt of your letter taken the necessary measures for having the Provisions required by him shipped and forwarded with every possible expedition; and we have the satisfaction to state that two Victuallers named the *President* and *Flora*, are now lading therewith, and in such a state of forwardness as to afford reasonable ground to expect that they will be completely laden,⁵⁴ and in readiness to proceed on their Voyage by tomorrow afternoon.

Earlier that year, the Admiralty could answer that, after a request of 25 August for two months provisions, ‘directions accordingly to the Victualling Board, where a supply has already been sent to answer that demand’.⁵⁵

⁵³ TNA, ADM 110/61/291-3, VB to Admiralty, 30 January 1810.

⁵⁴ TNA, ADM 110/61/67-8, VB to TB, 23 November 1809.

⁵⁵ TNA, ADM 1/9/76, Admiralty note 11 September 1809, see Saumarez to Admiralty, 25 August 1809.

The victualling system in 1809 found itself under a great strain, yet it was a strain they were able to withstand. Unclear organisation in the Victualling Board, communication problems emanating from the supply of such a remote fleet, the loss of a transport, the sudden increase in the size of the Baltic fleet and the difficulty in procuring tonnage worried commanders and a concerned Admiralty. The victualling system had proved adept at reacting quickly to avoid disastrous food shortages in the Baltic fleet. It had proved less able to organise regular, timely shipments in advance. The victualling systems still had room for improvement: this would change in 1809-10. Following a damaging year in which the victualling of the Baltic fleet had been called into doubt, changes needed to be made.

Reforming the Baltic Victualling System, 1809-1810

Early in the winter of 1808-1809, and particularly in the winter 1809-10, widespread systemic changes were brought to the victualling system. As Chapter 1 has shown, the Victualling Board and Admiralty could be very proactive at instituting personnel changes. Similarly, it was also astute when making systemic changes to the victualling service. There was a degree of performance measurement. Admirals' and captains' correspondence informed those in London. Inter-departmental letters were passed between naval boards, highlighting inefficiencies and inaccuracies. Large amounts of information were collected, for instance the 'state and condition' of fleets, were returned from foreign stations. Occasionally this was recorded in the Victualling Board minutes, but often it was not. Every winter, with Saumarez back in London, changes to systems and procedures could be recommended and executed. On 12 April 1810 for instance he wrote to the Victualling Board proposing changes to supply system, advocating fewer, larger shipments planned precisely months in advance.⁵⁶ Ships would no longer leave ports under-supplied. The Admiralty made it clear that in the Baltic, fleets were to be provisioned initially with six months' provisions. 'Whereas we think it proper that the Ships of the Line which may form a part of the Squadron intended to be employed in the Baltic, and the Neighbouring Seas', they wrote:

⁵⁶ TNA, ADM 2/158/115-6.

in the course of the ensuing Spring, shall, previously to their proceeding upon that Service, be completed to six months, of all species of Provisions, including Wine and Spirits: and that Frigates and Sloops shall have an equal supply of Provisions or as much thereof as they can conveniently stow: We signify the same for your information, and that upon your receiving our orders hereafter, respecting the said squadron you are to understand that when ships are directed to be completed for Baltic Service, they are to be Victualled agreeably to the Proceeding Regulation.⁵⁷

Notice was given to the officers and agents at Deptford, Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Dover, and on board the *Lancaster* and *Harmony* Depôts at Sheerness and the Downs, where Mr Grant, the Contractor at Yarmouth.⁵⁸ Never again would ships leave port lacking in provisions.

Secondly, naval administrators attempted to remove future problems with the hiring of transport tonnage. In April 1810, as the Baltic fleet left for its third year on station, the Admiralty allowed the Transport Board to raise its tonnage rates for the hire of freight. 'Whereas you have transmitted to us in your letter to our secretary of the 12th Inst. the copy of a letter you had received from the Victualling Board', they wrote,

upon the subject of the Tonnage that will be required for conveying Provisions to the fleet in the Baltic, under the orders of Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez...it will be necessary to increase the rate of hire, to twenty five shillings per Ton, per month, for three months certain, which is the rate of hire you have given for some time past, in cases of emergency; we have taken the same into consideration, & do hereby require and direct you, to procure the Tonnage which may be required for the service in question, on the most reasonable terms in your power, in sufficient time to load the vessels of the period specified in your letter for the Transport of Provisions for the Baltic Fleet accordingly.⁵⁹

The rate of hire was increased: the Transport Board had paid for more transports to solve the problem. Difficulties securing tonnage in the future had been comprehensively reduced. By 1810, any crisis that might have existed concerning the procurement of transport tonnage was over. Indeed, one can see increasingly detailed demands by the Transport Board over what to hire. Whereas in 1809 they were hiring almost desperately, by 1810 they could be choosier. In 1810, three tenders by Henley and Son were offered: the *Mary*, *Freedom* and *Norfolk* vessels were all rejected, the Transport Board writing to

⁵⁷ TNA, ADM 2/157/464-5, Admiralty to TB, 30 January 1810.

⁵⁸ TNA, ADM 111/194, 31 January 1810.

⁵⁹ TNA, ADM 2/158/115-6, Admiralty to TB, 19 April 1810.

Henley that 'I am directed by the Board to acquaint you that she is not wanted'.⁶⁰ Clearly in September the Board had more than enough shipping for its need. On the same date, two other Henley ships, the *Zephyr* of 372 tons and the *Trusty* of 487 tons, tendered for 'six months Coppered Transports', were deemed not wanted by the Transport Office.⁶¹

Thirdly, the Victualling Board took on more of the decision making. This enabled it to take a more long-term view of what was needed. Knowing the numbers of men in the Baltic and the daily ration, whilst also being aware of the transport tonnage situation, they were better placed to make the decisions of when and how much to send. In what was essentially a centralisation of the victualling process, Saumarez still played a role, but a more subsidiary one. By 1810, the Victualling Board was in complete control of all remote supply to the Baltic, deciding when shipments were sent as well as the quantities of foodstuffs to be sent.⁶²

Deliveries became known as 'moieties', with two main shipments of victuals planned for each year. The term moiety had previously been used to describe payments of specie to the Swedish Government, as part of their subsidy.⁶³ J.W. Croker, First secretary of the Admiralty confirmed that since 'a Squadron of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels is intended to be employed in the Baltic under the command of Sir James Saumarez', the direction of the Admiralty was for the Victualling Board to 'communicate with the Commander in Chief of the Squadron on the subject of sending out such quantities of Provisions as may from time to time be necessary for the supply of the said Squadron to the extent of about 15,000 Men, and to take measures for securing an adequate supply for the said 15,000 Men at such periods as shall be fixed upon by the Commander in Chief'.⁶⁴ These periods were to be decided by Saumarez in consultation with the Victualling Board following the return of the Baltic fleet in the winter.

⁶⁰ NMM, HNL 13/22 f.2, 14 September 1810.

⁶¹ NMM, HNL 14/5 f.1, 5-6, 14 September 1810.

⁶² SRO, HA 93/6/1/1362, VB to Saumarez, 5 June 1810.

⁶³ See TNA, FO 73/49, Thornton (Minister at Stockholm in 1808) to Canning, 9 August 1808.

⁶⁴ TNA, ADM 111/194, 31 March 1810.

Saumarez was of course still in correspondence with the Victualling Board, and was of great assistance in advising or correcting the Victualling Board's knowledge of the number of seamen in the Baltic. The Victualling Board wrote to the Transport Board that same month, acknowledging his advice:

In reference to our letter of the 31 March last informing you that we should have occasion for Vessels to load with the remaining...provisions for the Baltic by the 1 July next, we have to acquaint you that by a letter we have received from Sir James Saumarez it appears that the force under his command has been increased, and that it will in consequence be expedient that a supply of Provisions to the extent of Two thousand nine hundred tons instead of two thousand should be forwarded. From the early notice thus given we trust that not any difficulty or delay will occur in respect to your furnishing us with the requisite Vessels by the time specified.⁶⁵

Moreover, this demonstrates the remarkable flexibility available to the Baltic victualling system in 1810. The supply was increased from 2,000 to 2,900 tons in a matter of weeks without any complications or delays. Such an arrangement could avoid the issue of procuring transports which was the huge delaying factor of the previous year. 'In order to afford the Transport Board timely notice of the Tonnage required for this service', wrote the Victualling Board, they would be informed in advance, 'stating that the Tonnage necessary for the first moiety, consisting of 2000 Tons, will require to be at Deptford, in perfect readiness to load by the first week in May next; and that the second Moiety consisting of the like number of Tons, will be required to be in readiness, at the same place, by the first week in July'.⁶⁶

It was also decided that the 'respective Cargoes of the different Ships should be comprised of equal proportions of each particular Species of Provisions'. Why this should be the case is unclear but it seems likely that this was new policy following on from the loss of the *President* victualler the year before. If the contents of the two *Flora* victuallers are examined (see p. 173), it can be seen that they did not carry equal proportions of all species, but carried more of particular types. In neither of those ships for example was there wine, spirits, sugar or butter. It is highly likely that the *President*, when lost, carried larger amounts of these species, which were then greatly missed. The

⁶⁵ TNA, ADM 110/62/131, VB to TB, 5 June 1810.

⁶⁶ TNA, ADM 111/194, 31 March 1810.

agent at Deptford was directed to take special care that such regular assortment of the different species be ‘duly apportioned and punctually attended to’.⁶⁷

Again, the commanders in the Baltic could still have an impact on decision making about victualling. For instance, the Victualling Board reported that, ‘our Chairmen having laid before us a letter he has received from Captain George Hope first Captain to the Baltic Fleet [in modern parlance the Chief of Staff, and the man responsible for such planning] upon the subject of hastening the second moiety of the Provisions required to be forwarded for the use of the said Fleet; we have to request you will furnish us with all possible dispatch with the Tonnage necessary to complete the shipment of what remains due on warrant and with Four hundred and fifty Tons in addition, to enable us to comply with a further demand for the same service’.⁶⁸ The planning was still the Victualling Board’s responsibility. The following year in another letter to the Transport Board, it advised that:

in reference to our letters to you of the 12th and 13th ult. and to a communication made to our Chairman by the First Captain to the Baltic Fleet, we deem it necessary that the second supply of Provisions for the fleet under the command of Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez should arrive in the Baltic early in the month of September, and we therefore earnestly request that you will provide us with the Tonnage requisite for this service by the first week of the next month at furthest, which, according to the usual method of calculating the Tonnage in this Department amounts to One Thousand three hundred and ninety two tons.⁶⁹

As this letter also points out, the consequence of the centralisation of victualling decision-making in the Victualling Board, rather than the commander, was that planning could now occur up to six months in advance. In March 1810, the Victualling Board could state to the Transport Board

the Right Honorable Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having been pleased to direct us to send out to the Baltic such quantities of Provisions as may from time to time be necessary for the supply of the Squadron of His Majesty’s Ships and Vessels intended to be employed upon that station under the command of Sir James Saumarez, we have to acquaint you that the supplies which we shall have to forward for this service will amount in the whole to about Four Thousand Tons, the first variety of which it is essentially requisite should be so timely shipped as to be forwarded from Deptford by the 1st day of June next, and the other variety by the first day of August following, we have to request

⁶⁷ TNA, ADM 1/9/306-7, TNA, ADM 111/194, 31 March 1810.

⁶⁸ TNA, ADM 110/62/199-200, VB to TB, 14 July 1810.

⁶⁹ TNA, ADM 110/64/90-1, VB to TB, 20 July 1811.

that you will cause us to be furnished, by the 1st day of May next, with suitable Vessels for the conveyance of the first variety to the extent of 2000 Tons, and that you will take such previous measures for providing tonnage for the remaining variety or 2000 Tons as you may judge expedient, observing that it is indispensably necessary that the vessels to be appropriated should be at Deptford in perfect readiness to load by the 1st day of July next.⁷⁰

By planning so far ahead, and with knowledge of the changing availability of transports at their fingertips, the Victualling Board solved the problems that could arise from temporary shortages of both tonnage and specific victuals.

In 1808, there were four small shipments of victuals, sent at Saumarez's bidding, often amounting to little more than short-term solutions to the problem of provisioning. Dependent on communication from Saumarez, these deliveries could be hamstrung by the need to prepare at short notice; in times of transport shortage this posed problems. Following the changes made in the winter of 1809-10, this would no longer be the case. But by centralising the victualling system, the naval administration had ensured that huge shipments of victuals could be prepared in advance. With time, and extra money for securing freight, delays in shipments would be a thing of the past. Two large shipments were organised by the Victualling Board; they could be brought forward, if, for example, the numbers of seamen in the Baltic changed.

And so it was done, 'it was agreed that it would be necessary to send out four months Provisions of all species for fifteen thousand Men, and that the same should be forwarded in moieties. The first Moiety (or two months supply) to be shipped so timely as to be in readiness to sail from Deptford by the first week in June next...and the other Moiety to be shipped, and in readiness to sail from Deptford by the first week in August'.⁷¹ For this first moiety, the Transport Board was securing tonnage far in advance, as early as 28 April and 1 May 1810.⁷² Ships would be sent when loaded: hence the first two victuallers, ready on 11 May, joined the first convoy. The next ships fully loaded were

⁷⁰ TNA, ADM 110/61/460-1, VB to TB, 31 March 1810.

⁷¹ TNA, ADM 111/194, 31 March 1810.

⁷² TNA, ADM 111/195, 28 April 1810, 1 May 1810. Also the 3 and 4 May.

ready on 21 May, the last on 2 June.⁷³ The huge majority had already been loaded before 1 June, the time limit set for the transports given in the letter of 31 March 1810.

Small misjudgements could be rectified. Captain Garret, the Agent for Transports at Deptford, complained that the vessels furnished by the Transport Board for the conveyance of provisions for the use of the Baltic fleet had been ‘found incapable of taking the whole proportion required to be sent out by about 700 Bags’, and ‘it being absolutely necessary that the said Bread should be forwarded, and that a proportion of other species should be shipped therewith on order to Ballast the Vessels that may be appropriated to convey the same’. Within two days the Transport Board had obliged, securing the *Elizabeth* transport of 162 tons for the service, thereby completing the full amount of the first moiety.⁷⁴ The second moiety was arranged similarly, though this time supplies for 17,000 men were sent, in line with the increase in size of the Baltic fleet (as seen above). The full complement of Transports was ready by 7 August 1810, only a few days later than planned.⁷⁵

The Victualling Board also took on responsibility for the island of Anholt’s provisioning on a permanent basis, writing to the Admiralty that,

two months Provisions has recently been shipped and forwarded for the squadron under the command of Sir James Saumarez in the Baltic, so that the Admiral will have it in his power to afford Captain Nicholls a temporary supply; and we therefore request to be informed whether it is their Lordships pleasure that we shall immediately send out a further supply for the one hundred and ninety two Men being the number for which the Garrison is composed and also for the supply of one hundred Inhabitants, or whether we shall await the result of the enquiry which our Chairmen acquaints us is directed to be taken by the Vice Admiral, and which may perhaps enable their Lordships to make a permanent arrangement with regard to the future supplies to be sent out to that Island.⁷⁶

This was agreed upon. With the Victualling Board controlling the distribution of victuals to the Baltic fleet, Saumarez could concentrate on his operational objectives rather than spending time on managing the provisions for his fleet.

⁷³ TNA ADM 111/195, 11 May 1810, 21 May 1810, 2 June 1810.

⁷⁴ TNA ADM 111/195, 24 May 1810, 26 May 1810.

⁷⁵ It is not clear from the archives, but as occurred with the first shipment, it is highly likely that the first transports to be loaded would have left much earlier than the 7 August. ADM 111/196, 7 August 1810.

⁷⁶ TNA, ADM 110/62/137-9, VB to Admiralty, 8 June 1810.

Further changes were made. Permanent victuallers were sent to aid fleets heading to the Baltic, again at the bidding of the Admiralty rather than the Commander in Chief. ‘Whereas we think fair that you shall without loss of time provide a Vessel for the purpose of supplying water to such of the Squadron under the orders of Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez’, they wrote, ‘as may occasionally put into Hoseley Bay, continuing the said Vessel upon that service until the final departure of the Vice Admiral’s Squadron for the Baltic: We do hereby require and direct you, to give the necessary orders for this purpose, accordingly’.⁷⁷ A similar victualler was sent there to furnish other provisions there. The Admiralty instructed the Victualling Board that ‘you shall immediately provide an assorted cargo of Provisions to the extent of about 250 Tons, to be put on board a Transport intended to lie in Hosely Bay, at a depot for supplying such of HM Ships as may occasionally anchor there, keeping such Provisions, together with Stores, from time to time complete; & that a clerk be sent out on board the said Transport belonging to your department, for the purpose of keeping an account of the receipt & issue of the Provisions’.⁷⁸ Captain Boteler remembered later that ‘every fortnight four ships of the line were sent away to Hosely Bay, on the Norfolk coast, to complete water and get about twenty bullocks for the fleet, then go off the Texel, to be in sight of the large Dutch and French fleets at anchor in the Zuyder Zee, and there remain four or five days. Spring tides were the only time those ships could get out’.⁷⁹

Another development was the increased use made of other British out-ports. In 1808 and 1809 supplies had nearly always come from Deptford. Closer to the Baltic in sailing time as well as distance was the port of Yarmouth. In decline as a naval base since the Dutch Wars, in 1810 it began to be used to supply certain victuals to the fleet. This was initially suggested by Admiral Dixon in 1809, and passed on by the Victualling Board to the Admiralty, which would see the benefits of a port more accessible to the Baltic. ‘We beg leave to transmit to you for the information of the Right Honorable Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, a copy of a letter we have this day received from Rear Admiral Dixon’,

⁷⁷ TNA, ADM 2/160/259-60, Admiralty to VB, 5 April 1811.

⁷⁸ TNA, ADM 2/160/466, Admiralty to VB, 28 June 1811.

⁷⁹ Bonner-Smith, *Captain John Harvey Boteler*, p. 30.

they reported, ‘requesting that supplies of Live Oxen and Vegetables, may occasionally sent from Yarmouth for the use of the Companies of His Majesty’s Ships under his command in the Great Belt’. So unprecedented was it that initially the idea was questioned. ‘As there are no instance of Live Cattle ever having been sent by the Department to that place’, the Victualling Board commented, ‘and as we apprehend that it would be very difficult if not impracticable, to preserve Vegetables on such a Voyage, we have to request you will submit to their Lordships consideration how far it may be expedient to comply with the Rear Admiral’s request’.⁸⁰

The Admiralty was less keen than Dixon. However, the following year, Yarmouth began to be used to cater for the increasing victualling needs of the Baltic fleet. The Admiralty requested that ‘in consequence of His Majesty’s Ships and Vessels stationed in the Belt under the Command of Rear Admiral Dixon, being unable to obtain any Vegetables, a supply thereof may be sent from Yarmouth by such of His Majesty’s Ships as may be on their way to the station: We do hereby require and direct you to provide and send out a supply of such Vegetables, as will bear the voyage from Yarmouth for the use of the said ships and Vessels, accordingly’.⁸¹ Fairly large amounts were sent, ‘as opportunities occur in his Majesty’s Ships’. The majority of the supplies came to Yarmouth from Deptford itself: victuals were redirected from Deptford, rather than Deptford taking a reduced role. In this instance, the following amounts were taken from the contractor for vegetables at Yarmouth.

Table 24: Provisions from Yarmouth, 1809

	Pounds		Cwt
Potatoes	33,600	or	300
Onions	8,400	or	75

⁸⁰ TNA, ADM, VB to Admiralty, 18 August 1809.

⁸¹ TNA, ADM 2/159/58-9, Admiralty to VB, 30 August 1810.

The contractor was instructed ‘to enjoin the Contractor to select such Potatoes and Onions for the service in question, as will best bear the voyage and be likely to keep.⁸² The Baltic fleet therefore ceased to be reliant on the supply from Deptford.

The Victualling System Refined 1810-12

Throughout the rest of the Baltic fleet’s time in the Baltic, the victualling system conducted itself along these lines. With victualling matters centralised in the Victualling Board, Saumarez and the Admiralty could concentrate on their own areas of expertise. Advanced planning, unheard of in 1808-9, added to the changes in the way tonnage was secured and in the amount of money available to hire it which meant the victualling system once again could claim to have mastered the organisational and administrative problems that surrounded the victualling of the Baltic fleet.

The Victualling Board was organising the distribution of victualling resources even before anyone requested it; from 1810 they were consistently demonstrating competence and efficiency. One rare inquiry from the Admiralty in 1811 brought a confident and assured response. ‘We received...a letter from Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez in which he requests that the Spirits and Bread for Wingo Sound may be hastened as much possible’, wrote the Victualling Board. ‘In return to which...we, on the same day directed our agent afloat at Sheerness to put as much Bread and Spirits on board His Majesty’s Ship *Fisgard* destined for Wingo Sound, as she could possibly stow, and that it appears by a report we received from our said agent dated the 27th past that one hundred Bags of Bread and three Tons of Spirits were, on the preceding day...that sixty four hundred weight of Bread in Casks, were then in readiness...and that it was stated in the Demand that no more of either Species could be received’.⁸³

Such questioning letters were a rarity; by 1811, the Admiralty had all but ceased writing to the Victualling Board. There was one occasion when the Victualling Board became

⁸² TNA, ADM 111/192, 23 August 1809.

⁸³ TNA, ADM 110/64/425-6, VB to Admiralty, 2 December 1811.

concerned about the tonnage being procured. The Victualling Board complained to the Admiralty, ‘being apprehensive that His Majesty’s Ships in the Baltic may be distressed for want of Provisions for the conveyance of which they applied to the Transport Board for Freight so long since as the 8th April last’. They wrote to the Transport Board, referring them to their previous letters reminding them of the application made by them beforehand, strongly impressing on them ‘the necessity of suitable vessels being immediately furnished for the service’.⁸⁴ They were less than impressed with the Transport Board, also complaining of 500 tons of shipping still required for the fleet in the Mediterranean.⁸⁵ Echoes of 1809 returned to the Victualling Board in 1811, worried once again that inadequacies in the Transport Board would bring about delays. However, the Transport Board was more competent than perhaps the Victualling Board believed. On 12 June, they replied, stating that ‘as two ships making together 461 Tons have already sailed, and one of 392 Tons is now ready to load in aid of the Baltic Service, they trust that no inconvenience will arise from the time which has been necessarily required for providing for it, especially as the Baltic Fleet has so recently sailed from this country; but that there will be no delay on the part of their Department in completing such Service’.⁸⁶ It was a problem of communication rather than organisation.

Apart from two letters informing the Board they were sending two transports to act as permanent victuallers in the Baltic, and one instance in December 1811 when a shipment of provisions was ordered to Wingo Sound for the benefit of Saumarez’s fleet, a careful study of the Admiralty out-letters finds no examples of Admiralty-Victualling Board correspondence.⁸⁷ There was no need for the Admiralty to step in. Provisioning operations appear in the archives when they go wrong; in this the problems of 1809, previously chronicled, are notable examples. The lack of concern, and indeed the lack of any correspondence at all concerning provisioning, is a telling demonstration of the wholesale improvement the victualling system had undergone by 1811.

⁸⁴ TNA, ADM 111/199, 12 June 1811.

⁸⁵ TNA, ADM 111/199, 3 June 1811.

⁸⁶ TNA, ADM 111/199, 12 June 1811.

⁸⁷ TNA, ADM 2/160 and ADM 1/161, Admiralty out-letters covering 1811, are virtually bereft of Admiralty letters to the VB.

Indeed, far from being undersupplied, as had occurred twice in 1809, the Baltic fleet continued to be oversupplied throughout 1810-12. The Victualling Board wrote in August 1810 that

we have to request you will represent to their Lordships that the first Moiety of the Quantities of Provisions originally intended for the squadron upon that Station was sent out in the Months of June and July last and that the same together with the proposition of the second Moiety already shipped added to what the respective Ships have on board will we conceive be sufficient to serve 14,000 Men up to the middle of January next; we therefore beg you will move their Lordships to signify to us whether it may not be proper for us to suspend the lading of about 400 tons of the last Moiety which at present remaining unshipped as the shipment and Freight thereof will be attended with considerable expense and loss to the public in the event of the same not being required for the supply of the beforementioned squadron.⁸⁸

Whereas in 1809 the Victualling Board had been desperate to requisition any tonnage available, and struggled to send ships out fully supplied, in 1810 they were asking permission to suspend shipments, so comprehensive had their provisioning been so far that year. In reply it was ordered that 'the whole of the Provisions remaining due upon warrant for the supply of the Squadron in the Baltic be countermanded'.⁸⁹ The Victualling Board had learned valuable lessons from the year before.

1811 too boasted a victualling system coping well with demand. The Victualling Board wrote again to the Admiralty in 1811, pointing out that the Baltic fleet was adequately provisioned, and asking if there was anything else they thought the Admiralty might suggest; 'the Provisions on board His Majesty's Ships in the Baltic, together with what are on board Victuallers there, and on the way thither, being, as we conceive, sufficient to serve to the end of December next; we have to request you will move the Right Honorable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to signify to us their pleasure in regard to our forwarding any further supplies'.⁹⁰

For the second moiety of 1811, the Transport Board had already procured shipping before the foodstuffs had even been ordered. The same day the Victualling board ordered the

⁸⁸ TNA, ADM 110/62/275-6, VB to Admiralty, 9 August 1810.

⁸⁹ TNA, ADM 111/196, 11 August 1810.

⁹⁰ TNA, ADM 110/64/225, VB to Admiralty, 18 September 1811.

second moiety to be put on warrant, they received a letter from the Transport Board, stating that the *Urania* Transport of 206 Tons was already appropriated to load cargo for the Baltic ‘in aid of the 1,392 Tons of Navy Provisions for which conveyance was required to the Baltic’.⁹¹ Their calculations as to what was needed were being proven to be correct. As they wrote, ‘the Provisions on board His Majesty’s Ships in the Baltic, together with what are on board Victuallers there, and on the way thither, being, as the Committee conceive, sufficient to serve to the end of December next’. As such, they ordered that ‘no further supplies are to be forwarded to His Majesty’s Ships and Vessels in the Baltic’, and informed the Accountant for Stores, ‘for his causing the Provisions remaining due on warrant from Deptford for the Baltic to be countermanded’.⁹² In 1811, Dr Jamison, the Physician to the Baltic fleet, wrote to the Transport Board, complaining that the fleet had perhaps too much lemon juice.

To be persevered in during long voyages, it often forms the remote cause of other diseases, such as water in the chest, general Dropsy, Dysentery, or Debility of the digestive organ...a large use of Lemon Juice will debilitate the most healthy and when persevered into perhaps a necessary extent to cure frequent returns of Scorbutic action, and the want of necessary nourishing Diet encourages its debilitating powers, Hence the diseases of debility which I have mentioned frequently follow its lavish use in the previous reduced constitutions from vicissitude of Climate described in the notation.⁹³

It is important to note that the Physician to the Baltic fleet was able to use a word like ‘lavish’ to describe the supply of lemon juice to the fleet.

In 1812, the supply of the Baltic continued as it had done in 1810 and 1811, that is to say, without drama or controversy. Transport tonnage was procured on schedule, victualling convoys left on time.⁹⁴ Convoys were fixed to the Baltic ‘every 14 Days from 9th July to the 15th October, in order that the Victuallers belonging to this Department may be prepared to take advantage of the several convoys, and to avoid the delay and expense occasioned by the necessity of affording protection to single ships which might have sailed with the general convoys’.⁹⁵ If there were shortages of manpower loading, the

⁹¹ TNA, ADM 111/200, 27 July 1811.

⁹² TNA, ADM 111/200, 18 September 1810, 20 September 1810.

⁹³ TNA, ADM 1/3761, Dr Jamison to the TB, 4 November 1810.

⁹⁴ TNA, ADM 111/203.

⁹⁵ TNA, ADM 111/204/295-7, 14 July 1812.

Victualling Board provided extra manpower. ‘It being of the utmost importance that the Victuallers loading for the Baltic should be all completed by the end of the next week’ they wrote, ‘write to the Agent at Deptford and direct him to cause every exertion to be used for that purpose, and if it shall be deemed necessary, to employ a part of the men during Extra hours upon the said service’.⁹⁶

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In 1809, the Baltic fleet had twice come close to a victualling disaster: in June, when Saumarez had been so worried, and again towards the end of the year, as the fleet prepared for an ice-ridden winter in the Baltic. Potential disasters had been avoided; delayed deliveries of victualling transports had finally arrived. The, ‘great inconvenience to which the Baltic Fleet was subjected in the year 1809 from the want of the arrival of supplies in due time’, did not happen again.⁹⁷ The Victualling Board made a series of changes and minor reforms to ensure this was the case: victualling deliveries were planned up to six months in advance, the timings of which were made by the Board itself. The Transport Board was able to raise the rates of hire to secure whatever transport tonnage was necessary. The port of Great Yarmouth as well as permanent victuallers were used to spread the supply of victuals to the Baltic fleet. In these cases, the Victualling Board was improving existing procedures rather than over-hauling the system, through a combination of hard won experience and close winter interaction between commander and administrator. That was not to say they were incapable of wider, more extensive reforms when necessary, as will be discussed in Chapter 9. In actuality, the Baltic fleet did not need its agent victualler, who had been removed at the start of 1809. Even after the near-disasters of 1809, there was no move to appoint anyone to this position, and the competent running of the victualling system from 1810-1812 suggests that the Admiralty was right when it decided an agent victualler was unnecessary.

⁹⁶ TNA, ADM 111/204, 1 August 1812.

⁹⁷ TNA, ADM 110/64/11-2, VB to the TB, 13 June 1811.

It is easy to impart blame on naval administrators. Janet MacDonald paints a negative picture of the Victualling Board, stating that the victualling commissioners were ‘reactive rather than proactive’, capable of responding to ‘acute’ problems, but unable to address longer-standing systemic problems. A major fault was their failure ‘to instigate changes to their internal systems and office procedures’.⁹⁸ On the contrary, as this chapter has shown, the Victualling Board commissioners oversaw frequent changes to systems and the institution of reforms. The Commission for Naval Revision prompted its own reforms; it should be remembered that separate to this, the Victualling Board were comfortable changing procedures at their own bidding, when the need arose.

The mistakes of 1809 would not be made again; the story of victualling from 1810-1812 was one of unremitting success. The system devised for the provisioning of a fleet of over 16,000 men, surrounded by hostile states, with a vulnerable supply line, could not have been carried out a few decades before. The improvements in the victualling system brought a strategic flexibility no other nation could match; no other nation in the world would have been able to supply a fleet in such dangerous waters, for so long, and with such success. Herein lay the contribution of the victualling service to Britain’s victory in the Napoleonic Wars. By 1811, both the Victualling Board and Saumarez were clear that the provisioning system was more than adequately doing its job, enabling the Commander in Chief to concentrate on his operational and strategic objectives. In a ‘Report of the State and Condition of His Majesty’s Ships named in the margin [the *Hannibal*, *Ardent*, *Vanguard*, *Orion*, *Mars*, *Dreadnought*]’, Saumarez commented in 1811 that he had ‘great pleasure in stating the Crews are in general very healthy to which the occasional supplies of Fresh Provisions have greatly contributed’.⁹⁹ It is to fresh provisions, and the procurement of supplies locally, that this thesis will now turn.

⁹⁸ MacDonald, ‘Management Competence’, p. 291.

⁹⁹ TNA, ADM 1/12/139, Saumarez to Admiralty, 7 July 1811.

Chapter 8: Supplied by the Enemy: Diplomacy and the Local Procurement of Foodstuffs

The Swedish Government declares war, it is true, against Great Britain, but it is not said that any measures of active hostility are to be had recourse to.¹

- Von Platen to Saumarez, 3 December 1810.

It is only requested by their Government that the British Admiral or those under his command, will send a Flag of Truce with the boats sent for water or Fresh Provisions and under the protection of Parley, opportunity will be given them to procure the supplies they require.²

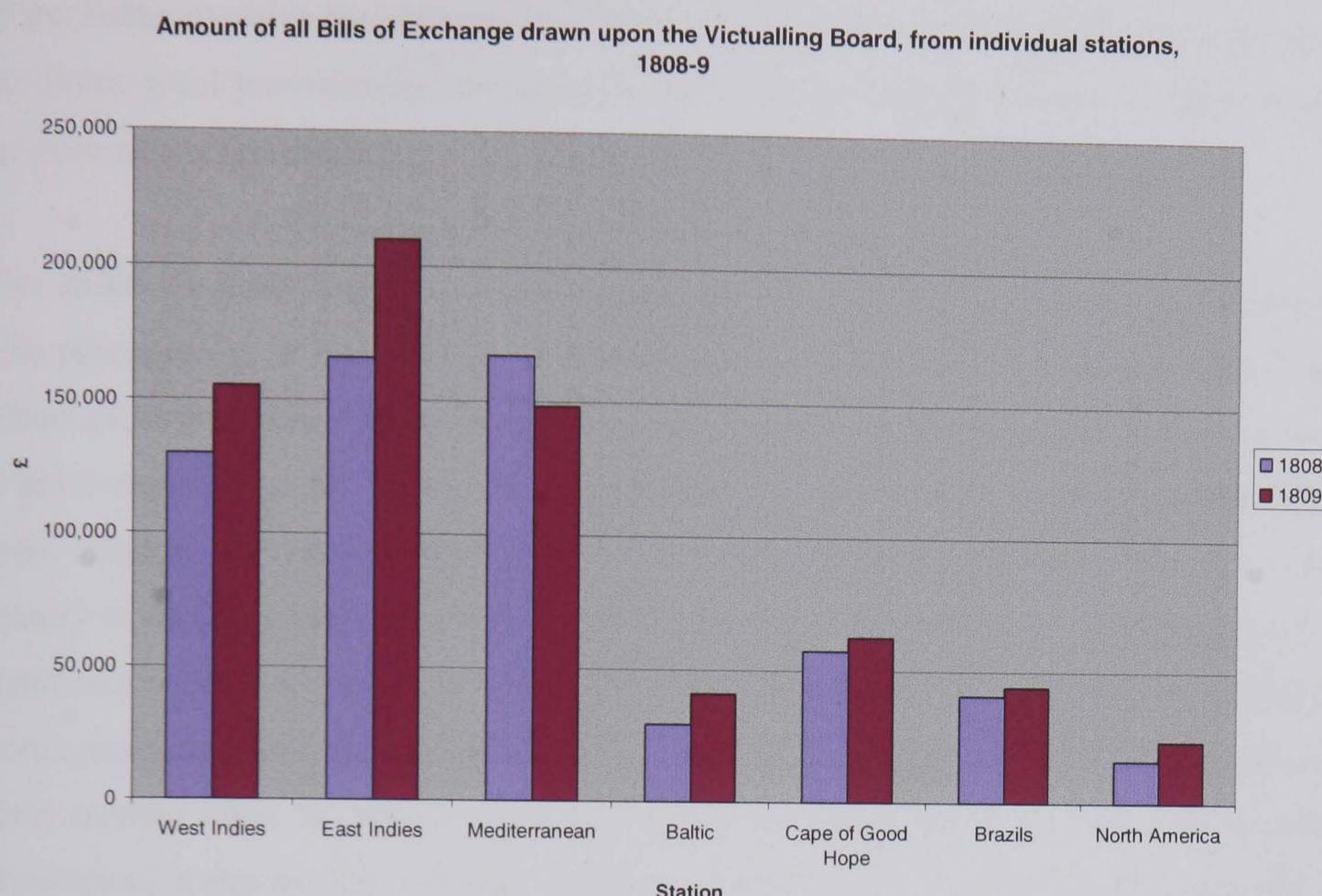
- George Foy to John Smith, 9 May 1811.

The local procurement of provisions was a well-tested means of obtaining supplies for a fleet in foreign waters. In the East and West Indies nearly all provisions were secured in this manner, with merchant contractors paid to supply all of a fleet's victualling needs, known as 'sea provisions'. The graph below shows the amount spent on procuring supplies locally on each station in 1808 and 1809. Bills of exchange, the means by which supplies could be bought and claimed back by merchants, represent the total spent on foodstuffs on the respective stations.

¹ Baron von Platen was a former Admiral and an important Councillor of the Swedish State. Platen to Saumarez, 3 December 1810, A.N. Ryan, ed. *Saumarez Papers* (NRS, Vol.110, 1968) p. 163.

² George Foy was a British businessman and unofficial agent in Stockholm. John Smith was the Consul in Gothenburg between 1804 and 1813. TNA, FO 73/65, George Foy to Smith, 9 May 1811.

Figure 16



Source: ADM 110/61/4611.

The Baltic fleet did not require as great a quantity of locally sourced provisions as did other stations. Both the West Indies and East Indies were supplied exclusively from local resources. In European waters, proximity to the major out-ports of Deptford, Portsmouth and Plymouth meant that it was cheaper to send provisions out to fleets, as we have seen in Chapters 6 and 7 for both the Mediterranean and Baltic fleets (and often for the smaller fleets sent to the Cape, the Brazils and North America). This explains the comparative paucity of Baltic local provisioning. However, perishable supplies such as meat, and weighty and bulk supplies such as water were obtained locally. Much, of course, also depended on the fertility of the region. Chapter 3 has already described the geographical and agricultural problems the Baltic presented for procuring supplies locally. Nevertheless, Royal Navy fleets in the Baltic and also the Mediterranean obtained beef

and water locally.³ That in 1808-9 the Mediterranean fleet was somewhat larger than that of the Baltic explains the difference in amounts. Also noticeable from the graph is that in the Baltic local provisioning increased from £29,144 in 1808 to £40,863 in 1809. It was an increasing dependence.

The ability to obtain supplies locally rested upon the diplomatic situation in the Baltic. The procurement of food would be facilitated by friendly and hospitable nations from whom provisions could be obtained. Conversely, the victualling needs of the fleet became a key component in the diplomatic decisions made by Saumarez. Such was the distance from London, as Commander in Chief of the Baltic fleet Admiral Saumarez had much leeway to dictate policy. He could be frustrated by the lack of orders. On May 24 1809 Saumarez wrote to his wife complaining ‘I wish I could speak as favourably of my public correspondents – but they pursue their former plan of leaving me without instructions’. Two months later, he was still in the dark as to orders from London: ‘Sir Richard B[ickerton] preserves his accustom’d silence, altho’ I have written to him repeatedly’.⁴ While it is possible that the Admiralty were happy to leave Saumarez to his own devices they certainly did not inform Saumarez that that was their intention and he was left to make his own decisions. Whether by delegation or negligence (and this author agrees with Voelcker that it was probably the latter) Saumarez was able to adopt his own strategy, occasionally diverging from his superiors and subordinates, based on his convictions and his own interpretation of British interests.

On Saumarez’ arrival in the Baltic Sweden was happy to supply the fleet, increasingly dependent upon a subsidy from Britain. In February 1808 a subsidy treaty was agreed, Sweden being promised £1.2 million per annum.⁵ In any case, the Swedish economy was reliant on British trade. This became increasingly evident in the following years, as French pressure for Sweden to join the Continental System grew. The Swedish government was well aware that British naval action could decimate their trade and

³ For a fuller comparison of the differences between Baltic and Mediterranean victualling, see James Davey, ‘Within Hostile Shores: Victualling the Royal Navy in European Waters during the Napoleonic Wars’, in *The International Journal of Maritime History*, Vol. 21 No. 2 (December 2009).

⁴ Bickerton was appointed as a Lord of the Admiralty in 1807. Voelcker, *Saumarez vs Napoleon*, pp. 85-6.

⁵ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 163.

agriculture. Between 1801 and 1803, an average of 40-50 per cent of Sweden's iron and steel, by far her most important export, went to England. Andersson commented that 'the maintenance of good relations with this country was therefore essential to Swedish economic life'.⁶ The Swedes were dependent on British goodwill so that cargoes of grain without which much of the Swedish population would starve, could cross over to Sweden from the German provinces, as mentioned in Chapter 3.⁷ Engestrom, the Swedish Chancellor from 1809 stated that, 'we cannot break off all trade with England...indeed, article IV of the treaty of Paris authorises us to receive from England the salt required for the needs of our population and, consequently, to sell Swedish produce to the English'.⁸

This self-interest was reciprocated: Britain gained much from a friendly and accommodating Sweden. Although Baltic supplies of naval stores came largely from Russia and northern Germany rather than Sweden, the latter was a destination for the large British export-trade to northern Europe, in particular the ports of Gothenburg and Stockholm. However, the main importance of Sweden was strategic. Swedish ports provided shelter for the Baltic fleet, particularly in the winter as the Baltic froze over. More importantly, they provided supplies to Saumarez' fleet, especially fresh beef and water. There was therefore a clear link between British diplomacy and victualling. A worsening diplomatic situation from 1809 led to increasing concern about these supplies: at times of Anglo-Swedish conflict, remarkable efforts were made by the Swedes to ensure that supplies would continue.

This chapter will outline the system in place for procuring victuals locally. It will consider the precedents for this, particularly the provisioning of the Baltic fleet in 1801 and the Mediterranean fleet. It will then trace how the local procurement of provisions changed between 1808 and 1812 as the diplomatic situation changed. Sweden found itself in a difficult position. Military defeat by Russia and a Francophile court brought Sweden

⁶ Ingvar Andersson, *A History of Sweden*, Translated from the Swedish by Carolyn Hannay (Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1955) p. 302.

⁷ See p. 71

⁸ 'Nous ne pouvons pas interrompre tout commerce avec l'Angleterre, continuait le ministre; en effet, l'article IV du traité de Paris nous autorise à recevoir de ce pays le sel nécessaire aux besoins de notre population et, comme conséquence, à vendre aux Anglais les produits suédois'. P. Coquelle, 'La Mission d'Alquier à Stockholm', *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*, Vol. 23, 1909, p. 203.

into the Continental System in 1809. In 1810 it became a French ally. Its trade and grain convoys, dependent on Britain, were at risk. As Martha Saumarez wrote succinctly of the Swedes to her husband, ‘They stand between two fires either of which is likely to consume them’.⁹ The curious and unprecedented situation arose whereby the Swedish nation fought a ‘phoney war’ against Britain. While officially at war with Britain, Sweden continued to happily supply the Baltic fleet, on the condition that Britain would not undertake aggressive operations against them. The need to secure local provisions goes a long way to explain the friendly British attitudes towards Sweden throughout 1808-12. Conversely, Sweden’s willingness to provide these provisions is also a reflection of its underlying goodwill, but also of economic necessity.

The local procurement system: 1808

The system for procuring supplies locally in the Baltic was the same as that used in the Mediterranean. The value of local provisioning was clear: it was quicker, provided better quality victuals, and removed the month long period of storage as the provisions were transported. Above all it was cheaper, always a concern for the Victualling Board.¹⁰ With no cost for transports and freight, procuring supplies locally was advantageous. The system used in the Mediterranean between 1800 and 1802 would be replicated in the Baltic six years later. Firstly a bill of exchange would be drawn upon the Victualling Board in favour of one or more merchants for the necessary amount. This would then be charged against the agent victualler at that port, or where none was present, against the Consul or Admiral who organised it. As a memo of July 1808 made clear, ‘the Captains and Commanders of the Ships and Vessels of the Squadron are to apply to the person appointed at the different Ports they arrive at for Fresh Beef or Live Bullocks, taking care to give proper receipt to the same’.¹¹ The said official would then request the bill of exchange to be charged as an imprest against him and would request payment from the Victualling Board, which according to the relative currency values would then (if all was correct with the receipts and invoices) approve the payment.

⁹ Voelcker, *Saumarez vs. Napoleon*, p. 137.

¹⁰ Davey, ‘Within Hostile Shores’.

¹¹ NMM, MKH 112, General Memo, 24 July 1808.

Smithson Waller was appointed Agent Victualler to the Baltic fleet in 1808. This was Waller's first appointment as Agent Victualler, having no experience in that particular role. He had been a purser on the *Prince of Wales* up until March 1808, most recently serving in the Baltic in Lord Gambier's fleet. Clearly, he was a talented purser. The Victualling Board minutes record an imprest standing out against him in March 1809 on 'account of Provisions purchased by him at sundry places and times for the use of His Majesty's Ships under the command of Admiral Gambier off Copenhagen, amounting to the sum of £7851..16..4'. With the report of Mr. Prime, the chief clerk of the Imprest Office obviously clearing him, the Board gave Waller 'a Commission of two and a half per cent, upon the amount of his disbursements, exclusively of the purchases made for the supply of His Majesty's Ship *Prince of Wales*' and ordered the imprest of £7451 16s 4d standing out against Admiral Lord Gambier and Mr. Waller to be cleared, and that the Bill of Exchange for £600, was nonetheless to be accepted when presented and 'a perfect Bill be made out in discharge thereof'. A 'Ready Money Bill' was to be made out to Mr. Waller, for the sum of One hundred and eighty six Pounds, ten shillings, 'being the amount of the balance which appears to be due to him: as submitted'.¹² He was a man to be taken on trust.

No doubt it was this reputation as a competent and reliable purser that encouraged the Victualling Board to believe he could make the step up to Agent Victualler, and take on the organisation of the supplies for the whole fleet that left for the Baltic in 1808. In April the Board moved to 'appoint Mr. Smithson Waller to be this Boards Agent in procuring and sending of supplies of Cattle, Fresh Beef, Vegetables...for the squadron intended to be employed in the Baltic, and to allow him a salary of Four Hundred Pounds per Annum'. In addition to this he was given an allowance for table money at a rate of 15 shillings per day, and was furnished with instructions for his guidance.¹³ He also had previous precedents to guide him, both in the Mediterranean and the Baltic. During Nelson's time in the Baltic after Copenhagen (June-October), the Admiral purchased live

¹² TNA, ADM 111/187, 2 May 1808.

¹³ TNA, ADM 111/187, 1 April 1808.

cattle from the contractors Solly and Gibson. The receipt for the oxen was as follows, charging between £10 and £12 per oxen.

	No.	Cost.	Total
<i>Live Oxen</i>	331	<i>at £12 Sterling</i>	£3972
<i>Do</i>	203	<i>at £11 10s</i>	£2334 10s
<i>Do</i>	80	<i>at £11</i>	£880
<i>Do</i>	45	<i>at £10 10s</i>	£472 10s
<i>Do</i>	75	<i>at £10</i>	£750

Rent for land for feeding the bullocks, feeding the cattle, lighterage and duties, an allowance to a butcher added more to this total, resulting in a fee of £9359 6s 5d, £8851 2s 5d once account was taken of tallow and hides sold. They were to be taken to the fleet off Bornholm in ships of war. These amounts were in excess of previous agreements and Solly and Gibson lost heavily on the transaction. Eventually the Victualling Board requested the Admiralty's permission to pay the two merchants, while admitting it was above the agreed price.¹⁴

Waller's knowledge of Baltic victualling was of considerable advantage to the fleet. In April 1808 Saumarez passed Waller's plans for procuring beef from Sweden, contracting with the merchant Mr Krok. The fleet had yet to leave for the Baltic so it is likely that the three key personnel, Krok, Saumarez and Waller were all in London at this time planning the provisioning effort for the first year. Saumarez wrote to his wife a week later that he was sure 'we shall have occasional supplies from the different ports of Sweden, principally Gothenburg'.¹⁵ Krok tendered the Victualling Board 'to supply with Fresh Beef those vessels of His Britannic Majesty's fleet which may be sanctioned in the Sound, the Danish Belts, or the Baltic'. Although the Board was 'not seeming disposed to engage in a Contract for such supply', it added that 'the Commander in Chief of that fleet should in such matters be applied to'. Krok stated the same prices and conditions upon which he would be able to furnish such supply. These were detailed: for each pound of beef: sixpence would be charged. If live oxen were needed, the weight paid for will be the weight 'which by mutual consent may be supposed to have'. Beef or live oxen would

¹⁴ NMM, ADM DP/21, 20 October 1801.

¹⁵ SRO, SA 1/3/1/2, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 18 April 1808.

be 'received on board some English Ship of War laying between Copenhagen and Elsenore'. For each 1000lbs of beef delivered, a bill would be received within 30 days.¹⁶

Waller urged that all the supplies provided the previous year at Landskrona and Malmo were made at sixpence per pound, and he was insistent that this price would be considered very reasonable, 'especially as the price of black cattle in Sweden has always advanced by 30% in consequence of the great consumption last year on the English fleet, and by the army in Zealand; as likewise because of the great quantity which will be required for the Swedish troops which are at present assembling throughout the Country'. In this he hinted at the great problem facing Baltic provisioning: the arrival of the Baltic fleet in any town or city would (at the very least) double the population of that town. The consequent rise in prices for all goods, in particular scarce goods such as beef, were a constant obstacle for the Victualling Board. Hood wrote to Saumarez in July 1808, emphasizing this point: 'the communication is very difficult across the Belt and that a mixture of 10,000 French, 16,000 Spanish and 4,000 Dutch are in...Jutland, and about 25,000 Troops in Zealand: that everything is at a very high price, particularly meat of every kind'.¹⁷ The arrival of a fleet merely added to this. There might come a point, where the price would become so high, it would be actually be cheaper to transport beef from Britain. Waller also mentioned a seasonal factor, that cattle were always dearer in spring 'than generally they are in autumn'. He pointed out that Krok had been a good servant of Britain the year before, stating that he, 'last year, during the battle of Copenhagen, supplied Captain Fraser of the *Vanguard* with beef – and also M Kennedy the Commissary General for the English Army in Zealand, both which Gentlemen can affirm that his prices were always lower than those at which others delivered'.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the absence of paymaster accounts means there is no record of all the payments made for beef in Sweden.¹⁹ However, it is clear that supplies were obtained from various ports around Sweden. Captain Hope wrote in 1808 that 'the Squadron

¹⁶ ADM 1/6/23-4, Smithson Waller to Saumarez, 4 April 1808.

¹⁷ TNA, ADM, 1/6/34, Hood to Saumarez, 24 April 1808.

¹⁸ TNA, ADM, 1/6/23-4, Smithson Waller to Saumarez, 4 April 1808.

¹⁹ See p. 22.

having been occasionally supplied with Fresh Beef, no Salt Provisions will be received'.²⁰ Gothenburg was the main victualling area. In 1808 beef was also obtained at Helsingborg. Between 20 April and 10 May, the *Centaur* received deliveries of fresh beef at Helsingborg, sometimes as much as 3300lbs at a time.²¹ At various Swedish ports including Gothenburg, Helsingborg, Ystad and Karlskrona, beef was supplied. Saumarez reported in August 1808 that 'it was common to receive fresh beef', and that at present he had 10 live oxen on board the *Victory*.²² A 'General Memo' sent around in July 1808 laid out the number of oxen each ship was allowed to take on board at any one time. 'The Commander in Chief', wrote the memo, 'having given directions to the Agent Victualler to contract for the supply of Fresh Beef at the different Ports on the coast of Sweden... When any ship arrives off Ystad and is in want of Live Bullocks, she is to hoist a white flag at the Main and fire one gun, when a supply agreeably to the following proportion with fodder will be sent to her'. Line of Battle ships were to receive 30 oxen, frigates 20 and sloops 12.²³ There was a continuous supply of Bills of Exchange from Waller during 1808. On 25 July two Bills of Exchange were drawn upon the Victualling Board for the purchase of oxen and two of Fresh Beef, which were ordered to be accepted and charged as imprest 'against the Commander in Chief by whom it is attested: for the particulars of which: see the Bill of Exchange Book'.²⁴ On 19 August, it was ordered that 'the Bill of Exchange therein advised of drawn upon this Office for Victualling Services amounting to the sum of...£500, be accepted, and be charged as Imprests against Mr. Waller'.²⁵ A further bill of exchange for £250 was also accepted and charged as imprest against him on 6 September. The next month, a further bill of exchange 'herein advised of drawn upon this Office for the purchase of Oxen, amounting to the sum of £1,000 be accepted and be charged as Imprest against Mr Waller'.²⁶

Key to the process was keeping receipts. In May 1808, Saumarez reminded his captains and pursers of this with a general memo.

²⁰ TNA, ADM 1/6/382, Captain George Hope, Memo, 1 August 1808.

²¹ TNA, ADM 51/1824, Log of the *Centaur*, 20 April-10 May 1808.

²² SRO, SA 1/3/1/2, Saumarez to Martha, 18 August 1808.

²³ NMM, MKH 112, General Memo, 24 July 1808.

²⁴ TNA, ADM 111/188, 25 July 1808.

²⁵ TNA, ADM 111/188, 19 August 1808.

²⁶ TNA, ADM 111/188, 6 September 1808.

It is the Commander in Chief's direction that the Captains and Commanders of such of HM Ships as may receive Fresh Beef from Gothenburg also water, do cause receipts agreeably to the annexed forms to be given for the same to the Agent for Victualling His Majesty's Ships in the Baltic, and in the event of receiving Stores or Provision at any other port, care is to be taken that the receipts are given for the same before the ships proceeds to Sea. Should the ship be ordered out in a hurry they are to be sent to the Senior Officer.

The receipt would list the place of supply, the date, the agent or consul involved, the name of the ship, and the specific amount of various foodstuffs supplied, all signed by the purser.²⁷ Waller's reputation as a trustworthy employee meant that the absence of receipts could be overcome if necessary. Waller wrote in July 1808 that he supplied His Majesty's sloops *Ranger*, *Sea Gull* and *Nightingale* with the fresh beef for which he was unable to procure receipts. He requested that the pursers of the ships be charged. The Victualling Board ordered that 'an extract of Mr Waller's letter to be delivered to the Accountant for Stores for his charging the Purser, as desired'. The bills of exchange mentioned in Mr Waller's letter amounting to the sums of £1500 and £337 10s 9d were accepted, and were charged as imprest against Mr Waller.²⁸

Consuls, Intelligence and Victualling

At Karlskrona on the other side of the Sound and Belt to Gothenburg, the British Vice-Consul John Lindegren managed the local procurement of beef. Smaller amounts were obtained but it was important to have a variety of places from which beef could be procured. The log of the *Centaur* shows many deliveries of fresh beef while the ship was stationed in Karlskrona after returning from the eastern Baltic, on 6 July, 7 October and 9 October 1808.²⁹ Where the agent victualler was absent, consuls would replace the agent victualler as the official in charge of local foodstuff procurement.

A consul's role was both political and economic. Indeed, Sweden's active economic expansion of the 1720s and 1730s can be traced by the expansion of the Swedish consular service. Until the 1780s, southern Europe was the major area of appointment in

²⁷ NMM, MKH 112, General Memo, 12 May 1808.

²⁸ TNA, ADM 111/188, 23 July 1808.

²⁹ TNA, ADM 51/1824, Log of the *Centaur*, July-October 1808.

accordance with Sweden's offensive commercial policy in that region. The independence wars in North and Latin America resulted in a number of consulates being established in this area.³⁰ As political representatives in the Baltic, consuls were part of a wider intelligence network which also encompassed admirals such as Saumarez, Baltic merchants and friendly Swedish officials. Political events, changing political sympathies and contracting were all discussed. One typical letter from a consul stated that 'a person in whom I believe a considerable degree of confidence may be placed, arrived here three days ago from Zealand and gave me a great deal of intelligence'.³¹ News spread quickly across the Baltic. For example, in June 1810, Saumarez passed on intelligence of the death of the heir to Charles XIII before it was even announced by the Court. He wrote that 'I have received the important information that the adopted heir apparent to the Crown of Sweden, who on his return to Stockholm last Monday from Heilsenburg, had fallen off his Horse supposed in a fit of apoplexy and died upon the spot. I enclose the copy of the intelligence of this melancholy event transmitted to one of His Majesty's Consuls at Gothenburg, also received it from Mr Fenwick, Consul at Keilsenburg'. Such information was valuable in keeping Britain ahead of the diplomatic game. The death referred to above was not announced officially until 28 June 1810 when Saumarez wrote to Yorke reporting the 'Prince Regal of Sweden's Death as announced by His Majesty's Consul at Gothenburg'.³² A few weeks later his intelligence made him 'very much apprehend that election of a French General [Bernadotte] to the Heir Apparent to the Crown of Sweden... I express my regret that choice should have fallen upon one who was in the service of the greatest enemy of the human race'.³³ Again, this was weeks before the crowning was confirmed (on 7 September 1810). Such knowledge enabled him to report back to London more quickly than it would learn by other means. For example, in September 1811, he was able to report to Yorke of the intention of Bonaparte to attack Colberg and that the King of Prussia had ordered a strong body of troops for the defence

³⁰ Leos Muller, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Commerce: The Swedish Consular Service and Long-distance Shipping, 1720-1815* (Uppsala University, Stockholm, 2004) pp. 18, 41.

³¹ TNA, FO 22/58/121, Fenwick to Charles Bagot, 2 October 1808.

³² NMM, YOR 16/1/ 6, Saumarez to Yorke, 1 June 1810, 28 June 1810.

³³ NMM, YOR 16/10, Saumarez to Yorke, 21 August 1810.

of that fortress (under Blucher). He was also able to give a detailed list of weaponry and armaments available to the garrison and the number of Prussian troops.³⁴

The intelligence network was particularly useful for gauging the opinion of Sweden, both its state officials and its people.³⁵ Informants made the position of each clear. Saumarez confirmed to Yorke in 1810 that 'I am from opinion from the last reports I have received, the Government will studiously avoid a rupture with England, and they are in great dread of an attack from Russia'.³⁶ Of particular use to the intelligence network was Count Rosen, Governor of Gothenburg, who confirmed to Saumarez, that, even if Sweden were forced into a war with Britain, no hostile measures would be taken. As Saumarez reported:

I have this moment received the private communication from Count Rosen Governor of Gothenburg that he has been informed by His Government that Bonaparte has peremptorily demanded that Sweden will adopt the same system against the commerce of England as the other Powers upon the Continent in Alliance with France and that all British and Colonial Produce shall be forthwith confiscated, also that measures of hostility shall be immediately pursued towards England.³⁷

Information from John Smith, the consul at Gothenburg, confirmed 'the very considerate manner in which Sweden appears to put in force the Decrees against Colonial Produce and other Merchandise' prompting him to forgo responding with hostile measures against the Swedes.³⁸ Merchants regularly reported intelligence to Saumarez; one named Johnson confirmed that, 'the relations between England & Sweden will continue nearly the same as they have been for the last six months, as the New Declaration appears to me to have principally in view the enforcing of municipal Regulations...It is understood that the communication with England by Packet Boats is to continue, but as it is necessary that this should be done with caution, it is recommended by the Governor of Gothenburg that only one Packet should be dispatched weekly from Harwich to Gothenburg'.³⁹ Consuls

³⁴ NMM, YOR 16/55, Saumarez to Yorke, 2 September 1810.

³⁵ Intelligence matters appear only in private papers, in this case the Yorke's. Matters of intelligence would be kept out of the public Admiralty files.

³⁶ NMM, YOR 16/10, Saumarez to Yorke, 27 August 1810.

³⁷ NMM, YOR 16/26, Saumarez to Yorke, 20 November 1810.

³⁸ NMM, YOR 16/26, Saumarez to Yorke, 26 November 1810.

³⁹ NMM, YOR 16/27, Copy of a communication made to Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez by Mr Johnson.

also provided information on the Baltic Sea, so Britain would know when convoys could start up again. 'Ice has been loosening and is now driving about the Sound at the impulse of the wind and currents'.⁴⁰ Again on 14 March 1811, Fenwick wrote that 'the Belt and Sound are now quite clear of ice'.⁴¹ This was not only to help naval commanders but was also part of their economic role as organisers of the vast Baltic trade.

Consuls had specific economic roles. Firstly, they collected information on prices, market situations and business opportunities and forwarded it to the necessary state authorities. They assisted the subjects of the sending state in handling contracts with local authorities and informed the sending state's subjects of risks. Muller gives the example of consuls frequently representing absentee ship-owners at court when a ship or cargo was declared a prize. Their 'semi-diplomatic' status might directly affect the security of commerce and shipping. Muller goes as far as to argue that the consular service was a 'mercantilist institution' rather than a diplomatic one.⁴² British consuls tend to be removed from most diplomatic histories, overshadowed by the movements of foreign secretaries and ambassadors. In keeping abreast of local information and intelligence, which involved military movements, food prices, diplomatic and political sympathies, consuls played an essential role in obtaining local provisions. They advised on prices and quantities. Charles Fenwick, consul in Helsingborg, wrote in June 1810 of

The temporary difficulty that exists in procuring oxen for the use of the squadron and of their extravagantly high price, both of which circumstances I am very sorry to learn. I am aware from experience that a large number of oxen cannot be procured at a short notice, although when a sufficient time is given a regular and efficient supply may be depended on. I however believe that Mr. Sodergren (with whom Mr. Berridge is in treaty for cattle) has overrated his price, as I do not believe that those which I am procuring here will cost any thing like the sum of 200 Krona per pair which Mr Sodergren says is the current price at Christianstad. As however I am quite unacquainted with that neighbourhood, I cannot form a competent opinion on the subject. You may however rest assured that as far as my exertions will go, they shall be applied to procuring them at the lowest rate possible and that I will bona fide adhere to what I had the honour of stating to you in my last respects in what regard my own commission.⁴³

⁴⁰ TNA, FO 22/61/7, Fenwick to Hamilton, 23 February 1810.

⁴¹ TNA, FO 22/62/18-20, Fenwick to Smith, 14 March 1811.

⁴² Muller, *Consuls, Corsairs, and Commerce*, pp. 20-1.

⁴³ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1389, Fenwick to Saumarez, 14 June 1810.

Consuls also kept an eye on the provisioning efforts of the enemy, often an excellent means of detecting future troop movements. In 1810 Fenwick wrote that the ‘Swedish Government has contracted for a large quantity of Provisions for the Fleet at Carlskrona which it is reported will be equipped for service in spring’.⁴⁴ He spoke of reports outlining the movement of 20,000 French soldiers over the little Belt. ‘Provisions are ordered by the Danish Government for them, at the rate of half a pound of Beef, one pound and a half of Bread a Bottle of Beer and a Glass of Brandy for each man, the expense of which is for the accompt. of Denmark’.⁴⁵ Fenwick’s ear was always close to the ground: one letter of 18 February 1808 stated that ‘the Bakers at Elsinore have now got orders to provide the Government with as much Biscuit as they can get ready, and it is presumed that it is for the French, for the Danes are not used to this kind of Bread’.⁴⁶

At various ports around the Baltic, where the Agent Victualler was absent (which after 1809 was everywhere) consuls would have responsibility of organising and arranging the local provisioning. As we have seen, in Karlskrona, Vice-Consul Lindegren supplied passing British ships with fresh beef. In the absence of an Agent Victualler or fleet commander, they administered the local procurement. With Waller taking charge of supplies in Gothenburg, the vice consul in Karlskrona thus had an important role in providing fresh beef for the squadron of the Baltic fleet stationed in the eastern Baltic under Rear-Admiral Hood. On the 13 August, the Victualling Board minutes note that Lindegren, had written vouchers for fresh beef supplied to him at Karlskrona amounting to the sum of £1019 11s 9d. It was ordered that ‘the two Bills of Exchange, amounting to the sum of £1019 11s 9d be accepted, and be charged as Imprest against Mr Lindegren; and that a perfect Bill be afterwards, made out to the like sum to clear the same; as submitted’.⁴⁷ Captain Thomas Byam Martin of the *Implacable* added to this with a letter of the same day, stating that ‘he attested three Bills of Exchange drawn upon this Board to the amount of £287 10s 9d for Fresh Beef and Oxen supplied to His Majesty’s Ship under his command’. Particular care was taken by the Victualling Board that exact

⁴⁴ TNA, FO 22/61/80-1, Fenwick to Smith, 27 November 1810.

⁴⁵ TNA, FO 22/58/67-8, Charles Fenwick to George Canning, 13 March.

⁴⁶ TNA, FO 22/58/51-2, Fenwick to George Canning, 28 February 1808.

⁴⁷ TNA, ADM 111/188, 27 September 1808.

payments were made. In consequence of ‘subsequent information respecting the rate of Exchange between England and Sweden’, Martin thought it his duty to write to Mr Lindegren stating that the sum of £7 3s 6d be repaid to M Field, the Purser, which the Board confirmed.⁴⁸

In Stockholm, the Minister Foster was asked to leave Sweden as French pressure forced Sweden to take official hostile measures against Britain in June 1810. However, George Foy, an English businessman resident in Sweden, remained as an unofficial link. Two further consuls were also present in the Baltic. Charles Fenwick had been a consul in Denmark: at the outset of war with the Danes in 1807 he had crossed the Sound and taken up residence at Elsinore in Denmark, and then Helsingborg, where he stayed on in his private capacity. As the above quotes concerning the gathering of intelligence testify, Fenwick was an able consul. In 1812, Saumarez wrote in warm tones about Fenwick’s service. ‘His Majesty’s Service having derived considerable benefit from the zeal and exertion of Mr Fenwick late Consul at Elsinore, in the intelligence he has from time to time communicated to me during my command in the Baltic, and who in facilitating thro’ Sweden the conveyance of persons employed in the service of Government, I beg leave to recommend him to your Lordship for any remunerative as his Services may be found deserving of’.⁴⁹

John Smith, consul in Gothenburg, became more important in the victualling process after Waller’s removal in 1809. After the Swedish declaration of war in November 1810, he too stayed on in his private role.⁵⁰ He was less competent, however. He was often criticised by the Victualling Board for having irregular accounts. Smith spent much of 1810 concocting excuses proclaiming his innocence, or alternatively simply ignoring the Board altogether. In June the Board wrote to Smith refusing to admit the Bill of Exchange for £1,300 which he had drawn on them ‘in payment of supplies of Fresh Beef and Live Oxen to His Majesty’s Fleet...until the necessary Vouchers respecting the

⁴⁸ TNA, ADM 111/188, 30 September 1808.

⁴⁹ TNA, FO 22/63/42, Saumarez to Wellesley, 29 January 1812.

⁵⁰ Voelcker, *Saumarez vs Napoleon*, p. 106.

Supplies in question are received by us'.⁵¹ On 17 September the Board wrote to him again, stating that 'we of course refused acceptance to your Bills to so much larger an amount than you had sent the Purser's receipts for', adding that 'you have not produced any receipts of disposal, nor even stated to which Ships the Articles were furnished'.⁵² Keeping receipts was such a vital part of the accounting method that Smith's negligence is all the more remarkable. They wrote again on 2 October 1810, acquainting Smith that 'the Accounts and Vouchers you produce are so very loose and defective that we must preserve in the resolution of not accepting any of your Bills, unless they are accompanied with proper receipts and vouchers, as the reasons mentioned in your letter of the 30th July last, by way of excuse for those irregularities, are by no means sufficient to justify us in accepting Bills unaccompanied by proper vouchers'.⁵³ They added pointedly that his excuses were ridiculous: 'the same reasons if valid, would apply to Mr Fenwick at Helsingburgh, but on the contrary, he invariably transmits regular receipts and other Vouchers corresponding with the exact amount of the Bills he draws, in consequence of which, we are enabled to accept them'.⁵⁴ Smith's reply, written on 3 November 1810 acknowledging the 'irregularity and deficiency of Receipts which in some measure may be the case' but offering the unconvincing excuse that it was hard to keep on top of his accounts, with 'the distance being so far from town'.⁵⁵ It was perhaps not surprising that the Victualling Board wrote to Smith 'relative to the propriety of taking this Business out of your hands, and committing it to some other person more disposed to pay attention to our Instructions'.⁵⁶ Fortunately for Britain, the other consuls were both reliable and competent.

⁵¹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1558, VB to Smith, 16 June 1810.

⁵² SRO, HA 93/6/1/1558/2, VB to Smith, 17 September 1810.

⁵³ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1558/4, VB to Smith, 2 October 1810.

⁵⁴ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1558/4, VB to Smith, 2 October 1810.

⁵⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1622, VB to Smith, 3 November 1810.

⁵⁶ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1558/4, VB to Smith, 2 October 1810.

Diplomatic Strains: 1809-10

During the winter of 1808 to 1809, a small proportion of the fleet remained in Swedish west coast ports, as the Baltic Sea froze over (Marstrand, Lanskrona). They continued to receive supplies of fresh meat, through their contract with Mr Krok. The following year Waller transmitted three letters he had received from Mr Krok of Gothenburg, dated 16 January, 30 March, and 1 May 1809, ‘upon the subject of his having provided and maintained during the Winter a large number of Oxen for the device of His Majesty’s Squadron employed in the Baltic’. Unfortunately, he claimed that he had sustained ‘a very considerable loss’. Mr Waller informed the Victualling Board that he had desired Mr Krok ‘to have a sufficient number of Oxen in readiness to supply the Squadron intended to remain on that Station during the Winter, as well as that expected in the early Spring’. Fewer men had been left in the Baltic than expected: leaving Mr Krok with ‘near four hundred heads of cattle’ and nobody to purchase them.⁵⁷ Krok faced a significant loss. The large amounts of provisions, including significant quantities of salt beef transported to the Baltic in late 1808, no doubt played a part.⁵⁸ An account of the provisions on board various victuallers lying in Flemish Roads, Gothenburg, lists 33,268 8lb pieces of beef being with the Baltic fleet in late October 1808. Given that there were 10,144 men in the Baltic in November, and 6,578 in December, that would still have left 132,368lbs of beef for the wintering Baltic fleet, which numbered a mere 2,365 men.⁵⁹ This was enough to feed them for exactly 14 weeks.⁶⁰ This precise figure is interesting, since 14 weeks is the exact time from 1 January 1809 until the likely arrival of the full Baltic fleet again in April 1809. The Victualling Board’s calculations were once again specific and exact.

⁵⁷ TNA ADM 111/191 2 June 1809.

⁵⁸ See pp. 130, 147.

⁵⁹ These calculations are based on one man requiring four pounds of beef per week, as per the official weekly ration. Even with the Baltic fleet using the victuallers to their maximum, the 10,144 men based in the Baltic throughout November would have used 81,152lbs, the 6,578 men based there in December would have used 52,624. This would leave a minimum amount of 132,368lbs of beef remaining for the wintering Baltic fleet. The fleet numbers are taken from ADM 8, which were the lists the Victualling Board and Admiralty worked from. For the provision amounts, see TNA, ADM 1/7/343-4, ‘an account of the provisions &c on board the undermentioned Victuallers lying in Flemish Roads, Gothenburg, October 25th 1808’. The Victuallers were *Favourite, Industry, Atlas, Addington, Margaret, Jane, Thomas & Sarah, Diana, Echo, Active, Trafalgar, Britannia, Jenny, Concord, Rose, Ann, Syren, Gibraltar, Peter*.

⁶⁰ Given a weekly consumption of 9,460lbs (4lbs a week for 2,365 men).

Needless to say, Krok was left out of pocket. There is no record of whether the Victualling Board did cover Krok's losses. Other evidence though, namely the Board's willingness to pay compensation to Lindegren in 1810 and also Krok's tender in 1811 to supply the Baltic fleet once more, suggests his fingers had not been burned too much by the experience.⁶¹

This incident could be an explanation of the Victualling Board's decision to remove Waller as agent victualler in early 1809. Such large quantities of fresh beef were clearly not needed and Waller was at least partly responsible. No record remains detailing why Waller was suddenly deemed unnecessary, but in April 1809 he was removed as Agent Victualler. That he was not replaced suggests that this was nothing personal: only that his duties could be carried out as easily by consuls.⁶² Rear-Admiral Bertie, who had replaced Keats as squadron commander in the western Baltic, wrote to Hood later that year, stating that 'as I understand Mr Waller the agent Victualler is returned to England, and there being no person here deputed by him to supply the squadron with Fresh Beef, I have given Mr Fenwick [Consul in Elsinore] directions to provide it at the contract price'.⁶³ Waller continued to process his accounts, in April the Victualling Board minutes record further Bills of Exchange from him. The Board ordered that 'the three Bills of Exchange therein advised of drawn upon this Office for Victualling services, amounting to the sum of £1315..9..0 be accepted and be charged as Imprest Against Mr Waller'.⁶⁴ Waller would return to his old position as purser on the *Prince of Wales*.

In 1809, the responsibility for procuring supplies locally would fall on the British consuls in the Baltic. They would face the first diplomatic strains between Britain and Sweden. The armistice between Sweden and Russia in early 1809 began the process by which Sweden was slowly reeled into the Continental System. John Gooch wrote to Lord Mulgrave in August 1809 'Seeing that the Ruler of France is grasping all the shores of Europe, and without doubt intends by them to form a Maritime Confederice similar to

⁶¹ See pp. 226-7.

⁶² As suggested above, Waller actually appears to have been a very competent Agent Victualler, the issue with Mr Krok notwithstanding.

⁶³ NMM, MKH 114, Bertie to Hood, 15 April 1809.

⁶⁴ TNA, ADM 111/191, 19 April 1809.

that of the Rhine, each to furnish a contingent of Ships, or Men, by which means he will obtain Seamen for his purposes'. Sweden he stated, 'is lost to us'.⁶⁵ On 13 March 1809, King Gustav IV was overthrown in a bloodless coup.⁶⁶ Gustav's hatred for Napoleon had made him Britain's strongest ally in Europe, and his removal from power increased the ambiguity surrounding relations with Sweden. Swedish stock was not high in Britain: the month before, Gustav had attempted to blackmail the British government, by threatening to close his ports to British shipping unless the his subsidy was doubled. The British refusal - based on the knowledge that, as Canning pointed out, the Commons would reject it - left Sweden friendless in Europe.⁶⁷ The new king (although initially regent) was the elderly Duke of Sodermania, who later became Charles XIII was merely a figurehead for more ambitious ministers.

These developments left Saumarez concerned for the supply of his fleet, as he wrote, 'supposing Sweden to become an enemy, or a neutral power & shutting her ports against our ships of war'.⁶⁸ British ships were temporarily forced to leave Swedish harbours and British Admirals began to expect war. The lack of friendly harbours would make British objectives that much harder to secure. A hostile Sweden would mean no more local procurement of provisions. Later that year on 17 September 1809 the Treaty of Frederikshaven was signed between Sweden and Russia, ending the war between them very much on Russia's terms. Sweden did join the Continental System and ordered British ships out of Swedish ports albeit in a non-confrontational manner. The British Consul at Gothenburg however, made it clear to Saumarez that this would not affect supplies heading towards the Royal Navy. 'I am further desired by the Governor' (von Rosen), he wrote 'to request that you will not permit any of the Boats of the Fleet to come up to the Town or above the Fortress, except a Flag of Truce, nor officers to appear in their uniforms...with regard to supplying the Ships with Fresh Beef &c I have not had an opportunity to arrange but as far as I can see it will go on, though not ostensibly for

⁶⁵ MA 21/283 John Gooch to Lord Mulgrave, 15 August 1809.

⁶⁶ The immediate cause of the overthrow was the ever volatile Gustav's accusations of cowardice towards many leading aristocratic families, and a new tax five times the rate it had been in 1800. See Voelcker, *Saumarez vs Napoleon*, p. 77.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 80-1.

⁶⁸ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1248, 'Saumarez' (see p. 149), 'Strategic Situation in the Baltic'.

the use of His Majesty's Fleet'.⁶⁹ So began the secret provisioning of the Baltic fleet by Swedish officials.

The Swedes ensured that supplies to the British fleet would not be stopped. Aware of the importance Saumarez placed on them, Baron von Platen, a retired Swedish Naval Officer, then a councillor of state, was deputed to explain that discreet provisioning would continue. He wrote to Saumarez in 1809 detailing the good-feeling and gratitude of the Swedes, and their plans for future provisioning:

at the conclusion of the peace, hard as it is, we can not yet deny, that a high degree we are indebted to you, for our existing as a state...As for the Continental System, it is easily to be seen by the Treaty that the Russian interest is not alike with the French and that it is mentioned only because it ought to be so. For the first moment I am authorised to say that no alteration will take place in what was before mentioned to Mr. Foster and he probably will have advertised of our ports and oxen to so brave an ally to so successful a protector for so many sails as your Esq. judges it fit to send in into them for the remaining of the harvest...If your Excellence should wish for any refreshments at Gotland such as may be had there of sheeps and greens proper steps are taken by the Governor. The best way might be to send a small vessel with an advertisement, and then a little after let the fleet proceed to Ostergarn...I am confident the Governor will make his utmost for to by all possible means.⁷⁰

Local provisioning that had occurred in 1808 continued as normal throughout 1809. Writing the following year, Saumarez wrote that 'this summer is likely to prove more inactive than any former one – every account from Russia states their fleet to be dismantled, and the Swedes are not disposed to give us any employment. They testify upon every occasion their sense of gratitude at the moderation by which I uniformly acted towards them, and they continue to allow the usual supplies of fresh provisions to be sent to the squadron, although not with the approval of the Government'.⁷¹ Captain Thomas Harvey of the *Majestic* described being provisioned at Karlskrona as usual. 'After having compleated the *Majestie*c water during which time I embarked cattle and vegetables for the Belt Squadron' he wrote; 'while at Carlsrona I had provisions at different times taken out of *Majestic* which will account to you for the difference you must procure in

⁶⁹ TNA, ADM 1/9/248, John Smith, Consul at Gothenburg to Saumarez, 16 November 1809.

⁷⁰ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1129, Platen to Saumarez, 22 September 1809.

⁷¹ SRO, SA 3/1/2/1, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 24 June 1809.

the State and Condition'.⁷² Diplomatic developments had not affected the supply to Saumarez' fleet: in 1810 this became a possibility.

1810-2: War with Sweden and the continuing supply of the Baltic fleet

In 1810 Sweden's adoption of the Continental System worried officials. Sir Matthew Wood wrote to Lord Mulgrave, First Lord of the Admiralty, stating that 'our situation in the Baltic is much changed for the worse since March 1808...by the hostility of Sweden, and the late consolidation of Buonaparte's power, over Russia, Prussia & Denmark'.⁷³ Charles Fenwick, reporting the peace treaty between France and Sweden in January 1810, outlined the main points of the treaty. 'The most important provisions of this Treaty are stated to be, the total exclusion of British Trade from the Ports of Sweden without an exception of Colonial Produce; and that Sweden shall break off, all her connexions, with Great Britain'.⁷⁴ Supplies to the Baltic fleet would therefore be interrupted, and the Admiralty Board was aware of this. In May it wrote to Saumarez urging him to ensure his ships kept an ample supply of water on board: it was not known how long they might be without Swedish hospitality.⁷⁵ The British government still hoped that conflict could be avoided. In May 1810 they wrote to Saumarez, hoping that 'moderation and temper in abstaining from such measures till they become absolutely necessary for the protection of our trade, in avoiding as far as possible all occasions of disagreement and difference, and in conducting any discussions that may arise, in the manner most likely to bring them to an amicable and satisfactory termination'.⁷⁶

It was not to be. Sweden declared war on Britain on 17 November 1810. The threat to British supplies was clear, but the Swedish authorities went out of their way to ensure the

⁷² TNA, ADM 1/9/265, Thomas Harvey, Majestie, to Saumarez, 9 October 1809.

⁷³ MA 22/373, Sir Matthew Wood to Lord Mulgrave, 25 April 1810.

⁷⁴ TNA, FO 22/61/5-6, Fenwick to William Hamilton, 23 January 1810.

⁷⁵ TNA, ADM 2/1370, Admiralty to Saumarez, 8 May 1808.

⁷⁶ TNA, ADM 2/1370, Croker to Saumarez, 11 May 1810.

British knew that these provisions would not be affected. To all intents and purposes, nothing would change. Here we can see the benefits of Saumarez' conduct throughout the period as Commander in Chief in the Baltic. Ever courteous, his relaxed and understanding conduct towards Sweden earned dividends between 1809 and 1812. Swedish resentment of the French was becoming more pronounced. The Swedish Admiral Krusenstjerna highlighted Swedish disillusionment with their French allies:

Our friends the French and Danes express their friendship to us with unremitting zeal in capturing and robbing from our merchant vessels, whilst our enemies the English let them pass unmolested from one port to another. We did not suffer by one hundred times as much from the two nations, the time we were at war against them, as we do now when they call themselves our friends and allies.⁷⁷

Conversely, as von Rosen commented, 'Admiral Saumarez' ways of thinking and attitude regarding Sweden are quite the same as they so far have been. He protects our trade, lets our ships sail with or without convoys and licenses, allows exports of colonial merchandise'.⁷⁸ This was a deliberate gamble on the part of Saumarez, hoping that his policy of appeasement and compassion would lead Sweden to reciprocate. So although Sweden made official noises banning the British from their ports and ending the supply to the fleet, confidentially it was made clear that

these measures are perfectly contrary to the sentiments of the Swedish Government and particularly to those of the Crown Prince, and as they are to be acted upon in the most modified manner, and only confined to the sequestration of British Produce, that I shall abstain from any offensive measures against Sweden...It is added that in consequence of the early communication made by the Swedish Governor in Gothenburg, it is expected that very little loss will be incurred to the British Merchants, having had time to make the necessary arrangements.⁷⁹

Saumarez' conduct had been instrumental. Von Platen wrote in 1811, 'you have been the guardian angel of my country. By your wise temperament and loyal conduct you have been the first cause of the plans which have formed against the Demon of the Continent. Had you fired one shot when we declared war against England, all had been ended, and

⁷⁷ Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence*, Vol. II, p. 245.

⁷⁸ Von Rosen, Ep.E.10:11, fol.109, 8 June 1811.

⁷⁹ NMM, YOR 16/26, Saumarez to Yorke, 20 November 1810.

Europe would have been enslaved'.⁸⁰ Von Rosen commented in 1813, 'you were the first cause that Russia had dared to make war against France: had you fired one shot when we declared war against England, all had been ended, and Europe'.⁸¹ For instance, had Saumarez carried out Wellesley's instructions to treat the Swedish coastal trade as 'enemy' at the start of the 1811 season or had retaliated for the 'Carlsham cargoes' by using his firepower to retake the sequestered merchant ships, 'Sweden would almost certainly have felt bound to respond to Alquier's [the French minister in Sweden] pressure with action rather than deception, to enforce the Continental System to which he was tied by treaty with France, and to cease providing supplies and shelter to Saumarez's Baltic fleet; above all water'.⁸² In emphasising that Swedish and British interests were not mutually exclusive, he ensured that 'phoney war' remained just that.

In February 1811, Fenwick wrote to Saumarez, stating that despite the war, 'matters appear to continue pretty nearly what they were, and it is the opinion that no alteration will take place with regard to us, or at least not for the worse'. The reasons for this were clear: 'it is said that the newcomer has entirely devoted himself to his adopted country, and the treatment which he has received in that which he has left, makes it likely that he will still more firmly attach himself to whom he now is. It is said that he is very popular there, owing to his having embraced the beforementioned line of conduct'.⁸³ Fenwick, Smith and Saumarez kept in close contact with the Swedish court, in particular the Swedish Foreign Minister, the Baron d'Engeström. Sweden's entry into the war had always been hesitant, forced reluctantly into the Continental System by a domineering Napoleon. What followed was the peculiar situation of two states at war freely and happily trading provisions. Five months after the declaration of war, Engeström informed

⁸⁰ Ross, Vol. II, p. 293.

⁸¹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/2447, Von Rosen to Saumarez, 22 August 1813. There are some doubts as to whether it was von Rosen who wrote the letter. There are four copies in the archive, none of which are signed. Sir John Ross believed it to be from Baron von Platen aide de camp to the Crown Prince, while the archivist believed the letter from von Rosen. Tim Voelcker, whose knowledge of von Rosen is exceptional, backs the latter, and indeed the friendly yet grateful phrasing suggests his authorship. See Voelcker, *Saumarez vs Napoleon*, p. 3.

⁸² Tim Voelcker, 'From Post Captain to Diplomat: The Transformation of Admiral Sir James Saumarez in the Napoleonic Wars', PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2007, p. 256.

⁸³ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1664, Fenwick to Saumarez, 22 February 1811, unsigned 'for fear of accidents in crossing the sea', but in Fenwick's hand.

a British agent, that orders had been sent to Swedish governors instructing them to grant 'every facility to the English that circumstances may afford' to the British fleet stationed off the coast of Sweden. 'The British Admiral or those under his command will send a Flag of Truce with the boats sent for water or fresh provisions and under protection of a parley, opportunity will be given to them to procure the supplies they require'.⁸⁴ As Foy wrote, 'it is desired that for [provisioning] the admiral may fix on Carlskrona, to the Governor of which place orders are already issued to grant every facility to the English that circumstances may allow'.⁸⁵ Consul Smith was relieved to hear of these developments: 'I am very happy to learn that Possible Intentions of our Government towards this Country and as far as my Information leads, Sweden is equally well inclined, notwithstanding the demonstrations it has been obliged to adopt'.⁸⁶

Sweden was well inclined to do so. Bernadotte would certainly have known of the importance of Britain to the Swedish economy. Krusenstjerna wrote that 'I am most perfectly persuaded, that my Royal Sovereign will enjoy the greatest satisfaction in accepting the assurance Your Excellency has been pleased to communicate of His Britannic Majesty's intentions to preserve the harmony and good understanding, that exist between both Nations – intentions, which for the benefit and prosperity of both Nations it has been an object for His Swedish Majesty' earnest wishes and most studious endeavours to injure in the British Government'.⁸⁷ There were considerable loopholes of which British fleets could take advantage, despite Sweden's theoretical hostility. Count Rosen wrote that 'Ships flying the English flag are not allowed, unless suffering from substantial damage at sea and needing assistance, to enter a major port'.⁸⁸ This was an exception taken advantage of many times, with Royal Navy ships entering Swedish ports, particularly Gothenburg. After a discussion on board the *Victory* between Saumarez and Tawast, the military Commander in Chief at Gothenburg, Saumarez reported that

⁸⁴ TNA, FO 47/74.

⁸⁵ TNA, FO 73/65, George Foy to Smith, 9 May 1811.

⁸⁶ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1719, Smith to Reynolds, 2 May 1811.

⁸⁷ Kristina Sandberg, 'England, Sverige och Hanobukten 1810-12', Historia 01, Högskolan i Växjö Docent Larsson's uppsätsseminarium den 5 juni 1978, Karlshamn Kommun, p. 20.

⁸⁸ Voelcker, 'From Post Captain to Diplomat', p. 142.

He was instructed to communicate to me in the most confidential manner, that it was the earnest wish of the Swedish Government to keep on the most amicable terms with Great Britain and that it was not intended under any circumstances to commit any acts of hostility whatever; that the supplies of water and fresh provisions for the use of the squadron should be facilitated both at Hano Bay and Gothenburg; for which purpose the Picquets should be withdrawn from the points the most convenient for the articles to be received'.

He added that 'the appearance of any hostile measures was only intended for Demonstration, and in order to elude the Vigilance of French Spies, who might be dispersed in the Country'.⁸⁹ Saumarez replied that it was 'far from my Intention to commit any act of Hostility against Sweden, and that I was confident it was the Wish of my Government to keep upon an amicable Footing as long as Circumstances would possibly admit'. He gave orders to allow the coasting trade of Sweden to pass unmolested, and aimed at extending it to the ports in Swedish Pomerania.⁹⁰ So, despite such inconveniences as declarations of war, the conflict between Sweden and Britain remained one of pretence. Saumarez' promise not to undertake hostile measures against Swedish commerce was taken as a given. His conduct towards the Swedes had always been respectful, kind and honourable, despite provocation. Saumarez was aware that British prevention of Swedish coasting trade 'would have been a subject of the greatest distress to Sweden, but when added to other disastrous events, must involve them in the deepest ruin', and as such had always been avoided.⁹¹ Saumarez wrote with relief that 'with the exception of the Affair at Carlshamn which took place previous to my arrival, nothing has occurred to cause any interruption to the same intercourse as was held last year, the usual supplies are continued and places pointed out where they can be most readily received'.⁹²

The Swedish authorities allowed the British to set up a victualling base on the tip of Sweden's south coast, on the Island of Hanö. The idea for this had come from one of Fenwick's contacts back in June 1810. Anticipating the Swedish declaration of war, he passed on the suggestion from a Mr. Berridge, who had suggested to him 'the advantage

⁸⁹ TNA, ADM 1/12/13-15, Saumarez to Admiralty, 23 May 1811.

⁹⁰ TNA, ADM 1/12/13-15, Saumarez to Admiralty, 23 May 1811.

⁹¹ Voelcker, 'From Post Captain to Diplomat', p. 143.

⁹² NMM, YOR 16/43, Saumarez to Yorke, 28 May 1811. The 'Carlshamn Affair' referred to came when ships laden on British account were detained at Karlshamn by the Swedish government, arousing anxieties in London, Ryan, *Saumarez Papers*, p. 169.

of forming a depot [for] oxen at the Island of Hanö and as the circumstances of Sweden with respect to France are to appearance becoming every day more critical I think the plan of forming such a depot beyond the reach of French influence would finally prove highly advantageous to the Fleet under your command'.⁹³ This was a sensible suggestion and was implemented that year. In 1810-11, Napoleon's Continental System was enforced more rigorously than at any time. Hanö Bay was already the collection point for convoys returning to Britain, chosen because of its natural advantages as the place where merchantmen from different ports assembled. Fresh water could also be obtained there by passing ships.⁹⁴ In 1810 Hanö Bay was again designated as the rendezvous point, the last convoy being ordered to sail on 15 October.⁹⁵ It was here that the economic war in the Baltic was won. Sir John Ross recounted that ships would collect there until they had accumulated to 'about 500', where they would set sail. As he commented, 'the tyrannical decrees of Buonaparte were thus rendered null and void on this part of the continent'.⁹⁶

A slaughterhouse was built on the island. The Baltic fleet was doing as the Mediterranean fleet had done under Lord Keith ten years earlier when a slaughterhouse had been set up in Lisbon for the purpose of victualling the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean: 'the Slaughter house seems to me to be absolutely requisite', wrote Keith to James Yeo, the agent victualler at Minorca, 'and I am of opinion that the Stores are judiciously tried'.⁹⁷ Unfortunately, due to the secrecy of the operations around Hano, few precise records exist. It is not clear where exactly the slaughterhouse was built on Hano only that it was near the waterline. On 7 July, the log of the *St George* states explicitly that they 'employed carpenters on shore Building a slaughterhouse'.⁹⁸ From then on, men were sent ashore to butcher animals, the first mention coming two weeks later on 18 July, when the Captain 'sent the butchers on shore to slaughter bullocks. On the 6 September they 'received fresh beef and vegetables'.⁹⁹ It is hard to measure the exact amounts of beef received since the masters of vessels did not always record deliveries of fresh beef.

⁹³ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1389, Fenwick to Saumarez, 14 June 1810.

⁹⁴ Ryan, 'Melancholy Fate', p. 123.

⁹⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1310, Admiralty to Saumarez, 3 May 1810.

⁹⁶ Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence*, Vol. II, p. 196.

⁹⁷ NMM, KEI/I/23, Keith to James Yeo, 8 January 1800.

⁹⁸ TNA, ADM 51/2345, Log of the *St George*, 7 July 1810.

⁹⁹ TNA, ADM 51/2345, Log of the *St George*, July-September 1810.

However, as a guide, between 12 June and 29 September 1810, the *St George* received 36,081lbs of beef.¹⁰⁰ The complement of the *St George* was 738 men; this amount of beef would be enough to feed the ship's men the rations due to them in the standing orders for 12 weeks.¹⁰¹ Neither is it clear exactly where the beef came from. Previously, the British had secured beef from Carlshamn, and it had been carried back to the fleet on small boats. Water was also easily available. On 6 June 1811, 'hands were sent on shore to prepare the wells for watering'.¹⁰² The log of the *Victory* mentioned the crew were on shore digging wells.¹⁰³

The British settlement was perfectly well known to Bernadotte and the Swedish authorities, but was kept secret from the French. This was state-sanctioned supply, in direct contradiction of the terms of the Swedish-French alliance. The Swedish authorities had issued an order in May 1811, forbidding any 'strangers' to go into the neighbourhood of Carlshamn, in order to conceal any contacts between the British fleet and the shore. By these means it was hoped the French would not find out about the secret provisioning. In a fascinating letter, Fenwick outlined his thoughts on the Hanö base:

I regret that the Swedish Government have made complaints respecting the publicity of the supplies to the Fleet, but as I do not perceive that those sent from the neighbourhood of Hano Bay have been noticed by the public Prints, I trust that the measures adopted there to prevent observation will prove efficient. From what I have had an opportunity of seeing. I consider it next to impossible for any unauthorised Foreigner to become acquainted with what is going on, unless it were communicated by the Natives, and this is pretty well provided against, by the precautions taken by Baron Hakanson, the Governor of Blekinge.¹⁰⁴

George Foy was asked by Engestrom in November that year to find out from Saumarez how long he proposed keeping any part of his fleet at Hano, or in that neighbourhood since numerous business agents wanted to go there to deal with their personal affairs.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ TNA, ADM 51/2345, Log of the *St George*, 12 June-29 September.

¹⁰¹ Each seaman was given 4lbs of beef per week. A complement of 738 would thus use 2,952lbs of beef per week. 36,081 would therefore sustain them for over twelve weeks. It should be added that it was rare that a Royal Navy ship had a full muster to match its complement, hence it is likely the beef would have covered a longer period, taking them to the end of September.

¹⁰² TNA, ADM 51/2345, Log of the *St George*, 6 June 1811.

¹⁰³ TNA, ADM 51/2934, 11 July.

¹⁰⁴ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1837, Fenwick to Saumarez, 19 August 1811.

¹⁰⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1957, Foy to Saumarez, 16 November 1811.

Key to the operation was secrecy. As Saumarez commented, ‘Baron Tawast was particularly solicitous that the Communication which he had made to me should be considered in the strictest confidence; and expressed his Hopes that the whole Conference would be kept a profound secret’.¹⁰⁶ Sweden did not want to feel the wrath of the French. Similarly, Britain was aware that discovery of the continuing communications and provisioning would compel their Swedish counterparts to enforce the Continental System to its full effect, was also happy to keep the arrangements secret. Discussions were furtive and illicit. Von Rosen commented in August 1811: ‘the best way to handle this matter...[is that I have]...a secret meeting with S[aumarez], which now is easier for me than last time, as we agreed that when it is to happen, S. will meet me on an island, rowed there by officers in a little boat and disguised’.¹⁰⁷

It is certain the French suspected that the Swedes were not acting as an ally should. Fenwick wrote to Smith in December 1810, about the arrival of the French minister, Alquier, in Stockholm. ‘Mr Alquier arrived at Helsingburg on the 12th inst: and continued his journey for Stockholm the same day’, he wrote. ‘I have received confidential intelligence that an Agent of the French Government has stated to Mr Alquier that my stay in Sweden was for the purpose of facilitating the supply of Provisions to His Majesty’s Fleet in the Baltick, and for other services incompatible with the interests of France, and represented to him, that it would therefore be improper to allow me to remain any longer in this Country. My informant says that it is beyond a doubt Mr Alquier’s intention to represent and enforce points of this kind with the Swedish Government’.¹⁰⁸ The Danes too suspected something. In a letter from Krusentjerna to Saumarez, he reported the Danish complaints about the friendly relations between Britain and Sweden: ‘I beg privately to inform Your Excellency that the Danish Government has given very ample demonstrations to our Government against the communications which pretend to exist between the British ships of war and the Swedish Coast, also of the supplies which contrary to the treaty are furnished the British ships.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ TNA, ADM 1/12/13-15, Saumarez to Admiralty, 23 May 1811.

¹⁰⁷ Von Rosen Papers, Ep.E.10.11, f.120 26 July 1811, Ep.E.10.11. f.123, 7 August 1811.

¹⁰⁸ TNA, FO 22/61/72-3, Fenwick to Charles Smith, 16 December 1810.

¹⁰⁹ Sandberg, ‘England, Sverige och Hanobukten 1810-12’, p. 20.

There were French spies around: no doubt they did hear of the provisioning operations going on in Hano. Foy wrote to Saumarez in August 1811 stating that spies were present: 'It would seem that some French Spies have latterly come by the Packets from England', he wrote 'purposely to expose this Government in the Eyes of the French by proving the communications preserved by the Packets between the Countries', and also to delve into the provisioning operations. They were not helped by the late Swedish Consul in London who was 'partly to be blamed, as it is on his passports or certificates that the passenger, on getting the Packets, are admitted into Gothenburg...Baron d'Engestrom would be extremely thankful if Your Excellency would intimate to His Majesty's Government the necessity of the alien office at Harwich being more circumspect in regard to the persons they admit on board the Packets for Sweden'.¹¹⁰

There then followed games of half-truths and deceptions. Royal Navy ships continued to be supplied at Hano. Throughout 1811, the log of the *St George* notes bullocks being received, hands building houses on shore and butchers being sent on shore to slaughter bullocks.¹¹¹ Surreptitious means were taken up to disguise it. In May 1811, Sweden made a token gesture to confiscate some British shipping. Saumarez wrote to the Admiralty, pointing out that

The Swedish Government intends by no means to give offence to the British...If any other Vessels are detained...it is only a measure of Necessity and Demonstration at the Present critical moment, when Russia seems wavering and suspending her operations against France, for Sweden seems to stand alone under the Displeasure of Napoleon for what she has not done, and for what she did in the winter...it is merely a demonstration to appear as having adopted the Continental System, but on no account to confiscate the Property which lies equally safe in our possession as on board the Ships, and which most likely will be restored in a very short time.¹¹²

Alquier was under no illusion as to Swedish loyalty, and complained to the Swedish authorities about their failures as allies. His main complaint was about General Tawast (the Commander of the Swedish West Coast Army) visiting HMS *Victory* in May, on

¹¹⁰ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1866, Foy to Saumarez, 30 August 1811.

¹¹¹ TNA, ADM 51/2345, Log of the *St George*, June 1811.

¹¹² TNA, ADM 1/12/7-8, Saumarez to Admiralty, 15 May 1811.

board officially for a cartel. He said that the English consul had been present at the meeting and had signed a contract to provision the English fleet. Alquier complained that Tawast 'promised him from five to six hundred oxen, of which fifty are already delivered. Therefore the Sweden is feeding the enemies of France...The Swedish were also supplying the Island of Anholt where the English fleet were anchored'.¹¹³ He went on to complain of the convoys that came and went between England and Sweden, and of the supplies delivered from Sweden to the English base on Anholt. Von Rosen denied the Consul Smith was on the *Victory*, which in Voelcker's words, 'enabled him to avoid answering all the other points, which were indeed true'.¹¹⁴ He added that Saumarez had started to get supplies from Jutland and prayed that this would develop so that 'we could be spared from being the suppliers' and therefore avoid French criticism. Sweden remained officially at war with Britain, and made token gestures to their French allies. Von Rosen confiscated 10 oxen which were bound for the fleet and asked that this might appear in the papers, 'so that I, poor sinner, may for once shine with continental fervour in the annals of Europe'. Saumarez had been warned in advance so as 'not to be cross'.¹¹⁵ Given the benefits to the Baltic fleet the provisioning provided, it is certain that he was not too upset. Saumarez too made token captures of Swedish coastal vessels to reinforce the show of hostility, notably in May 1811 when two vessels were taken.¹¹⁶

Years after the Napoleonic War had finished, those most concerned in this shadowy business felt more comfortable disclosing the activities around Hano. Sir John Ross, lieutenant on the *Victory*, wrote a memorandum to His Majesty's government, asking for a pension for Count von Rosen, who had been involved in much of the provisioning. 'In the year 1810', he wrote, 'when Sweden was obliged to obey the mandate of Buonaparte, and shut her ports against Great Britain; it became necessary to open a secret communication with some individual who had power to supply the fleet with fresh provisions, vegetables &c. I was employed by Sir J. Saumarez Confidentially on this

¹¹³ 'Il lui a promis six cents boeufs, dont cent cinquante ont déjà été livres. Don la Suède nourrit les ennemis de la France...les Suédois approvisionnent également l'île d'Anholt, où mouille la flotte anglaise'. P. Coquelle, 'La Mission d'Alquier à Stockholm', *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*, Vol. 23, 1909, p. 226.

¹¹⁴ Voelcker, *Saumarez vs. Napoleon*, p. 153.

¹¹⁵ Von Rosen Letters, Ep.E.10.11, f.120 26 July 1811, Ep.E.10.11. f.123, 7 August 1811.

¹¹⁶ Voelcker, *Saumarez vs. Napoleon*, p. 153.

service and in a private interview with Count Rosen, then, (and ever since) Governor of Gothenburg this desirable arrangement with him'.¹¹⁷ He had witnessed a conversation between Mr Smith the English Consul and Count Rosen, the former promising von Rosen that when the peace was concluded he would be given a pension of 'a thousand pounds or more if necessary; Mr Smith then promised that he would make it £2,000 if he could'. Unfortunately, Smith had left for England before any money was paid, and died soon after, while his nephew, W. Morris, 'who had a personal dislike to Count Rosen, destroyed the letter, both to hurt the Count, and get himself into favor being a candidate for the Consulship, and Count Rosen ultimately received only £400, which may justly be considered a breach of faith'. Ross encloses a copy of a letter from Sir James Saumarez to Count Rosen, demonstrating 'his Lordship's opinions of the services rendered to Great Britain': all of which were favourable. Ross asked whether 'it would be politic to give to Count Rosen 5 or 600£ which would no doubt bring him sound, by relieving him from his pecuniary embarrassments under which he is now labouring ever since that period at which he was promised the money and on which he actually depended'.¹¹⁸

Ross' statement that the provisioning arrangements, built around a mutually agreed interest in peaceful and friendly relations, 'ultimately led to the treaty of alliance, or to the Swedes joining the allies of Great Britain against France', was correct.¹¹⁹ The Swedes became more and more well disposed to Britain. By the end of 1811, the British could be forgiven for thinking the Swedes were not their enemy at all. In November 1811, Saumarez was concerned by the condition of HMS *St George*, and suggested that the ship winter at Gothenburg. As Ryan commented, 'the state of Anglo-Swedish relations was now such that there was no political objection to this suggestion'.¹²⁰

Towards the end of 1811, further long-term provisioning arrangements began to be drawn up. A British merchant by the name of Anthony Scheck residing on the Island of Anholt offered to enter into a contract to supply the island of Anholt. Mr J Boyle, the purser

¹¹⁷ TNA, HD 3/6, John Ross, Memorandum for His Majesty, September 1834.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ A.N. Ryan, 'The Melancholy Fate of the Baltic Ships in 1811', *MM*, Vol.50, No.2, (May 1964) pp. 126.

appointed to victual the Garrison of Anholt, reported that Scheck, ‘had applied to him and expressed a wish to enter into a joint Contract with a reputable London House, to supply the Garrison on that Island with Spirits, Sugar, Cocoa, Raisins, and Tobacco, that he is trying to open a communication with the Danish Dutchies for the supplying of Fresh Beef and Vegetables, and that from the superior quality of the Fresh Beef, compared with that usually obtained from Sweden’.¹²¹ The Board was always keen to delegate provisioning to competent individuals. As previously stated, whole stations in the Indies were run on this principle. Generally the Baltic had neither the agriculture nor the necessary diplomatic security to do this, but given Anholt’s small size, and the likelihood of a lengthy British stay on the island, it approved the measure. They replied to Boyle ‘that we approve of his intentions in regard to the Fresh Beef; and that when Mr Scheck shall submit his proposal to us. in regard to other species he may be desirous of supplying we shall give the subject due consideration’.¹²²

Local Procurement analysed

Supplying fleets locally was an accepted means of achieving fresh provisions, and even the declarations of war could not intervene to halt this. Financial motivations played their part. Why was Britain so keen to obtain as many supplies locally? Firstly, it was often cheaper to purchase supplies locally. Mr Krok’s contract of 1808, for instance, spoke of a price of sixpence per pound of beef, delivered at Gothenburg.¹²³ This works out at £7 and 12 shillings per tierce (a tierce being 304lbs). During 1808, the price of beef in Deptford was substantially higher, at £9 6s and 8d per tierce.¹²⁴

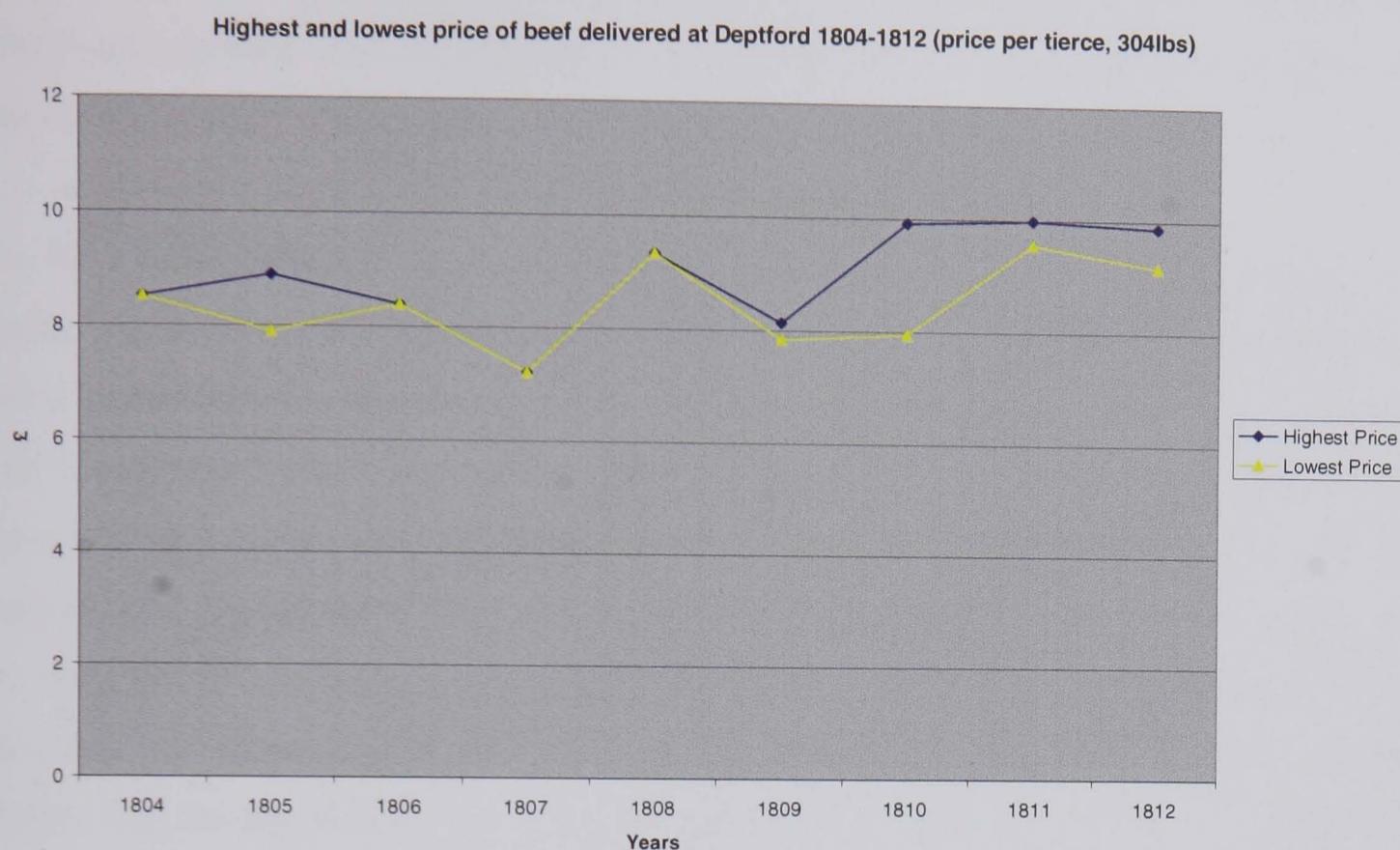
¹²¹ TNA, ADM 111/198, 1 March 1811.

¹²² TNA, ADM 111/198, 1 March 1811.

¹²³ TNA, ADM 1/6/23-4, Smithson Waller to Saumarez, 4 April 1808.

¹²⁴ House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, 1823 (417) Accounts relating to Navy and Victualling Contracts, and Pay of Shipwrights, 1790-1823 p. 12.

Figure 17



Source: House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, 1823 (417) Accounts relating to Navy and Victualling Contracts, and Pay of Shipwrights, 1790-1823 p. 12. Between 1806 and 1808 there is no gap between the lowest and highest price, since they were the same.

This price, for 1808, was unusually high: above we can see the changing price of beef during 1804-1812. Even though the price of beef dropped in 1809 to £8 2s and 9d, the contract to supply in the Baltic was still significantly cheaper. The Victualling Board's desire to contract locally was a rational policy, especially when the transport costs from Deptford to the Baltic are taken into account. It is possible that there was a qualitative difference: the poor quality of Swedish beef had been hinted at by Boyle above when discussing the supply to Anholt. However it is unlikely that this was a consideration for a Victualling Board obsessed by the ultimate quantitative figure: price. Indeed, the question that remains is why, given the relative cheapness of Baltic beef, did they continue to send the vast quantities from Deptford, in late 1808, which prompted Mr Krok's over-supply?¹²⁵ Why did they continue to transport salt beef out to the Baltic fleet throughout 1809? Krok's over-supply was unfortunate, but generally the British did try to obtain as much beef as they could locally. Sweden lacked the quantities to supply the entire fleet,

¹²⁵ See pp. 130, 139.

but Saumarez attempted to obtain as much as he could. Secondly there was also the issue of security. The overthrow of King Gustav IV, in early 1809 created political and diplomatic turmoil. The Victualling Board was not to know in 1809 that Swedish co-operation could be relied upon.

Mr Krok's difficulties aside, obtaining local supplies was cheap, quick and efficient. The Baltic commanders did not have the opportunity to play the market to secure the best price. Lord Keith had that luxury during his time in the Mediterranean in 1800. Aware of the benefit that derived from competition, he claimed 'on the subject of Fresh Beef and Live Cattle, I agree with you that any one individual, intrusted exclusively with the supply, may impose upon the Government; an I am well assured that the first article can be obtained at a lower price at Leghorn than the price that it at present costs...it is therefore my determination to resort to a fair and open competition, in order that the Public may be supplied on just and reasonable terms'.¹²⁶ In April 1800 he worried that the price of beef 'that it at present costs...exceeds Eightpence sterling per pound' was too dear.¹²⁷ That the Baltic fleet secured a price of six pence per pound in a less agriculturally productive region, outside a competitive market, makes the achievement all the more remarkable.

Long-term contracts, organised in advance, were cheap and reliable. However, supplies bought at short notice could be prohibitively expensive. On the rare occasions when the Baltic fleet became needy, it was the merchant's turn to manipulate a desperate navy. We saw in Chapter 6 the problems the Baltic fleet faced in 1809, with two deliveries of

¹²⁶ NMM, KEA/L/23/264-6, Lord Keith to James Yeo, agent victualler in the Mediterranean, 27 April 1800. Keith was an assiduous player of the market. Earlier in 1800 he commented that 'at present I am far from thinking that the Beef is supplied on as low terms as it could be procured...but I shall hereafter endeavour, when opportunity will admit, to obtain full information on the subject, and guide myself accordingly'. NMM KEA/L/23/260-1, Keith to the Commissioners for Victualling His Majesty's Navy, 25 January 1800. In April he wrote to the British Vice-Consul at Savona, complaining that 'the beef which you have found on board the Audacious appears to me to be charged at a high price, and even exceeds that at which you told me you could provide it'. He ordered that no more be purchased for any of the ships under his orders. NMM KEA/L/23/192, Keith to Mr Alebrite, British Vice-Consul at Savona, 11 April 1800.

¹²⁷ NMM, KEA/L/23/264-6, Lord Keith to James Yeo, Agent Victualler in the Mediterranean, 27 April 1800.

victuals delayed.¹²⁸ In November 1809, Saumarez' need for spirits, always the most popular of victuals, was great as he waited for the transports to arrive. In 1809 there were 809,600 pints of spirits needed for the fleet in the Baltic to maintain the official ration for the entire fleet, of which only 538,720 were transported.¹²⁹ There was a clear deficit between what was needed and what was delivered. He wrote a forceful letter to the Victualling Board, 'representing that the Squadron under his command being very much in want of a supply of Spirits'. As a result, he had found it necessary to direct Mr Robert Gamble, the purser of the *Victory*, to purchase between four and five thousand Gallons, 'on the lowest terms he could procure the same, and enclosing a voucher for four thousand three hundred and thirty Gallons of Rum at Seven Shillings and six pence per Gallon'.¹³⁰ This was an inflated cost. In Deptford a gallon of rum delivered to the Victualling Board cost 3s 11½d at its highest in 1809 and 2s 8d at its lowest. To be charged more than double this at 7s 6d was extortionate. Such was the cost of victualling inefficiency. This was a rare occurrence and the only example this research has found of Saumarez paying well over the odds for provisions. For the most part as the regular supplies of beef that arrived at the fleet showed, the use of local merchants to supply the fleet was a well-worn and useful asset.

How did the merchants themselves fare? The seller of the spirits mentioned above was carrying on a lucrative trade. Certainly, as ship-owners knew well government contracts were solid investments, and often profitable. Mr Krok complained in early 1809 that the Victualling Board had left him with severe losses, and he had been left overstocked. In 1811, he once again offered to supply the Baltic fleet with beef and vegetables: clearly contracting with the British state was an advantageous route to wealth. The Board devolved the decision on Krok's offer to Saumarez, keen to avoid a situation such as in the winter of 1808/9, when more beef had been arranged than was necessary. As it wrote, 'send a copy of the said letter to Vice Admiral Sir James Saumarez, and request that he will upon his arrival in the Baltic, or other part of his station, make such arrangements for

¹²⁸ See pp. 169, 171-4.

¹²⁹ TNA, ADM 111/191-193. For the context of this figure, see p. 239.

¹³⁰ TNA, ADM 111/193, 29 November 1809.

the supply of live oxen and Vegetables to the Ships of his Squadron as he may deem most expedient, and acquaint Mr Krok therewith'.¹³¹

There were risks inherent in contracting. Lindegren, the Consul at Karlskrona, suffered from some loss, when operations beyond his control took the fleet away from provisions he had hastily arranged, leaving him severely out of pocket. In early 1810, he wrote complaining of 'the suffering I have been subjected to by the failure of an undertaking I engaged in by your request and for account of HM Ships under your command then in these roads'. In order to supply the needs of the Ships under Captain Barrett's command with bullocks, spirits and rice, Lindegren begged Barret to 'consider that great expense, trouble and exertion could not possibly be avoided'. The livestock was purchased at numerous and distant places and was consequently very dear. The spirits and wine, 'not being within the line of my business, I was obliged to contract for with several persons which naturally occasioned loss of time and left no profit to me'. The collection of these different items at Karlskrona 'attended a great trouble and still greater expense, particularly bringing down the goods, and the loading of the crafts'. Unfortunately, the vessels were about to be loaded and sent on their way to the British ships, about twelve miles from the town, 'when most unfortunately a thick fog came in over land, which rendered the further progress of the vessels utterly impossible'. The convoy which the Royal Navy was covering had in the mean time made sail, and it became necessary for the *Minotaur* to proceed after it. The vessels transporting the provisions out to the fleet 'had no other alternative to return...with the whole of their cargoes which are now laying very heavily on my hands'. Lindegren calculated his loss 'to the fairest calculations' at £400, and he asked Barrett to plead to the Victualling Board for restitution.¹³²

The Victualling Board demanded a full statement of account, which was then sent. The account specified the exact amount of loss sustained by Mr Lindegren at £689 2s and 2½d.¹³³ Six months later, Lindegren was awarded compensation for his losses:

¹³¹ TNA, ADM 111/198, 26 March 1811.

¹³² SRO, HA 93/6/1/1444, Lindegren to Barrett, 18 January 1810.

¹³³ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1444/5, Lindegren to Barrett, 18 January 1810.

we have ordered the Bill of Exchange, amounting to the sum of £550, which you state to have authorized MR John Lindegren, to draw upon this Board, in consideration of the losses he had sustained in the purchase of sundry quantities of Provisions, for the use if His Majesty's Ship *Minotaur*, but which were not supplied to the said ship, on account of her being obliged to proceed to sea:- to be accepted and a perfect Bill to be made out in discharge thereof; and to return our best thanks for the trouble you have taken on this occasion.¹³⁴

There were inevitable risks with contracting. If the fault was with the navy a merchant could expect compensation. As their acquaintances in the ship-owning industry would no doubt have told them, the British government had a vested interest in looking after its contractors. A government contract was the most dependable to achieve steady profits. For the government the use of local contractors provided a quicker, more reliable, and cheaper supply of certain foodstuffs. Despite diplomatic difficulties local contractors continued to be used in the Baltic: both contractor and government found this advantageous. The supply of beef was regular and for the most part cheap and efficient: an efficiency that was matched across the victualling system.

¹³⁴ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1517, Victualling Board to Saumarez, 4 September 1810.

Chapter 9: The Effectiveness of Baltic Victualling: Operations and Strategy

Assessing the effectiveness of the state, of governmental Boards, and of individuals poses problems for the historian. This is certainly true of assessing victualling effectiveness during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. This thesis so far has used correspondence to and from admirals' and captains' for remarks concerning victualling. Commander's comments on supply mostly consisted of complaints: looking only at crises would give a skewed perspective on provisioning operations. When victualling operations were running smoothly, they were never remarked upon. We have seen the problems in 1809 and the critical improvements in 1810 and 1811. Only at crisis point did victualling as a subject explicitly enter the correspondence of Admirals. The remarks of contemporaries tell us much about the success of provisioning: this chapter will provide statistical data that will assess the effectiveness of the victualling system empirically.

The effectiveness of the Victualling Board can be measured on two levels. We have seen in Chapters 6 and 7 that the victualling system was effective, especially after 1809 in getting the basic task done: keeping men at sea fed adequately. In wartime, it is this level of effectiveness that is striven for. Secondly however, effectiveness can be measured using particular performance indicators. It can be judged on an operational level; in terms of speed, or as importantly, 'timeliness'. It can also be judged on 'efficiency'.¹ Efficiency is a part of effectiveness; efficiency is only attempted when the system is working and the basic aims are being met. For instance, the basic aim of the victualling system was to ensure men were fed, regardless of cost or wastage. However, once this achievement was guaranteed, wastage became in issue. Judging efficiency is therefore a means of testing the improvement of the victualling service.

¹ A further measurement of victualling effectiveness is cost, but this thesis has already covered the cost of transports (Chapter 5) and the cost of procuring supplies locally (Chapter 8). This chapter will therefore begin by focusing on timeliness and efficiency.

This chapter will also look at other indicators; for instance the incidence and occurrence of scurvy. This disease had causes not solely limited to the distribution of provisions: by 1808 there was sufficient knowledge of the prevention of scurvy. The occurrence of scurvy would be due to supply problems rather than medical ignorance. The widespread distribution of lemon juice was only achieved when supply problems were overcome.² The occurrence of mutiny and the amount of wastage will also be considered. Operations serve a strategic end however: the second part will consider whether the victualling of the Baltic fleet allowed it to serve its strategic ends. Incidents where provisioning problems impacted on strategy will be analysed. The relationship between victualling and the defence of British trade, the blockade of the Russian fleet, and the attack on the Continental System will be discussed.

A final indicator of effectiveness is ‘cost’. Strenuous efforts were made to ensure the Board paid the cheapest price. Where it worked out cheaper to procure provisions locally, such as beef from Sweden, it was advocated by the Victualling Board, as we have seen in Chapter 8. The trade in victualling contracts was clearly lucrative; there was never a shortage of merchants coming forward to supply the Navy. And yet the high number of bankruptcies among contractors towards the end of the Napoleonic War (for example Thomas Pinkerton in 1810), suggests that the Victualling Board was never beaten into paying too much over the odds.

Victualling Operations: Speed

It was vital to ensure that provisions arrived in the Baltic quickly. How fast could the Victualling Board distribute provisions and, more importantly, was it done in time? A better term might be ‘timeliness’: provisions needed to arrive quickly but not before they were needed. Because administrators were dealing with perishable supplies, foodstuffs arriving too early would be rotten by the time they were needed. As we saw in Chapters 6 and 7 the decision as to when to send provisions was the Commander in Chief’s in 1808-9 and the Victualling Board’s from 1810 onwards.

² Vale, ‘The Conquest of Scurvy’, pp. 160-75.

Distribution was not the sole preserve of the Victualling Board. Although charged with assigning provisions, the responsibility for securing and organising tonnage, in a timely fashion, was that of the Transport Board. The effective management of provisions required cooperation and co-ordination across more than one government body. The speed with which provisions were distributed can be separated into four categories. Firstly, there is the time taken, on receiving orders from the Admiralty, for the necessary tonnage to be ordered from the Transport Board and for the necessary victuals to be ordered from the victualling stores. Then there was the speed in which tonnage was secured. Thirdly, there is the period taken to load provisions, and arrange a convoy. Fourthly there is the time taken to deliver the provisions to where they were needed. As an indicator of timeliness a fifth and final consideration will be the occurrence of scurvy.

1. Admiralty to Victualling Board Orders

On receiving orders from the Admiralty, or a request from a fleet commander, the Victualling Board would order the necessary tonnage and provisions there and then. This research has not come across any delay of more than twenty four hours in this part of the chain of command. Syrett commented that in the 1780s, ‘for the Admiralty to transmit an order within 24 hours of receipt was rather exceptional’, with delays of 3-4 days common place.³ This was certainly not true by the 1800’s. In 1805, Charles Middleton had planned a detailed distribution of duties among the commissioners of the Admiralty to promote ‘economy of time’ and the ‘punctual discharge of duty’, ever the objective of that distinguished administrator.⁴ By the end of the Napoleonic Wars and certainly by 1808, the processing of letters was speedy and efficient. William Marsden, second secretary at the Admiralty observed that ‘no public letter was ever omitted (unless under very peculiar circumstances) to be read at the Board, minuted, answered and despatched, if practicable, on the day of its receipt’.⁵

³ Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 7.

⁴ *Barham Papers*, Vol.3, pp. 76-78.

⁵ William Marsden, *A Brief Memoir of the Life and Writings of the Late William Marsden, Written by Himself* (London, 1838), p. 97. Quoted in Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1760-1850* (Ashgate, London, 2004) p. 19.

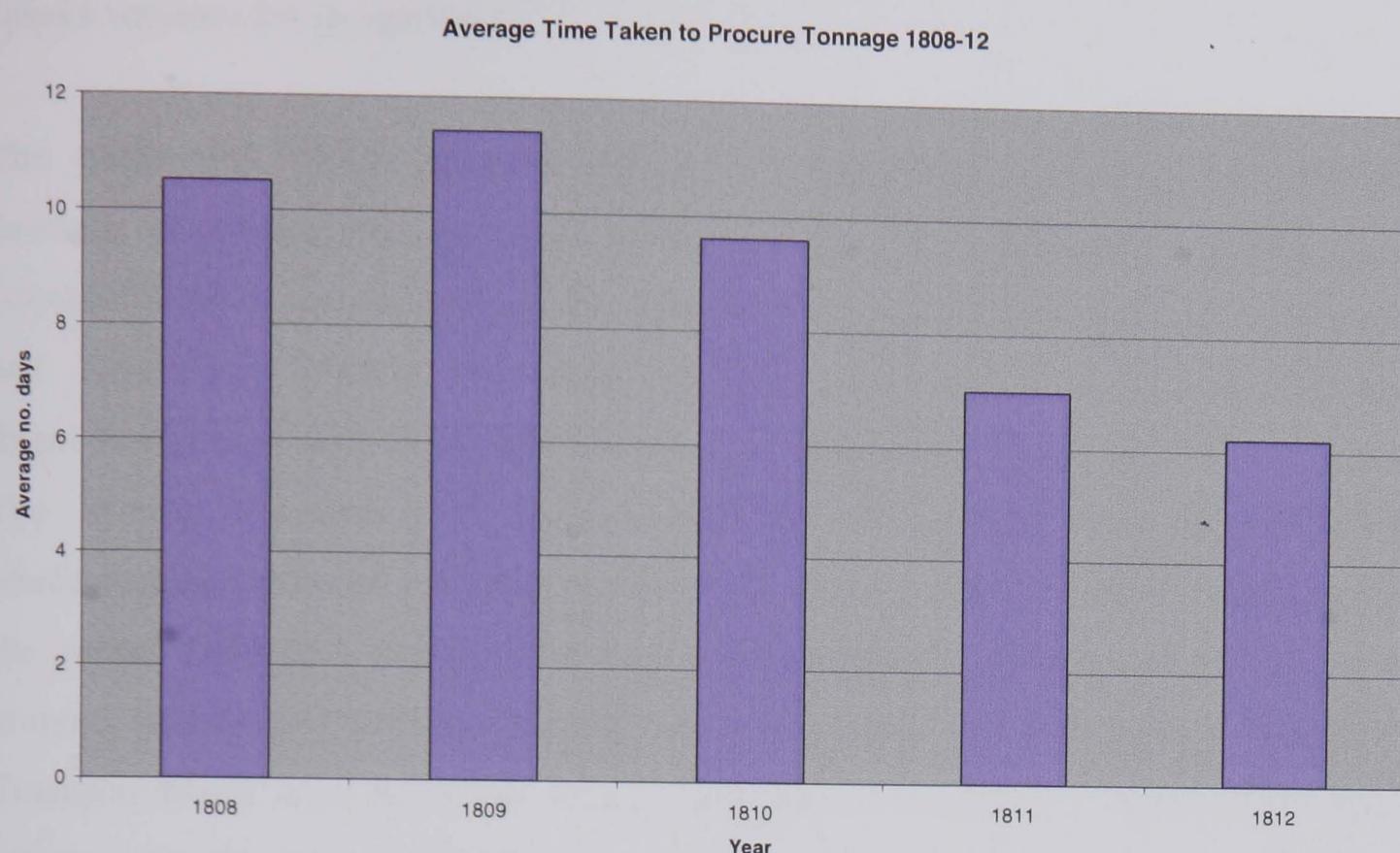
2. Time taken to secure tonnage

The second measure of speed is more interesting. As we saw in Chapter 3, securing tonnage for victualling purposes fell upon the Transport Board, and its ability to do so did not depend solely on administrative competence: the tide of the war could overwhelm government administration. In 1809 for example there was a chronic shortage of tonnage for all transport services, due mainly to the demands of the expedition to Walcheren and also the increasing British involvement in the Iberian Peninsula. The Victualling Board reported to the Admiralty in August 1809 that they were ‘finding it impracticable at this time to procure Freight, on any terms’ for the conveyance of the discussed species.⁶ Between 1808 and 1812 the average time between the Victualling Board requesting transport tonnage for the Baltic fleet, and that tonnage being delivered, was 9.11 days. This in itself is impressive.

The speed of transport procurement becomes more illuminating if we look at the average times taken for tonnage to be supplied each year between 1808 and 1812, as shown in the graph. It is calculated by measuring the time delay between the order being given for tonnage by the Victualling Board, and the last transport being procured.

⁶ TNA, ADM 110/69/285-6, VB to Admiralty, 22 August 1809.

Figure 18



Source: TNA, ADM 111/187-188, TNA, ADM 111/191-193, TNA, ADM 111/195-6, TNA, ADM 111/199-200, TNA, ADM 111/203-5, TNA, ADM 110/58/328-9. See Appendix 1.⁷

The average increase in time in 1809, the year of transport shortage, can be seen. What is more noticeable from this graph is the decrease in the average time it took for tonnage to be secured after 1809. By 1812 the time taken to procure tonnage had been almost halved. Following the problems of 1809, the Admiralty wrote to the Transport Board, recognising from the previous years' difficulties the crucial importance of securing the necessary tonnage. The Admiralty gave the Transport Board a blank cheque to raise the freight rate to 25 shillings making ship-owners more willing to come forward and let their vessels. This reform implemented, by late 1810 the Transport Service was sufficiently supplied with transports that it could refuse tenders from Henley and Son.⁸ This significant increase in bureaucratic speed was simply a result of financial motivation. The Transport Board, so often criticised by their colleagues in naval administration, benefited from an increasingly professional and accountable civil service brought in by the

⁷ A study of Appendix 1 will show that there was a fairly steady time delay as the Victualling Board waited for tonnage, taking on occasion as little as a few days, and at most two weeks.

⁸ See pp. 178-9. NMM, HNL 14/5/1-10.

Commission of Naval Revision, reporting in 1809. The ever lessening procurement time speaks volumes for its success.

The speed with which transport tonnage could be procured throughout 1808-1812 becomes even more marked if the Victualling and Transport Board's performance is considered not over a short period, but throughout the wars against French Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. By 1810, transport procurement speed had increased dramatically, especially compared with corresponding times before the Peace of Amiens. The average time taken to procure transport tonnage to support Lord Keith's Mediterranean fleet between 1800 and 1802 was 29 days. The contrast with the figure for the period 1808-12 - a mere 9.11 days - was marked.⁹ Although the earlier period presents data from a different fleet in a different theatre, in each case the duties of the Transport Board were the same: to hire transports as quickly as possible. The contrast between the Board's effectiveness in 1800-2 and their performance by 1810 is self-evident. This was a vast improvement and demonstrates further the smoother, speedier and more efficient naval administration after the report of the Commission of Naval Revision. M.J. Williams, writing on the American War of Independence, wrote of the inevitable 'lengthy delays between the orders to send out supplies and the sailing off the victuallers resulted in delay in reaching the American Station'.¹⁰ During the American War victualling ships were lost to major fleet operations and consequently had to be convoyed: however the Baltic provisioning fleets were no different. With transports being secured within a week of orders being given by 1810, this was no longer an issue.

3. Time taken to load victualling shipments.

Once tonnage was secured there was then the time taken to load victuallers and to arrange and join a convoy. This was a cumbersome and often laborious task. In 1808 Perceval wrote that 'everybody knows how much time is consumed getting Transports out of the River [Thames] to the Ports of Departure and how many expeditions have been delayed

⁹ TNA, ADM 111/154-155, ADM 111/158-161, ADM 111/163, ADM 111/187-188, ADM 111/191-193, ADM 111/195-6, ADM 111/199-200, ADM 111/203-5, ADM 110/58/328-9. See Appendix 1 and 2.

¹⁰ Williams, 'Sandwich', p. 541.

for weeks and sometimes months from that cause alone'.¹¹ This may have been related to complaints in January 1808 that the Portsmouth Victualling Office had taken far too long to re-victual some transports.¹² The table below shows the average yearly time taken for this step in the process with the Baltic fleet.

Table 25: Time taken to load and arrange a convoy, 1808-1811

Year	Time Taken to load and arrange convoy
1808	7.25 days
1809	12.2 days
1810	13.3 days
1811	8 days

As this makes clear, the average time was between one and two weeks. In fact, a quick look at Appendix 3 demonstrates that this process often took as little as four or five days: in 1809 and 1810 a couple of exceptional delays skewed the data. This is again a quick turnaround. Naval Administration was not helped by the fact that arranging a convoy depended on merchants' acquiescence and the availability of escorts. Baltic convoys were arranged between the Admiralty and interested merchants. At a Board meeting on 29 March 1808 the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty requested the secretary of Lloyds put up a notice asking Baltic merchants to appoint one of their number to communicate with the Admiralty about the fixing of convoys: Mr. Emes was appointed to that position.¹³ In the spring of each year the Commander in Chief, Admiralty secretaries and Mr. Emes met to discuss arrangements for the coming year.¹⁴ By 1812, victualling deliveries were planned to take advantage of convoys. As the Victualling Board noted, convoys would leave 'every 14 Days from 9th July to the 15th October, in order that the Victuallers belonging to this Department may be prepared to take advantage of the several convoys, and to avoid the delay and expense occasioned by the necessity of affording protection to single ships which might have sailed with the general convoys'.¹⁵

¹¹ MA, 19/29.

¹² Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 40.

¹³ TNA, ADM 3/163, 13 April 1808.

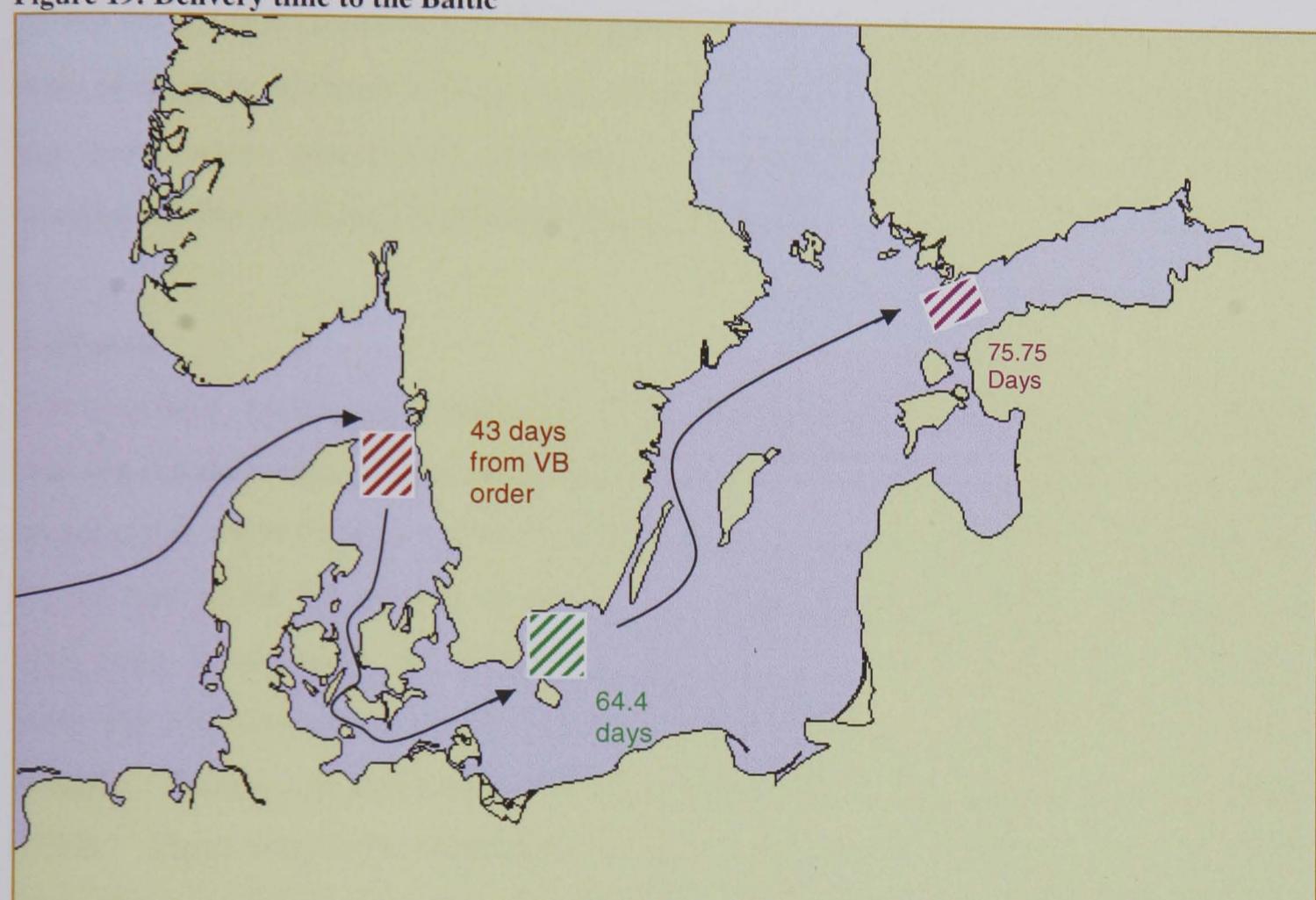
¹⁴ A.N. Ryan, 'The Defence of British Trade with the Baltic 1808-13', *English Historical Review*, Vol. LXXIV, 1959, p. 450.

¹⁵ See p. 189.

4. Delivery Time

The fundamental question is whether victualling supplies arrived on time. The three stages (points 1-3) put together, we can see that a transport could arrive in the Baltic about six weeks after the initial order was given by the Victualling Board.

Figure 19: Delivery time to the Baltic



In 1808 and 1809 the average time from the order being given, and the provisions arriving in the western Baltic, was 43 days: an impressive speed. A victualling convoy would then continue through the Baltic: it would take an average of 64.4 days from the order being given to reach the lower Baltic, around the Island of Bornholm and Hano Bay, a gathering point for convoys returning to Britain. It would take on average a further two weeks to reach the eastern Baltic, where a squadron was employed blockading the Russian Baltic fleet.¹⁶

¹⁶ These times were calculated using a range of sources. For the Admiralty and Victualling Board orders, see TNA, ADM 111/187-188, ADM 111/191-193, ADM 111/195-6, ADM 111/199-200, ADM 111/203-5, ADM 110/58/328-9. For information regarding the arrival time of the victualling deliveries, see TNA, ADM 51/1824, ADM 110/58/283-4, ADM 52/3798, ADM 51/2345. See Appendix 4.

Following the first two years of Baltic operations, there was a move to increase efficiency. Economies of scale were brought in with two large deliveries sent instead of four smaller ones. Instead of merely responding to short-term demands from commanders, between 1810 and 1812 victualling convoys were planned months in advance, with the two shipments planned to sail on 1 June, and on 1 August each year, giving each a full month to sail to the Baltic. In these years when victualling deliveries were planned in advance, tonnage was secured, loaded and dispatched on schedule. The key point when considering timeliness is not just how quickly supplies could be transported, but were they distributed quickly enough?

5. Scurvy

One excellent ‘performance indicator’ is an assessment the incidence of scurvy. Scurvy was the regular blight on naval service during the 18th century. Ignorance of its causes meant crews away from port and fresh foodstuffs were prone to outbreaks of this disease. By the time of the Napoleonic War it was no longer the mystery to naval captains it had once been. Even before the sanctioned supply of lemon juice to ships many Admirals were already converts to this method of preventing scurvy. Admirals such as Howe, Bridport, Rainier and Keith recognised the beneficial effects of citrus juice during the 1790s.¹⁷ There were still misunderstandings. The surgeon’s log of the *Ajax* 1799-1800 notes that lemon juice was ineffective in preventing scurvy.¹⁸ Another ship’s log details an attempt in 1800 to cure scurvy by burying patients up to the neck in earth.¹⁹ For the most part though, the lessons of citrus fruit were learnt. The issue of lemon juice meant scurvy became very rare. Between 1795 and 1800 scurvy accounted for only 2% of British naval patients.²⁰

The issue of lemon juice to Royal Naval fleets had become standard practice by the late 1790s. Indeed, it was ordered by the Commissioners for Victualling His Majesty’s Navy in 1801 in their ‘Instructions relative to the issue of Lemon Juice and Sugar’:

¹⁷ Vale, ‘The Conquest of Scurvy’, p. 168.

¹⁸ TNA, ADM 81/5.

¹⁹ TNA, ADM 101/83/3.

²⁰ Rodger, *Command of the Ocean*, p. 485.

Whereas the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty have been pleased to direct that Lemon Juice and Sugar shall be furnished to His Majesty's Ships for the preservation of the health of their several companies; and Whereas the said articles will be charged to, and must be accounted for by, the respective Pursers, into whose charge the same are to be delivered...The sugar and Lemon Juice are to be issued to the crews of His Majesty's Ships and Vessels in the proportion of One ounce of Sugar, and One ounce of Lemon Juice per man per day, and are to be either mixed with the Grog or Wine allowed to Ship's companies, or to be issued unmixed as sherbet, according to the Captain's. in their discretion, shall think it proper to direct.²¹

With lemon juice issued to all fleets, the appearance of scurvy was an issue of supply rather than scientific medical knowledge, its outbreak confined to occasions when the *distribution* of lemon juice failed. It was a disease that pointed to deficiency. Did the Baltic fleet have to deal with scurvy?

The answer is an emphatic 'no'. We have already seen that Britain's Swedish allies suffered greatly in 1808. The more nervous officers of Saumarez' fleet were concerned that scurvy might be an issue. Dr Jamison warned Keats that 'as the fatal ravages of that formidable disease have totally unmanned the Swedish Navy, and having manifested its way at different times on board several of our ships'.²² A close inspection of Royal Navy musters paints a different picture. At the end of 1808 there were only four cases of scurvy amongst over 11,000 seamen.²³ Given that the fleet had been at sea for eight months this was remarkably low. These incredibly low rates of scurvy were replicated throughout the fleet's time in the Baltic. On the 27 December 1809, Jamison wrote to the Admiralty, listing the numbers sick on the *Gorgon* Hospital ship between the 5 and 27 December 1809. Of the twenty men listed, none had scurvy. Fever and debility were present, as was rheumatism, but not scurvy.²⁴ Jamison was a very competent physician to the fleet, sending back monthly returns listing the respective numbers of sick. Below the number of seamen suffering from scurvy, as compared to the overall sick list in the Baltic fleet can be seen.

²¹ TNA, ADM 111/158.

²² SRO, HA 93/6/1/460, Dr Jamison to Keats, 28 December 1808.

²³ TNA, ADM 1/8/38. Of the four cases, three were on board the *Prometheus*, which had spent the second half of the campaign in the eastern outskirts of the Baltic, the furthest from supply.

²⁴ TNA, ADM 97/88, Jamison to Transport Board, 27 December 1809.

Table 26: Incidence of scurvy in the Baltic fleet, 1808-9

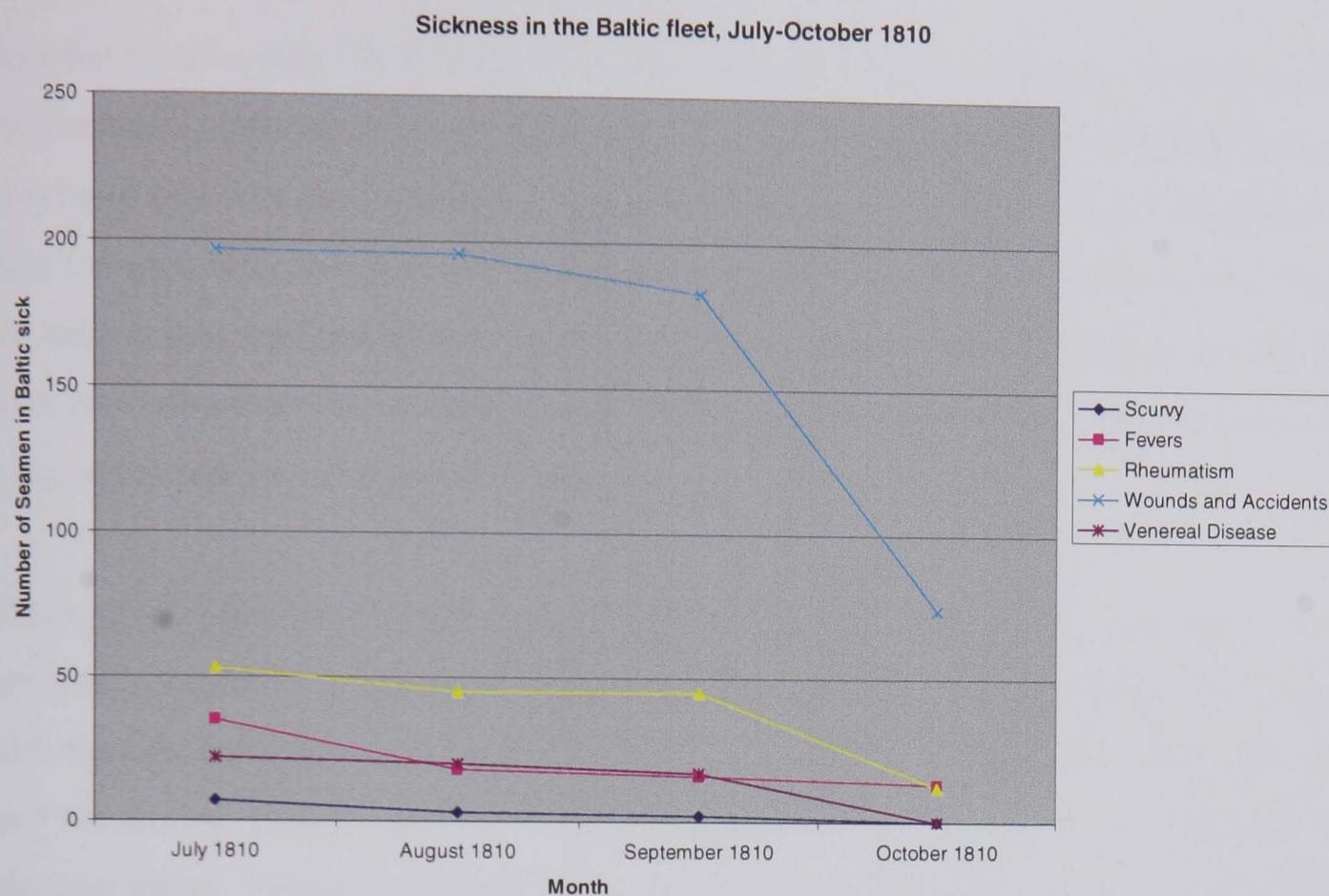
Month	Number of Men in the Baltic	Number of Seamen Sick	Number of Scurvy Patients
August 1808	10,160	300	0
September 1808	10,160	181	2
October 1808	11,796	50	2
November 1808	10,144	57	3
December 1808	6,578	77	3
January 1809	6,336	122	0
February 1809	2,625	145	0
March 1809	3,596	170	0
April 1809	12,100	160	0
May 1809	14,504	187	0
June 1809	16,311	194	0
July 1809	17,398	225	0
August 1809	15,972	262	0
September 1809	15,877	280	0
October 1809	15,764	300	1
November 1809	15,390	316	1
December 1809	10,038	336	1

Source: TNA. ADM 102/241.

As the table demonstrates, the proportion of scurvy patients was minute. Indeed, for much of 1809 there were no reported cases. The virtual eradication of scurvy becomes even more evident if one compares the number of cases of scurvy to the overall men mustered in the Baltic. Even when the fleet size rose to up to 17,000 in 1809, scurvy appeared on just the one occasion. The proportion of seamen with scurvy never rose above 0.03%.²⁵ Scurvy would barely appear for the rest of the fleet's time in the Baltic. On the 15 August 1810 Jamison compiled a return of all the sick and wounded on all the ships and vessels 'employed under the command of Vice Admiral Saumarez during the months of July'. As can be seen in the graph below, scurvy was all but eradicated.

²⁵ TNA, ADM 102/241.

Figure 20



Source: TNA, ADM 97/98.

Also demonstrated by the data above is the fall in all forms of sickness, as ships began to return home to Britain. Concerns for the health of the fleet would have better placed managing shore leave and the appearance of venereal disease, rather than scurvy. The majority of the seven cases of scurvy in July 1810 were based on one ship, HMS *Mars*, with 4 cases. In 1811 (May to August) again the cases of scurvy were limited to individual ships: the *Hannibal* (2 cases) and the *Calypso* (4).²⁶ The sloop *Osprey* was involved in convoying merchant ships to and from the Baltic. The journal of Mr. Gamble, the surgeon on board, survives in the National Archives for the period 30 September 1810 to 1 October 1811. Throughout this period and despite many entries describing the various ailments of seamen on board, there was not one reported case of scurvy on board. His abstract for the period reveals that there were 23 cases of flux, 4 wounds and accidents, 3 of rheumatism, 7 of venereal disease. Of a total 50 cases, not one was linked to scurvy.²⁷

²⁶ TNA, ADM 97/88, State and Condition of the Baltic fleet, May-August 1811.

²⁷ TNA, ADM 101/111/4, Medical and Surgical Journal of His Majesty's Ship *Osprey* between the 30 September 1810 and 1 October 1811.

Victualling Operations: Efficiency

So what of efficiency? It was the Victualling Board's duty to plan each individual fleet's requirements. Informed by the Admiralty of a fleet's size, the Victualling Board would also have access to the 'Admiralty Lists', recorded bi-annually, giving the complement of men for each ship and fleet. As such they knew the number of men on each station and the daily ration required by each individual. From this they would calculate the amount of each provision that was needed per day by the fleet, and could then distribute provisions designed to last for a set period of time.

Much rested upon these calculations. Sending too little would lead to shortages. To send too much would be a waste of resources. The estimates were generally very accurate, with specific quantities sent out to supply exact forces. For example, in September 1801 the Victualling Board sent out 80,000 4lb pieces of pork with one shipment to the Mediterranean, 'being a proportion for twenty thousand men for two months'.²⁸ This amounted to 320,000 individual rations. This amount of pork, divided by the 20,000 seamen meant the shipment contained 16 rations per man serving in the Mediterranean. And, since each man was given two rations of pork per week, this allowed enough pork for eight weeks, almost exactly the two months planned for by the Victualling Board. Far from being a leaden institution responding to demand at short notice the Victualling Board practised a highly sophisticated level of planning and organization.

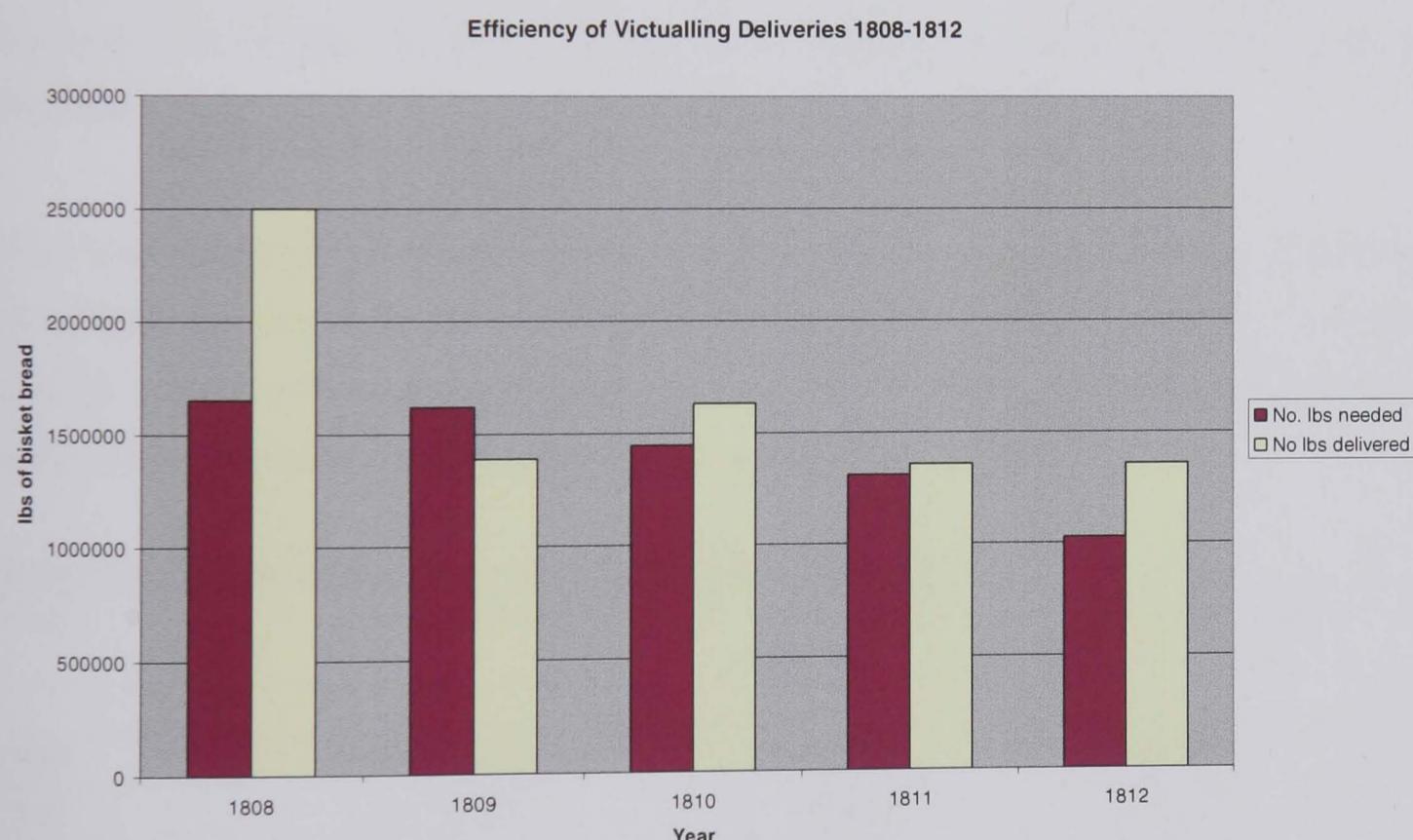
Judging efficiency is a matter of judging wastage against shortage. We know the number of men stationed in each theatre and can therefore calculate the number of rations needed over a year. From the Victualling Board minutes, we can also calculate the number of rations sent out, and compare the two. If there were significantly higher amounts of rations being sent out than were needed, then we can talk of wastage. If there is significantly less being sent out, then it is clear there was a shortage. The Baltic theatre particularly lends itself to this mode of analysis due to its annual status. Since the

²⁸ TNA, ADM 111/160, 16 September 1801.

majority of the fleet would return at the end of each year, annual needs can be book-ended and isolated individually.

Bread was the staple of a seaman's diet. A fleet of 11,000 men required 11,000 lbs of bread per day. The provisions brought on board the fleet on leaving Deptford would maintain them for six months. In 1808 Saumarez left for the Baltic, in his words 'well equipped for a six months cruise'.²⁹ To keep the fleet maintained for the rest of the year required 1,777,825 lbs of biscuit bread to be transported out to the Baltic. The total amount of bread sent out to the Baltic was 2,500,400 lbs. Supplies were also sent out to supply 10,000 Spanish troops, mentioned in Chapter 6 (pp. 145-8), temporarily supplied by the British fleet in the Baltic. The graph below shows the amount of bread required and the amount of bread delivered throughout the 1808-1812 period.

Figure 21



Source: TNA, ADM 111/187-188, ADM 111/191-193, ADM 111/195-6, ADM 111/199-200, ADM 111/203-5, ADM 110/58/328-9. See Appendix 5.

In 1808, as the graph makes clear, much more was sent than was needed. The large amount sent, particularly early in 1808, might have been intended not just for the Baltic

²⁹ SRO, HA 93, Saumarez to Martha Saumarez, 18 April 1808.

fleet but also to feed Sir John Moore's military expedition sent to the Baltic in May for joint operations with Sweden. This force was withdrawn in the summer because of a dispute between Moore and the Swedish King, and was moved to support the Spanish revolt.³⁰ This left an excess of foodstuffs in the Baltic, explaining the over-supply. Despite the departure of Moore's army, further supplies continued to be sent in September. It is possible planners did not realize this, more likely a natural tendency to err on the side of caution in the first year of Baltic operations. With fears for the Baltic fleet's provisioning efforts, and unsure of Britain's ability to victual them, this over-supply was a cautious move in case of large losses while going through the Great Belt. This was still essentially wastage and not an efficient use of resources. The following year, the Victualling Board made the opposite mistake. 1809 was the only year that too little was sent. Instead of sending too much, they barely sent enough; shortage instead of spoilage. This is a good example of inefficiency leading to ineffectiveness. The deficit can partly be explained by the surplus left over from the year before: it is no coincidence however that it was in 1809 that the only victualling complaints were made by Saumarez.³¹

The victualling practice reforms in the winter of 1809-10 were not limited to organising victualling convoys in advance, making the timely arrival supplies more likely. They also marked a more efficient organisation of resources. In 1810 and 1811, the difference between the provisions needed and provisions sent was far closer.

Table 27: Bread needed and delivered to the Baltic fleet, 1808-1812

Year	Lbs of Bread needed	Lbs of bread delivered	% difference
1808	1,777,825	2,500,400	28.90%
1809	1,619,199	1,388,240	-14.26%
1810	1,445,610	1,631,056	11.37%
1811	1,307,382	1,355,200	3.53%
1812	1,027,644	1,355,200	24.17%

³⁰ Davey, 'Repatriation'.

³¹ This was exacerbated by ships leaving for the Baltic with less than the original six months rations, as was required, and also the transport delays observed that year. See pp. 174-5, 176-7.

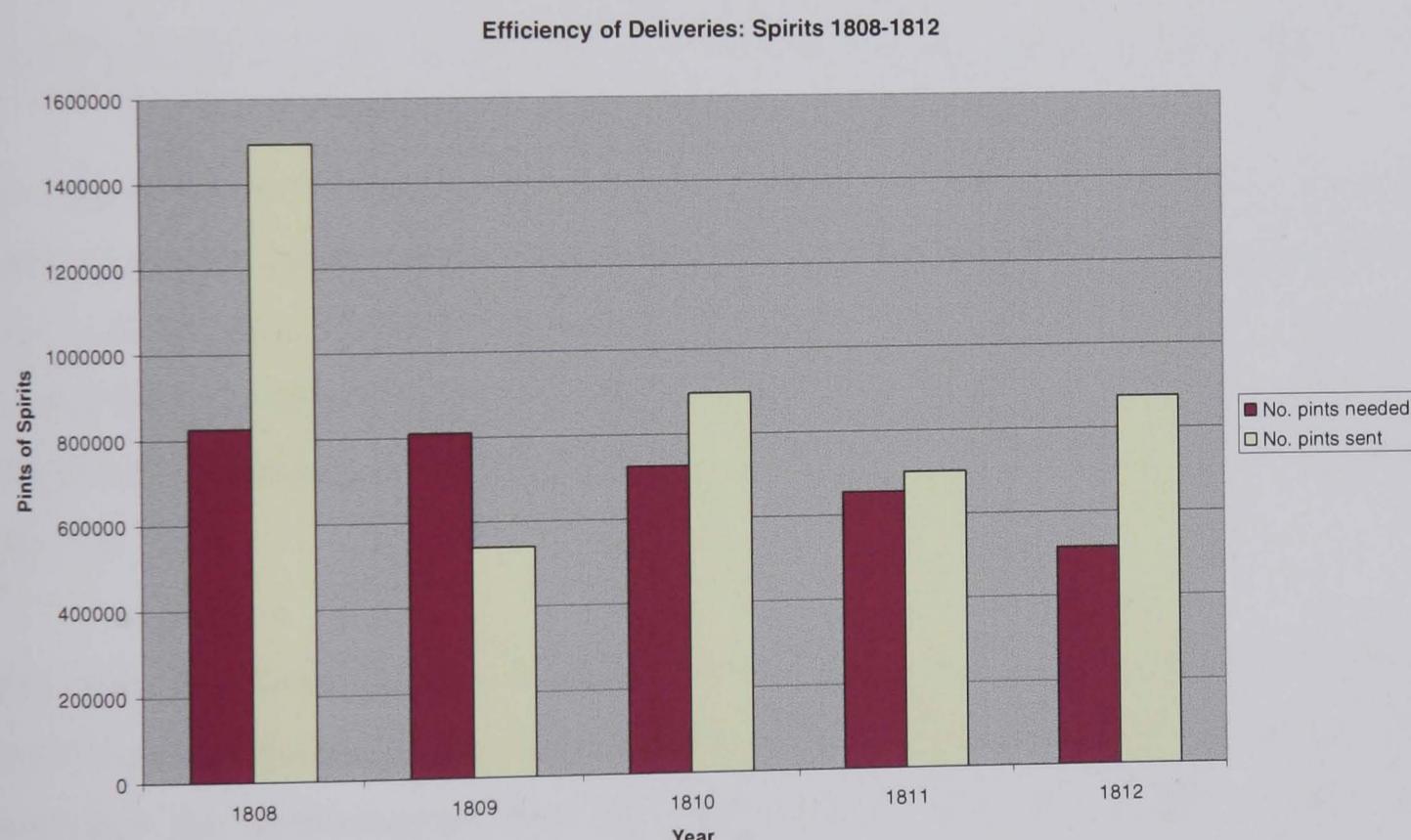
Source: TNA, ADM 111/187-188, ADM 111/191-193, ADM 111/195-6, ADM 111/199-200, ADM 111/203-5, ADM 110/58/328-9. Appendix 5.

In these two years much more accurate calculations were made by the Victualling Board between needs of the fleet and provisions shipped.

The graph refers only to biscuit bread but these sorts of accurate provisioning estimates were made for all species of foodstuffs. Only beef which on most stations could be procured locally was exempt from these calculations. Even here reductions in beef transported to the Baltic or Mediterranean were made only when secure local supplies had been organised.

The graph below shows the amount of spirits needed and sent between 1808 and 1812.

Figure 22



Source: TNA, ADM 111/187-188, ADM 111/191-193, ADM 111/195-6, ADM 111/199-200, ADM 111/203-5, ADM 110/58/328-9. See Appendix 6.

The graph shows a similar pattern to biscuit bread, although more pronounced in the first two years. In 1808 there was a vast over-supply, to an even greater extent than in with bread. Spirits' longevity being much greater than biscuit-bread meant much more would

keep until the following year. It is possible the following year's shortage was planned to be covered by the previous year's over-supply. However we know that in 1809 there were shortages of spirits, as Saumarez complained of that specific deficit and was forced to purchase spirits locally.³² Between 1810 and 1812, the quantity of spirits required and the amount transported became increasingly congruous. In 1810 and 1811 the Victualling Board's calculations were almost exactly right with only 19.32% and 6.61% extra being sent. This slight amount of wastage on the part of the Board was understandable. Given that transports could be lost, and that provisions could go off, it was logical that the naval administration would allow a degree of error with their calculations.

Table 28: Spirits needed and sent to the Baltic fleet 1808-1812

Year	Amount needed	Amount Sent	% Difference
1810	722,805 lbs	895,992 lbs	19.32
1811	653,691 lbs	699,992 lbs	6.61
1812	513,822 lbs	873,396 lbs	41.16

Source: TNA, ADM 111/187-188, ADM 111/191-193, ADM 111/195-6, ADM 111/199-200, ADM 111/203-5. ADM 110/58/328-9. Appendix 6.

The figure for 1812 is less precise although there are good reasons for this. The 'amount sent' column is slightly skewed since Britain in 1812 was supplying the Swedish forces with victuals, now that they were once again allied with Britain. Secondly Russia ceased to be a Baltic antagonist in 1812: Royal Navy ships were ordered away from the Baltic to other theatres throughout the year, reducing the amount needed, particularly at the end of the year.

The close correlation between foodstuffs needed and distributed was evident throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. Two deliveries in 1801 were designed to provision the Mediterranean fleet for eight months. The first, on 10 February was calculated to support 15,000 men for four months. The second, on 9 June 1801 was the allowance for 20,000 men for a further four months.³³ Between May and December 1801

³² See pp. 226-7.

³³ TNA, ADM 111/159, 15 July 1801.

there were between 15,500 and 21,700 men in the Baltic.³⁴ Using the Admiralty lists, we can see that 4,300,199lbs of bread were needed to sustain the fleet for this period. Using the Victualling Board Minutes we can see that 3,920,000lbs were actually sent out.³⁵ In addition there were 360,000lbs of flour sent with the delivery of 10 February delivery, and 480,000lbs with the shipment on 9 June, which would have more than made up for the slight deficit. Flour was not sent exclusively since baking it required a lengthier cooking process, with consequent demands for wood or coal. On the other hand it was less bulky than sending ready made bread. Thus, the Victualling Board settled on a compromise whereby mostly biscuit bread would be sent, with additional flour to make up the rest.

A further measure of efficiency is that of wastage through error not in the Victualling Offices in London, but in the quality of supplies. N.A.M. Rodger commented that ‘with the exception of stockfish, there was no item of which as much as 1% was condemned – an astonishing fact considering the limitations of technology and the hazards to which the full casks were exposed after issue’.³⁶ Was this true of the Baltic? Again it appears that 1808 and 1809 were bad years for efficiency. On two occasions, Mr Holt, the accountant for stores at Deptford, had reason to complain about provisions shipped on board victuallers to the Baltic. On 15 June he reported a claim made on passing the account of Mr Thomas Nicholls, the Master of the *Ceres* Transport. Between 14 July 1808 and 28 April 1809 626 pounds of bread was condemned in a survey of 17 February 1809. It was ordered that the claim be placed to the credit of the Master’s account.³⁷ That same day, Holt also reported a similar claim by the Masters of the *Boreas* transport, between 2 July 1808 and 26 April 1809, ‘for Bread 152 pounds, Oatmeal 40 gallons, Pot Barley 80 pounds, returned into store at Portsmouth and there condemned 19 April’. Again it was ordered that the Master’s account be credited.³⁸

³⁴ TNA, ADM 8/81-82.

³⁵ TNA, ADM 111/159-160.

³⁶ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (Fontana Press, Harper Collins, 1986) p. 85.

³⁷ TNA, ADM 111/191, 15 June 1809.

³⁸ TNA, ADM 111/191, 15 June 1809.

Errors at the Store Office were not limited to quality concerns. Later in 1809, the purser of the *Vanguard* in the Baltic reported short measures of certain species sent out. Inclosing a 'Report of Survey' on a quantity of cheese received by him from the *Brunton* Victualler, he requested information 'with regard to the shortness of weight &c, with the Report thereon of the Accountant of Stores'. The response from the Victualling Board demonstrates a deep knowledge and command of the issue. As it ordered:

Write the Purser in reply that the Cheese in question, appears to have been laden on board the *Brunton* Victualler at Deptford on the 7th June last, and the circumstance therefore alluded to by him of the warranty of it having been so nearly expired when received on board the *Vanguard* was unavoidable; and state to him that the deficiency in the Weight of the said Cheese, being according to his statement about one pound in sixteen or twenty one pounds, was not greater than what is usual, and might be expected, and that the allowance of the eights is intended to cover such losses.³⁹

It is notable that errors came in 1809, without doubt a low point for the Victualling Board. Mistakes were made in calculating the necessary amounts; further errors were made in loading the victuallers, as both quality and quantities of provisions sent out could be condemned by pursers and Victualling Board officials. It should be pointed that the quantities complained about were small, especially if compared to the large amounts of victuals being supplied to the Baltic fleet. 626 pounds of bread lost among deliveries of hundreds of thousands of pounds of bread was not enough to impact seriously upon a fleet's operational viability. As notable as these fairly insignificant errors is the complete absence of any such problems in 1810 and 1811. A comprehensive search through the archives of the Victualling Board, the Admiralty and those of Saumarez himself has found no mention of similar problems from 1810 onwards.

There were errors out in the Baltic: these were mistakes of receipting, or even carelessness. Mr John Ross, the purser of the *Tartar* stationed in the Great Belt, wrote in September 1809 that 'he received from the Transport Brig *Providence*, Cornelius Ryan Master, Five Boxes of Candles containing 360 pounds, but that as the service was performed in great haste, he made a mistake in reckoning them, and gave a receipt for 460 pounds; and requesting that he may be charged accordingly'. Such receipting

³⁹ TNA, ADM 111/192, 17 October 1809.

mistakes could be easily rectified.⁴⁰ Later that month John Barrow, at the Admiralty, reported a copy of a letter which the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty had received from Lieutenant Stokes commanding the Gun Brig *Constant*, requesting to be allowed the expense of some casks which were lost in ascertaining soundings. The Lieutenant was allowed credit for the two hogsheads, two barrels and twenty eight iron hoops issued by him, ‘in the event of his appearing in debt the articles on his next account’.⁴¹

The Victualling Board managed an efficient provisioning system as borne out by the data presented in this chapter. Mistakes in 1808 are understandable given Britain’s unpreparedness for lengthy Baltic service. In 1809 the naval administration failed the Baltic fleet. Supplies were insufficient and occasionally condemned. A key tenet of the British state was its ability to reform itself. Though not linked to the Baltic fleet in 1809 the commission of Naval Revision, which had been investigating the naval departments since 1804, published its reports and recommendations for the Transport and Victualling Boards. These reforms would be too late to help the Baltic fleet in 1809: the improved performance in 1810 and 1811 is evidence of the Report’s impact.

The Commission of Naval Revision

In April 1809 the 9th, 10th 11th and 12th the Reports of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty’s Navy or more simply the ‘Commission of Naval Revision’ were published. While the Commission was charged with investigating the whole of naval administration, it spent much of its time recommending changes to the Victualling Board. Throughout 1809 the results of these reports were implemented. There were direct ramifications, with specific changes executed. The report brought in wholesale changes to the way in which victualling services were conducted. Efficient control of ships from shore required accurate reports and timely returns of information to the Admiralty and Victualling Board: this whole process was completely overhauled. There were also more subtle transformations. The report, advocating as it did a more

⁴⁰ TNA, ADM 111/192, 11 September 1809.

⁴¹ TNA, ADM 111/192, 18 September 1809.

accountable and streamlined civil service, began to reform the entire culture of naval administration.

How did the report impact on the victualling system? The main focus of the Tenth Report was ‘the numerous instances of mismanagement’, and the huge backlog of accounts. The Commission estimated that there was a total of £10,985,100 worth of cash accounts yet to be paid off and remaining ‘unliquidated’. ‘We cannot avoid remarking, that when it becomes notorious that the Accounts delivered into any Office generally lay there for a considerable time, and sometimes years before they are finally settled’ they wrote. This was put down to ‘a lack of sufficient space to employ more clerks’ and ‘the pressure of the current business’, by which they meant the pressure of war. The Report stated that ‘nothing short of an entire new system [is] likely to be effectual’. The members of the Board were divided into committees of correspondence, accounts and stores.⁴² Operational issues also caused contemporary concern. 1808 to 1809 was a particularly sensitive time for the Victualling Board. Richard Strachan’s squadron stationed off Rochefort had been forced to abandon its station due to lack of victuals: it prompted a public debate in the House of Commons. The failure of the Walcheren expedition, also deriving from logistical issues would advance this further. Though neither was in reality the fault of the Victualling Board, it was the fault of the victualling system, which incorporates the whole of naval administration involved in provisioning. There was severe pressure to improve its operational performance.

The Eleventh Report considered the victualling system abroad, at British out-ports and for foreign fleets. As it observed, the business of victualling ‘is conducted in a loose and confused manner without system, clearness, regularity or method’. The accounts for stores, which were involved in loading supplies for foreign fleets, were ‘unnecessarily intricate and voluminous, without providing any sufficient check’. The Baltic fleet that had been over-supplied in 1808, and would suffer in 1809 from the opposite problem, bore witness to his. With so many of the Board’s staff involved in rendering accounts, there was some doubt ‘who is to be considered really responsible for the Stores’. Books,

⁴² *Commission of Naval Revision*, Tenth Report, pp. 3-5, 8, 13-14, 36.

accounts and returns were ‘unnecessarily multiplied’, full of defective information, often ‘formed from probable calculation, but not from fact’. There were others that were entirely fictitious. Vouchers and returns of information were therefore often useless. They ‘omitted to describe the numerous useless Forms and Accounts kept relating to the supply of provisions to Your Majesty’s ships in ordinary – a branch of duty which we found in much unnecessary perplexity’. It is not hard to see why the Victualling Board had occasionally miscalculated when sending supplies to the Baltic fleet in 1808 and 1809. These criticisms aside, the Commission’s report was not one of blame: instead it targeted ‘the consequences of defects, which have gradually and imperceptibly arisen in the course of the last century’. They took advantage of the opportunity to bring in an entirely new system, replacing the piecemeal reforms of the 18th century.⁴³

The recommendations of the Commission were lengthy and wide-ranging. The main objective was a significant improvement in the Board’s distribution of provisions. All forms of wastage were discouraged: the improvement in victualling efficiency in 1810 was a logical consequence of these reforms. A clerk from the Victualling Office was to attend the issue of provisions to ensure supplies were correct: each clerk was to be given a daily issue book in which all issues would be written, including the species and the quantity. Precise amounts of provisions were to be sent to fulfill the needs of exact numbers of men. They were also to ensure all casks were sent off perfectly full. These daily issue books were to be regularly compared to purser’s receipts by the resident agent. The system whereby receipts, vouchers and bills of lading were regulated was improved, with one ‘Clerk of the Check’ placed in charge. ‘In shipping Provisions and Stores for [foreign] Service, the two clerks shall attend and take an exact Account of the quantity of each species of Stores laden in any Transport, in their respective Daily Issue Books’. These would be forwarded to the Clerk of the Check, and then the agent, who would compare them quarterly. Great care was taken to document and take account of stores lost by leakage and waste: again it would be recorded in various accounts and ledgers, to be double-checked at regular intervals by the storekeeper. Most importantly complete accounts were to be kept of all stores received, issued and expended. By doing

⁴³ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Eleventh Report, pp. 4, 6-7, 24.

so (and checking that what was coming in was similar to what was going out) they aimed at placing the entire victualling establishment on a much more efficient footing, and targeting wastage. There would be a quarterly examination of these accounts. Weekly accounts 'of the progress made in shipping off provisions' were ordered, so ensuring that they 'at all times know the progress made in shipping Provisions and Victualling Stores...on distant service'.⁴⁴ The centralisation of victualling decision-making we saw in Chapter 7 was a by-product of the Commission of Naval Revision.

The delivery of foodstuffs to fleets stationed abroad was now regulated, precise and accountable. As the Victualling Board explained, 'it being essentially requisite in the shipment of Provisions from this Department at Deptford to the Foreign Stations that the Commander in Chief, Agent Victuallers and other persons, to whom the said Provisions &c may be consigned, should be made acquainted, as early as possible, with the respective quantities laden on board each vessels'. At the other end of the system, under the new regulations issued to the 'Agents for the Victualling Establishments at the Home Stations', as soon as the masters of the vessels had signed the receipts for the quantities of provisions and victualling stores shipped on board them, the receipts and invoices were to be forwarded immediately to the Accountant for Stores of this Office, 'to the end that an abstract of the articles shipped may be forthwith laid before the Board by him'. The Board wanted to oversee all levels of the victualling system. It gave warning of the penalties:

in the event of its at any time occurring that the Masters of the Vessels omit to timely sign the receipt, which the Agent at Deptford is by every means in his power to prevent, Ordered further that an abstract and Invoice of such shipment be in those instances forwarded without delay to the Store Accountant for the purpose beforementioned, and that the Masters' receipt be transmitted as speedily after as may be.⁴⁵

Quantities shipped and delivered were noted, so as to inform future decisions.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 74-6, 81, 82, 86, 90.

⁴⁵ TNA, ADM 111/193, 27 October 1809 .

Great care was taken to ensure the most efficient service. As the Commission wrote, ‘the Storekeeper is to issue first the provisions that are the oldest, or in the worst condition for keeping, and to this end he is to regulate the conveyance of them to the respective ships, that the Provisions which it may be proper to expend first may be the last received into the Ships, and thereby stowed uppermost, and most readily got at for being first expended’. Those dealing with public money were to be carefully regulated. The Chief Clerk of the Imprest Office would examine rates of exchange on which Bills of Exchange were drawn.⁴⁶ Problems that had occurred in 1809 with fleets being sent out under-supplied would not happen again.

The Commission found little wrong with the Transport Board. On the contrary, the 9th Report which focused on the workings of the Transport Board, complimented them on the success of the Board since its inception in 1794. The Ninth Report of Naval Revision stated in early 1809 that ‘much Money and Time have also been saved by transferring Ships from one Service to another, according to the demands of each, instead of suffering them to remain unemployed, as was before the practise’.⁴⁷ Published in April 1809, the transport tonnage crisis that would impact on the Baltic fleet later in 1809 did not enter their investigation. The Commission’s most important legacy was not simply the suggestion of specific changes. From 1810 there were continual improvements in both the Victualling Board and Transport Board.

To assess the effectiveness of the Victualling system, we have looked at two criteria: speed and efficiency. In terms of distributing the provisions, even in its worse years, the victualling system provided a fairly timely and efficient service. Delays, while not common, did occur. It is perhaps understandable that the Victualling Board would claim that delays were ‘probably unavoidable’.⁴⁸ Eighteenth century communication and ships prey to adverse weather did conspire on occasion to draw complaints from commanders. For example, in 1800 adverse weather delayed a victualling convoy heading to the Mediterranean. It is to the credit of the naval administration that it did not let such

⁴⁶ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Eleventh Report, p. 74.

⁴⁷ *Commission of Naval Revision*, Ninth Report, p. 14.

⁴⁸ TNA, ADM 110/64/11-2, VB to TB, 13 June 1811.

excuses predominate. James Yeo, the agent victualler at Minorca would no doubt have agreed: as he pointed out, 'in great and multiplied concerns it's possible for an oversight to happen'.⁴⁹

The Baltic fleet did not experience a perfect victualling system in its first two years of existence. The Commission of Naval Revision reported from 1807 onwards, though the chief reforms concerning victualling came in 1809 as the Baltic fleet faced its greatest problems. The Commission's legacy for the victualling of fleets in foreign waters was a widespread tightening and streamlining of the provisioning process. While calculations of foodstuffs needed abroad had always been accurate, from 1810 the Victualling Board squeezed the difference between amounts needed and the amounts sent, as the respective figures for 1810 and 1811 demonstrate. These improvements took effect immediately. More than this they concentrated on improving the timeliness of victualling operations. The Commission's long term effect was an improvement in the culture of naval administration. The key improvement in logistics during the Napoleonic War was the gradual - yet crucial - improvement in speed with which deliveries of foodstuffs were ordered, arranged and loaded. Delays might not have always been the fault of naval administration: this did not stop it improving its performance. Keith in 1800 and Saumarez in 1809 did complain of waiting for victuals but these occasions are conspicuous by their rarity. From 1809 transports were procured more quickly than ever before and exact quantities of provisions were distributed. The timely arrival of provisions would have telling consequences for British sea-power and, consequently, British operational viability.

Victualling, Operations and Strategy

The true test of victualling effectiveness was the concern of every serving admiral and captain: did a shortfall in victualling effectiveness impact on operations? Was the Baltic fleet ever compromised by a lack of victuals? The answer has to be a resounding 'no'.

⁴⁹ NMM, KEI/L/2/212, Yeo to Keith, 29 May 1800.

There were occasions when, as we have seen, supplies were late getting out to the Baltic. These delays and shortfalls could be overcome by the temporary introduction of two-thirds rationing. This was never a popular measure and could not be sustained indefinitely. It could however fill a temporary shortfall and in 1809 was used to great effect. Despite the various and slight shortages in 1809, the fleet continued to pursue its major objectives with no loss to its strategic objectives. Indeed, as can be seen during 1809, the fleet continued to protect trade and blockade the Russian fleet.

There are very few examples where operational capability was undercut by provisioning problems. We saw in Chapter 6 that in 1808 the *Mars* and *Africa* were forced off station to receive a supply of provisions, while the *Ardent* lost 83 men while watering on the Danish shore.⁵⁰ The first was a relatively temporary and innocuous mistake. The second was more concerning for the fleet. However, the self-sufficiency achieved by the Baltic fleet by 1809 with regards to water removed the threat of similar losses. These examples aside, only one example has been found of operational viability coming close to being threatened by severe problems with the victualling service. In 1811, HMS *Plantagenet* was stationed off Rostock protecting trade on its way to and from the Baltic. Its captain, Eyles, wrote on 28 July speaking of ‘the expense of Provisions as stated in the weekly account, having now not more than fifty nine days Bread & Spirits at two thirds allowance’. He added that the ‘victualling also of the *Woodlark* and *Fly*’, two ships also in his squadron ‘will reduce me more’. He stated that he could ‘not rely upon any supply from the Transports gone up, for what are the Contents of two amongst so many and Admiral Reynolds very naturally told the Brigs when asked for Provisions they were to be supplied from the ship whose orders they were under, as he had so many who looked up to him to have their wants supplied’.⁵¹

The lack of supplies meant he was forced off his station. As Dixon explained to Saumarez, ‘In consequence of the very reduced state of the Water and Provisions of that ship. I have directed Captain Williams of the *Dictator* to succeed Captain Eyles on that

⁵⁰ See pp. 154-5.

⁵¹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1810/2. Captain Eyles to Dixon, 28 July 1811.

station, and intend taking the *Plantagenet* to Anholt to compleat her water and afterwards send her to wingo Sound for her Provisions, which I hope will meet your appropriaition. I have completed the *Dictator* in her Water & Provisions from the *Ardent*, which latter Ship will rejoin you the moment her Water is completed at Anholt'.⁵² The two other ships previously mentioned, although smaller, would also remain on station: Eyles mentioned that 'the *Woodlark* & *Fly* [would remain] to Cruize here until my return which movement I trust you will approve'.⁵³ Firstly it should be stated that this was an isolated occasion. Secondly, it should also be mentioned that the operational effects were not a particular concern for Dixon. Relative to the entire geography of the Baltic, the ship's station off Rostock was not especially far from British victualling bases. Both Hano and Anholt were 200km away. Ships from stations away from Hano, Gothenburg, Karlskrona and Anholt in the eastern and lower Baltic (for example off Rostock) were most at risk from running out of victuals. However, as Eyles commented, transports would still reach them. Although the *Plantagenet* left its station, the *Woodlark* and *Fly* remained, and the *Dictator* would soon join them to continue to escort trade to and from northern Germany: operational effectiveness was not compromised. This is also true when we consider the victualling of the whole Baltic fleet. It is an interesting fact that 59 days' worth of victuals provoked such concern: the bar of provisioning standards had been set very high. That this constituted the only major occasion when operations were influenced by victualling speaks volumes about the effectiveness of Baltic provisioning.

1. The Protection of Trade: British Exports

Ultimately, the success of victualling must be judged at the strategic level. Supply is a means to an end. Was the Baltic fleet able to carry out its strategic function? One of its most important duties was the protection of British and neutral trade in that region. This was complicated by many factors. Merchant fleets could still fall prey to French and Danish privateers. A further consideration was that British merchants did not wish the ships laden with their property to appear off the Baltic ports in convoy with the Royal Navy, as this would have defeated the precautions taken to disguise the origin of the

⁵² SRO, HA 93/6/1/1810, Dixon to Saumarez, 4 August 1811.

⁵³ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1810/1, Captain Eyles to Dixon, 25 July 1811.

cargoes.⁵⁴ Above all the Admiralty urged that merchant ships ‘should not be delayed beyond the time necessary to collect the Trade at either of the abovementioned places...’.⁵⁵

There were certainly fears British trade would suffer. Thornton wrote to Canning in June 1808, stating that he was

Strongly inclined to believe, that the Exportation from England through this country to the Russian and other ports of the Baltic will be much less than it is hoped for in England, if I may judge from the number of licenses obtained from His Majesty in Council: and it would be very right, that the merchants of England should prepare themselves for much disappointment and much loss upon this point’. Thornton went on to say that ‘Buonaparte is perfectly indifferent to the suffering and Privations of his Northern Allies, if he does not even take pleasure in augmenting them, and his agents pursue his system with a zeal and rigour, which I should not have expected from so corrupt and greedy of gain as all of them are whom I have seen.⁵⁶

Fortunately for Britain, neither opinion turned out to be accurate. Most obvious was the official hostility of much of the Baltic region. This could be countered however. An entrepôt was created at Gothenburg for ‘the Admission of all British Productions, colonial or manufactured, on certain conditions, and with certain regulations, until they can be re-exported...in other vessels to Ports in the Possession, or under the Influence of France, from which the British Navigation and Commerce are excluded’.⁵⁷

In the first two years of the war, the British fleet proved very successful in allowing trade into the Baltic. As N.A.M. Rodger put it, ‘soldiers and officials even at the highest levels of the Napoleonic system were eminently corruptible, and many honest men, not otherwise disloyal, had no patience with measures openly designed to support Napoleon’s ambitions by beggaring his subjects, and particularly his non-French subjects’.⁵⁸ French Custom officials were paid 500 francs a year, barely more than an unskilled worker. The Chief of police in Leghorn commented on their tendency towards corrupt behaviour: ‘How can you prevent a custom officer earning 40 francs a month...from returning an

⁵⁴ TNA, ADM 1/6/ 28 July 1808. Ryan, ‘The Defence of British Trade’, pp. 449-50.

⁵⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/43, Admiralty Orders, 16 April 1808.

⁵⁶ TNA, FO 73/48, Thornton to Canning, 11 June 1808.

⁵⁷ TNA, FO 73/47, Thornton to Canning, 24 March 1808.

⁵⁸ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 558.

offer of 200 or 300 francs just to pretend to be asleep for half an hour, when he is alone at his post'.⁵⁹ For, despite the supposed hostility of much of the region British trade did continue in northern Germany and Russia.

Danish privateers did record successes against British merchant ships. As we saw in Chapter 1, the entrance to the Baltic was an area where shipping was particularly susceptible to attacks from shallow draughted vessels. In 1808 Saumarez was questioned by the Admiralty concerning the loss of 17 neutral ships in a convoy under HMS *Thunderer* and *Piercer*, reflecting the pressure on government from MP's representing major ports.⁶⁰ The Admiralty wrote to Saumarez hoping that 'the disaster which has unhappily befallen the convoy arose from unavoidable accidents, and not from any deficiency in the force allotted by you for its protection...use your utmost endeavors to prevent any such captures in future'.⁶¹ Again in late 1810 Napoleon's efforts to increase the blockade took shape. In October he decreed the destruction of British owned goods found in territories under his control: in Baltic ports some 240 ships with British cargoes were seized and their contents condemned.⁶² In July 1810 the Danes captured 47 sail off the Skaw.⁶³ In 1810 British shipping losses reached their peak, with 619 vessels lost. More important were the effects of these losses on insurance rates. Baltic rates that in 1806 had been between 3 and 5%, rose as high as 20% in 1808. At their highest, in 1811, they reached 22%.⁶⁴ The Admiralty passed on complaints from the insurers Lloyds: 'The Chairman of a committee appointed by the underwriters of Lloyds to enquire into the losses...that have lately taken place in the Baltic, having respected that you may be permitted to give them such information on the subject as you are in possession of'.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Silvia Marzagelli, 'Napoleon's Continental Blockade: An Effective Substitute to Naval Weakness?' in Bruce A. Elleman and SCM Paine, ed. *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-Strategies 1805-2005* (Routledge, London, 2006) p. 29. Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade 1689-1815* (Dawson, London 1977) p. 29.

⁶⁰ Voelcker, 'From Post Captain to Diplomat', p. 68.

⁶¹ Admiralty to Saumarez, 27 June 1808, Ryan, *Saumarez Papers*, p. 27.

⁶² Christie, *Wars and Revolutions*, p. 314.

⁶³ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 558.

⁶⁴ Ryan, 'The Defence of British Trade', p. 461.

⁶⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1654, Admiralty to Saumarez, 10 December 1810.

Saumarez took particular pride in his protection of British trade; ‘The very trivial loss sustained by the Merchants in the Baltic Trade, is a strong proof of the unremitting care and attention bestowed on that important subject’, he commented in 1808.⁶⁶ Saumarez was constantly at pains to assure his Admiralty superiors that trade protection was his foremost concern. During the evacuation and repatriation of nearly 10,000 Spanish soldiers in August 1808, an operation of considerable importance to British war aims, he was adamant that the protection of trade was still his priority. ‘I enclose herewith the Dispositions of His Majesty’s Ships & Stations in the Baltic’, he wrote back to London:

by which their Lordships will be pleased to observe I have taken the utmost use to afford protection to the Trade of His Majesty’s subjects and of His ally without interfering with the measures to be pursued in rescuing the Spanish Troops from the Islands in the Belt or for weakening the Force stationed for the Defence of Sweden which has always been an object of my greatest attention.⁶⁷

Saumarez’ professional pride aside, the point remains: the conduct of convoys had been successful. The use of an entrepôt and neutral flags, combined with the rather liberal attitudes of continental custom officials meant that by 1809 and in 1810 British trade was once again flowing at something close to its peacetime volume. As an example of the success with which the protection of trade was managed, Admiral Dickson’s accounts between the 25 June and the 9 November 1809 point to 15 separate convoys passing through the Belt, numbering 2,210 ships in total, without any losses.⁶⁸

As Fenwick commented in 1811:

The vigilance of your cruisers and the formidable convoy’s sent thro’ the Belt have completely disheartened the Danish privateers who making few or no prizes now will be all ruined. The government is also thereby deprived of the large revenue which it last year obtained from the amount of goods condemned.⁶⁹

British exports continued to enter the Baltic, albeit with discretion and in lesser quantities than before. This is demonstrated in the graph below. The initial dip in both imports and

⁶⁶ TNA, ADM 1/7/398-405, Saumarez to Admiralty, 21 November 1808.

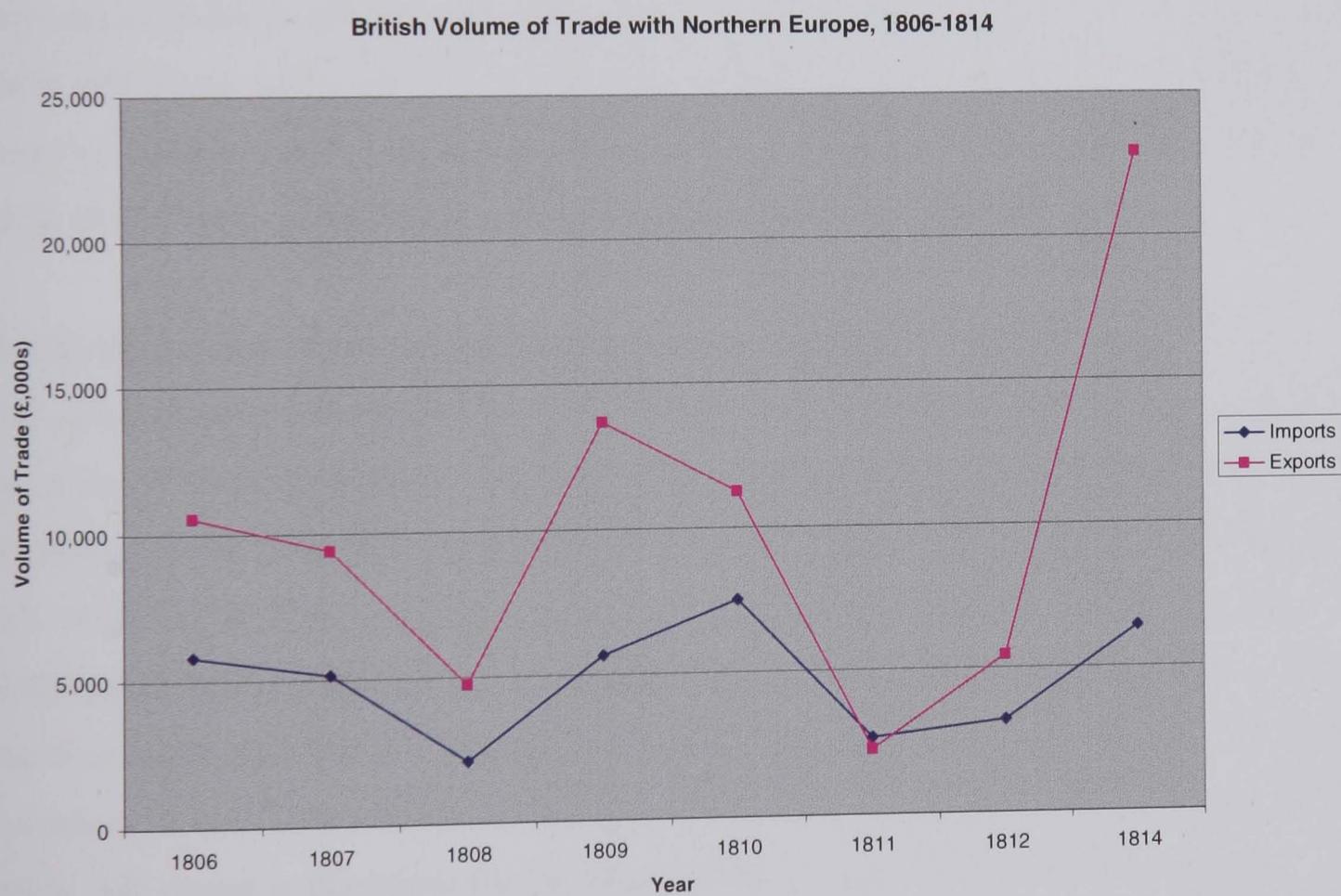
⁶⁷ TNA, ADM 1/6/415-6, Saumarez to the Admiralty, 8 August 1808. Davey, ‘Repatriation’, *Journal of Military History*, forthcoming.

⁶⁸ TNA, ADM 1/9/249, ‘A List of Convoys that have passed within the Limits of Rear Admiral Dickson between the 25th Day of June and the 9th November, off Sproe’, 9 November 1809.

⁶⁹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1787, Fenwick to Saumarez, July 1811.

exports from northern Europe in 1808 is evident. However, the success of the British in maintaining both importing and exporting trade to and from the Baltic in 1809 and early 1810 is also evident: both exports and imports reached a higher level than in the peacetime year of 1806. The renewal of Napoleon's confiscations in late 1810 is also notable as witnessed by the huge drop in 1811, barely recovering in 1812. 1811 was the worst year for Britain economically. British exports to northern Europe fell to only a quarter of the level of 1806. It was in 1811 that Napoleon came closest to severely harming British exports in the Baltic. J Oddy wrote that 'the late stoppages to that exportation [to the Baltic] has occasioned the late of increasing Commercial embarrassment in the Commercial World, whilst the Merchants warehouses & Stores are full: but which they cannot sell at even depreciated value, from the want of Exportation'.⁷⁰

Figure 23



Source: Mitchell and Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*. p. 311. There is no data for 1813, which explains the rather sharp rises in 1814.

⁷⁰ TNA, FO 22/63/7-11, J Oddy, extract from *Oddy's Treatise on European Commerce*, 11 March 1811.

The decline in exports to northern Europe is evident in this graph. The release of economic pressure by 1814 is also obvious, as exemplified by the huge increase in British exports. It is true that exports fell below their pre-war level, particularly in 1811: that they continued at all was due to the work of Saumarez and the British consuls. As Saumarez himself commented in 1808 with some justification, ‘when it is considered that above three hundred sail of vessels have gone under convoy to the Baltic in the face of the immense flotilla which the enemy have collected in Zealand, it cannot be a matter of surprise that 16 of that number should have fallen in their hands’.⁷¹ In the years 1808-10 a significant proportion of British trade continued to enter the Baltic, particularly to Sweden and northern Germany. Indeed, the remarkable amount of trade passing through the Baltic was a source of much complaint to those charged with directing it. Charles Fenwick, the British Consul General in Denmark wrote of ‘the immense British Trade and Navigation thro’ the Sound, have been truly arduous. Forty to fifty, and latterly nearly double that number of British Convoys, with 4,000 Sail of our Merchant ships, arriving annually in the Sound; have engaged more than half of my time’.⁷² Complaints from merchants were rare: individual merchant fleet losses, such as in 1808 and 1810 were exceptional and constituted a small fraction of the overall trade. The withholding of trade from Russia, if anything, was to prove beneficial as we will see.

2. The Protection of Trade: British Imports (particularly Naval Stores)

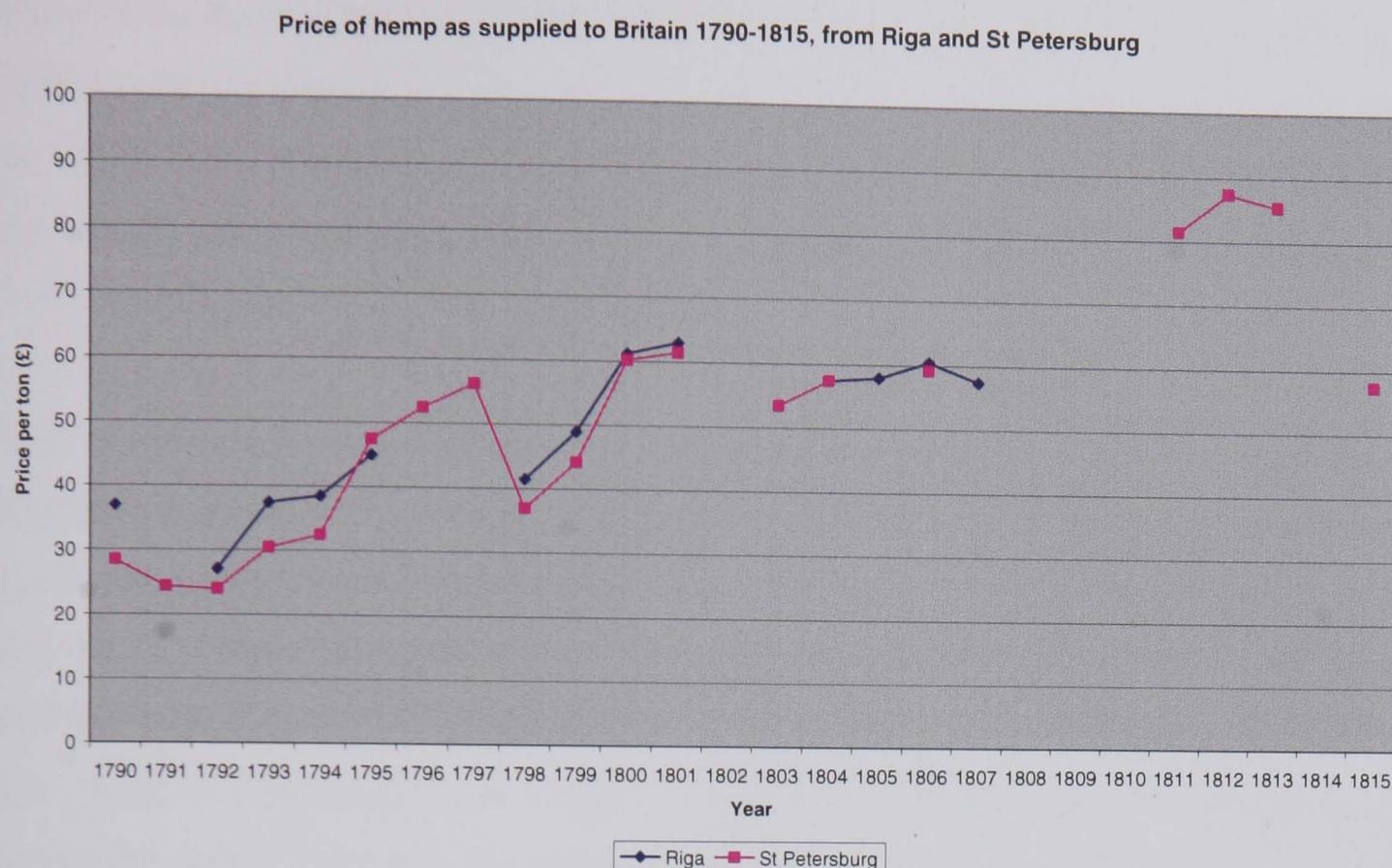
The continental blockade was not merely about reducing British exports. This is partly a question of French intentions and British perceptions: the British were always far more concerned about their ability to obtain crucial naval stores from the Baltic. After all, only two fifths of British overseas trade was with Europe: as Christie has argued, the Continental System was unable to cripple Britain. New markets, particularly in South America were able (in the long run) to replace their Baltic markets.⁷³ We saw in the introduction how essential naval stores from the Baltic were to Britain. The war in the Baltic had severe implications for the prices of these most valuable of commodities.

⁷¹ SRO, HA 93/6/1/192, Saumarez to Mulgrave, 14 July 1808.

⁷² TNA, FO 22/58/20-1, Charles Fenwick to George Canning, 8 January 1808.

⁷³ Christie, *Wars and Revolutions*, p. 312.

Figure 24



Source: House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Online, (417) Accounts Relating to Navy and Victualling Contracts, and Pay of Shipwrights, 1790-1823. There was no data for 1802, and 1808-10. Riga prices from 1811-1815, where recorded, were the same as those at St Petersburg, though they do not show up on the graph.

The graph above demonstrates the changing price of hemp in Britain in the period 1790-1815, perhaps the most crucial resource required. Particularly noticeable are the price spikes in 1800-1 and in 1811. Unfortunately there is no data for the years 1808-10. However, Anderson states that although hemp cost £66 per ton in 1807, by the end of 1808 this had risen to £118, which matches the rest of the data.⁷⁴ This was also true of other naval stores. Prices began to rocket, on account of rising freight rates. Memel fir costing £7 in the autumn of 1806 had risen to £16 by 1809. Danzig plank that had cost £12 in 1806 cost £24 in 1809, and could barely be obtained. The freight rates of hemp rose from a peacetime rate of £2 per ton to £30 per ton in 1809.⁷⁵ Various commentators suggested plans for circumventing the British need for naval stores. Walker wrote to Mulgrave proposing a ‘plan for the preservation of Oak Timber which would give ‘at least a double period of duration to vessels built of timber purchased’, and ‘would not be attended with an expence exceeding £3,000 in the construction of a 74. The increasing &

⁷⁴ Anderson, ‘The Continental System and Russo-British Relations during the Napoleonic Wars’, p. 71.

⁷⁵ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 89.

distressing scarcity of oak timber holds out such a strong temptation to Experiment'.⁷⁶ While in the Baltic Captain Watkins of HMS *Majestic* volunteered for a service, 'which I think can be performed, and desirable on account of the great scarcity of Riga Spars in our Dock Yards. My plan is to attempt carrying away...some vessels as well as a quantity that may be now at Memel (with I conceive very little risk) should your Lordship approve I will enter farther into my plan of proceeding'.⁷⁷

Such plans were not necessary. The supply of naval stores was never threatened by Napoleon's attempt to shut off the continent. Partially this is because the break with the Baltic powers had been foreseen. Efforts had been made to obtain large supplies of iron and naval stores, in Anderson's words 'before the blow fell'. About 70 British merchantmen arrived at Kronstadt for this purpose as late as October 1807, of which only four were in port (and were therefore sequestered) when war was declared on 7 November 1807.⁷⁸ Contract payments between 1 January and 30 April 1807 list huge amounts (in this period alone amounting to a ledger that is too heavy to carry) of hemp, oak, etc, naval stores purchased by the Treasury from the Baltic, although some of this did come from Canada.⁷⁹ Payments for naval stores constitute a thesis in itself (though a challenging one, since the sources are sketchy during the Napoleonic Wars). However, even two years later, it is clear naval stores were getting through. In both 1809 and 1810, British merchants spent more than £700,000 on hemp from northern Europe.⁸⁰ In 1810, imports of timber rose dramatically from £0.5 to £0.8 million.⁸¹ A report to Yorke of 1810 showed that stocks of hemp in store for the navy were 20,249 tons against an annual consumption of 12,000 tons.⁸²

⁷⁶ MA 21/857, Mr Walker to Lord Mulgrave, 15 April 1809.

⁷⁷ MA 21/846, Captain Frederick Watkins, HMS *Majestic* to Lord Mulgrave, 5 March 1809.

⁷⁸ Anderson, 'The Continental System and Russo-British Relations during the Napoleonic Wars', p. 71.

⁷⁹ TNA, ADM 20/322.

⁸⁰ Mitchell and Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, pp.289-290. In 1809 £722,000 was spent, in 1810 the amount was £752,000.

⁸¹ Peter Padfield, *Maritime Power and the Struggle For Freedom: Naval campaigns that shaped the modern world, 1788-1851* (John Murray, 2003) p. 286.

⁸² NMM, YOR/17.

3. The Attack on the Russian Economy

The Baltic fleet enabled British naval power to go on the offensive and blockade its enemies, in particular France and Russia. The ability to attack the Russian economy, while not as important as securing Britain's dependence on Baltic supplies of naval stores, was a vital arm in Britain's offensive strategy. Partly this function was military: preventing the opponent's fleets from leaving port but it also had an economic function, removing mercantile trade from Britain's enemies. France could never be forced out of the war by the maritime blockade, but this was not the case with countries such as Russia more dependent on maritime trade (and therefore more susceptible to economic blockade). There was a clear policy on the part of Britain to force Russia out of her alliance with France by harming her economically. Naval stores continued to be imported from the Baltic, though increasingly from Danzig and northern Germany rather than Russia. Russian finances depended on the export of naval stores to Britain. Sir Stephen Shairp, British Consul General in St. Petersburg, had predicted in 1807 that the removal of this trade would force Russia out of the Continental System. In December 1809 he wrote, 'let her go one year without exporting and she will appreciate the value of our connexion'.⁸³ This table below shows the distribution of Russian exports to European countries before 1807.

Table 29: Distribution of Russian Exports to European nations, 1806

	Flax	Hemp	Tallow	Iron
Great Britain	91.26	61	76	75
France	0.02	2.4	2	2.22
America	0.38	13.7	0.38	
Spain & Portugal	5.5	7		2
Holland, Germany and other places	2.12	15.9	1.5	20.78
	100	100	100	100

Source: TNA, FO 22/63/7-11.

Britain received 91% of Russia's flax, 61% of its hemp, 76% of its tallow and 75% of its iron. These significant amounts were in direct contrast to the French market for

⁸³ TNA, FO 65/71, Sharp to Canning, 9 September 1807, 18 September 1807.

Russian exports. Britain's monopoly of Russian raw produce did much to influence Russia's diplomacy. As Oddy, who drew up the table above, stated of the Baltic states: 'these powers flourished only by their Exportation to Great Britain, that of the whole of Sweden was 7/8ths, Prussia two thirds, and that of Russia, dividing her exportations into 100 parts to all nations'. His table demonstrates that Britain received most of the crucial commodities.⁸⁴

There is little doubt that the Russian aristocracy was seriously affected by the loss of income from their trade in timber, hemp and other products that they had supplied to the British Navy for many years. During the second half of the eighteenth century Great Britain became Russia's most lucrative trading partner.⁸⁵ British contractors also had given long-term credits to both merchants and gentry in Russia which made them largely dependent on trading with Britain. Savoy, the French minister in St Petersburg, had reported it most unlikely that France could take England's place for imports to Russia, and 'what is more, I fear that if measures are taken against England, the Emperor Alexander will have to take severe measures to silence the dissafected'.⁸⁶ Saumarez was well aware of this. In 1810 he wrote to the First Lord of the Admiralty, 'If it were possible for us to go on without any trade to the Baltic, I am convinced it would soon reduce Russia to the necessity of making peace'.⁸⁷

Equally effective was the withholding of British trade to Russia. By the later stages of the Napoleonic Wars, Britain had achieved a further monopoly of the supply of many important colonial products. Fluctuations in British-Russian trade came to mean large price fluctuations in Russia.⁸⁸ The graph above on page 253 demonstrates that British exports to northern Europe were always higher than imports from northern Europe. In essence, Europe needed British trade more than Britain needed European exports. This was to be a powerful tool of policy. J Oddy spoke of 'the consummate wisdom & policy

⁸⁴ J Oddy, extract from *Oddy's Treatise on European Commerce*, FO 22/63/7-11, 11 March 1811.

⁸⁵ Kaplan, *Russian Overseas Commerce*, p. 51.

⁸⁶ Niven, *Napoleon and Alexander I*, pp. 59-61. As a Frenchman, Savoy would have been unaware of the difference between 'England' and 'Britain'.

⁸⁷ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1625, Saumarez to Yorke, 5 November 1810.

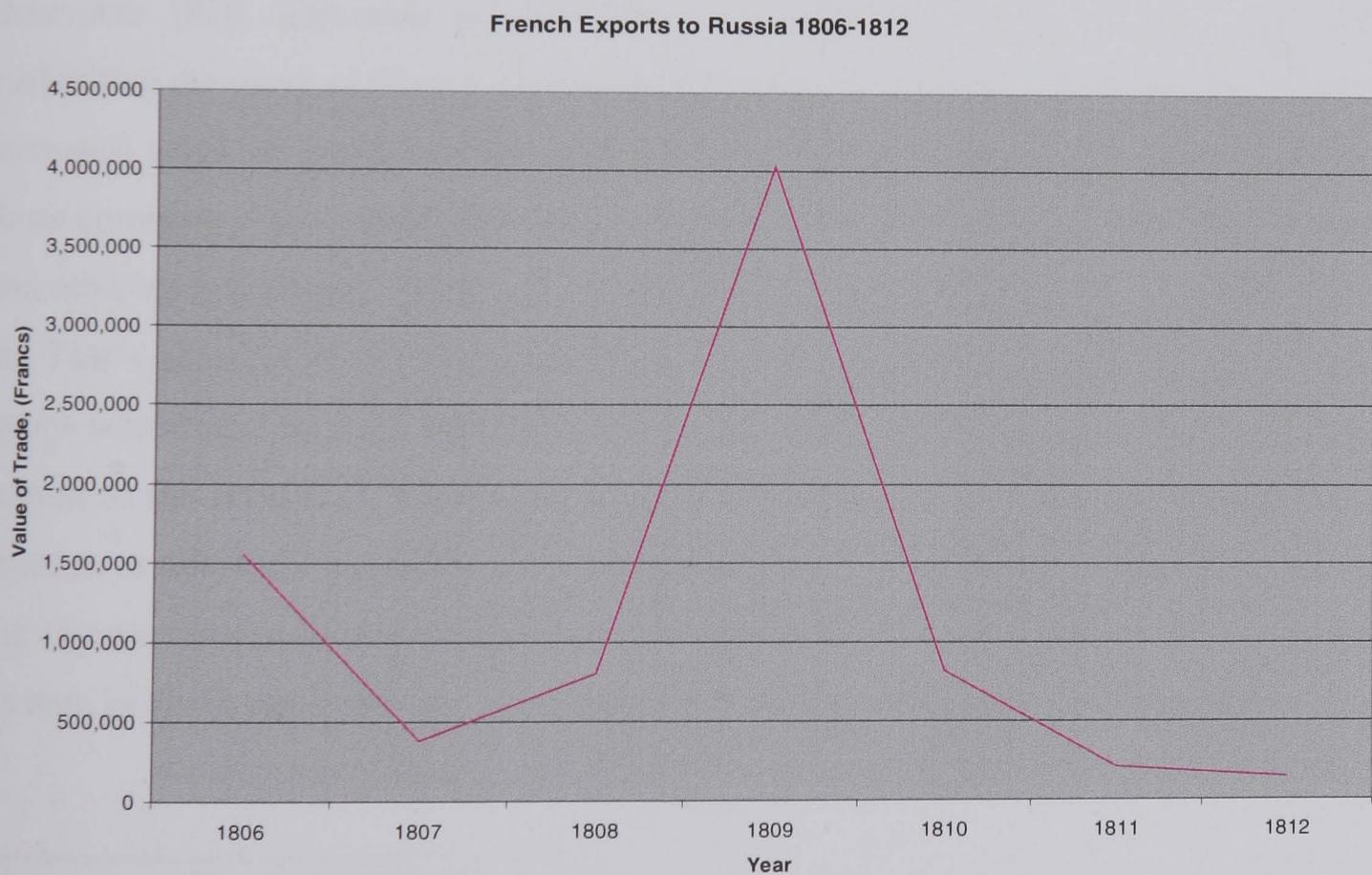
⁸⁸ M.S. Anderson, 'The Continental System and Russo-British Relations during the Napoleonic Wars', p. 75.

of the British Government at this crisis, than not granting any licenses for importation, from the Baltic, and so long as they shall submit Colonial Produce to be so rigidly excluded: & whilst, we are receiving their Exportation, at their own quality in their own shipping, paying their own price & rearing seamen for France, by allowing their Produce to come in foreign vessels into our own ports, the whole voyage'.⁸⁹ The British merchant John Mordaunt Johnston agreed.

For, either we are independent of the trade with the northern nations, or its is indispensably necessary to us; if the former be the case we ought to act a part worthy if a nation like ours, and if the latter, we can command commerce, and render it ultimately secure and profitable, by withholding it altogether for a time; that this system would produce the desired effect is evident to all those who give themselves the trouble to examine the state of the finances of different governments in the north of Europe.⁹⁰

It would be the latter that was decided upon. This policy would ultimately be successful. British imports from Russia were cut drastically. The maritime blockade also reduced French imports to Russia, so that Russia was starved of all colonial goods.

Figure 25



⁸⁹ J Oddy, extract from *Oddy's Treatise on European Commerce*, FO 22/63/7-11, 11 March 1811

⁹⁰ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1641, Johnson to Saumarez, 27 November 1810

Source: A. Chabert, *Essai sur les Mouvements des Revenues et de L'activite Economique en France de 1798 à 1820*, 2 Vols. (Paris, Librairie de Medicis, 1945-1949) Vol. 2, 321, cited in Davis and Engerman, *Naval Blockades*, p. 46

In Figure 25 we can see the rise in French exports to Russia after the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807, but also the decline after 1809 as Saumarez' blockade took effect. This would eventually force Russia into retreating from the Continental System. One writer observed in 1811 that the blockade of the Baltic 'would have harassed the Russian government, and compelled her to choose out of two disastrous alternatives, either to risk a revolution in maintaining the continental system, or precipitate rupture with France in receding from it, at a time too, when the consequence of such a rupture must have been fatal. Looking forward as we then did, and as we have now every reason to do, to a more favourable occasion for such an exertion of her power, there remains little question as to the most preferable of these two expedients...' ⁹¹

Indeed, by 1811, the choice for Russia was clear. Neither the Trianon decree of August 1810 nor the Fontainebleau decrees were accepted by the Russian government. On 31 December 1810, Alexander released 'ukaz' – a tsarist declaration of law – effectively prohibiting the entry of French manufactured goods into Russia.⁹² By this ukase, Russia increased taxes on goods coming by land (predominantly French) but reduced them on those coming by sea (mostly British and colonial goods, albeit under American, Prussian and other neutral flags).⁹³ Napoleon's declaration of war on Russia was directly related to the Tsar's ukase of 1810, allowing English goods into Russian ports.⁹⁴ By 1811 French goods were being burnt in Russia. Russia was showing that she was no longer willing to submit to the economic restrictions Napoleon was trying to impose on her. Napoleon's reaction to this was characteristically violent. In June 1812 he declared war on Russia and the Grande Armee began its march on Moscow. With Sweden leaving the Continental System in 1812, the Baltic was once more open to the full extent of British trade.

⁹¹ FO 22/63/22-7, anonymous letter, tagged 'Preliminary Considerations', Summer 1811 (no date).

⁹² M.S. Anderson, 'The Continental System and Russo-British Relations during the Napoleonic Wars', p. 71.

⁹³ Voelcker, 'From Post Captain to Diplomat', p. 159.

⁹⁴ Watson, *The Reign of George III*, p. 496.

4. The Blockade of the Russian Fleet

The final objective of the Baltic fleet was the blockade of the Russian fleet. In late 1808 Saumarez was presented with an opportunity to attack it. On leaving Cronstadt the Russian fleet entered a brief action with a squadron in the eastern Baltic. On meeting Captain Byam Martin, the fleet was chased into Rogerswick. The Russian fleet would not leave port for the rest of the war. Like the aftermath of Jutland in 1916, battle was unnecessary. The Russian fleet was not to leave its port moorings until 1812, when it went to sea as a friend of Britain. In 1810 a merchant commented to Saumarez that ‘The Russian fleet is still laid up in Cronstadt, and there are no apparent preparations for its fitting-out’.⁹⁵ This was to be the natural state of the Russian fleet: Martin’s brief chase had been all that was necessary to convince them of British naval superiority. Charles Yorke agreed: ‘the apparently intended inactivity of the Russian Fleet (which it would seem is not likely to make its appearance in any Force this season) as well as the kindly disposition of the Swedes (to be encouraged by all proper means) offers results highly advantageous to HM at this conjecture’.⁹⁶

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The operational viability of the Baltic fleet relied upon an effective victualling system. Without regular and timely supplies the British fleet could not have remained at sea for up to ten months at a time without returning to a victualling base in the Baltic, let alone one in Britain. Such effectiveness was a direct result of the British state’s ability to reform and improve itself, improving timeliness and efficiency. As a consequence, the Baltic fleet was able to fulfill its strategic obligations. Although trade was affected, significant amounts continued to be conducted to and from the Baltic. The Russian fleet was blockaded in port: one incident in 1808 notwithstanding, it was to remain there for the entire war. Added to this, the British fleet was able to execute a tight economic blockade that forced Russia to leave the Continental System. In the final instance logistics are a means to a strategic end, and in this the supply to the Baltic fleet was ultimately effective and successful.

⁹⁵ SRO, HA 93/6/1/1407, St Aubin to Saumarez, 25 June 1810.

⁹⁶ NMM, YOR/16, 9, Saumarez to Yorke, 11 August 1810.

Conclusion

This thesis has made a significant contribution to our understanding of naval administration, naval logistics and the operational and strategic consequences that follow from these. Furthermore, it has much to offer British political and economic history. This research has focused on the Royal Navy's involvement in one region over five years, thereby allowing a detailed examination to be made of the relative success of the provisioning operations, and whether this improved over time. Fundamentally, this thesis has been concerned with measuring victualling effectiveness. In a time of war - particularly one which at times stretched Britain's capacity to conduct war - making systems work, regardless of cost, was the crucial consideration. This study has shown that this was the most important concern for politicians, naval administrators and admirals concerned with supplying the Baltic fleet between 1808 and 1812. Once this had been assured, governments could focus on improving efficiency; reducing costs and wastage, and improving speed. These in turn would only make systems more effective.

Victualling is a neglected topic, and what has been written has never considered how provisioning was carried out at ground level, or how logistics impacted upon naval operations. It has been well documented that during the 18th century there were continual improvements in victualling standards. However, the incremental evolution in the effectiveness of the British victualling service that distributed provisions to fleets on foreign stations has never been traced through the century, as outlined in this thesis. There was a clear correlation between an improving victualling service and widening operational capabilities. That being said, even by the 1800s, a reliable service had yet to be implemented. There were fears for the viability of the Baltic fleet as it was prepared in early 1808, due solely to concerns over its ability to sustain itself with victuals once there.

The Victualling Board was rarely short of provisions in its stores: the huge London food market meant the main issue for the board was not whether they were able to procure foodstuffs, but how much they would pay for them. Keeping the Baltic fleet supplied depended on how successfully victuals could be distributed to it. In other

words, it was the logistical dimension that determined operational success. If the provisioning failed, the Royal Navy could not hope to execute its strategic and operational designs. It was the responsibility of naval administration, in particular the Victualling Board and Transport Board to organise and execute provisioning operations. This study has shown how the administrative structure was arranged, and how it managed the process of delivering foodstuffs to foreign fleets.

The provisioning service to the Baltic fleet was effective. In 1808 victualling deliveries arrived on time, with little delays. The victualling service showed itself to be flexible and capable of responding to unforeseen events. In 1809 an increase in the size of the Baltic fleet, widespread national shipping shortages, and faulty administration combined to cause a series of delays of victualling deliveries. These were isolated incidents and for the most part provisioning matters did not impact on the operational effectiveness of naval forces. However, the victualling service could still not guarantee effectiveness.

The fundamental finding of this thesis is in outlining how the victualling service improved after 1810. In this, the thesis has made a significant contribution not just to our knowledge of naval logistics and their strategic consequences but also the 18th century British state. Historians writing on the British state during this period have emphasised the role of patronage, the absence of a meritocracy, and its leaning towards convention to the exclusion of innovation. The naval departments, under pressure of war, were capable and indeed willing to conduct reform. This took two forms. Firstly there were smaller changes to procedures that were the common currency of naval administration. Secondly however were the grander broadly-conceived reforms emanating from governmental commissions into the state of the naval departments. The Commission of Naval Revision, reporting from 1809 instituted a new dynamic; a professional workforce, where ‘men of business’ – men appointed because of their expertise and merit rather than affiliation – managed the issues of state. Hand-in-hand with this, the Commission also oversaw widespread changes that improved the victualling service. Indeed, the one could not happen without the other. A new, streamlined, accountable and efficient victualling service required men of ability to run it.

This study goes against the prevailing historical orthodoxy and also the most recent scholarship on the subject. Janet MacDonald's study of the Victualling Board commissioners during the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France deplores the absence of a meritocracy, stating that, 'the failures of the Victualling Board are attributable to the lack of management competence of the victualling commissioners, which are attributable to the way they were appointed, with more emphasis being given to considerations of political patronage than professional ability'.¹ This thesis has found this to be untrue; from 1808 it was men of talent that ran the Victualling Board.

While, in MacDonald's view, the Victualling Board proved very resourceful dealing with 'acute' demands, they were less competent dealing with long-standing, 'chronic' issues, particularly the backlog of accounts. As a result,

It seems, therefore, that certainly before, and probably after, the changes to the system in 1809 brought about by the Board of Revision, the board of victualling commissioners, as the managers of an important and high-spending government department, were the only competent when dealing with routine matters which had clearly laid-down parameters, or which arose in a manner which prompted an immediate response...whether the Victualling Board's performance improved on a grand scale after 1809 is difficult to ascertain, mainly because it coincided with an escalation in the war effort.²

On the contrary, this study has shown both that it is possible to assess the Board's performance after 1809 and that, when measured, its performance is impressive. Where the business of the Victualling Board and Transport Board mattered, distributing provisions to fleets across the globe, there were considerable improvements in the victualling service after 1809. A more efficient, smoother, and above all quicker victualling system was implemented. We saw in Chapter 2 that earlier in the 18th century procuring transport tonnage for a victualling convoy took months to arrange.³ By 1810, transport tonnage could be procured in a week. From 1810 the timely arrival of victuals, carefully calculated to fit precise numbers of seamen, became commonplace.

¹ MacDonald, 'Management Competence', p. 2.

² MacDonald, 'Management Competence', pp. 293-4. In an earlier work, Macdonald argues that there was little difference between victualling methods of the Napoleonic Wars, and those same methods over the previous seventy years. As she comments, it is 'hard to see how they could have changed it more, given the available technology and administrative systems'. Janet MacDonald, *Feeding Nelson's Navy* (Chatham Publishing, London, 2004) p. 172.

³ See p. 57.

Important though the Commission of Naval Revision was this research has shown that naval administration was both capable and willing to institute procedural change at its own bidding. The centralisation of victualling decision making, the removal of the Navy Board from the provisioning chain of command and the alteration of procedures for provisioning Baltic fleets, all came about before the Commission of Naval Revision reported. Scholars' understanding of the British state, or at least the naval departments that accounted for the majority of the state's spending, must be re-configured.

What must also be re-considered is the 18th century state's relationship with the private sector. Increasingly evident in recent historical inquiries is the inter-dependence of the state and the market. The state depended on the market; unable to produce the vast quantities of victuals, shipping, ordnance, medicines and naval stores needed by the navy itself, it transferred to responsibility, and consequently also the risk onto contractors, who were happy to supply the most reliable purchaser of all: the state.⁴ Britain's success in war required it to use these markets; firstly to ensure adequate supplies, and with these secured, to achieve the best possible price. The state did play these markets successfully, and as this thesis has shown, this was equally the case when procuring transports from the large market for shipping in London.

The reforms of the years 1809-10, both procedural changes related to organic administrative change and widespread reforms instituted by the Commission for Naval Revision, instituted a new victualling service that *could* guarantee effectiveness. This had crucial strategic implications. Operations conducted in the Baltic between 1808 and 1812 could not have been carried out even twenty years earlier. The fleet could be sustained the year round without the need to return to port.

It is important to note that this study has looked only at one theatre. There would need to be corresponding studies of other stations after 1809 before final conclusions on

⁴ Such is the importance of this interdependence that the term 'Contractor-State' is now being presented as a viable alternative to John Brewer's 'fiscal-military' state. The international conference looking at the spending of states across Europe in the 18th century was in 2009 renamed 'The European Contractor State, 1659-1815, and its implications'. See also Knight and Wilcox, *Sustaining the Fleet: War, the Navy and the Contractor State*.

any potential ‘strategic revolution’ could be made. However, if other stations also witnessed the significant improvement in victualling effectiveness seen in the Baltic, it would certainly be possible to point to a strategic watershed in the history of the Royal Navy. In the same way that Napoleon’s decision to live off the land revolutionised land warfare, the Royal Navy’s ability to reliably provision fleets across the globe, using remote transports to continually re-victual fleets, gave it a strategic flexibility none could match.⁵ After 1809, the navy’s ability to do this was assured. A ship sitting in the eastern Baltic would be as well provisioned as one lying off Deptford; therein lay the new-found strategic flexibility.

This thesis has demonstrated that an effective logistical system was the key to supporting strategic objectives. The Royal Navy fleet could be maintained in the Baltic from April until December each year; the victualling service allowed the Royal Navy to command the Baltic Sea to an unprecedented degree. Consequently, British and neutral trade was protected and the Russian fleet was blockaded, as was continental trade. The economic blockade of the continent would ultimately force Russia into leaving the Continental System and tempt Napoleon into his greatest mistake: the attack on Russia in 1812. This is something often missed by historians: the Baltic region has been seriously overlooked in analyses of war and national interests, something this study has repudiated. Indeed, the success of the Baltic blockade foreshadowed a strategy Britain again resort to in the Baltic against Russia. During the Crimean War the British would again blockade Russia in the Baltic; ‘as a

⁵ Napoleon’s decision to live off the land, though never wholly relied on, enabled his corps to be dispersed over much wider areas, converging when necessary at the ‘decisive point’. As Howard argues, the French armies ‘had to a large extent live off the country...Napoleon expected his troops to fend for themselves, which indeed they did, though they did make the French cause very unpopular in the process’. This policy did however work less well as Napoleon began to penetrate the less fertile areas of Europe into, Poland and Spain. See Michael Howard, *War in European History*, (Oxford University Press, 1976) pp. 84-5. As Rothenburg has argued, although Napoleon ‘did not entirely rely on “living off the land”, and frequently, such as in 1800, 1807, and again in 1812, laid down great magazine for the supply of the army...Napoleonic strategy was based on rapid movement forcing the enemy into decisive battle. Large wagon trains, even if they had existed, could not have kept pace’. One notable example was the Austerlitz campaign in December 1805, where, lacking effective logistical support from the supply train, he drove ahead anyway, living off the land and stores captured from intact Austrian arsenals, ultimately securing the defeat of the 3rd Coalition. This army carried a mere eight days worth of rations with it, spread over a wide frontage, able to subsist of the country. See Gunther Erich Rothenburg, *The Art of Warfare in the Age of Napoleon* (Indiana University Press, 1981) pp. 129-130. See also Martin van Creveld, *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge University Press, 1977) pp. 40-61, and John Morgan, ‘War Feeding War? The Impact of Logistics on the Napoleonic Occupation of Catalonia’, in the *Journal of Military History*, No.73, (January 2009), pp. 83-116.

gradual, cumulative strategic instrument the blockade could degrade Russian military performance, weaken the resource base of the state, and assist the move towards peace'. The Russian dependence on the regular exports of bulky primary produce was exposed, resulting in a rapid decrease in wartime spending linked to the collapse of import-based customs revenues. At the end of the war, revenue met only one quarter of wartime expenditure, leading to a sizable deficit and serious inflation.⁶ As in 1808-1812, economic warfare had concrete political results.

The victualling system that supported naval forces in the Baltic and indeed around the world therefore played a vital role in the final British victory in 1815. It certainly gave Britain a crucial advantage over its rivals. The effective victualling service executed in the Baltic was in direct contrast to the Swedish fleet, which in 1808 was paralysed by scurvy, thus removing its ability to conduct operations in the Baltic. Conversely, the British fleet continued to patrol the Baltic, hundred of miles from the nearest out-port.

The victualling service was only one element of the British war machinery, albeit a significant one. Ultimately British success in the Napoleonic War rested on its financial advantage. British national debt enabled it to borrow much larger amounts than its enemy, and at much lower rates. This was particularly true of the last eight years of the war. The 'fiscal-military state' proved itself to be an unrivalled form of organization for the waging of 18th century warfare. Investors were only willing to subscribe to large loans *because* they were backed by a highly efficient tax regime which guaranteed the payment of interest. Daunton summed up the financial achievement well:

The Navy was the largest business of the eighteenth century. A first-class naval vessel with a crew of 900 exceeded the work-force of the largest factory; it involved large fixed capital in dockyards; and demanded a massive provisioning system to supply food, munitions, ropes, sails, and myriad pieces of iron, brass and copper...the outcome was an efficient system of tax collection and public finance which allowed Britain to bear a heavier financial burden than France, yet without a political crisis threatening the state.⁷

⁶ Andrew D. Lambert, 'The Crimean War Blockade 1854-6' in Bruce A. Elleman and S.C.M. Paine, *Naval Blockades and Seapower: Strategies and Counter-strategies 1805-2005* (Routledge, London, 2006) pp. 46, 56.

⁷ Daunton, *Progress and Poverty*, p. 511.

But as Daunton hints, it was not just the raising of capital. How that capital was spent was as just important; in the victualling service, the British had spent their money well. Indeed, the financial power Britain enjoyed enabled it to pay for an expensive supply system without worrying about cost.

British policy-makers had no doubt as to the potency of naval power: it was the central arm of any national strategy. In battle, blockade, or in the movement of troops, the navy had the technical expertise, experience and leadership to execute such operations. The challenge in regions such as the Baltic where the Royal Navy had little experience, was being able to sustain them once there. All possible avenues were explored. Exceptional diplomatic manoeuvres for instance secured important local foodstuffs, while every effort was made to find and exploit local water sources. The assimilation of knowledge and experience, and its consequent application was the mainstay of the improving victualling service in the 18th century. This study has shown that this continued between 1808 and 1812. The process whereby naval administration learnt from the previous years experience was not unique, to the time or indeed the place. Similarly, the Russian army displayed a similar learning curve in its campaigns against Napoleonic France from 1812 onwards.⁸ The last five years of the Napoleonic War saw all European states improving their military means to secure the defeat of Napoleon. For Britain this meant unleashing the full force of British naval power. For this it required a victualling service that could sustain a naval force, enabling it to act wherever, and for as long as, it wanted. After 1809, the Baltic fleet could count on such a service.

⁸ See Dominic Lieven, *Russia Against Napoleon: The Battle for Europe 1807-1814* (Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 7-8, *passim*. The Russian army became more professional, while improving its logistical systems, greatly contributing to its advance on Paris.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Time taken to secure transport tonnage to the Baltic.

VB Order	Tonnage Ready¹	Time Taken	TNA reference
1808			
7 June	17 June	10	ADM 111/187
15 July	19 July	4	ADM 111/188
5 September	20 September	14	ADM 111/188
22 September	7 October	14	ADM 111/58/328-9
		10.5	
1809			
20 May	25 May	5	ADM 111/191
20 May	10 June ²	21	ADM 111/191
16 August	7 September	22	ADM 111/192
6 September	12 September	6	ADM 111/192
20 November	23 November	3	ADM 111/193
		11.4	
1810			
31 March	1 May	5	ADM 111/195
31 March	4 May ³	4	ADM 111/195
5 June	25 July	20	ADM 111/196
		9.6	
1811			
8 April	2 June	7	ADM 111/199
<i>8 April</i>	<i>18 June</i>	<i>71</i>	ADM 111/199
20 July	27 July	7	ADM 111/200
<i>20 July</i>	<i>26 August</i>	<i>37⁴</i>	ADM 111/200
		7	

¹ This date ‘tonnage ready’ corresponds to the day the last transport needed was procured.

² Delivery was split into two separate deliveries, which left at different times with different convoys.

³ Delivery travelled with two convoys, one on the 1 May 1808 and one on the 4 May 1808.

⁴ In 1811, each ‘delivery’ was planned to proceed to the Baltic on separate convoys. Partly this was to spread the risk if capture/destruction, but also to reduce the time perishable goods would be stored unused. Since deliveries were split into two, there was a deliberate delay in time between the order for provisions and the procurement of tonnage. Therefore, measuring the time between the original order and the final provision of transport tonnage is anomalously high, bearing no relation to the Board’s ability to procure tonnage. Therefore, italicised data has been left out of calculations of the overall average procurement averages.

1812			
19 May	28 May	9	ADM 111/203
9 July	20 July	11	ADM 111/203
27 July	29 July	2	ADM 111/204
15 September	18 September	3	ADM 111/204
26 October	2 October	6	ADM 111/205
		6.2	
Average 1808-1812		10.83	

Appendix 2: Time taken to secure tonnage to the Mediterranean, 1800-1802

VB Order	Tonnage Ready	Time Taken	TNA reference
24 March 1800	2 May	39	ADM 111/154-5
10 February 1801	3 March	21	ADM 111/158
9 June 1801	6 July	27	ADM 111/158-9
16 September 1801	16 October	30	ADM 111/160-1
14 April 1802	12 May	28	ADM 111/163
Average 1800-2		29	

Appendix 3: Time taken to load victualling shipments

Transports Procured	Transports loaded and convoy arranged	Time Taken	TNA reference
1808			
17 June	21 June	4	ADM 111/187, ADM 51/1824
19 July	28 July	9	ADM 111/188
20 September	29 September	9	ADM 111/188, ADM 110/58/283-4
7 October	14 October	7	ADM 110/58/328-9
		7.25	
1809			
25 May	15 June	20	ADM 111/192
10 June	4 July	24	ADM 111/192
7 September	12 September	5	ADM 111/193
12 September	18 September	6	ADM 111/193
23 November	29 November	6	ADM 111/193
		12.2	
1810			
1 May	11 May	10	ADM 111/195
4 May	21 May	17	ADM 111/195
25 July	7 August	13	ADM 111/196
		13.3	
1811-12⁵			
Average 1808-1810		10.83	

⁵ After 1810, the Victualling Board minutes become less revealing about the times in which transports were loaded. Indeed, with deliveries being planned months in advance from 1810, the time between transports being procured and their being loaded becomes less representative of their performance.

Appendix 4: Time taken to deliver provisions to various areas of the Baltic.

It has proven difficult to discover every delivery's timings. Using ships logs, the victualling minutes and other records it has been possible to build a partial picture. As in Appendix 1, since deliveries were planned in advance, the time between the VB order and the arrival does not correspond to administrative performance, with the original order coming months before tonnage and loading was necessary. Therefore, only 1808-9 has been used.

VB Order	Arrive at Gothenburg/ Wingo Sound	No. Days	Arrive Hano/ Bornholm/ Karlskrona	No. Days	Arrive Nargen Island, Gulf of Finland	No. Days	TNA reference
1808							
7 June			25 July	49	6 August	60	ADM 111/187, ADM 51/1825, ADM 52/3798
15 July			22 August	36	6 October	83	ADM 111/187, ADM 51/1825, ADM 52/3798
6 September							
23 September			1 December	69			ADM 1/7/461-2
1809							
20 May	23 June	34			21 July	62	ADM 111/191, ADM 51/1958, ADM 51/2345
20 May	12 July	53	10 August	82	26 August	98	ADM 111/191, ADM 51/2345, ADM 51/1979

16 August	21 October	66	10 November	86			ADM 111/192, ADM 51/2976
6 September							
20 November	9 December	19					ADM 111/193, ADM 51/1996
Average		43		64.4		75.75	

Appendix 5: Efficiency of victualling deliveries, Bread.

* Covered by rations on board ships that left Deptford in April

April 1808 – March 1809

Month	No. Men on station	No. Rations needed (lbs)
April 1808	*	
May 1808	*	
June 1808	*	
July 1808	*	
August 1808	*	
September 1808	*	
October 1808	10796	365678
November 1808	10144	304320
December 1808	6578	203918
January 1809	6336	196416
February 1809	2625	81375
March 1809	3596	111476
Spanish Soldiers	9897 (for 52 days)	514644
Total Needed		1777825

Delivery	No. Bags	No. lbs delivered (112 lbs in a bag)
Shipment 1	5500	616000
Shipment 2	5500	616000
Shipment 3	5500	616000
Shipment 4	5825	652400
Total Delivered		2500400

April 1809 – March 1810

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April 1809	*	
May 1809	*	
June 1809	*	

July 1809	*	
August 1809	*	
September 1809	*	
October 1809	15746	488684
November 1809	15390	461700
December 1809	10038	311178
January 1810	5827	180637
February 1810	3000	84000
March 1810	3000	93000
Total Needed		1619199

Delivery	No. Bags	No. lbs
Shipment 1	6000	672000
Shipment 2	2250	252000
Shipment 3	2500	280000
Extra	270	30240
Shipment 4	1375	154000
Total Sent		1388240

April 1810 – March 1811

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April 1810	*	
May 1810	*	
June 1810	*	
July 1810	*	
August 1810	*	
September 1810	*	
October 1810	15900	492900
November 1810	13965	418950
December 1810	9897	310000
January 1811	2511	76260
February 1811	2511	70000
March 1811	2511	77500
Total Needed		1445610

Delivery	No. Bags	No. lbs

Shipment 1	5000	560000
Shipment 2	8000	896000
Extra	1563	175056
Total Sent		1631056

April 1811 – March 1812

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April 1811	*	
May 1811	*	
June 1811	*	
July 1811	*	
August 1811	*	
September 1811	*	
October 1811	13700	424700
November 1811	13500	405000
December 1811	5600	173600
January 1812	5600	174282
February 1812	2220	61600
March 1812	2220	68200
Total Needed		1307382

Delivery	No. Bags	No. lbs
Shipment 1	5500	616000
Shipment 2	6600	739200
Total Sent		1355200

April 1812 – March 1813

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April	*	
May	*	
June	*	
July	*	
August	*	

September	*	
October	9327	289137
November	9327	279810
December	9327	289137
January	1884	58404
February	1884	52752
March	1884	58404
Total Needed		1027644

Delivery	No. Bags	No. lbs
Shipment 1	5000	560000
Shipment 2	500	56000
Shipment 3	6600	739200
Total Sent		1355200

Appendix 6: Efficiency of Victualling Deliveries: Spirits

Because the spirit ration could be replaced by a wine ration at times, wine has been converted into the equivalent spirit ration. Men were given a pint of wine in place of a half pint of spirits per day.

* Covered by rations on board ships that left Deptford in April

April 1808 – March 1809

Month	No. Men	No. Rations (pints)
April 1808	*	
May 1808	*	
June 1808	*	
July 1808	*	
August 1808	*	
September 1808	*	
October 1808	11796	182838
November 1808	10144	152160
December 1808	6578	101959
January 1809	6336	98208
February 1809	2625	40688
March 1809	3596	55738
Spanish Soldiers	9897 for 52 days	257322
Total Needed		888912

Delivery	Gallons Spirits	Pints of spirits	Gallons wine	Equivalent to x pints of wine
Shipment 1	38500	308000		
Shipment 2	38500	308000		
Shipment 3	38500	228000	20000	320000
Shipment 4	20387	163096	40775	652400
Totals		1007096		486200
Total Sent				1493296

April 1809 – March 1809

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April 1809	*	
May 1809	*	
June 1809	*	
July 1809	*	
August 1809	*	
September 1809	*	
October 1809	15784	244342
November 1809	15390	230850
December 1809	10038	155589
January 1810	5827	90318
February 1810	3000	42000
March 1810	3000	46500
Total Needed		809599

Delivery	Gallons Spirits	Pints of spirits	Gallons wine	Equivalent to x pints of spirits
Shipment 1	42000	336000		
Shipment 2			10500	42000
Extra	8750	70000	17500	70000
Shipment 3	945	7560	1890	7560
Shipment 4	350	2800	700	2800
Totals		416360		122360
Total Sent				538720

April 1810 – March 1811

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April 1810	*	
May 1810	*	
June 1810	*	
July 1810	*	
August 1810	*	
September 1810	*	
October 1810	15958	246450
November 1810	13965	209475
December 1810	9897	155000

January 1811	2511	38131
February 1811	2511	3511
March 1811	2511	3877
Total Needed		722805

Delivery	Gallons Spirits	Pints of spirits	Gallons wine	Equivalent to x pints of wine
Shipment 1	35000	280000	35000	140000
Shipment 2	39666	317328	39666	158664
		597328		298664
Total Sent				895992

April 1811 – March 1812

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April 1811	*	
May 1811	*	
June 1811	*	
July 1811	*	
August 1811	*	
September 1811	*	
October 1811	13700	212350
November 1811	13500	202500
December 1811	5622	86800
January 1812	5622	87141
February 1812	2220	30800
March 1812	2220	30800
Total Needed		653691

Delivery	Gallons Spirits	Pints of spirits	Gallons wine	Equivalent to x pints of wine
Shipment 1	19250	154000	38500	154000
Shipment 2	32666	261328	32666	136164
		415328		284664

Total Sent				699992
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April 1812 – March 1813

Month	No. Men	No. Rations
April 1812	*	
May 1812	*	
June 1812	*	
July 1812	*	
August 1812	*	
September 1812	*	
October 1812	9327	144589
November 1812	9327	139905
December 1812	9327	144568
January 1813	1884	29202
February 1813	1884	16376
March 1813	1884	29202
Total Needed		513822

Delivery	Gallons Spirits	Pints of spirits	Gallons wine	Equivalent to x pints of wine
Shipment 1	23333	186664	23333	93332
Shipment 2	14000	112000	28000	112000
Shipment 3	40425	323400	11500	46000
		622064		251332
Total Sent				873396

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ADM 7/791-795: Baltic Convoy Lists 1809-1811

ADM 7/869: Abstract of Salaries due to persons on the Victualling Establishment, 1805-1821

ADM 8/69-100: List Book, showing the disposition of Ships, names of Officers 1792-1815

ADM 20/322-4: Treasury Ledgers, Naval and Victualling, 1808-1809

ADM 51: Captains Logs

- | | |
|-------------|-------------------|
| ADM 51/1824 | <i>Centaur</i> |
| ADM 51/1958 | <i>Curlew</i> |
| ADM 51/1979 | <i>Mercurius</i> |
| ADM 51/1996 | <i>Osprey</i> |
| ADM 51/2093 | <i>Alonzo</i> |
| ADM 51/2295 | <i>Fantome</i> |
| ADM 51/2300 | <i>Drake</i> |
| ADM 51/2345 | <i>St George</i> |
| ADM 51/2396 | <i>Fury</i> |
| ADM 51/2425 | <i>Gluckstadt</i> |
| ADM 51/2564 | <i>Mercurius</i> |
| ADM 51/2567 | <i>Manley</i> |
| ADM 51/2837 | <i>Sheldrake</i> |
| ADM 51/2934 | <i>Victory</i> |
| ADM 51/2976 | <i>Woodlark</i> |
| ADM 51/3878 | <i>Lancaster</i> |
| ADM 51/4062 | <i>Hebe</i> |

ADM 52: Masters Logs

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