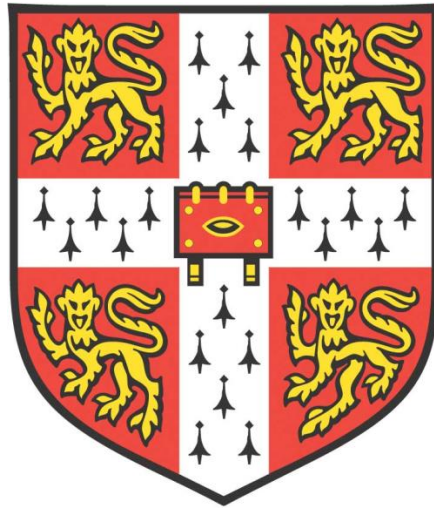


A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HISTORY OF THE 1797 FLEET MUTINIES AT SPITHEAD AND THE NORE



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This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

ABSTRACT

Callum Easton, 'A Social and Economic History of the 1797 Fleet Mutinies at Spithead and the Nore'.

This thesis presents an analysis of the 1797 fleet mutinies at Spithead and the Nore based on an application of methodologies drawn from social, economic, and cultural history. Using both quantitative and qualitative sources, I present a new interpretation of these momentous events that reveals the centrality of perceptions of fairness and 'good usage' to their causation, course, and legacy with implications for historiographies of labour relations and popular protest. I have analysed the evidence used in previous studies to support the interpretation that the mutinies were revolutionary in their intentions and concluded that this does not provide a credible case. For the first time, I have quantified the impact of the stagnation of sailors' wages between 1653 and 1797 on their purchasing power and conclude that this was a, but not *the*, cause of mutiny. Through the study of mutineer writings, rhetoric, and behaviour, I argue that insult and hurt pride were key motivators of mutiny and that relative rather than absolute naval conditions were pivotal causes of dissatisfaction. I assert that complex social inversions were employed by mutineer leaders to create legitimacy and encourage obedience towards their regime while minimising the need for violence or coercion. The practical challenges inherent to daily life during mutiny are contended to have encouraged continuity and moderation on both sides. Far from a 'terror', the judicial response to the mutinies was, I conclude, both pragmatic and conciliatory, while also within precedent for naval justice and reflective of judicial practice in civil society. The public perceptions of the mutinies are found to have been hotly contested and rehabilitation of the navy had to wait for redemption provided by victory at sea. Frequent comparisons are drawn between naval practice and the wider attitudes and prevailing circumstances in British society on shore.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CMP	Court Martial Papers
CMPNM	Court Martial Papers Nore Mutiny
LCS	The London Corresponding Society
NMM	The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
UI	The United Irishmen

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Map of South East England with Spithead marked in blue and the Nore in red.



INTRODUCTION

The 1797 fleet mutinies were a nightmare scenario for the British state. Their timing could hardly have been worse and it is difficult to overstate the fear that they engendered. Britain's last continental ally, Austria, was in the process of making peace with France, and successive poor harvests in 1795 and 1796 had led to an increase in social unrest. In December 1796 an attempted French landing in Ireland had been narrowly foiled not by the Royal Navy but by poor weather. Soon afterwards, the abortive French raid on Fishguard in February 1797 had sparked a run on the Bank of England and forced William Pitt's government to suspend cash payments. It was against this bleak context that, between mid-April and mid-June 1797, the Royal Navy mutinies at Spithead and the Nore dropped British prospects to a new and terrifying nadir.¹

I. The 1797 Fleet Mutinies: A Short Narrative

The 1797 fleet mutinies at Spithead and the Nore directly involved approximately 30,000 men, immobilised the two fleets responsible for defending Britain at the height of wartime, and were played out within easy sight of the civilian population on shore.² The presence of the mutinous fleets in the Solent and at the mouth of the Thames struck at the twin pillars of the British 'fiscal-naval state': the naval establishment centred on Portsmouth, and the maritime trade of London.³ By taking control of warships the mutineers possessed themselves of the most technologically advanced, powerful, and expensive weapons at the disposal of any eighteenth-century state. As one military observer noted, even 'if the whole

¹ G.E. Manwaring and Bonamy Dobrée, *The Floating Republic* (London: Frank Cass and Co. LTD, 1966), pp. 3-6.

² Admiralty List Books, April-June 1797, TNA, ADM 8/73.

³ The term is N.A.M. Rodger's in, 'From the "Military Revolution" to the "Fiscal-Naval State"', *Journal for Maritime Research* 13 (November 2011), pp. 119-28.

inhabitants of Britain were soldiers [...] they are unequal to the task of subduing a single ship of the line'.⁴ Edmund Burke, meanwhile, believed that the mutinies rendered Britain so vulnerable that 'our only hope is in a submission to the enemy [...] [on] any terms'.⁵

The mutinies began on 16 April 1797 when the sailors of the Channel Fleet refused to sail from Spithead. Six weeks earlier the discontented sailors had sent petitions for redress of grievances to the veteran, Admiral Howe.⁶ Having received no answer, the sailors determined not to put to sea until their demands had been considered. Life nevertheless continued in an orderly fashion. Daily routines were maintained and officers obeyed, apart from weighing anchor. The mutineers did not allow escort ships to join the demonstration lest trade should suffer.⁷

The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty quickly admitted the justice of most mutineer demands. They conceded higher pay, larger food rations, and pay for sick seamen to be applied to the entire navy. Howe also agreed that some unpopular officers would be transferred. Legislation was set in motion and a royal pardon prepared, but the delay bred suspicion, which led to the only fatal incident of the Spithead mutiny. Four men were killed on board the *London* when Vice-Admiral Colpoys attempted to confine sailors below decks. The mutinous crew showed notable restraint and did not take retribution. On 15 May the Spithead mutiny ended in cordial celebrations as Admiral Howe informed each ship that their demands had been met. No one was punished for their involvement in the mutiny.

On 12 May, a supporting mutiny broke out at the mouth of the Thames. The small, rag-tag Nore fleet was less important to national security than the Channel Fleet and the Admiralty assumed that news of the Spithead settlement would quickly restore order. Having just granted most of the demands of one mutinous fleet, the government and Admiralty worried that further concessions would fatally compromise their command.⁸ The just grievances of the Spithead fleet had been redressed to the benefit of all sailors. Consequently, a dim view was taken of the Nore mutiny, particularly when new demands were presented.

⁴ Philip Patton, *Account of the Mutinies at Spithead and St Helens in April and May 1797*, NMM, TUN/212 pp. 4-5.

⁵ J.P. Gilson (ed.), *Correspondence of Edmund Burke and William Windham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 241.

⁶ Admiralty Petitions c. 1793-1798, TNA, ADM1/5125.

⁷ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Portsmouth: 1797, TNA, ADM1/1021-23, fol. 356.

⁸ Admiralty out-letters, Secret Letters, TNA, ADM 2/1352, fol. 90; Admiralty Rough Minutes, 1797, TNA, ADM 3/137, fol. 111.

Determined not to negotiate, and conscious that the small Nore fleet posed little threat, the Admiralty decided to wait out the crisis.⁹ On 30 May, however, the bulk of the North Sea Fleet (eleven ships of the line) deserted Admiral Duncan and joined the Nore mutiny.¹⁰ The authorities cut off supplies to the ships involved, but this backfired when the mutineers blockaded the Thames to confiscate provisions from passing ships. This action decisively turned public opinion against the mutineers and strengthened the government's hand, as expressed in newspapers across the political divide.¹¹ With no sign of compromise or negotiation, the mutiny began to fall apart, and the last two ships surrendered on 15 June. Courts martial followed and approximately twenty-eight mutineer ringleaders were executed.¹² However, on 11 October, many of the same ships and crews decisively defeated the Dutch fleet at the battle of Camperdown, which did much to restore the reputation of the navy.¹³

II. Historiographical Overview

The first history of the 1797 fleet mutinies was William Johnson Neale's 1842 work, *History of the Mutiny at Spithead and the Nore*.¹⁴ Neale gave an overview of both mutinies, but had the benefit of only a small fraction of the primary sources now available to historians. His history uses an anecdotal style and presents many factual errors. These range from mistaking the dates of some events to serious suggestions relating to causation which have often been repeated despite being demonstrably false. Wilson's history of the mutinies embodied common Victorian perceptions about the brutal and unpleasant nature of life in the

⁹ This view was quickly disproved by the mutineers' interdiction of Thames trade.

¹⁰ Conrad Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1913), p. 165.

¹¹ For details on the role of newspapers during the Spithead mutiny see David London, 'Mutiny in the Public Eye: The Role of Newspapers in the Spithead Mutiny' (King's College, London, PhD thesis, 2001).

Government and opposition newspapers were united in their horror at the blockade of the Thames.

¹² Admiralty Rough Minutes, 1797, TNA, ADM 3/137, fols. 306-22.

¹³ This brief overview of the mutinies presents an uncontroversial narrative which corresponds to the work of, for example, Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*; and Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*.

¹⁴ William Johnson Neale, *History of the Mutiny at Spithead and the Nore: With an Enquiry into Its Origin and Treatment: And Suggestions for the Prevention of Future Discontent in the Royal Navy* (London: Thomas Tegg, 1842).

eighteenth-century Royal Navy.¹⁵ These suggestions, however, were unconvincingly substantiated using broad generalisations rather than specific sources. Of final note is Johnson Neale's evident presentism as he sought to use the mutinies as exempla for preventing disturbances in the Royal Navy of the 1840s. This led him to express anachronistic views in relation to the mutinies, such as on temperance.¹⁶

The next account, Herbert's *Great Historical Mutinies* (1876)¹⁷ drew almost exclusively on Johnson Neale's 1842 work. Both follow a clear Whig line in presenting the mutinies as the result of mismanagement on the part of the Pitt administration. In Herbert's book, this was taken to an extreme by his assertion that 'Richard Parker [the most famous Nore mutineer] and his associates were benefactors to the British navy, saving it, as they did, from the ruin being worked on it by George III, Mr Pitt, and their adorers'.¹⁸ Herbert's religious beliefs coloured his views on matters such as temperance and Pitt's misdemeanours to determine his views on the mutinies.

The first scholarly work on the subject of the Spithead and Nore mutinies was Conrad Gill's *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (1913).¹⁹ This provides a much more detached and methodical investigation of the mutinies. His was the first systematic analysis of their causation, and he framed this discussion in terms of a dichotomy between naval conditions and revolutionary intentions. Each successive historian of the mutinies has emulated Gill by addressing this debate and taking one of these positions or the other. Gill used a wide range of qualitative sources including correspondence, the press, and court martial records to argue that the mutinies were primarily protests over poor working conditions by the loyal majority of seamen, but also subscribed to the mistaken idea that these sailors had to be encouraged to mutiny by more politically aware quotamen, most of whom were landsmen.²⁰ This view also found regular repetition in succeeding histories.

As an example of a specific error, Gill claimed that one of the leading Spithead mutineers, Valentine Joyce, was a United Irishman and tobacconist from Belfast who had recently joined the navy as a quotaman.²¹ From 1795 each British county had to find a set 'quota' of recruits for the navy. These 'quotamen' volunteered or were coerced into service in

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 2-9.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 407-15.

¹⁷ David Herbert, *Great Historical Mutinies* (London: William P. Nimmo, 1876).

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁹ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*.

²⁰ Landsmen were individuals unskilled in maritime labour, now often popularly called 'landlubbers'. Ibid., p. 309.

²¹ Ibid., p. 317.

exchange for a financial bounty payment. The claim that Joyce was such a quotaman was an old one and had appeared in the press while the Spithead mutiny was still ongoing. It was refuted by Joyce himself, who wrote to prove that he had been born on Jersey and raised in Portsmouth (where his family still lived), was a skilled sailor, and had spent several years in the Royal Navy. He was also too young to have been the Belfast tobacconist. Gill appears to have missed this refutation, with the result that his work contributed to the diffusion of one of the most persistent myths associated with the mutinies.

Gill employed a logical structure whereby he investigated the seamen's working conditions factor by factor from food, pay, and medical care, to discipline, and recruitment. Gill, however, was limited by his lack of quantitative data, which led him to apply too much weight to several factors which have since been refined (such as the ratio of pressed men). Nevertheless, Gill's method was thorough and led him to conclude that seamen's conditions were generally better in 1797 than in the previous two centuries (though he did not pay much attention to the impact of falling real wages). This led him to conclude that the crucial change was effected in the minds of the seamen, and there he identified the influence of the quotamen.²² Gill's idea that the crucial change leading to mutiny occurred in the minds of the sailors is compelling, but does not necessarily mean that seditious quotamen brought it about. This dissertation argues that ideas of fairness, pride, and 'good usage' could also explain this change.

Manwaring and Dobrée's *The Floating Republic* (1935) benefitted from the publication of sources unavailable to Gill (such as the Spencer Papers).²³ Their work is less detached and methodical than Gill's, which Manwaring and Dobrée ascribed to their having 'more sympathy' for the sailors.²⁴ Due to their wider access to primary sources, Manwaring and Dobrée, unlike Gill, recognised the falsity of the claim that Valentine Joyce was a quotaman.²⁵ Despite these differences, the conclusions of this work are substantially similar to Gill's. While Manwaring and Dobrée also found a privileged place in their causation for the disquieting impact of the quotamen, they concluded that the majority of mutineers remained loyal in character. They presented the seamen as oppressed victims seeking fair redress. In this they might have been influenced by elements of presentism relating to their

²² Ibid., pp. 295-96.

²³ Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*.

²⁴ Ibid., p. viii.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 101. The myths regarding Joyce and the quotamen did not end with Manwaring and Dobrée's refutation of them and appeared in the final twentieth-century account of the 1797 mutinies, James Dugan's non-academic work, *The Great Mutiny* (London: Deutsch, 1966).

expressed views on the Invergordon mutiny of 1931.²⁶ Manwaring and Dobrée expressed an exaggerated view of the horrors of naval life through superficial descriptions of sailors' food and living conditions.²⁷ Some of these claims are tested through the application of quantitative methods in chapter two and largely discounted.

The most recent contributions to the study of the mutinies have disproved several myths relating to the causation of the mutinies, such as attributing their outbreak to the influence of Irishmen or quotamen.²⁸ This reactive approach has, however, prevented them from developing new explanations that might better reflect the complexity of the mutinies. For example, Coats has used a quantitative analysis of ships' muster books to argue that Irishmen were not as large a proportion of the mutinous crews as previously believed, and that they were not disproportionately represented among leading mutineers. In so doing, Coats challenges the view of the mutinies as revolutionary in intentions, but does not present an alternative interpretation of their origins.²⁹

This is very much in evidence in Coats and MacDougall (eds.) *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*. The contributions in this volume present divergent views. While, for example, Coats is unconvinced by any revolutionary links to the mutinies, Philip MacDougall is more open to this possibility. As such, historians remain divided on the revolutionary dimension of the mutinies and so this is an aspect which requires careful definition.

Taken together, the dedicated studies of the mutinies, from Gill to Coats, generally favour the causative strand of naval conditions rather than revolutionary intentions. Though Gill suggested that quotamen might have had a role in encouraging the sailors to mutiny, he concluded that this was not motivated by any form of seditious conspiracy or revolutionary intent. Instead, he suggested that better-educated individuals likely pointed out to the sailors the unjustness of their position and the grievances of their existence associated with naval conditions. The most recent studies have rejected a role of instigator for the quotamen and instead emphasise the proficiency of the seamen as fully capable of organising and executing

²⁶ Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 254. In September 1931 approximately 1,000 sailors of the Royal Navy fleet at Invergordon, Scotland staged a two day mutiny in protest over planned pay cuts of between 10 and 25 per cent. The mutiny was peacefully resolved, but it triggered a run on the pound which forced Britain off the gold standard. This episode is examined in greater detail in the conclusion of this dissertation.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

²⁸ N.A.M. Rodger, 'Mutiny or Subversion? Spithead and the Nore' in Thomas Bartlett (ed.), *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2003); Ann Veronica Coats and Philip MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797: Unity and Perseverance* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011).

²⁹ Ann Veronica Coats, 'The 1797 Mutinies in the Channel Fleet: A Foreign-Inspired Revolutionary Movement?' in, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797: Unity and Perseverance*, pp. 137-39.

a protest based on collective action.³⁰ This position, however, has generally led specialist historians of the mutinies to take a reactive rather than an active approach: challenging mistaken interpretations without advancing new ones.

This brief summary of the historiography raises several questions. First is the possibility of identifying an explanation for the 1797 fleet mutinies that moves beyond the previous dichotomy of revolutionary intentions or naval conditions. Secondly, if naval conditions are to be emphasised over revolutionary intentions, it should be established why this latter interpretation has been so influential and enduring, and whether there is any evidential foundation for it. Furthermore, the relative significance of different aspects of naval conditions should be determined and put into their wider eighteenth-century context. All of these issues will be addressed in this dissertation.

The 1797 fleet mutinies have been used, often rather superficially, by historians debating Britain's avoidance of revolution in the 1790s. The most significant example of this was E.P. Thompson's 1965 book, *The Making of the English Working Class*, but the argument has since been extended by others, such as Roger Wells and Marianne Elliott.³¹ All three sought to present the 1797 mutinies as evidence of seditious activity in Britain. These works are discussed more extensively in chapter one of this dissertation. The application of the mutinies to the question of revolutionary prospects in Britain does, however, provide one interpretation of their significance. One of the main proponents of the opposite view of Britain's avoidance of revolution, Ian Christie, also used the mutinies as an example.³² For Christie, these were mainly 'provoked by genuine grievances about conditions of service', though he also mentioned the potential role of Irishmen and quotamen as instigators of mutiny. The disagreement between these historians as to how close Britain came to revolution is mirrored in their contrasting interpretations of the fleet mutinies. A significant reinterpretation of these mutinies therefore has much to contribute to broader debates on the British experience during the 'age of revolutions'.

³⁰ Ibid.; N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean, A Naval History of Britain 1649-1815* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 444-50.

³¹ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: V. Gollancz, 1965); Roger Wells, *Insurrection: The British Experience 1795-1803* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983); Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France* (London: Yale University Press, 1982).

³² Ian R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain: Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution*, The Ford Lectures 1983-1984 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 52.

More recently, the 1797 fleet mutinies have been considered in line with the idea of ‘maritime radicalism’ presented by Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, and then elaborated further by Niklas Frykman.³³ Sailors, they argued, were at the forefront of patterns of resistance across the Atlantic world, and drew on their own centuries-old traditions of collective decision making, negotiation, and opposition. These factors, derived from experience on merchant ships, privateers, and pirate ships, made up the ‘hydrarchy’ — a maritime state made by and for sailors.³⁴ They apply this concept of maritime radicalism as the result of a distinct and independent tradition of protest, resistance, and collective action among sailors to the 1797 mutinies to demonstrate the organisational capacity of sailors. This would counter the traditional historiographical view that the seamen were ‘simple Jacks’, loyal, oblivious, and altogether incapable of organised resistance without outside assistance.³⁵ Furthermore, the characterisation of the ‘hydrarchy’ as a paradise lost of maritime equality and ‘good usage’ for seamen can partially explain the restorative (rather than revolutionary) aims of the moderate majority among the 1797 mutineers.

Although, as mentioned above, the revolutionary framework must be qualified, E.P. Thompson’s ‘moral economy’ thesis can be fruitful for understanding the 1797 mutinies. This notion referred to the socioeconomic expectations of workers based on reciprocity and customary rights. These expectations increasingly came under threat during the later-eighteenth century, particularly with the onset of industrialisation and the rise of economic liberalism. The workers responded through riots and protests in attempts to restore or defend their traditional rights with varying degrees of success.³⁶ Similarly, the naval mutineers of 1797 were faced with unfavourably changing terms of service and aimed at a partial restoration of their previous position relative to other groups, particularly soldiers. Despite these similarities, Thompson never applied this idea to the fleet mutinies, which have continued to be dominated by ideas of revolutionary intentions or absolute naval conditions. The applicability of moral economy to the 1797 mutinies is discussed in chapter three of this dissertation.

³³ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra, Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000); Niklas Frykman, ‘The Wooden World Turned Upside Down’ (University of Pittsburg PhD Thesis, 2010); Idem., ‘Connections between Mutinies in European Navies’ *International Review of Social History* vol. 58 (2013), pp. 87-107.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 143.

³⁵ This opinion was present in the work of Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 315-18; and Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 15; and also more recent historians such as Wells, *Insurrection, The British Experience, 1795-1803*, p. 81.

³⁶ E.P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *Past and Present* vol. 50 (1971), pp. 76-136.

The fleet mutinies can tell us a great deal about wider British society at the end of the eighteenth century. This dissertation has studied the mutinies in their own right, but I draw frequent links to civil society with economic conditions, demands for fair treatment, patterns of protest, and judicial practice identified as especially promising grounds for comparison.³⁷

While previous studies have concentrated on the disputed causation of the mutinies, this dissertation approaches mutiny in a more practical sense, as a process of negotiation. This demands that attention be paid not just to the sensationalist or crisis moments of mutiny (particularly visible at mutiny's beginning and end), but to the whole sweep of these protests including mundane affairs. It is not asked merely why these mutinies took place but how they were carried into effect and maintained for a month apiece. As such, a spatial analysis of these mutinies is presented and linked to myriad social inversions which offer a more holistic picture of the lived experience of mutiny.

Some of the perceived weaknesses of elements of the historiography can be attributed to uncertainty of boundaries or definitions. For example, too often the Spithead and Nore mutinies are mistakenly conflated or the particularities of one are erroneously applied to the other. Similarly, an awareness of the broad definition of mutiny is necessary because all mutinies were not equal; cases of insolent individuals usually had little in common with the concerted and prolonged actions of fleet mutiny. The ways in which these intellectual problems have been addressed in this dissertation are explained in the following section.

III. Defining the Scope of Analysis of the 1797 Fleet Mutinies

There are three problems that must be addressed in order to delineate the scope for enquiry in this dissertation. The first concerns chronology; the second, definition; and the third, the need to study Spithead and the Nore in tandem. One problem when studying the

³⁷ Chapter two draws connections between civilian and naval purchasing power against the context of the poor harvests of 1795 and 1796. Chapter three connects sailors' demands for fair treatment to wider social ideas of reciprocal expectations linked to the idea of moral economy. Chapter four directly links the social inversions and counter-theatre of the mutineers to similarly symbolically-charged protests on shore. Finally, chapter six situated the judicial response to the Nore mutiny within the discretionary rationale of wider British civil justice in the late-eighteenth century.

Spithead and Nore mutinies is their periodisation, as exact dates of mutinous activity vary from ship to ship and are sometimes a matter of interpretation. For example, N.A.M. Rodger has argued that there were two distinct Spithead mutinies, the first ending when it was confirmed that the state would grant their key demands, and the second starting with the incident on the *London* on 7 May.³⁸ It should be remembered, however, that even between Rodger's two mutinies, the majority of the warship crews resolutely refused to put to sea or move further than St Helens. As such, it appears more fitting to view the intervening period as a truce or lull within a single enduring mutiny. It is necessary to be conscious of variation between individual ships, but a broad outline of periodisation would date the Spithead mutiny to c.16 April to 15 May (with the lull lasting 24 April to 7 May), and the Nore mutiny c.12 May to 14 June. For an outline of mutiny timing by ship, see Appendix 1.

It is necessary to outline the definition of 'mutiny' adopted in this dissertation. In a legal sense these disturbances were undoubtedly mutinies; they were carried out by men on active naval service and so subject to military law. As such, the term 'mutiny' is used throughout this dissertation. It should be noted, however, that contemporary observers and historians alike have drawn a useful comparison between these mutinies and work stoppages or 'strikes'. Writing a month after the end of the Spithead mutiny, Captain Patton recalled that 'the seamen of the fleet did not at any time view their own conduct in the light of a mutiny' but 'as a combination to obtain what they deemed the just reward of their labour'.³⁹ Another eye-witness writing twenty-eight years after the events, Admiral Owen, recalled that the sailors' disobedience 'bore more the character of what is called a strike of work than that of mutiny'.⁴⁰ The sailors refused to sail, but otherwise the commands of their officers were generally obeyed.

It is important to note at this stage that the English term 'strike' is itself inherently maritime in origins. The first 'strike' was the London sailors' strike of 1768,⁴¹ with the term referring to the act of striking (dismantling) the rigging and so strengthening the sailors' refusal to sail by practically impeding movement.⁴² As such, the term 'strike' was not yet

³⁸ N.A.M. Rodger, 'Mutiny or Subversion? Spithead and the Nore', p. 550.

³⁹ Philip Patton, *Account of the Mutinies at Spithead and St Helens in April and May 1797*, NMM, TUN/212 p. 16. Patton had witnessed the 1797 fleet mutinies first hand.

⁴⁰ Sir Edward William Campbell Richard Owen, *Reflections on the Mutiny at Spithead* (1825), NMM, COO/2/a, p. 43.

⁴¹ Though a similar event had taken place on the Rivers Tyne and Wear in April 1768, likely inspiring the more dramatic 'strike' in London.

⁴² Richard Sheldon, 'The London Sailors' Strike of 1768' in Andrew Charlesworth, David Gilbert, Adrian Randall, Humphrey Southall, and Chris Wrigley (eds.), *An Atlas of Industrial Protest in Britain, 1750-1990* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

thirty years old at the time of the 1797 mutinies (though almost sixty at Owen's time of writing) and still held strong maritime connotations. Legally, though, the men's actions were mutiny, and this term was widely used by state officials, newspapers, and the courts martial that eventually tried a small fraction of the Nore mutineers.

Though 'mutiny' is used in preference to 'strike' throughout this dissertation, we must understand that the eighteenth-century Royal Navy's definition of mutiny was a broad one. Mutiny could range from mundane insolence, disobedience, or violence on the part of an individual; a single crew taking control of their ship or; as at Spithead and the Nore, concerted fleet-wide disobedience.⁴³ In their scale and duration, Spithead and the Nore were stark exceptions to most mutinies, but they were also very different to the most notorious Royal Navy mutinies of the late-eighteenth century, which were themselves distant outliers. For example, we must set aside images of Clark Gable, and Errol Flynn in the famous *Bounty* films that have come to condition popular perceptions of mutiny. The less famous but equally potent imagery of the *Hermione* mutiny of September 1797, where the majority of officers were brutally murdered by a vengeful crew, is equally unhelpful to our present study. The *Bounty* mutiny of April 1789 and the *Hermione* mutiny were both rare exceptions where the crews not only deprived officers of their command (or indeed their lives), but also deserted their country's cause. The vast majority of eighteenth-century Royal Navy mutinies bore a much closer resemblance to workplace strikes or individual disputes than to these extreme examples.⁴⁴

Due, in part to the broad official definition of that offence, mutiny, of one sort or another, was a much more common occurrence in the eighteenth-century Royal Navy than has often been appreciated. Most officers could expect to encounter several mutinies during their career.⁴⁵ As mentioned, the term 'mutiny' was sometimes applied to cases where an individual sailor behaved in a disrespectful or insubordinate manner. Instead, we will here focus on mutiny as an act of collective protest, resistance, or negotiation. This tradition of negotiation, perhaps linking back to some of the egalitarian customs of earlier seafarers, found strong expression in the Royal Navy.⁴⁶ Some of the more frequent complaints of such

⁴³ Bruno Pappalardo, *How to Survive in the Georgian Navy, A Sailor's Guide* (London: Osprey, 2019), pp. 112-14.

⁴⁴ Frykman, 'The Wooden World Turned Upside Down'.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁶ For example, both Rodger and Rediker have demonstrated that, when faced with a great danger or choice that would represent a significant risk to the ship's company, it was traditional for the captain to seek the opinion of his crew. This would seem to suggest that sailors had a legitimate voice in cases where the ship was in danger, which would have a bearing, for example, on mutinies complaining about the unseaworthiness of a vessel. See N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 236;

mutinies included long delays in payment of wages, large quantities of spoiled rations, concerns that the purser⁴⁷ was cheating the crew, or fears among the sailors that their ship was dangerously unseaworthy. The naval authorities recognised that such grievances might arise and made it known that the legitimate way to highlight them would be for sailors to petition their senior officers. Many crews did just that, but if no reply or redress was received, mutiny would likely result. Even then, captains and admirals often conceded the justice of the sailors' complaints and, by attempting to address them, seemed to tacitly endorse the act of mutiny itself.⁴⁸ Such single-ship mutinies typically took one of two forms. In some cases, the crew would remain below decks (preventing officers from identifying ringleaders) and refuse duty until their complaints were addressed. Alternatively, a crowd of sailors would gather on the forecandle at the front of the ship and then rush aft to present their demands to the officers on the quarterdeck. Forecandle guns might also be turned to face aft as further intimidation.⁴⁹

Let us consider the cases of several such mutinies. On the *Culloden* in December 1794, the crew anticipated that their leaky ship would receive a refit. When instead they were ordered to sail for the Mediterranean, they barricaded themselves below decks and turned several of the forecandle guns aft. This stalemate lasted for eight days until the crew gave in on the assurance that they would not be punished. In fact, ten of the men were court martialled and five hanged. This duplicity on the part of the *Culloden*'s officers was remembered with concern by the 1797 mutineers.⁵⁰ Similarly, in November 1794 the crew of the *Windsor Castle* mutinied, fortified and armed themselves on the lower decks, and demanded the replacement of their captain and first lieutenant. The admiral offered a court martial to consider the conduct of those officers, but the mutineers refused. In the absence of their testimony, the captain and first lieutenant were acquitted. Nevertheless, the mutiny continued and, unable to either persuade or overpower the crew, after four days the captain and first lieutenant requested and were granted a transfer. The sailors had succeeded in their object, and the recourse to mutiny was, it seems, implicitly, justified by this result.⁵¹ These two mutinies, the one successful, the other not, are in many ways typical of mutiny as collective protest in the Royal Navy. They amply illustrate the potential risks and the

Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 240-44.

⁴⁷ The purser was a warrant officer responsible for the storage, condition, and distribution of a ship's supplies.

⁴⁸ As in the case of the *Windsor Castle*. See Frykman, 'The Wooden World Turned Upside Down', pp.185-87.

⁴⁹ Niklas Frykman, 'Connections between Mutinies in European Navies' *International Review of Social History* vol. 58 (2013), pp. 87-107.

⁵⁰ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 367.

⁵¹ Frykman, 'The Wooden World Turned Upside Down', pp.185-87.

potential rewards, as well as some of the common means of going about the business of mutiny. To their number one could add further single ship mutinies on the *Winchelsea* in 1793, the *Terrible* in 1795, and many others. Together, these instances demonstrate that mutiny was a well-established, if desperate, negotiating technique for sailors in the Royal Navy; that they were usually carried out without bloodshed on the part of the sailors (unlike the *Hermione*); that they could sometimes be highly successful; and that a common judicial response would be to punish a few ringleaders but forgive the rest of the crew.⁵² What set the Spithead and Nore mutinies apart, however, were their sheer scale, organisation, and duration. In these respects, though they used many of the same methods as single ship mutinies described above, the Spithead and Nore mutinies were without equal in the history of the Royal Navy.⁵³

One final question that will determine the scope of this dissertation is the extent to which the Spithead and Nore mutinies should be studied in tandem. There is ample historiographical justification for doing so, which has helped to set the terms of debate. Contemporary commentators and subsequent historians alike have been attracted to study Spithead and the Nore together as a satisfying form of morality play: an opportunity to contrast the light with the dark, a moderate and successful mutiny with an excessive, failed one. This is problematically deterministic; the path of the Spithead mutiny to success was not an inevitable one, while the excesses of the Nore mutiny developed by degrees and through engagement with the state. Nevertheless, the outbreak of the Nore mutiny, its timing and fate, cannot be understood without reference to its immediate predecessor at Spithead. In turn, an analysis of the Spithead mutiny that ignored the Nore would be incomplete. This dissertation will examine the two mutinies together wherever possible, while also doing justice to their idiosyncrasies. In doing so it will move beyond the simplistic tendency of characterising the Nore mutiny as the Mr Hyde to Spithead's Dr Jekyll.

⁵² Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 48-49.

⁵³ With the possible exception of the Invergordon Mutiny of 1931, but the peacetime context of this mutiny makes it very different to Spithead and the Nore.

IV. Sources and Methodologies

This dissertation requires the use of a broad array of sources and methodologies. These are deployed in a complementary and mutually-reinforcing manner. As far as possible, qualitative and quantitative methods have been deployed in tandem to provide a picture of the fleet mutinies that remains closely attuned to the significance of particular incidents, while also situating them within the wider picture. Individuals sometimes loom large in this dissertation, but they are situated within the context of their broader society, contemporary attitudes, and economic trends. The scale of analysis ranges from the minute examination of events on one ship over the course of a single morning to tracing impersonal economic forces across a period of a century and a half. This dual approach does not understate the historical potency of particular moments or events, but endows them with greater meaning through grounding them in the broader experiences and attitudes of their contemporary society as well as historical precedent.

The majority of sources used have been qualitative ones ranging from private correspondence and newspaper reports to official Admiralty documents such as captains' logs and court martial transcripts. These have usually required literary analysis and socio-cultural historical methodologies, but some, such as court martial information and Old Bailey trial reports, have been subject to tabulation and quantitative study. At the other end of the spectrum, visual images, maps, pottery, and souvenir print culture have also been scrutinised, demanding aesthetic analysis to draw out their strands of meaning and a keen eye for their purpose or appeal. Additionally, songs, ballads, and pieces of music have been unpicked, not only for their meaning, but for their social purpose. A small minority of sources, such as the revolutionary newspaper the *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel* have required translation from French. The lion's share of sources was drawn from Admiralty records held at the National Archives. Eighteenth-century British naval administration generated enormous amounts of paperwork, which has been well-preserved. Particularly useful series include Admiralty correspondence (both letters received and drafted replies), ships' muster books, and the daily logs kept by ships' captains and masters. While these favour the accounts of commissioned officers, the words and sentiments of humble sailors are gleaned from their letters, petitions, and court martial testimonies, both as witnesses and defendants.

The result is a diverse and far-ranging inspection of the fleet mutinies ranging from admirals, statesmen, and the king himself to sailors, their families, and concerned members of the public.

With events such as the fleet mutinies that directly affected tens of thousands of individuals, quantification is desirable to consider scale and representativeness. This is especially the case when, as here, economic factors played a large role. The quantitative sources used in this dissertation include published returns of grain prices, military pay rates, and Robert Allen's purchasing power dataset. In the first case this data, once collected, was immediately ready for use, whereas the latter two sources had to be tabulated, combined, and rigorously analysed before they could be useful. In other cases, as with trial transcripts, salient elements of qualitative sources were extracted, tabulated, and then subject to quantitative analysis for purposes either of drawing comparisons between civil and military practice, or of establishing whether actions conformed or diverged from precedent.

Much of the qualitative data has ensured that the human dimension retains its rightful place to the front and centre in this dissertation, but this has been complemented and strengthened by the greater comparative reach of quantitative analysis. The result is a more holistic study of the 1797 fleet mutinies that, while sensible of the peculiarities of this case study, also has contributions to make to our wider understanding of late-eighteenth century British society. It must be stressed that the voluminous nature of Admiralty documents has demanded significant selectivity. A complete survey of all relevant documents would take many years yet, and some ramifications of the resulting limitations are discussed in the conclusion of this dissertation. At every stage, however, matters of representativeness and particularity have been carefully weighed to capture as much as possible of these extraordinary events.

V. Dissertation Outline

This dissertation presents an analysis of the 1797 fleet mutinies at Spithead and the Nore based on an application of methodologies drawn from social, economic, and cultural history. Quantitative and qualitative sources are used to suggest the centrality of perceptions of fairness and ‘good usage’ to understand the causation, course, and legacy of these events, which has implications for historiographies of labour relations and popular protest.

Chapter one analyses the evidence used in previous studies to support the interpretation that the mutinies were revolutionary in their intentions. This investigation concentrates on the work of Edward Thompson, Marianne Elliott, and Roger Wells and examines the evidence that they put forward to suggest links between the 1797 mutineers and seditious groups. It is argued that there is no satisfactory evidence to demonstrate that the fleet mutinies were instigated or significantly shaped by seditious influences.

Chapter two offers a quantified analysis of the impact of the stagnation of sailors’ wages between 1653 and 1797 on their purchasing power. Purchasing power is found to have declined notably in absolute terms, with the longest-serving sailors experiencing the greatest decline. Furthermore, the trends in sailors’ purchasing power compare unfavourably to those of soldiers, thereby representing a powerful grievance. Declining purchasing power was a notable cause of the 1797 fleet mutinies, but the sailors’ deprived situation relative to soldiers was even more significant.

This line of argument is developed further in chapter three through the study of mutineer writings, rhetoric, and behaviour. It is argued that insult and hurt pride were key motivators of mutiny and that relative rather than absolute naval conditions were pivotal causes of dissatisfaction. A quantitative study of grain prices immediately before the mutinies demonstrates that the financial situation was improving from its earlier nadir, suggesting that economic causes alone cannot account for the mutinies. A ready alternative is found in the sailors’ more holistic idea of ‘good usage’ which related to matters of occupational pride.

Chapter four asserts that complex social inversions were employed by mutineer leaders to create legitimacy and encourage obedience towards their regime while minimising the need for violence or coercion. Extensive use is made of court martial transcripts to identify and explain the mutineer inversions and appropriations of symbols of naval

authority. These strategies presented a syncretism of sailors' autonomous traditions of resistance and legitimising rituals and symbols of the rule of officers. Comparison is drawn to patterns of popular protest and customs of counter-theatre on shore.

Chapter five moves away from the theatrical and sensationalist elements of the mutinies to concentrate instead on the mundane or routine practical challenges inherent to daily life during mutiny. The significant continuities of labour observed on a day-to-day basis are contended to have encouraged continuity and moderation on both sides. Some of these continuities were necessary for the mere maintenance of the ships and their crews, but others required individuals to make difficult decisions regarding their allegiances. This point is illustrated through a consideration of the unenviable position and role of ships' masters during the mutinies.

Far from a 'terror', chapter six finds the judicial response to the mutinies to be both pragmatic and conciliatory. A comparative quantitative analysis between naval court martial transcripts and the reports of a contemporaneous session of the Old Bailey demonstrate that the judicial response to the 1797 mutinies was within precedent for naval justice and reflective of judicial practice in civil society.

Finally, in chapter seven the public perceptions of the mutinies are found to have been hotly contested and were particularly tied to the fate of mutineer leader, Richard Parker. Rehabilitation of the navy had to wait for the redemption provided by victory at sea at Camperdown in October 1797 and for the national day of naval thanksgiving the following December.

Throughout this dissertation, frequent comparisons are drawn between naval practice and the wider attitudes and prevailing circumstances in British society on shore. This is not a purely naval history. As Quintin Colville and James Davey have identified, however, the bounds of naval history have expanded markedly in recent decades, with the focus no longer on 'the Royal Navy as a separate and separable institution' but the 'complex relationships between ship and shore, Britain and its empire, navy and nation'.⁵⁴ This dissertation complements this 'new naval history' by drawing connections between the navy and myriad elements of the social and economic history of late-eighteenth-century Britain. These include popular protest, labour relations, responses to changing socio-economic conditions, and

⁵⁴ Quintin Colville and James Davey (eds.), *A New Naval History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), pp. 1, 5-10.

attitudes to justice. At the same time, careful attention is paid to the ‘naval lived experience’ to avoid the risk, recognised by Colville and Davey, of ‘systematically erase[ing] naval exceptionalism’.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

1. REVOLUTIONARY INTENTIONS AS MOTIVATION FOR MUTINY

In March 1799 the House of Commons Committee of Secrecy presented its report on seditious activities. It stated the existence of ‘a systematic design, long since adopted and acted upon by France, in conjunction with domestic traitors’ to propagate the ‘destructive principles which originally produced the French Revolution’.¹ The 1797 mutinies represented one of their core examples. The committee attributed the fleet mutinies to precisely this sort of ‘intimate connection’ between foreign and domestic enemies. It was taken for granted that the sailors were ‘a brave and loyal body of men’ who could only have been seduced from their duty by ‘principles of foreign growth’. The chief domestic suspects were the United Irishmen, who were said to be ‘the persons principally engaged in’ the mutinies.² It is unfortunate that these claims have become a mainstay of the historiography of the 1797 mutinies,³ as the evidence presented by the committee is predominantly unrelated to the fleet mutinies and runs counter to the majority of evidence, including the results of the government’s own investigations.

Particularly problematic is the historians’ use of the courts martial of the *Pompée*. This ship was involved in the Spithead mutiny but received a blanket pardon. A month later, however, around 10 June, a derisory attempt at a second, much more radical, mutiny was discovered. This was a plot by four Irish sailors to murder several officers and take the ship to France. On their attempting to induct a fifth Irish sailor into the conspiracy, however, this individual reported them to the officers and the ‘mutiny’ was over before it could begin.⁴ The court martial held to punish these conspirators was conflated with the Spithead mutiny in the Report of the Committee of Secrecy and in some subsequent histories.⁵ The comparison between this abortive putsch and the fleet mutinies is an unhelpful one. The former was unable to reach a strength of five men and, on such a scale, was no threat at all (they would have struggled to control one of the ship’s boats, let alone a ship of the line like the *Pompée*) and the vast majority of *Pompée*’s crew (517 of them) professed their loyalty in a letter to the

¹ Report of the Committee of Secrecy of the House of Commons (Dublin: John Ex Shaw, 1799).

² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³ Even Conrad Gill’s work, still widely considered the most authoritative account of the mutinies, places significant blame on seditious elements and with Quotamen in particular. Conrad Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1913), pp. 315-318.

⁴ James Dugan, *The Great Mutiny* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1966), pp. 335-36.

⁵ For one such example, see Roger Wells, *Insurrection, The British Experience, 1795-1803* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986), p. 96.

Admiralty.⁶ The fleet mutinies included the seizure and control of many ships over a long period of time. This required the consent of a large proportion of the crews: a far cry from the four desperados.⁷ In terms of scale and timing, therefore, the *Pompée* incident is inappropriate evidence from which to draw conclusions about the 1797 fleet mutinies.

Ever since 1797, claims that the mutineers held revolutionary intentions have been common in the historiography. The works that have reached the largest audience were those by Edward Thompson, Marianne Elliott, and Roger Wells.⁸ These were written from a Marxist perspective against the Cold War context of the 1960s-80s and were part of a fierce debate with conservatives like Ian Christie.⁹ Much of the evidence deployed by Thompson, Elliott, and Wells in support of their view of the fleet mutinies was unfit for purpose. The recent volume on the mutinies edited by Ann Coats and Philip MacDougall has challenged many of the arguments of these historians, but on an ad-hoc basis.¹⁰ Their work effectively refutes many of the persistent myths of the mutinies by presenting their own evidence and showing it to be incompatible with earlier claims. I aim to complement their work here by showing that many of these older claims are, anyway, based on insecure evidential foundations.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. In the first it is demonstrated that the leaders of the fleet mutinies were drawn from the most skilled and experienced sailors. Alternative explanations that this or that group was seditiously involved in inciting the mutinies are then investigated with a section each for the radical and corresponding societies, quotamen, the Irish, the French, and the Foxites. Each of these groups are dismissed as instigators of mutiny. Section VII considers the political context and its ramifications as there were political advantages to the government of pointing the finger of blame to one or more of the groups discussed, even though, in reality, their influence was slight.

⁶ BL Add. Ms., fol. 218-19.

⁷ Court Martial Summaries, TNA, ADM12/24, p. 407.

⁸ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 2013); Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France* (London: Yale University Press, 1982); Wells, *Insurrection*.

⁹ Ian R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain, Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984).

¹⁰ Ann Veronica Coats and Philip MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797, Unity and Perseverance* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011).

I. Mutineer Leaders

The leaders of the 1797 mutinies were generally drawn from the best seamen.¹¹ This was well documented among contemporaries, and news even reached the French that the leaders were men ‘chosen from among the most skilled and experienced sailors’.¹²

The Nore mutiny court martial testimonies shed light on the preference for skilled sailors as leaders. At his trial, Thomas Starling asked the witness, Morgan Jones, who Starling had approached at the start of the mutiny to take an active part in the affair. Jones replied that he spoke to everyone he considered ‘anything of seamen in the ship such as he thought qualified to do their duty’.¹³ There was no interest in quotamen or politically-aware recruits, but in qualified seamen.

The correlation between leading mutineers and skilled seamanship was so clear that one defendant relied on it for his defence. William Ross asked witness, George Smith, ‘do you think a man in my station, a waister¹⁴ in the ship is capable of being accessory to carry on this business and overrule the ship’s company by my persuasion?’¹⁵ The implication is that only skilled sailors would have commanded sufficient social capital and respect within the skill-based hierarchy to perform a persuasive or leadership function.

John Davis of the *Sandwich* is an illustrative example of a skilled mutineer leader. He reported in his defence that he was an experienced sailor and well-regarded on the ship, which was why he occupied a position of responsibility during the mutiny. One witness who appeared in his defence was Captain Henry Blackwood of the frigate *Brilliant*. Blackwood told the court that, when he had been a mere midshipman on HMS *Trusty* in 1785-88, Davis was already an experienced maintopman: a highly respected group selected from the most

¹¹ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean, A Naval History of Britain 1649-1815* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 452; Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 39.

¹² *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel*, 6 June 1797 (‘choisis parmi les marins les plus capables et les plus expérimentés’). British newspapers made the same point. See, for example *London Packet or New Lloyds Evening Post*, 29 May 1797; *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 13 June 1797.

¹³ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/4, p. 10.

¹⁴ An unskilled seaman. Peter Kemp defines the term as ‘a seaman employed in the waist of a ship for working ship, in which station there was no work on a mast or yard and little to do beyond hauling on ropes or swabbing the deck. Hence, the name came to be used to describe an untrained or incompetent seaman’: Peter Kemp, *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 922.

¹⁵ The court objected to the question. CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/4, p. 48.

skilled seamen.¹⁶ By 1797, therefore, Davis had seen long service and was the epitome of Rodger's 'lower-deck aristocracy'.¹⁷ Davis was the sort of veteran seaman that other men would willingly follow.

This impression is driven home by the words of Captain Thomas Parr of the *Standard*. According to the format of naval courts martial, it fell to Parr to act as prosecutor in the trials of his mutineer crewmen. When it came to giving character statements as part of their defence, however, Parr was glowing in his praise for these men who had so recently usurped his command. Parr was 'sorry to say that the active mutineers that are here were amongst the best of the ship's company'. Speaking of the character of another prisoner, Parr repeated that 'the prisoner Saul was a very active good man — I have said the same for them all — they were the best part of the ship's company'.¹⁸ It is difficult not to read some emotional turmoil in his words. Most of the *Standard* mutineer leaders had seen long naval service: at least three had been present at the victorious 1794 battle, the Glorious First of June, and William Holdsworth asked the court to remember his loyal naval service across two wars. Of the thirteen men tried from Parr's ship, all but three were petty officers or highly skilled seamen, two were marine NCOs and the last was a marine private.¹⁹ The picture appears to have been similar across the rest of the Spithead and Nore fleets.²⁰ The two delegates of the *Repulse*, for example, were the captain of the maintop and the captain of the forecastle.²¹ Lieutenant Carne of the *Grampus*, meanwhile wrote that of the six men 'tried by a court martial, five of them were the best seamen in the ship'.²²

When Captain Philip Patton reflected on the course of the fleet mutinies shortly after their conclusion, he provided a window into the sailors' skill-based hierarchy. He challenged the idea that marines could be used to forcibly maintain order on board ship by pointing out that landsmen, including marines, felt a profound inferiority to seamen. All knew that the safety of everyone on board depended on sailors and that one good seaman could often do more than ten landsmen. For these reasons, Patton considered it dangerous to deploy marines

¹⁶ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/14, pp. 18-19.

¹⁷ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 452.

¹⁸ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/19, pp. 37, 86. On the *Comet* too, the mutineer leaders were the 'best-behaved' seamen, see Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/727, fol. 757.

¹⁹ Calculations and observations on CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/18-20 and CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/31-32.

²⁰ Of the 33 Spithead Delegates, 20 were petty officers and 13 were able seamen. They had been on board their ships for between two and four years. See Ann Coats, 'The Delegates: A Radical Tradition' in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797, Unity and Perseverance*, p. 41; To take another example, the mutineer leaders of the *Director* at the Nore were seven petty officers, a skilled seaman, a marine NCO and a marine private. NMM, ADM/L/D/129, Log of J. Griffiths, Lieutenant of HMS *Director*, May to June 1797.

²¹ TNA, ADM 51/1176/3, Captain's Log, HMS *Repulse*, September 1796 to September 1797.

²² TNA, ADM1/1622, Letters from Captains, Surnames C, fol. 88.

against the sailors as no ship could be safe where the seamen were discontented.²³ In this context, Patton argued, the skilled seamen ‘are and always will be, the leading men in measures which comprehend the whole companies’. These men, he believed, ‘never failed to [...] induce the company to follow their opinions’.²⁴ As James Dugan argued, when it came to selecting leaders, ‘the seaman voted for the messmate he respected most and had known for some time. He did not elect a wild-talking English radical or Irish agitator who had just been dumped off a press tender’.²⁵ To be effective, leaders had to command the respect of their shipmates. The experienced sailors had that respect: new arrivals yet to learn the ropes, no matter how politically aware, did not.

II. The London Corresponding Society

As the Spithead mutiny was coming to an end, Holborn magistrate, Aaron Graham, was dispatched to Portsmouth by the Duke of Portland to search for evidence of involvement by seditious societies. On 16 June, Graham was then ordered to Sheerness, this time accompanied by fellow magistrate, Daniel Williams, to repeat the investigation for the Nore mutiny. In their instructions, the magistrates were told that ‘Government are well informed that some of the London Corresponding Society, particularly [Alexander] Galloway & [Anthony] Beck, have had intercourse with the mutineers at the Nore’, and they were desired to seek any evidence ‘tending to show any connection between the mutineers & the London Corresponding Society’.²⁶ Graham and Williams’ report at the conclusion of their enquiries is well-known. On 24 June they assured the Home Secretary that they ‘unremittingly endeavoured to trace if there was any connection or correspondence carried on between the mutineers and any private person or any society on shore and they think they may with the

²³ Quoted in Brian Lavery (ed.), *Shipboard Life and Organisation, 1731-1815* (Aldershot: Ashgate for the Navy Records Society, 1998), p. 634. Generally, the marines openly sided with the sailors, though on the *Leopard* the marines were reportedly ‘secured below’ before the mutiny took place. Since this took place without a struggle or arousing the suspicions of the officers, however, it seems likely that even here the marines’ sympathies were with the sailors. Letters from Captains, Surnames H, TNA, ADM 1/1916, fol. 144.

²⁴ Philip Patton, Account of the 1797 Mutinies, NMM, TUN/212, pp. 2, 24.

²⁵ Dugan, *The Great Mutiny*, p. 95.

²⁶ Copy out-letter, marked secret, John King, to Aaron Graham and Daniel Williams, 16 June 1797, TNA, HO42/41/66 fols. 208-11.

greatest safety pronounce that no such connection or correspondence ever did exist'. They did not claim that 'wicked and designing men' had not been among the mutineers: indeed they concluded that some men of 'mischievous dispositions' had visited the *Nore*. Their conclusion, however, was that no club, society, or ill-meaning individual 'have in the smallest degree been able to influence the proceedings of the mutineers'.²⁷

Roger Wells criticised historians for concentrating on this sole report, and suggested that the rest of the magistrates' correspondence was less categorical in denying seditious involvement.²⁸ This suggestion is not entirely without foundation. On 10 June, Graham and Williams reported that they had ordered the arrest of a Dover coroner who spent time with the mutineers, and was known to them as 'the broken lawyer'.²⁹ Nine days later, they expressed regret at the escape of leading mutineers from the *Inflexible* 'as we are of opinion that if any proceedings of a Political nature were introduced into the Fleet, they originated on board that ship'.³⁰ Finally, on the same day as their widely-quoted report of 24 June, the magistrates suggested that 'the examination of the principal mutineers not having produced the information expected', the only way to discover any correspondence between seditious groups and the mutineers would be to study the papers seized from the *Sandwich*. They opined that 'it is probable, a careful investigation of those papers might lead to some important discovery'.³¹ These observations appear to leave room for Wells' political interpretation of the mutinies, but the majority of the evidence within this correspondence tends in the opposite direction. It should also be noted that Wells' overall conclusions, particularly on Irish matters, have been heavily criticised by Thomas Bartlett.³² Ann Coats has also pointed to several specific contradictions in Wells' chapter on the mutinies, for example on the literacy rate among seamen, but without offering an alternative to his overall argument.³³

Graham and Williams zealously investigated stories that Richard Parker and other leading mutineers met suspicious individuals at the Royal Arch pub in Sheerness. On examination, the mutineers and several civilians, including two waiters, positively swore no strangers were introduced to Parker or the other mutineers on those premises. Many further stories involved discussions with strangers or Parker receiving money, but careful

²⁷ Report of Magistrates Mr Graham and Mr Williams, TNA, HO42/41/68 fols. 213-14, 24 June 1797.

²⁸ Wells, *Insurrection*, pp. 93-94.

²⁹ Graham and Williams to John King, 10 June 1797, TNA, PC1/38/122, fol. 88.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Daniel Williams to Mr King, 24 June 1797, TNA, PC1/38/122, fol. 44.

³² Thomas Bartlett, Review of Roger Wells *Insurrection*, in *Irish Historical Studies* vol. 24 (1984), pp. 285-87.

³³ Coats, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 124-25.

investigation ‘always found it to be mere rumour’.³⁴ Another government confidante, Mr Conant, spoke with Parker and ‘endeavoured by all means in my power’ to discover who at a distance had fomented the mutiny ‘but I am extremely inclined to think that he has no knowledge of any persons, other than the crews themselves, who have abetted it’. On the matter of money ‘he protested to me in the most solemn manner, that no supply of money had ever been obtained except in very small sums from the men themselves’.³⁵ On 23 June, Mr Litchfield, soon to take over as judge advocate of the Nore courts martial, reported to Portland that the prosecution of Parker had concluded and that ‘no circumstances whatever have yet appeared that go to show any connection or communication between the fleet and any person on shore’.³⁶ It was also Mr Litchfield who followed up Graham and Williams’ suggestion of 24 June and studied the mutineer papers from the *Sandwich*. His conclusion was that ‘I do not find any reason to believe that the mutiny originated in any political views or considerations or that there was in the course of it any plan or system for the purpose of subverting or altering the established Government. Nor does it appear to me that the minds of the seamen in general have [been] in any degree tainted with disloyalty or any revolutionary principles whatever’.³⁷ Litchfield suggested that some attempt to turn the mutiny against the government might have been made, but that nothing had come of it.

From the correspondence between the investigators on the spot and their political masters, we must conclude, with Wells, that these letters are indeed more nuanced than is suggested by historians merely citing the report of 24 June. On the other hand, the correspondence itself presents no evidence of seditious involvement, but merely suggests where such evidence might be found. When this lead was explored by Litchfield, he dismissed the idea of effective seditious involvement. The correspondence, and particularly its later pieces of 24-27 June, which convey the considered judgements of the investigators, find heavily against seditious involvement. The weight of this evidence, therefore, does not support Wells’ argument.

To further his argument that seditious societies and individuals were involved in the 1797 mutinies, Wells cited the court martial of Richard Forrester of the *Monarch*. Wells noted that Forrester described himself as a Briton who ‘had spirit, and he had read Magna Charta and the History of England’. A lieutenant also related that Forrester ‘spoke of King George in particular and of forfeiting Allegiance’ before complaining of the ‘arbitrary power’

³⁴ Daniel Williams to Mr King, 24 June 1797, TNA, PC/1/38/122, fol. 44.

³⁵ Mr Conant to Mr King, 19 June 1797, TNA, PC/1/38/122, fol. 99.

³⁶ Mr Litchfield to Mr Ford, 23 June 1797, TNA, PC/1/38/122, fol. 87.

³⁷ Mr Litchfield to Mr King, 27 June 1797, TNA, PC/1/38/122, fols. 40-43.

of officers.³⁸ Firstly, radicals did not have a monopoly on Magna Carta, so the link between Forrester and seditious groups is not clear.³⁹ More seriously, though, Wells' use of Forrester's court martial to draw conclusions about the 1797 mutinies ignores their different contexts. Forrester's offense and trial took place in spring 1798, almost a year after the Nore mutiny. Furthermore, this was not a mutiny of a fleet, or even the crew of a single ship, but a case of one drunken man accused of 'mutinous utterances'. Crucially, as the court made clear, 'his general character was good; and since the loss of his wife he had been subject to intervals of melancholy and dejection bordering on insanity'. The trial summary notes that 'these circumstances appear to have saved his life'.⁴⁰ Not only was this not a comparable mutiny to those of 1797, it was hardly a mutiny at all: merely a bereaved and intoxicated individual speaking irreverently. Comparisons to the 1797 mutinies are doubly unhelpful in that they obscure our understanding of both the fleet mutinies and the case of Forrester.

Thompson claimed that visits to naval dockyards by members of the LCS provided a direct link between English radicals and the mutinous sailors of 1797. He suggested that these visits cast doubt on Francis Place's denial that the society supported the establishment of a republic with French aid.⁴¹ Thompson advanced three pieces of evidence in support of this argument, but all are problematic. The first is a biography of Place by Graham Wallas.⁴² This work outlines Place's denial of support for French assistance (a denial that Thompson doubted). However, the relevant section details Place's gradual withdrawal from the LCS. He left the committee 'at midsummer (1796)', and 'refused to be elected to it again, as I did also to be president of the general committee'.⁴³ Place resigned his position as Delegate in March, 1797, and his membership of the society that June. The biography makes no mention of the 1797 mutinies and, while they were ongoing, Place left the LCS altogether. Wallas concluded that Place and the LCS felt that 'the people ought to work out their own regeneration, and that it was their duty to resist the French if they attempted an invasion, on whatever pretext it was made'.⁴⁴ Writing in the late-1890s, Graham had no need to hide any seditious actions by Place, but nevertheless highlights his opposition to collusion with the French.

³⁸ Wells, *Insurrection*, p. 83.

³⁹ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (2013), pp. 19-27.

⁴⁰ Court Martial Summaries, TNA, ADM12/24, pp. 434-5.

⁴¹ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (2013), p. 162.

⁴² Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place, 1771-1854* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1918), pp. 26-28.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

The second piece of evidence used by Thompson to link the LCS to the mutinies was John Binns' autobiography, with the relevant section outlining his trip to Portsmouth in early February 1796.⁴⁵ This was over a year before the Spithead mutiny and eleven months before the sailors presented their grievances in petitions. Furthermore, Binns outlined the specific purpose of his trip to Portsmouth. At the end of 1795, the 'Two Acts' were passed, the second of which prohibited 'any meeting for political purposes of more than fifty persons at one time and place'.⁴⁶ This was a threat to the reformist agenda of the LCS, and the society sent circulars to the societies with which it corresponded to discuss how their cause might be continued 'without subjecting those who assembled to the pains and penalties of the law'. The LCS found that 'these communications did not produce the effects desired' and so emissaries were sent to large towns to 'organise societies for Parliamentary reform'. Binns did not know why he was sent to Portsmouth, but assumed that it was due to that town being 'the principal naval station and dockyard establishment, and the most fortified town in England'. During his time there, Binns visited the dockyards and several warships, but mentions only his pride and awe at the sight of a convoy of 250 ships.⁴⁷ His mission was to keep the cause of parliamentary reform alive in the face of the Two Acts, not to subvert the navy. After two weeks, Binns moved on to Birmingham, again to advise the Corresponding Society there in light of the Two Acts. There he was arrested and tried at the Warwick assizes of Lent 1797. As a result, Binns was nowhere near Portsmouth during the mutinies, and his energies were directed towards travelling to the United States.⁴⁸ Binns' autobiography makes no mention of the 1797 mutinies at all, despite his safety when writing at the remove of a continent and over half a century, as well as his otherwise proud candour when discussing his part in 'freedom's cause'. As such, this source cannot be said to substantiate supposed links between the LCS and the 1797 mutineers.

Thompson's final piece of evidence is John Gale Jones' travel narrative of a trip through Kent, including the naval town of Chatham.⁴⁹ This visit was concurrent with Binns' time at Portsmouth, and the two men then met in Birmingham and were arrested and tried together. As such, Jones' visit took place fifteen months before the Nore mutiny.

⁴⁵ John Binns, *Recollections of the Life of John Binns* (Philadelphia, 1854), pp. 63-66.

⁴⁶ These two acts were The Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act (Treason Act), and The Seditious Meetings Act (both 1795).

⁴⁷ Binns, *Recollections of the Life of John Binns*, pp. 63-66.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*; John Binns, *The Trial of John Binns, Deputy of the London Corresponding Society, for Sedition, before Mr Justice Ashurst, at the Assize held for the County of Warwick* (Birmingham, 1797), pp. v-vii.

⁴⁹ John Gale Jones, *Sketch of a Political Tour Through Rochester, Chatham, Maidstone, Gravesend, &c.* (Rochester: Boggins Book Bazaar, 1997), pp. 19-22.

Furthermore, Chatham was an important dockyard, but not a naval base in its own right; serving warships not requiring repairs usually remained downriver at Sheerness. Jones does not mention a trip to Sheerness, but even if he did get that far, the ships at the Nore anchorage did not constitute an organised fleet, but a loose combination of ships coming and going on diverse assignments. Consequently, the ships present in February 1796 would not have been the same ships at the Nore in May 1797, so even if Jones did speak to serving seamen at Sheerness, those men might have been half the world away by the time of the Nore mutiny. It is likely that there was a small amount of movement of sailors between ships and fleets, but with such a fluid force at Sheerness, and so few ships at Chatham, it appears more likely that, if incitement to sedition was Jones' intention, the permanent population of dockyard workers would have been a more promising target. These men took no part in the 1797 Nore mutiny. Jones did visit the new first-rate ship *Ville de Paris* and opined that it would 'make a fine national ship'. By this he likely meant that he would prefer to see it as a 'national' ship than as 'His Majesty's ship', but this was apparently his only irreverent dealing with the navy.⁵⁰ Jones' account was first published in 1796, so makes no mention of the 1797 mutinies. Published at this time, it is likely that Jones would not report seditious activities even if they had taken place, but the practicalities of the situation, and in particular the rapid turnover of ships in the area, strongly suggest that Jones' sojourn to Kent did not constitute a link between the LCS and the Nore mutineers. The one ship that we know Jones visited, the *Ville de Paris*, was with the Mediterranean fleet at the time of the Nore mutiny, and saw no courts martial for mutiny in this period.⁵¹

Finally, Elliott has suggested that significant Painite thinking existed among the 1797 mutineers, but her cited sources are unhelpful.⁵² Elliott's given sources are ADM1/3974, 5336-42. Firstly, only ADM1/5339-41 contain courts martial records relating to the 1797 mutinies. Secondly, Elliott did not identify which documents in ADM1/3974 she found useful and my own search of that box did not uncover evidence of specifically Painite thinking. Furthermore, chapter three of this dissertation analyses what sailors actually said during and

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ The first court martial for mutiny by a sailor of the *Ville de Paris* was in 1801, so surely unrelated to Jones' visit to that ship five years before. Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail 1793-1817* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2010), p. 6; Analysis and digest of court martial convictions, arranged by offence: J-N, TNA, ADM12/24.

⁵² Elliott, *Partners in Revolution*, pp. 136-7.

after the mutinies. While some individuals used seditious expressions, a few of them violently anti-monarchy or anti-Pitt, it is difficult to tie any of these directly to the publications of Thomas Paine; neither Paine nor his work were specifically mentioned.⁵³

III. Quotamen

It has long been a mainstay of the mutiny historiography to attribute much of the blame for the disturbance to quotamen. These were men recruited between 1795 and 1797 according to the Quota Acts, which set each county and borough of Great Britain a recruitment target. It has been claimed that these quotamen were potentially dangerous as they supposedly combined a higher level of education with a low tolerance for the harsher elements of naval service, thereby encouraging dissent. It has also often been suggested that justices of the peace tasked with filling these recruitment quotas naturally sought to rid their parish of troublemakers and petty criminals.⁵⁴ This view has been comprehensively challenged by the only two dedicated studies of quotamen recruits: by F.W. Brooks and Clive Emsley.

Brooks studied approximately 1,000 enrolment forms from the Lindsay area of Lincolnshire, whereas Emsley utilised recruitment records for the North Riding of Yorkshire. Considering the claim that quotamen were ‘unsatisfactory recruits’ likely responsible for the 1797 mutinies, both concluded that it was insupportable.⁵⁵ Brooks asserted that the majority of men recruited by the quota, certainly in the first levy of 1795, were mainly ‘village lads with decent reputations in whom their local landlord or parson took an interest when they went into the service’. Brooks found several examples of ‘local gentry writing to obtain a settlement of payment of arrears of bounty to the local quota men’.⁵⁶ This suggests that the recruits were not troublemakers to be packed off to the fleet and forgotten, but valued

⁵³ Analysis and tabulation of CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486.

⁵⁴ Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 3-6, 58-60.

⁵⁵ F.W. Brooks, ‘Naval Recruiting in Lindsay, 1795-97’, *The English Historical Review*, vol. 43 (1928), pp. 230-40; Clive Emsley, *North Riding Naval Recruits: The Quota Acts & the Quota Men 1795-1797* (North Yorkshire County Council, 1978).

⁵⁶ Brooks, ‘Naval Recruiting in Lindsay, 1795-97’, p. 239.

members of the local community. Emsley's results for North Yorkshire yield the same impression; he found that the recruits represented 'a cross-section of the lower class trades in the county for which they served', and that 'there appears to be no justification for branding the bulk of the quota men as unfortunates, misfits, or riff-raff'. Emsley found evidence of only one petty criminal being sent into the navy through the quota (a case of petty larceny) with the possibility of a second, both from the Buckinghamshire Quarter Sessions of 1795.⁵⁷ There is little to support the suggestion that quotamen represented a dangerously seditious population in the navy. Nicholas Rodger has done much to demonstrate that the navy was, in several respects, an attractive career,⁵⁸ which holds particularly true of the difficult situation of the mid-1790s.

It is possible that the magistrates, Graham and Williams, unknowingly sowed the seeds of the quotamen myth in their report from Sheerness after the Nore mutiny. They highlighted the useful presence of 'so many good writers as must have been found amongst the quota men'. Some have used this to suggest that the quotamen were prominently present among the mutineer leaders, and had a strong hand in policy-making. The magistrates' description, however, emphasised the sailors' ability to organise the mutiny themselves. As a result, the impression is that quotamen skilled at writing served a facilitating function as scribes, rather than leaders.⁵⁹ It is important to note that the mutineer figurehead at the Nore, Richard Parker, was a recent recruit to the navy via the quota acts, but he was also an experienced sailor who had previous naval experience. He was, therefore, far from unfamiliar with the rigours of naval life, and not representative of quotamen.⁶⁰

Elliott has nuanced the quotamen argument by pointing specifically to Irish quotamen. She cited Admiralty correspondence from Ireland to claim that many Irishmen were recruited into the navy via the quota acts, and that these constituted a potentially seditious or revolutionary influence.⁶¹ This mistake rests on a common misconception. The documents cited by Elliott do not relate to the Quota Acts, which were first introduced in 1795, and which were never applied to Ireland, but to the Acts for the Encouragement of Seamen, which, in one form or other, dated from the seventeenth century.⁶² These acts dealt with

⁵⁷ Emsley, *North Riding Naval Recruits*, pp. 11-12.

⁵⁸ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 114.

⁵⁹ Report of Magistrates Mr Graham and Mr Williams, TNA, HO42/41/68 fols. 213-14, 24 June 1797.

⁶⁰ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 124-28.

⁶¹ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution*, p. 136.

⁶² Letters from Ireland (Lords Justice, Lords Lieutenant, Irish High Court of Admiralty officers), TNA, ADM1/3991. The official name of the Quota Acts was the Manning of the Navy Acts, the first of which was passed in 1795.

considerations like the bounty payments provided to volunteer sailors, and were not quota-based conscription targets. The oldest document in the series cited by Elliott dates from 1791: four years before the introduction of the Quota Acts.⁶³ This can leave us in little doubt that the idea of local Irish justices getting rid of waves of criminals and troublemakers by sending them to satisfy local quota targets is a myth. Some Irishmen likely served as quotamen for English parishes, but the studies of Emsley and Brooks do not suggest that these were a sizeable group. The presence of many Irishmen in the navy in 1797 is, however, indisputable, and they too have frequently been blamed for the fleet mutinies.

IV. Irishmen

Elliott argued that HMS *Defiance* was the most troublesome ship at Spithead and had a particularly large Irish component to its crew.⁶⁴ There was some truth to this claim, but it had little to do with the 1797 Spithead mutiny. During the Spithead mutiny in April and May 1797, the behaviour of the *Defiance*'s crew followed the same trajectory as the rest of the fleet, and the mutiny came to a conciliatory end. Fifteen months later, however, in summer 1798, 25 sailors and marines were court martialled for mutiny, and in particular, for swearing a mutinous oath to support the United Irishmen (UI). Nineteen of the plotters were condemned to execution, and ten of these sentences appear to have been carried out. A Home Office memo details the addresses of the relatives of the ten men executed so that their effects could be forwarded home. All ten were located in Ireland.⁶⁵ Despite first appearances, this episode in no way supports Elliott's argument. Crucially, as with the *Pompée*, the *Defiance* mutiny was a far cry from the fleet mutinies of 1797. It occurred almost a year and a half after the Spithead mutiny, and was a failed plot effectively nipped in the bud. The small cohort of rebels could not have hoped to overpower the ship's officers and marines, let alone the hundreds of their fellow sailors. They did not control the ship for a single moment and did

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, p. 143.

⁶⁵ Ireland: Home Office correspondence on private and secret affairs, Oct-Dec 1798, TNA, HO100/79 fol. 338; Home Office Admiralty Correspondence, TNA, HO28/25/42.

not have a chance to put their plot into operation. This was not a mutiny, therefore, but an attempted mutiny: one with a negligible chance of success. These events do not suggest seditious UI involvement in the mutinies of 1797 (and indeed the peaceful trajectory of *Defiance* at that time implies its absence). Rather, it would seem to support the suggestion that the 1797 mutinies awoke the UI to the opportunity of infiltrating and disabling the navy.

Elliott herself recognised this possibility. She argued that ‘intermittent United participation in other mutinies over the next few years suggest a continuous policy of United infiltration long after the Nore and Spithead mutinies had collapsed’.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the *Defiance* case appears to be the only clear example of this. The only other candidates do not survive cursory inspection. There was the case of two men found with a book of seditious songs, but these were found not to be sailors.⁶⁷ A court martial of two seamen of the *Diomedé* for mutinous expressions revealed that one of them had corresponded with his brother in Nottingham who had encouraged his mutinous behaviour, but there was no Irish connection.⁶⁸ There was also a series of letters concerning ten Irishmen found on board a captured French privateer, *l’Immortalité*, but it transpired that these were innocent men who were prisoners of the French.⁶⁹ Finally was the reported personal opinion of a sailor, Joseph Bacon, in 1804 that ‘there are agents in several ships for the purpose of seducing the seamen but they are unconnected with and even unknown to each other’⁷⁰. These agents, if they existed, might well have been UI men but, equally, might have served a different cause. If this was a conspiracy, then its danger would have been greatly reduced by its lack of coordination. Alternatively, it is perhaps more likely that there were simply individuals with seditious beliefs in the fleet without a plan, or necessarily even desire, to act upon them. Cumulatively, there is no evidence to suggest that the UI had any impact on the course of the 1797 Spithead or Nore mutinies.

In attempting to demonstrate such an impact, Wells and Elliott both fell back on a mistaken characterisation of Spithead leader, Valentine Joyce. In their claim that Joyce was a United Irishman, both Wells and Elliott perpetuated a persistent myth of the mutinies.⁷¹ This story has been comprehensibly corrected by Ann Coats, who points out that Joyce himself rejected falsified stories of his supposedly Irish heritage during the Spithead mutiny in letters

⁶⁶ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, pp. 143-44.

⁶⁷ Home Office Admiralty Correspondence, TNA, HO28/24 fol. 163.

⁶⁸ Home Office Admiralty Correspondence, TNA, HO28/24 fols. 437-40.

⁶⁹ Home Office Admiralty Correspondence, TNA, HO28/24 fol. 453.

⁷⁰ Home Office, Ireland, TNA, HO79/6. Bacon served on the *Princess Royal* which had only just been recommissioned and was fitting out at Plymouth- so had not even entered service.

⁷¹ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, p. 143; Wells, *Insurrection*, p. 92.

to *The Times* and the *Portsmouth Gazette*. Joyce was not a Belfast tobacconist and United Irishman, but an experienced sailor with seventeen years of naval service who had been born in Jersey, and whose family lived in Portsmouth.⁷²

The focus of Elliott's work was the potential links between the UI and Revolutionary France. Her conclusion as regards the 1797 mutinies was that 'a policy of systematic infiltration of the navy was only adopted by the United Irishmen after the 1797 outbreaks' and that claims of UI-driven disobedience in the navy 'are significantly taken from later cases'.⁷³ Wells did not agree. Despite admitting that 'the sources are not very revealing', Wells argued that 'there can be no question that the UI started its offensive in the navy prior to the mutinies'. He provided no evidence for this assertion, which he then qualified with the claim that, though the UI did not cause the mutinies, they significantly shaped their course and character.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Wells did not present a persuasive case as to the supposed role of UI members in the mutinies.⁷⁵

Wells again tempered his argument by pointing out that the Spithead mutiny arose out of apolitical occupational grievances, but suggested that it nevertheless presented a welcome opportunity to politically-motivated sailors.⁷⁶ While this appears logical, the burden of proof would lie with Wells to demonstrate that these individuals were able to translate their personal feelings into action. Even if the presence of seditiously-minded individuals, such as United Irishmen, could be positively proved, it does not follow that they were able to have any bearing on the events. One man, even a most determined United Irishman, could not make a mutiny on the scale of Spithead or the Nore. A handful of such individuals would have been unable to weigh a ship's anchor, let alone sail their vessel to France or Ireland. In short, even if they were present, their only recourse would have been to persuade their shipmates and win them over to their cause. Whether or not anyone actually tried, Wells himself agreed that they had no prospect of success as 'something approximate to patriotism was one reason why the mutinies could not be extended into a strike for peace, nor the navy ever dominated by fifth columnists'. Wells concluded that any British Jacobins involved would have considered their failure 'nearly if not totally absolute', whereas United Irishmen 'clearly believed that they would receive little if any assistance from British sailors', so future

⁷² Ann Coats, 'The Delegates: A Radical Tradition' in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 57-58.

⁷³ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, pp. 137-38.

⁷⁴ Wells, *Insurrection*, p. 84.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 99.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 99-100.

plots in the navy had to centre on ‘their fellow countrymen in the fleet’.⁷⁷ Wells’ suggestion that the course of the mutinies was shaped by the involvement of UI members and British Jacobins remains unsubstantiated.

The conclusions of Wells and Graham and Williams appear similar: that hostile individuals probably tried to influence the mutinies, but that their machinations had not ‘in the smallest degree been able to influence the proceedings of the mutineers’. Furthermore, contrary to Wells, Graham and Williams were confident that no members of societies such as the LCS or UI were ever officially ‘deputed’ to the mutinies.⁷⁸ They saw no conspiracy: only a few seditious individuals whose impact was negligible. Graham and Williams provided a further corrective to Wells when they observed that the sailors ‘were perfectly capable of conducting it [the mutiny] themselves’.⁷⁹

Admirals and politicians shared the fear of Irish-borne incitement to sedition, but found little evidence for it. For example, in early June 1797, Peter Parker, the port admiral at Spithead, received intelligence that a new intake of Irish sailors en route to Portsmouth were carrying seditious papers. On arrival the men were subject to ‘the most exact scrutiny’ but no such papers were found.⁸⁰

With a shortage of evidence for the involvement of seditious groups, Thompson, Elliott, and Wells all fell back on the sheer number of Irishmen in the Royal Navy. Thompson suggested that there were 11,000 Irish sailors and a further 4,000 marines in the navy in 1797; Elliott claimed that the crews of many mutinous ships were 50% Irish; and Wells likewise pointed to the thousands of Irishmen in the fleet and suggested that they were unlikely all to be ‘free from traitorous associations’.⁸¹ It must be stated, however, that, just as one Irishman did not necessarily make a revolution, nor did 100 Irishmen, or 10,000. In addition, serious doubt has recently been expressed as to the proportion of Irish sailors in the navy. For example, whereas Wells claimed that the *Mars* was one of the most militant ships at Spithead and was ‘manned principally by Irishmen’, Coats has revealed that ‘in fact, *Mars* had the lowest number of Irish-born seamen among the Spithead ships, at 14.9 per cent’, and that it

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109. As further evidence that sailors were often unreceptive to seditious ideas, shortly before the mutinies, a lecture by John Thelwall at Yarmouth was stormed by sailors from the frigate *l’Espiegle* who ‘pummelled the audience’ and ‘wrecked the hall’. James Dugan, *The Great Mutiny* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1966), p. 156.

⁷⁸ Report of Magistrates Mr Graham and Mr Williams, TNA, HO42/41/68 fols. 213-14, 24 June 1797.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Portsmouth: 1797, ADM 1/1023, fol. 539.

⁸¹ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 183; Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, p. 138; Wells, *Insurrection*, pp. 81-82.

was not especially fervent in the mutineer cause.⁸² Coats calculated that Irish-born sailors composed, on average, approximately one quarter of the crews at Spithead, with the majority long-established naval sailors, not new recruits. Among the mutineer delegates, the proportion was just four out of thirty-three. Neither figure is disproportionately high when it is remembered that the Irish population was half that of Great Britain. Significantly, no correlation was found between the proportion of a crew that was Irish and revolutionary activity.⁸³ In the same work, Christopher Doorne finds little evidence of a significant Irish role at the Nore. He also counters Wells' suggestion that one Nore mutineer, Thomas Jephson, was a UI agent by highlighting the unreliability and confusion of the evidence presented against him, as well as his own clear proclivity for telling lies. The resulting picture is of Jephson as a critic of the king and Pitt's government, but nothing more.⁸⁴ Most recently, Jeremiah Dancy's quantitative study of naval logbooks for the period 1793-1801 returned a figure of 19% as the proportion of lower-deck seamen who were Irish.⁸⁵

In summary, the evidence for significant Irish involvement in shaping the 1797 mutinies is not persuasive. There is every indication that the UI were as surprised by the outbreak of the mutinies as the British government. Notably, one would expect that, if the mutinies were orchestrated by seditious Irishmen, they would have been better timed, for example to correspond with the attempted French landing at Bantry Bay the previous year, or the Irish Rebellion of 1798. In contrast, spring 1797 was a highly inauspicious moment: with neither the French nor Dutch fleets ready to make any offensive move, and no imminent insurrection planned for Ireland. Occurring when they did, the mutinies could be of little use to the Irish cause.⁸⁶ While the UI had a motive for spreading sedition in the navy, it appears far from likely that they had the means of achieving anything on the scale of the 1797 mutinies.

⁸² Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 21-22.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 133, 137.

⁸⁴ Christopher Doorne, 'A Floating Republic?' in Coats and Philip MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 185-86, 193.

⁸⁵ J. Ross Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang: Volunteers, Impressment and the Naval Manpower Problem in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2018), p. 50.

⁸⁶ Doorne, 'A Floating Republic?' in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 187.

V. Frenchmen

The possibility of direct French instigation appears remote. On 22 April 1797, by which time the Spithead mutiny was a week old, the Council of Five Hundred debated a policy of economic war on Britain through interdiction of British re-exports, particularly sugar. Councillor Doulcet opined that, in light of the current state of the French navy, such an economic measure might be one of few opportunities to strike directly at British interests and compel the British towards an ‘honourable peace’.⁸⁷ British spies and observers, meanwhile, assured the Admiralty that there was no imminent threat from the French fleet. Captain Keats reported that ‘only two of the line of battle ships have their sails bent’ in Brest and ‘they seem not quite ready’. Another report on the French ships of the line described that ‘all the topmasts were struck, and there was scarcely a sufficiency of seamen or marines on board them to do the ordinary duty of the ships, almost all having deserted from want of victuals, clothing, and pay’.⁸⁸ The French government knew about the Spithead mutiny by 5 May, but with this news came the sailors’ promise to sail and fight if the French left port.⁸⁹ General Wolfe Tone, waiting in the Texel to lead the next attempted invasion of Ireland, heard of the mutinies on 29 April, but this vital intelligence had come from Hamburg rather than Paris. Despite Tone’s best efforts, the French Ministry of Marine could not be persuaded of the urgency of the moment, the naval forces remained entirely unready, and the opportunity was lost. At the beginning of August, six weeks after the Nore mutiny ended, the invasion forces remained unready and a frustrated Tone confided in his diary ‘damn it, damn it, damn it [...] nothing was ready; that precious opportunity, which we can never expect to return, was lost’.⁹⁰ No attempt was made to send a sizable force to sea. Even as the mutinies came to an end, the Council of Five Hundred heard that ‘France no longer has a navy that can protect trade[...] the English dominate the seas’.⁹¹ It is possible that the French did not feel a need to capitalise on the mutinies. Perhaps the French hoped that the mutinies would bring about a revolution in Britain and so make direct military intervention unnecessary, or at least weaken

⁸⁷ *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel*, 23 April 1797.

⁸⁸ Reports of Captain Richard Keats and Mr Brummell, 21 and 24 April, 1797, BL Add. Ms. 35197, fols. 116, 123.

⁸⁹ *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel*, 5 May 1797.

⁹⁰ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 336-37.

⁹¹ *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel*, 25 June 1797. [‘la France n’avait plus alors une marine qui put protéger le commerce [...] les Anglais dominaient sur toutes les mers’].

the British for the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to reconcile the idea of French instigation or foreknowledge of the mutinies with their apparent surprise and abject unpreparedness to capitalise on them. From his passion on the subject it appears certain that General Wolfe Tone would have taken military advantage of the mutinies if he had known to expect them. As Tone feared, the opportunity was lost, never to return.

Thompson argued that ‘there was talk among the mutineers of removing the fleet to France (where indeed several ships, in desperation, finally sailed)’.⁹² Thompson is correct that the court martial transcripts reveal some discussion of the possibility of some of the mutinous Nore ships defecting to France.⁹³ He neglects to mention, however, that this was only ever a remote possibility suggested by a few die-hards in their desperation, and entirely unacceptable to the vast majority of the sailors; when the *Sandwich* raised the signal to sail on 9 June it was acknowledged by every ship, but not one crew made any move to obey.⁹⁴ Furthermore, Thompson here overlooked the physical unlikelihood of the mutineers safely sailing to France occasioned by the removal of the buoys at the mouth of the Thames on 6 June.⁹⁵ An attempt to sail out in any large vessel would likely have ended in disaster. Finally, Thompson’s description of ‘several ships’ eventually sailing to France suggests ships of the line of 64 to 98 guns, which constituted the core of the mutinous Nore fleet, deserting to the enemy.⁹⁶ The reality was very different. No naval *ships* sailed for France. A large ship’s *boat* of mutineers was chased by a revenue cutter on 11 June but escaped and might have made it to France. Approximately twenty further mutineers commandeered the small merchant ship, *Good Intent* and sailed to Calais. The ship was then sent back to England in the care of two boys. Several other reports likely related to this same incident.⁹⁷ In short, the French did not profit by a single ship from the 1797 mutinies: not so much as a sloop, let alone, as Thompson seems to suggest, a ship of the line.

⁹² Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 183.

⁹³ Analysis and tabulation of CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486.

⁹⁴ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 225-228; Loyal declaration of the crews at Spithead, 4 June 1797, ADM1/107/J361.

⁹⁵ Digests of Admiralty Correspondence, 1797, ADM 12/75, Orders in Council, 6 June 1797; Admiralty out-letters, Secret Letters, TNA, ADM 2/1352, fol. 128; Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 196.

⁹⁶ Ships of the line were those warships considered large enough to take part in fleet battles. In this period, the smallest ships of the line bore 64 guns on two gun decks, though smaller, 50 gun warships were sometimes used like ships of the line in shallower waters, such as off the Dutch coast at the Battle of Camperdown in October 1797.

⁹⁷ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 243-44.

VI. Foxites

Some contemporaries of the mutinies placed considerable blame on the Foxite opposition, but this warrants little serious consideration from historians. At mutineer, Thomas Jephson's trial, he accused Foxite peer, the Duke of Bedford, of having 60,000 men and 10,000 weapons ready to mobilise against the government. Unsurprisingly, the court did not entertain this possibility. Though vocal in his opposition to Pitt, Bedford was not a revolutionary; during the winter of 1797-98 he gave a voluntary contribution of £100,000 to the war effort.⁹⁸ Similarly little weight should be ascribed to a letter sent to a sailor on board the *Britannia* from a friend in London informing him that 'we expect shortly a Change in the Ministry and it is thought Mr Grey is to be prime Minister'. Wells claimed that *Britannia* was at the Nore, and that there might therefore have been communication between the Foxites and the mutineers.⁹⁹ In fact, *Britannia* was with the Mediterranean fleet, so this letter should simply be seen as an innocent exchange of (rather wide of the mark) political gossip.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the most famous expression of the idea of Foxite instigation was Isaac Cruikshank's popular print, *The Delegates in Council* (see Figure 1.1).

⁹⁸ Doorne, 'A Floating Republic?' in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 185-86.

⁹⁹ Wells, *Insurrection*, pp. 101-102.

¹⁰⁰ Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2010), p. 1.

compromise course. He made clear that he would vote in favour of the necessary government motions to end the mutinies, but refused to let these pass to the vote without debate, as Pitt had desired. The mutinies presented the Foxites with a nigh-unwinnable dilemma, and it was easy for Cruikshank, among others, to suggest Foxite complicity when this was far from reality. Nevertheless, many contemporary observers of the mutinies feared that they had been instigated through the involvement of enemy agents, or members of banned societies, such as the London Corresponding Society (LCS). This view was not discouraged by the government; it was a theory that usefully absolved them of blame or mismanagement.

Having discounted the claims that these diverse groups were responsible for the 1797 fleet mutinies, it is necessary to consider the political context and response to the mutinies. Even though these groups did not shape the mutinies, many MPs and statesmen believed that they had, or wished to believe so.

VII. The 1797 Mutinies for Pittites and Foxites

The debates occasioned by the mutinies in both houses of parliament reveal that issues of party were never far from the surface. Pitt and his ministers wished to pass all necessary measures without debate, whereas the Foxites criticised the government for mismanagement of the navy and particularly for its delay in preparing a bill to grant the sailors' demands. No signs of government haste appear in the records until 9 May, by which time delay, confusion, and suspicion had claimed several lives at the incident on the *London*.

The government estimates for the cost of raising sailors' wages and food rations in line with the agreement reached with the Spithead mutineers were only presented to Parliament on 5 May. In accordance with usual Parliamentary practice, it was ordered that these estimates should 'lie upon the table to be perused by the members of the House'. The issue was not raised again for three days.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, 1796-97, (1801), pp. 538-39, 552.

Meanwhile, an unfortunate discussion in the House of Lords undermined the sailors' belief in the legislature's good intentions with disastrous consequences.¹⁰⁴ On 3 May, the Duke of Bedford addressed the Lords with his astonishment that the ongoing mutiny had not been discussed. In reply, Lord Howe, the admiral commanding the mutinous fleet, wished that, 'for the sake of the service, the business had never been brought under discussion'. He feared that this would place the legislature into an impossible situation of either having to tacitly approve of the mutinies or risk their continuation. Lord Grenville and the Duke of Clarence agreed, warning that discussion of those matters would risk 'the most serious danger' (though Clarence unwisely added that he felt it a mistake to have 'complied with the demands of the sailors'). The Earl of Carlisle, however, wondered if the Lords would ever be allowed to debate the matter. He warned against a situation where 'one branch of the legislature were to be kept in perpetual ignorance' of events which 'had shaken the pillars of the state to their very foundation'.¹⁰⁵ The sailors did not fail to take notice.

Howe's speech was simply an appeal for discretion while legislation was prepared to realise the agreement struck with the mutineers. Among the Spithead sailors, however, who had cheerfully begun to return to duty, but whose suspicions were growing with each day that Parliament failed to produce their Act, Howe's words were misinterpreted as a duplicitous attempt to deny the sailors' demands. These tensions came to a head on board the *London* on 7 May when Admiral Colpoys ordered his officers to fire on an assembly of sailors. Four were killed, and bloody reprisals were averted only by a combination of personal courage on the part of Colpoys, and extreme restraint from the mutineer leaders.¹⁰⁶ This was the only fatal episode of the Spithead mutiny and it was the result of an entirely avoidable misunderstanding.

On the same day that these sorry events unfolded on the *London*, the sailors' bill came before Parliament. Pitt made the same appeal as Howe for the 'silent indulgence of the House' to grant their approval without discussion. Concurrent with the *London* incident, his observation that 'the slightest misrepresentation might produce the most serious consequences' was evidently true. Nevertheless, Pitt was asking the House to approve new spending of over £500,000 per year, and the Foxites would not allow it to pass without

¹⁰⁴ Letters from Flag Officers, Channel Fleet: 1797 ADM 1/107, fol 262.

¹⁰⁵ *Hansard* vol. 33, 1797-98 (London: Hansard, 1818), pp. 474-75.

¹⁰⁶ These events, and the causal role of Howe's speech to the Lords are explained in David W. London, 'What Really Happened On Board HMS *London*?' in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 61-78.

comment.¹⁰⁷ Fox made clear that ‘I certainly shall vote for the resolution; but I cannot do it silently without betraying my constituents’. He promptly used the mutiny as a club with which to beat the government, citing the scandalous delay in bringing the bill forward, for which he hoped ministers would be held accountable.¹⁰⁸ Sheridan agreed, and proposed that the passage of the sailors’ bill should be accompanied by a vote of censure on ministers for the delay.¹⁰⁹

The following day (9 May) Pitt defended himself with the claim that there was no unnecessary delay as ‘all those forms, which the regular conduct of business required, necessarily consumed some time’. This revealingly suggests that the mutinies were considered just another part of *regular* business rather than as an exception to be rushed through in breach of procedural niceties, as perhaps they might have been. This did not satisfy Fox, who denounced ‘tedious steps’ and ‘petty formalities’ in such a crisis. He and Sheridan laid the deaths on the *London* at Pitt’s door.¹¹⁰ Significantly, after this exchange the impression is one of Parliamentary haste; a message was sent to the Lords asking them to sit late to hear the sailors’ bill. This bill was presented to the Commons and immediately went through its first, second, and third readings, on which it was passed unanimously and carried straight to the Lords. There, at the suggestion of the Duke of Athol, the bill was passed without discussion as they had ‘already experienced the fatal effects of a conversation which had taken place on a former evening having been misrepresented’. With the Lords in agreement, the bill received royal assent that same evening.¹¹¹ It would appear that important business could be raced through Parliament, and perhaps the sailors’ bill could have been passed sooner. That was certainly the opinion of the Foxites. On 10 May, during a debate on the proposal to censure Pitt and his ministers, Fox told the Commons that Pitt had previously rushed bills through Parliament and reminded them of ‘the celerity with which the bill for the suspension of the Habeas Corpus’ and other measures designed to ‘infringe upon the liberties of the people’ had passed through the House.¹¹² The following month, two acts for repressing mutiny were steered through Parliament with notable dispatch.¹¹³ Nevertheless, the motion of censure was soundly defeated by 237 to 63.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁷ *Hansard* vol. 33, p. 477; *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, p. 552.

¹⁰⁸ *Hansard* vol. 33, pp. 479-81.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 483.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 484-88.

¹¹¹ *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, pp. 555-58; *Hansard* vol. 33, p. 490.

¹¹² *Hansard* vol. 33, p. 503.

¹¹³ The Bills for preventing the seduction of sailors and soldiers, and that for isolating mutinous ships passed on 2 and 5 June respectively, *Ibid.*, pp. 808-15.

¹¹⁴ *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, p. 563.

The political context of the 1797 mutinies was an uncomfortable one for the Pitt ministry, and both parties had to tread a careful line. The belief of several ministers, such as Pitt and the Duke of Portland, that the mutinies were the work of hostile agents appear sincere, but they also provided a useful means of deflecting Foxite charges of naval mismanagement and unnecessary delay. When Pitt told the Commons on 2 June that the origins of the mutinies ‘could not be in the hearts of British seamen’ but in seditious revolutionaries who had ‘poisoned the minds, and perverted the principles of our sailors’, he was largely reflecting accepted wisdom. Even Sheridan made reference to ‘foul incendiaries’.¹¹⁵ As shown in this chapter, these views left a lasting but deceptive impression on the historiography of the mutinies from Gill, through to Thompson, Elliott, and Wells.¹¹⁶ There was a great deal of uncertainty during and after the mutinies, and investigations such as those of Graham and Williams, or the courts martial, took time. In this context claims of seditious involvement were plausible and politically useful, particularly as links to English reformers would also damage the Foxites by association, as in the case of Cruikshank’s image.

Furthermore, such pragmatic scapegoating would not be uncharacteristic of the British state in this period. For example, Luddite disturbances in 1812 were blamed on French agents and the government sent London magistrates to investigate. Like Graham and Williams, they found no evidence of such links.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Walter Shelton has argued that, in times of high food prices, when bread riots threatened, the government (whether consciously or not) effectively scapegoated middlemen in the grain trade by issuing old statutes against hoarding. This directed popular anger towards the middlemen and away from the government.¹¹⁸ In the case of the mutinies, David London and Nicholas Rodger have highlighted the usefulness of scapegoats to the government as a means of diverting the press from attacks on the administration and perhaps even discomforting the opposition.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ *Hansard* vol. 33, p. 798.

¹¹⁶ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 315-23; Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 183-85; Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, pp. 135-44; Wells, *Insurrection*, pp. 79-109.

¹¹⁷ Malcolm I. Thomis, *The Luddites, Machine-Breaking in Regency England* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1970), pp. 42-43.

¹¹⁸ Walter J. Shelton, *English Hunger and Industrial Disorders, A Study of Social Conflict During the First Decade of George III’s Reign* (London: Macmillan, 1973), pp. 47-48.

¹¹⁹ David W. London, ‘Mutiny in the Public Eye: The Role of Newspapers in the Spithead Mutiny’ (King’s College London PhD Thesis, 2001), p. 19; N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean, A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 452.

This expedient was, however, recognised by some newspapermen themselves. The *Morning Post and Fashionable World* reported on 14 July that, whereas during the Nore mutiny ‘the Ministerial Papers insinuated that the Delegates would be found to be instigated by, and to be in correspondence with, very great men in this country’, since Parker’s trial ‘it has not been thought expedient to repeat the insinuation; for which, indeed, it should in candour be confessed, they knew in the first instance there was not the slightest ground or foundation’.¹²⁰ This piece directly accuses the government of knowingly scapegoating innocent individuals in order to deflect criticism from themselves. One can reasonably assume that the ‘great men’ referred to would include notable Foxites. This again demonstrates the sense in which the mutinies were a double-edged sword for the Foxites. It cannot be proved that the Pitt administration knowingly scapegoated others to deflect criticism from themselves, but the precedents and advantages of this policy make it a possibility.

Conclusion

The evidence presented by contemporaries and historians to claim that seditious intentions shaped the 1797 fleet mutinies has been shown to be unconvincing. The old suspects: the Irish, the French, English Radicals, Foxites, and quotamen have all been dismissed in turn. Instead, experienced sailors have been returned to their rightful place: at the head of the mutinies that they created and maintained for weeks on end. It was naturally to the skilled seamen, who daily led by example, that the sailors looked for direction. Individuals of seditious intent were likely present, but lacked the social capital to persuade or lead in the skill-based order of the lower decks.

It is necessary to appreciate, as did contemporary magistrates, that, practically speaking, the sailors were fully capable of originating and organising a mutiny themselves. Some in the 1790s and ever since have presented British sailors as brave and loyal, but simple souls easily led astray. Fortunately, this view has been significantly challenged by

¹²⁰ *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 14 July 1797.

historians such as Marcus Rediker and Niklas Frykman, whose work has highlighted long traditions of organised protest by sailors within a context of distinctly ‘maritime radicalism’.¹²¹ The mutinous sailors did not have to rely on the organisational talents of seditious landsmen, but found sufficient leaders and organisational acumen within their own ranks.¹²²

Claims that the fleet mutinies were incited by seditious groups, or that they were failed political revolutions, are not substantiated by the evidence presented by Thompson, Elliott, or Wells. Coats, meanwhile, has identified much more robust sources that appear irreconcilable with the revolutionary intentions interpretation.¹²³ Crucially, if any hint of sedition had existed, the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland could have been relied upon to have publicised it widely. Claims that the government did not *want* to find evidence of sedition are refuted by the instructions to Graham and Williams, and the discussions in Parliament. Chapter two considers the role of a further factor in bringing about the fleet mutinies: sailors’ stagnant wages.

¹²¹ Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Peter Linebaugh, and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra, Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000); Clare Anderson, Niklas Frykman, Lex Heerma van Voss, and Marcus Rediker (eds.), *Mutiny and Maritime Radicalism in the Age of Revolution: A Global Survey* (Glasgow: Bell and Bain Ltd., 2014). *International Review of Social History* Special Issue 21; Niklas Frykman, ‘Seamen in Late-Eighteenth Century Warships’, *International Review of Social History* vol. 59 (2009), pp. 67-93.

¹²² Richard Sheldon, ‘The London Sailors’ Strike of 1768’ in Andrew Charlesworth, David Gilbert, Adrian Randall, Humphrey Southall, and Chris Wrigley, *An Atlas of Industrial Protest in Britain, 1750-1990* (London: Macmillan, 1996).

¹²³ Coats, ‘The Delegates: A Radical Tradition’ in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797, Unity and Perseverance*, p. 41.

2. STAGNATION OF SAILORS' WAGES AS A MOTIVE FOR MUTINY

Introduction

The interpretation that the 1797 fleet mutinies were attempted political revolutions finds no substantiation in the available evidence. The suggestion that unbearable naval conditions were to blame for the mutinies must be analysed with equal thoroughness. Even in serious accounts of the mutinies, such as Manwaring and Dobrée's, we are told that pay was 'outrageously' insufficient and often 'two years in arrear', that food rations were 'inedible', pursers 'rapacious', that sailors would have been 'better off in the merchant service', and that 'most of the seamen's families starved or were supported by a grudging parish'.¹ Reading such a summary, it is difficult not to question how the Royal Navy proved such an effective fighting force. While not seeking to understate the undeniable hardships of naval life, it is necessary to move beyond sweeping generalisations in order to investigate the realities of naval conditions and place them within their eighteenth-century context.

In order to gain an understanding of the causation of the Spithead and Nore mutinies one must analyse, and where possible quantify, the state of several key naval conditions. Nicholas Rodger has presented a wide-ranging evaluation of naval conditions across the eighteenth century and argued that a naval life was in many ways desirable and, contrary to previous orthodoxy, often preferable to the merchant marine when it came to factors like medical care, workload, and career prospects.² It is impossible to investigate all of the factors discussed by Rodger in a single chapter, and so an element of selectivity is necessary. Fortunately, in their petitions, the mutinous sailors themselves draw attention to those aspects

¹ G.E. Manwaring and Bonamy Dobrée, *The Floating Republic* (London: Frank Cass and Co. LTD, 1966), pp. 18-19.

² N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1988); J. Ross Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang: Volunteers, Impressment and the Naval Manpower Problem in the Late-Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), p. 94.

of naval conditions which most concerned them.³ These include wages, food measures, and the disciplinary regimes of individual officers. There were other important factors of naval conditions, which exercised a cumulative effect, but these have been chosen as the most important causal factors based on the views expressed by the mutineers themselves in their petitions and personal correspondence.⁴ Furthermore, recognising those demands which sailors were willing to drop and those that they prioritised during their negotiations with the Admiralty permits identification of their greatest grievances. All contribute to a framework of comparative injustice and perceived unfairness which represented a common cause. To an extent, this was felt differently by sailors of different skill levels, and this will also be discussed in this and subsequent chapters.

Mutiny was a perilous undertaking and it is unlikely that sailors would risk their lives to achieve trivialities, or anything other than strong shared objectives. The first and main demand made by the mutinous seamen was for a rise in wages: a demand on which they remained resolutely determined. Their second request was for naval rations to be measured in full 16-ounce pounds. Next came the provision of pay to sick or injured sailors and improved care outside the navy. All of these were conceded by the Admiralty. The final success of the Spithead mutineers was the removal of 113 unpopular officers, though it was made clear that this was not to be taken as a precedent. In exchange, the seamen dropped their demands for higher pensions from Greenwich naval hospital and a higher share of prize money.⁵ This gives a clear list of priorities for discussion within the assessment of the causal role of naval conditions to the 1797 mutinies: wages, naval food, and discipline (as exercised by individual officers). The issues of food and discipline are discussed in chapter three. This chapter will concentrate on wage stagnation and consider the effectiveness of the naval allotment system (the official mechanism to allow sailors to support their families).

Regarding each of these factors, it was the most experienced, and longest-serving sailors who stood to lose most, or had seen the greatest decline in their fortunes. This supports the argument of the previous chapter that the 1797 mutinies were born of injustices to systems of inherited skill and knowledge, and were not simply the result of unskilled

³ See for example Petition of the Spithead Delegates to the Admiralty, 18 April 1797, NMM, TUN/212 and the petitions collected in Letters from Flag Officers, Channel Fleet: 1797 ADM 1/107, fol 202.

⁴ Helen Watt, and Anne Hawkins (eds.), *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France 1793-1815* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 410-43. There appears little reason for the mutineers to have lied to their families, and their passionate language makes clear that they did not dilute their sentiments for fear of letters falling into government hands.

⁵ Petition of the Spithead Delegates to the Admiralty, 18 April 1797, NMM, TUN/212; Ann Veronica Coats and Philip MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797: Unity and Perseverance* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), p. 27.

individuals joining the navy (particularly through the Quota Acts). The most significant individuals were those for whom naval conditions were of more than temporary concern, such as careerists: Rodger's 'lower-deck aristocracy'.⁶ This in turn emphasises the service element of the mutinies, rendering them further from abortive political revolutions and closer to occupational disputes.

The framework for these chapters is the list of grievances presented by the Spithead mutineers, rather than the demands of their Nore successors. The Nore demands will receive attention in later chapters, but there are several reasons for concentrating on Spithead. Crucially, while the Spithead mutineers engaged in a prolonged and ultimately successful process of negotiation with the Admiralty, thereby revealing their priorities, the authorities refused to negotiate with the Nore mutineers, whose demands increased as their frustration and desperation grew.

Encouragingly, the evidence of seamen's letters compiled by Watt and Hawkins suggest that the priorities of the Nore sailors were very close to those expressed in the Spithead petitions. Of the fourteen letters relating to the 1797 mutinies that explain the reasons for the mutiny, thirteen are from the Nore, and the other from Plymouth. Of these fourteen letters, eleven cite wages as a serious grievance, compared to three complaining of specific officers, and one drawing attention to naval food.⁷ Throughout, their language is one of perceived injustice. A typical example is the letter of William Roberts of *Director*, who felt that the sailors deserved 'better usage' and that they 'want nothing more, then to be used well'.⁸ These letters are an invaluable source for interpreting the sentiments of the lower decks and the extent to which they correspond to mutineer petitions and publications is reassuring.

⁶ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean, A Naval History of Britain 1649-1815* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 452.

⁷ Watt, and Hawkins (eds.), *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France*, pp. 410-43.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

I. Sailors' Purchasing Power

Declining sailors' purchasing power has frequently been cited by the secondary literature as central to the causation of the mutinies, but it has been imprecisely defined. The statistic most commonly used is that the cost of living increased by approximately thirty per cent between 1653 and 1797.⁹ Coats and MacDougall, for example, reveal authoritatively that 'the cost of living had risen 30 per cent since the last Act relating to their pay'.¹⁰ This figure is derived from the petition of the Delegates of the Spithead fleet to Parliament, where the actual quotation reads that (in 1653) 'the necessaries of life and slops'¹¹ of every denomination were at least thirty per cent cheaper than at pres[ent]'.¹² Already this muddies the waters. It has widely been commented that many of the petitions sent from the Spithead mutineers of various ships to Admiral Howe, the Admiralty, and Parliament were practically identical: and indeed this fact led Howe to doubt their veracity. Close inspection, however, reveals some notable differences. The petition of the men of the *Defence* to the Admiralty, quoted by Gill, comments on the 'considerable rise in every necessary of life, and an advance of 30 per cent. on slops'.¹³ It now appears uncertain whether the sailors of 1797 believed that the price of necessaries and slops since 1653 had increased by thirty per cent; by more than thirty per cent; or that the figure of thirty per cent referred specifically to slops with an unknown but 'considerable' rise in the price of necessaries. This last interpretation is supported by the similar petition from the men of the *Queen Charlotte* to the Admiralty on 28 February 1797, where the same familiar passage reads 'the Considerable rise in the Necessaries of Life, which is now almost double; and an advance of 30 P.C. on Slops'.¹⁴

⁹ Piketty has argued that inflation was practically insignificant during the eighteenth century, but this does not hold true for the 1790s. Fluctuations in the supply and demand of foodstuffs linked to rising population was itself a cause of inflation, which led to declining purchasing power for sailors. See Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 103.

¹⁰ Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 51.

¹¹ 'Slops' were naval clothes provided to sailors by pursers who were then remunerated by deductions from sailors' wages.

¹² TNA, ADM1/5125, Petition of the Delegates of the Spithead fleet to Parliament, 1 May 1797.

¹³ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 360.

¹⁴ Petition from the men of the *Queen Charlotte* to the Admiralty on 28 February 1797, quoted in Brian Tunstall, *The Anatomy of Neptune from King Henry VIII to the Present Day* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1936), p. 156; The men of the *London* also agreed on the figure of a 100% increase in the price of necessaries since 1653 in their letter to the crew of the *Queen Charlotte* of 26 February 1797, quoted in Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 21.

It appears highly problematic that the oft-quoted flagship factor of the naval conditions interpretation of the mutinies' causation was, in the first place, merely based on the petitions of sailors (none of whom would have been alive in 1653) rather than any quantitative work and, secondly, was perhaps only referring to the cost of sailors' clothing. Coats may have appreciated these problems when she sought to corroborate the 30% figure through comparison with Patrick O'Brien's indices of agricultural prices,¹⁵ but O'Brien's 1985 article actually suggests a rise of between 50 and 100% in the cost of agricultural prices from 1660 to 1797 and was largely based on Deane and Cole's figures, which have since been superseded. The price data is also based on raw goods like grains (which saw greater fluctuations in price) rather than consumed goods, such as bread.¹⁶

This uncertainty when it comes to the scale of the decline in sailors' purchasing power between 1653 and 1797 is troubling, as it leaves the most central claim of the 'naval conditions' explanation for the mutinies — that they were caused by a pronounced depreciation in the real value of sailors' pay — unsubstantiated apart from seamen's petitions which set the rate of depreciation variously at approximately 30%, almost 100%, or unknown.

This chapter presents more detailed and precise data for the decline in sailors' purchasing power than has ever been brought to bear on the debates surrounding the causation of the 1797 mutinies. It is argued that the decrease in the purchasing power of sailors' wages between 1653 and 1797 was a legitimate grievance and a significant motivation to mutiny. The rate of decline of purchasing power was far from constant and witnessed multiple fluctuations. Furthermore, the calculations presented here allow the trends in purchasing power of different ranks of sailors to be compared for the first time. The additional comparison of sailors' purchasing power to that of soldiers highlights the remedial effects of the repeated pay rises granted to soldiers (in 1792 and 1795): remedial effects that the sailors did not share. This serves to highlight the importance of fairness and pride to the causation of the 1797 mutinies. This is because, in several respects, the absolute value of naval pay appears to have been less significant than the knowledge that the pay of soldiers had been increased while that of sailors had remained stagnant for 144 years.

¹⁵ Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 130.

¹⁶ Patrick O'Brien, 'Agriculture and the Home Market for English Industry, 1660-1820', *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 100 (1985), pp. 773-800, pp. 776, 780.

Specifically, between the outbreak of war in 1793 and the 1797 mutinies, able and ordinary seamen, and landsmen all experienced a fall in their purchasing power of bread of thirty per cent and approximately eight per cent for beer. A clear view of purchasing power as a grievance is found in the letter of an unnamed seaman of the *Bellerophon* written in January 1796. Recounting a cruise off the Spanish coast to his family, this sailor wrote that ‘the Spaniards came to us in boats with bread[...] so very good and about the same price as in England (but since we came in I think the Bread so much Dearer than it has been for a rowl we sometime back got for a Halfpenny is now three halfpence)’.¹⁷ Even before the disappointing harvest of 1796, the rising cost of basic food was already a concern to sailors.

Soldiers, meanwhile, partially insulated by pay rises, felt only a twenty-five per cent fall in purchasing power for bread and actually saw their purchasing power of beer rise.¹⁸ As such, the declining purchasing power of sailors represented a clear material grievance, but the perception of having, unlike soldiers, been forgotten by an ungrateful nation seems to have been an equally potent cause of the 1797 fleet mutinies. This impression is further strengthened by the pay rises granted to naval lieutenants and captains between 1795 and 1797.¹⁹ The situation of sailors in this period was exacerbated by high prices occasioned by the poor harvests of 1795 and 1796. It was not a coincidence that Thomas Malthus penned his unpublished pamphlet *The Crisis* advocating the creation of workhouses in 1796, with his famous *Essay on the Principle of Population* following two years later as a cautionary siren of the dangers of growing population and finite food production.²⁰ The trend in sailors’ absolute purchasing power was clearly downward, but it seems that the relative trend- that is to say, the trend of their purchasing power compared to that of officers and soldiers- was equally important as a motivation for mutiny.

This chapter is divided into five sections. Section II explains the data and methodology of this analysis. The following section presents the results of these calculations. In order to do so, this section is further subdivided so as to discuss different periods of analysis. Results are shown as both tables and figures. My dataset is presented in Appendix 2 with figures drawn from it displayed in Appendix 3. The fourth section develops comparisons between different ranks of sailors and soldiers. Section V analyses the system of allotting naval pay (sending pay to family members on shore) and its level of uptake in order to consider the situation of sailors’ families.

¹⁷ Letter from unnamed lower deck seaman from the *Bellerophon*, 3 January 1796, NMM, AGC/B/26.

¹⁸ See Table 2.6.

¹⁹ Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, pp. 11-12.

²⁰ Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. xxix.

II. Methodology

From the outset, Robert Allen's 'London Prices Long Series' dataset was used to find the price of bread and beer between 1653 and 1815.²¹ Immediately, several issues arise. Firstly this is one of several rival price indices across this period; that by Gregory Clark is also widely used.²² For the nineteenth century, Charles Feinstein's price data has become the accepted word on the subject, but this dataset does not extend back to our period.²³ Robert Allen's price index was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, unlike other datasets, Allen's traces the price of finished products that historical individuals actually consumed, such as bread and beer, rather than approximating these from the price of wheat or other oats. Allen also presents his prices in pounds, shillings, and pence, rather than grams of silver, as is the case with Clark. As such, Allen's work was considered sufficiently accurate for the modest goal of providing more specific data than has yet been deployed to explore the relationship between the cost of living and the causation of the 1797 mutinies.

Secondly, common to many such datasets, Allen's is most pertinent to a particular locality: in this case London and South East England. While this fact brings the representativeness of this data for the country as a whole into question, London and the South East was the most heavily populated area of Britain in the eighteenth century, and the region most relevant to the experience of the mutinous fleets of 1797 at Portsmouth and the Thames estuary. The families of mutinous sailors would have come from right across the British Isles and far beyond, including foreign countries such as the Batavian Republic (the Netherlands), Scandinavia, and the Italian States.²⁴ As such, their experiences could not adequately be captured by a single price series. This being the case, it appears justified, from a statistical viewpoint, to study the experience of Southern England, including the largest urban population in Europe.

²¹ Robert C. Allen's 'London Prices Long Series, 1259-1914' dataset, <https://www.nuffield.ox.ac.uk/people/sites/allen-research-pages/> accessed 10.01.2017, last accessed 02.04.2018.

²² Gregory Clark, 'Price History in English Agriculture, 1500-1914', <http://faculty.econ.ucdavis.edu/faculty/gclark/data.html> accessed 10.01.2017, last accessed 02.04.2018.

²³ Charles H. Feinstein, 'Pessimism Perpetuated: Real Wages and the Standard of Living in Britain during and after the Industrial Revolution', *The Journal of Economic History* 58, no. 3 (1998): 625–658.

²⁴ Niklas Frykman, 'Seamen on Late Eighteenth-Century European Warships', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 54 (2009), pp. 67-93, 72, 91; Sara Caputo, 'Alien Seamen in the British Navy, British Law, and the British State, c.1793-c.1815' *Historical Journal* (Forthcoming, 2019).

Finally, Allen's results provide just one price for each kind of good per year. This has the effect of hiding the annual cycle of price fluctuations. Prices would generally be at their lowest immediately after the harvest and then climb gradually throughout the year until anticipation of the next harvest again set them on a downwards trajectory. Studying just one 'average' price for each year necessarily smooths out this cycle. Nevertheless, as long as one is aware of the ramifications of this for analysis of the data, it should not have a serious bearing on the veracity of the results. For example, as the 1797 mutinies occurred during the spring, they were well in advance of the 1797 harvest. As such, the price rates most relevant to the experience, thoughts, and actions of the mutineers are likely to have been those listed in the dataset for 1796.

The period 1653-1815 was chosen for study, as this covered the long duration of stagnation of Royal Navy sailors' wages from 1653 to 1797, and the post-mutiny pay rise of that year. This 144-year timeframe has received by far the most attention and analysis in what follows, but calculations were also continued until the end of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Throughout this period, comparison has been drawn with the situation, wages, and purchasing power of soldiers with the rank of sergeant, corporal, private, and private of marines (with these last two receiving equal rates of pay). This comparison was considered pertinent as both soldiers and sailors were servants of the state risking life and limb, and because the mutinous sailors of 1797 drew direct and jealous comparison to the soldiers' pay rise of 1795.²⁵

I decided to concentrate purely on the price of beer and bread across the period, rather than attempt to construct a more holistic 'basket of goods'. This was because the sailors, rarely permitted off their ships, and fed navy rations, would have found their purchasing opportunities few and far between. Those that did arise were often typified by binge purchases of alcohol rather than a balanced consumer basket of goods. The fact that sailors received room and board placed them in a similar position to live-in domestic servants or apprentices. Though beyond the scope of this study, it would be a worthwhile exercise to compare trends in payment of servants and apprentices to that of naval sailors.²⁶ Meanwhile, due to the enormous differences among sailors as to their dependants, family situation, and circumstances, a full basket of goods approach appeared to be of limited utility. Similarly, rent has not been considered due to the significant scope for local variations. It is hoped that a

²⁵ Spithead Mutineers' Petition quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 359.

²⁶ One useful starting point would be the article: Jacob Field, 'Domestic service, gender, and wages in rural England, c.1700–1860', *The Economic History Review*, vol. 66 (2013), pp. 249-72.

concentration on fundamental eighteenth-century staple goods like bread and beer would be more effective at shedding light on the overall trends of purchasing power for sailors and their dependants than a full basket of goods. Furthermore, a concentration on bread and beer would allow for some broad, though crude, comparisons and contrasts to be drawn between older and younger sailors. Difficult as it is to generalise, older and usually more skilled and experienced, sailors would have been more likely to have had dependant wives and children, or to have been more interested in their ability to marry and form an independent household. They would therefore have been more interested in the direction and severity of trends in their purchasing power of bread. Younger sailors, fed on board ship, less likely to have dependants on shore, and perhaps more hedonistic, might have paid greater attention to trends in their purchasing power of beer (though it must be remembered that many young sailors may have had parents or siblings to support). If these suggestions hold true, then a fall in purchasing power of bread would have been a greater grievance for older and more experienced sailors, and a fall in that of beer a greater grievance for younger sailors. Whether or not these hypotheses are correct, both bread and beer were staple goods in their own right, and would have formed a significant share of the diet of much of the population.

Methodologically, the first step was to determine the relevant wages of sailors and soldiers across the period. For sailors, this rate remained stagnant between 1653 and 1797, but soldiers saw pay rises in 1792, 1795, and 1797. Sailors' pay was determined per lunar month (28 days), while soldiers were paid on a day rate. In both cases, certain automatic deductions were made from the pay of soldiers and sailors.

Turning specifically to sailors' wages, in the period 1653-1797, the lunar monthly pay of an able seaman amounted to £1.4 shillings. From this total, a deduction of 6d. was drawn to fund Greenwich hospital, and a further 1s. was taken for the Chatham Chest (a welfare provision for retired sailors).²⁷ The net pay of an able seaman after a 28-day lunar month was therefore £1.2s.6d., which, rendered in terms of 'd. per lunar month', gives the value 270d. The same process was followed for ordinary seamen and for landsmen. This last, it should be noted, were a relatively new class of sailor, and so changes in their purchasing power are measured and analysed from c.1760 rather than 1653 as for able and ordinary seamen. The pay of sailors was also calculated in this way for their post-mutiny pay rise, which lasted for the period 1797 to 1801, and then also following a subsequent pay rise in that year until 1815. The deductions for the Greenwich hospital and Chatham Chest remained constant throughout

²⁷ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p. 125.

at one shilling sixpence (18d.) per lunar month. The results of these calculations are shown in Table 2.1 below. Further deductions were made to sailors' pay for such items as bedding, additional food and drink, medical supplies, and 'slops' (naval clothes), but these took place on an individual basis. They are, therefore, difficult to estimate with any accuracy. As such, no adjustment has been made for these further deductions in Table 2.1 or the calculations conducted using its data. Nor has allowance been made here for the inconsistent but often considerable discounts extorted when sailors exchanged their pay tickets for cash on arrival in friendly ports, thereby reducing their pay far below face value.²⁸ On the other hand, no modification has been made for bounties or prize money. This latter was largely based on chance, and far more likely to be enjoyed by the crew of a frigate or sloop than a ship of the line on blockade duties²⁹ (like most of the constituent vessels of the mutinous Channel and North Sea fleets). Recently Judy Stephenson and John Hatcher have argued that the wage data of builders (on which many historical calculations of 'real wages' have been based) in fact recorded the contractor's rate rather than the wage paid to the workers themselves, which was therefore overestimated.³⁰ No such problem exists in the case of this study as the pay of naval sailors was legislated by Parliament and recorded by the Admiralty.

Table 2.1 Sailors' pay in d. per lunar month after deductions, 1653-1815³¹

<u>Period</u>	<u>Able Seaman</u>	<u>Ordinary Seaman</u>	<u>Landsman (from 1757)</u>
1653-1797	270	210	198
1797-1801	336	264	240
1801-1815	384	288	252

Replicating this exercise for soldiers proved more difficult. As with sailors, the basic pay rate is known, though in this case it is expressed per day rather than per lunar month (see Table 2.2, column 3). Between 1653 and 1797 an infantry private in the army or the marines received a nominal pay rate of 8d. per day. The complicating factor, however, is that, whereas

²⁸ Ibid., p. 130.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 135-36.

³⁰ Judy Stephenson, "'Real' Wages? Contractors, Workers, and Pay in London Building Trades, 1650-1800" *The Economic History Review*, Vol. 71 (2018), pp. 106-132; John Hatcher and Judy Stephenson (eds.), *Seven Centuries of Unreal Wages, The Unreliable Data, Sources and Methods that have been used for Measuring Standards of Living in the Past* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

³¹ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p. 125; Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, p. 3.

all sailors faced a set and steady deduction of 18d. per lunar month for Greenwich Hospital and the Chatham Chest, the deductions imposed on soldiers' wages were not standardised. A broad survey of the existing literature on the English and British army of the Interregnum, Stuart, and Hanoverian periods was undertaken in order to provide the most secure possible basis for these arbitrary adjustments of the data.³² It is known that an infantry private would have seen deductions of at least 2d. on his 8d. per day salary in order to pay the regimental quartermaster, but the rate of further deductions depended on factors including the battalion's locality, the attitude and propriety of his officers, and the local cost of living. This renders calculation imprecise, and estimates must be made to suffice. On the pessimistic side, Brereton suggested that, once all deductions had been made, a soldier would be fortunate to save 1d. per day.³³ There was a greater degree of consensus between Scouller and David, with the former suggesting a figure of 4d. per day for a private after deductions, and the latter settling on a figure of 5d. per day.³⁴ For this study, the difference was split between these two estimates, with the result that a private's nominal daily salary of 8d. is reduced to 4.5d. after deductions, representing a net lunar monthly salary of 126d. As such, just over 50% of the nominal salary is left to the private as net salary. This approximate ratio has been maintained and applied to sergeants and corporals for the period 1653 to 1792, and for all ranks in later periods. The results of these calculations are shown in Table 2.2.

³² Saul David, *All the King's Men: The British Soldier from the Restoration to Waterloo* (London: Viking, 2012), p. 17; J. M. Brereton, *The British Soldier: A Social History from 1661 to the Present Day* (London: Bodley Head, 1986), pp. 8-9, 48; Alan J. Guy, *Oeconomy and Discipline: Officership and Administration in the British Army 1714-63* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 172; John Childs, *The Army of Charles II* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976), pp. 258-59; R. E. Scouller, *The Armies of Queen Anne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 128-29; Britt Zerbe, *The Birth of the Royal Marines, 1664-1802* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2013), pp. 101-102; George Browning, *The Domestic and Financial Condition of Great Britain*, (London: 1834), p. 615; *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, 12 July 1796 to 5 October 1797 (1801), p. 600.

³³ Brereton, *The British Soldier*, p. 48.

³⁴ Scouller, *The Armies of Queen Anne*, p. 129; David, *All the King's Men*, p.17.

Table 2.2 Soldiers' pay in estimated d. per month after deductions, 1653-1815³⁵

<u>Period</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>d. per day</u>	<u>After Deductions</u> <u>(estimated)</u>	<u>d. per lunar</u> <u>month</u>
<u>1653 – 1792</u>	<u>Sergeant</u>	18	9	252
	<u>Corporal</u>	12	6.5	182
	<u>Private</u>	8	4.5	126
	<u>Private of Marines</u>	8	4.5	126
<u>1792 – 1795</u>	<u>Sergeant</u>	20.5	10	280
	<u>Corporal</u>	14.5	7.5	210
	<u>Private</u>	10.5	5.5	154
	<u>Private of Marines</u>	10.5	5.5	154
<u>1795 – 1797</u>	<u>Sergeant</u>	22	10.5	294
	<u>Corporal</u>	16	8	224
	<u>Private</u>	12	6	168
	<u>Private of Marines</u>	12	6	168
<u>From 1797</u>	<u>Sergeant</u>	24	11.5	322
	<u>Corporal</u>	18	9	252
	<u>Private</u>	14	7	196
	<u>Private of Marines</u>	14	7	196

The data upon which this section rests have now been discussed: Allen's price datasets for bread and beer, and the lunar monthly salary of sailors and soldiers, all covering the period 1653 to 1797. This data was combined and analysed using the following method. It was decided to determine how many pounds of bread could be bought for 100% of the

³⁵ David, *All the King's Men*, p. 17; Brereton, *The British Soldier*, pp. 8-9, 48; Guy, *Oeconomy and Discipline*, p. 172; Childs, *The Army of Charles II*, pp. 258-59; Scouller, *The Armies of Queen Anne*, pp. 128-29; Zerbe, *The Birth of the Royal Marines*, pp. 101-102; Browning, *The Domestic and Financial Condition of Great Britain*, p. 615; *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, 12 July 1796 to 5 October 1797 (1801), p. 600.

lunar monthly salary of the different ranks of soldier or sailor in each year. This was repeated to calculate the number of barrels of beer that could be bought with 100% of the lunar monthly salary of these ranks in each year. The results of these calculations of the purchasing power of sailors and soldiers in absolute terms of bread and beer are shown in Figures 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, and 2.5.

It is highly unlikely that anyone spent every penny of their monthly salary on either bread or beer, and so it was decided predominantly to use index values (where the absolute value for a designated year is taken as the yardstick and presented as '100', with other years then expressed as a percentage of that standard, thereby facilitating easy comparison) in order to measure trends over time. The trend in the drop in purchasing power of bread and beer would, therefore, be the same whether 100% or 10% of the lunar monthly salary was spent on these items. Furthermore, this decision also makes the results more relevant to the families of sailors as, from 1795, sailors were able to send fifty per cent of their salary home each month.³⁶ If absolute values of bread and beer were used, these would have to be halved to show the purchasing power of the families. Instead, using index values, the trend would apply to families and to sailors equally.

Several different starting points for these index values were chosen in order to capture the experience of different groups, as well as the long-term scale and direction of changes in purchasing power. The results of these different scales of analysis are shown in Tables 2.3 to 2.6, and explained below. Pay rises are signified by a change in colour within these tables and a key is provided by way of explanation.

³⁶ The details, popularity, and uptake of this allotment system will be studied in Part V.

Key

<u>Colour</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Black	Original wage from 1653 (1653 to 1797 for sailors. 1653 to 1792 for soldiers)
Red	Soldiers' Pay Rise, 1792 to 1795
Green	Soldiers' Pay Rise, 1795 to 1797
Blue	Soldiers' Pay Rise, from 1797
Purple	Sailors' Pay Rise from 1797

Table 2.3 Decadal averages of index purchasing power, 1653-1797 (1653-62 = 100)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Able Seaman</u>		<u>Ordinary Seaman</u>		<u>Landsman</u>		<u>Sergeant</u>		<u>Corporal</u>		<u>Private</u>		<u>Private Marine</u>	
	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Beer</u>	<u>Bread</u>	<u>Beer</u>
1653-62	100	100	100	100	N/A	N/A	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1680-89	112.47	86.9	112.1	87.11	N/A	N/A	112.47	86.72	112.47	86.73	112.47	87.41	112.47	87.41
1700-09	120.34	77.59	120.46	77.78	N/A	N/A	120.46	77.49	120.45	77.55	120.45	77.78	120.45	77.78
1730-39	124.09	67.93	124.09	68.44	N/A	N/A	124.09	67.9	124.09	67.86	124.09	68.15	124.09	68.15
1760-69	107.52	67.93	107.52	68.44	100	100	107.52	67.9	107.52	67.86	107.52	68.15	107.52	68.15
1780-89	93.37	59.66	93.82	60	87.25	87.59	93.82	59.78	93.82	59.69	93.82	60	93.82	60
1787-96	85.92	57.93	86.26	58.22	80.35	84.83	91.38	61.62	93.34	63.27	96.5	65.93	96.5	65.93
1788-97 (1)	83.3	57.59	83.64	57.78	84.14	84.14	90.07	62.36	92.54	63.78	96.5	67.41	96.5	67.41
1788-97 (2)	85.23	58.97	85.66	59.11	79.33	86.21	90.94	62.73	93.74	64.8	98.24	68.15	98.24	68.15
1796	61.63	54.48	61.64	54.67	57.32	80	71.91	63.84	75.86	66.84	82.18	73.33	82.18	73.33
1797 (1)	78.67	54.48	78.67	54.67	73.16	80	91.78	63.84	96.81	66.84	104.89	73.33	104.89	73.33
1797 (2)	97.89	67.93	98.9	68.89	88.68	97.24	100.52	69.74	108.92	75.51	122.37	85.19	122.37	85.19

III. Observation on results

A. *Longue durée* 1653-1797

(See Table 2.3)

The long-term trends in the purchasing power of soldiers and sailors between 1653 and 1797 will be investigated first. This has been done in two ways: an annual comparison, and a decadal comparison. In the first, 1653 and subsequent years are considered individually. This is revealing, but makes the analysis vulnerable to short-term fluctuations. In the second, average values are taken for each decade in order to smooth out the short-term fluctuations and provide a more representative picture of these periods. This allows a more balanced view of the overall trends across this 144 year period.

Looking first at the annual comparison, the purchasing power of sailors when it came to bread was approximately twenty to twenty-five per cent lower in 1797 than in 1653, and almost one half lower for beer. Soldiers were somewhat better off due to pay rises in 1792 and 1795, while landsmen, a new lower rank of sailor instituted from around 1760, witnessed little decline in purchasing power from 1760 to 1797. These figures, however, reflect the pay rise granted to sailors and soldiers in 1797. This is interesting, as the estimates in the existing historiography suggest that purchasing power was approximately one third lower at the time of the fleet mutinies than in 1653. In fact, based on this long-term analysis, the sailors' purchasing power of bread was one fifth to one quarter lower than in 1653 even *after* the pay rise of 1797.

Looking at the data for 1796, the year most relevant to the causation of the mutinies, a significant fall in purchasing power compared to 1653 becomes apparent. For bread, sailors' purchasing power fell to just forty per cent of the 1653 level, which appears cataclysmic, but deceptively so. Soldiers too saw their purchasing power for bread fall to forty-seven to fifty-four per cent of the 1653 level. For beer, the situation was only marginally better at approximately forty-five per cent of the 1653 level for sailors and fifty-three to sixty per cent for soldiers. If these figures were taken at face value, there could be little doubt about the causation of the 1797 fleet mutinies: the appalling economic conditions, showing sixty per cent devaluation in the purchasing power of bread, the staff of life, would surely be explanation enough for seeking redress.

There are, however, several good reasons why these figures should not be taken at face value. The starting point of 1653 was a year of particularly low prices, and so, correspondingly, a year of unusually high purchasing power. This skews comparison with later years, and so it is preferable to study the decadal average for 1653-62, which yields a less dramatic decline in purchasing power by the 1790s. To put this into empirical perspective, in 1653, 4lb of bread cost 3.9d., which meant that an able seaman's lunar monthly salary of 270d. could buy 276.92lb of bread. The average price of 4lb of bread across the decade 1653-62, though, was significantly higher at 6.46d., which meant that the able seaman's lunar monthly salary would only stretch to 180.65lb of bread: a full thirty-five per cent less than the figure for 1653 alone. Of course, as noted, individual sailors in 1797 would have had little grasp of the situation in 1653. They were aware that their pay had been stable since 1653 and that the cost of living was lower at that time. The attempt at a more precise quantification in this chapter, however, is justified by the substantial causal significance attributed to stagnant sailors' wages in the historiography of the 1797 mutinies and the fact that this has until now remained unquantified.

Relying on this decadal approach, the decade of lowest purchasing power is 1788-97 (with 1797 set to the pre-mutiny wage rate). In this decade, the purchasing power of bread for sailors was an average of approximately seventeen per cent below the level of the index decade of 1653-62, with beer much more adversely affected at forty-two per cent below the 1653-62 rate. The two pay rises granted to soldiers in 1792 and 1795 served to insulate them much more effectively in this period; their purchasing power of bread was only five to ten per cent below that of 1653-62, and thirty-three to thirty-eight per cent for beer. If these calculations are repeated for the decade 1788-97, but the pay rate is changed to the post-mutiny value, the sailors move approximately two per cent closer to their 1653-62 purchasing power and soldiers about one per cent: that is to say, eighty-five and sixty per cent of the 1653-62 rate for sailors, and ninety-five and sixty-six per cent for soldiers.

While using decades as the scope of analysis has the advantage of reducing the influence of the unrepresentatively high purchasing power of the year 1653, at the opposite end of the timeline, it also serves to smooth out the shocks of the 1795 and 1796 harvest failures. Consequently, the most appropriate method is to retain the decadal value for the period 1653-62, which was, after all, distant and indistinct history to the men of 1797, but to compare that decade to the years 1796 and 1797 individually. For the sake of clarity, here and

in the tables and figures below, where the wage rate or purchasing power in 1797 *before the pay rise of that year* is meant, it is labelled '1797 (1)'. Where the comparison is with the post-mutiny pay rise value, the term '1797 (2)' is used.

Starting with the 1796 nadir, the sailors' purchasing power of bread was forty per cent lower than the average for 1653-62, whereas soldiers and marines, insulated by their pay rises of 1792 and 1795, saw a decline in purchasing power of bread of only eighteen to twenty-eight per cent. This fall for sailors remains significant, but is not as cataclysmic as the sixty per cent fall observed using the annual method. Meanwhile, if one compares the year 1797 (1) to the decade 1653-62, sailors' purchasing power of bread fell by twenty to twenty-five per cent, compared to just five to ten per cent for soldiers and marines. The 1797 pay rise, 1797 (2), returned sailors to near parity with 1653-62 in this respect, but soldiers found their purchasing power ahead of where it had been in 1653-62. This resolves the problem noted above whereby the 1797 pay rise appeared to raise sailors' purchasing power of bread only to a level that remained almost a third below that of 1653.

Turning to beer, the 1796 nadir for seamen reduced their 1653-62 purchasing power of beer by forty to forty-five per cent compared to just seventeen to twenty-seven per cent for soldiers and marines. Furthermore, for the sailors, the 1797 pay rise only returned their purchasing power of beer to about seventy per cent of the 1653-62 level. The presence of the landsmen, whose index= 100 value was for 1760-69, is useful here. For landsmen the 1797 pay rise restored their purchasing power of beer to ninety-seven per cent, implying that the pay rise restored sailors' purchasing power of beer to approximately its 1760-69 level. This suggests that the pay rise was intended to restore sailors' purchasing power to a more favourable condition within living memory, rather than to parity with conditions when the wage rate was set in 1653. The authorities, it appears, were trying to put the clock back one generation, not to 1653. For soldiers, the 1797 pay rise restored their beer purchasing power to seventy to eighty-five per cent of the 1653-62 level.

B. Generational analysis, 1769-97

(See Table 2.4)

The sailors' petitions referencing the Interregnum origins of their wage rate show that they were well aware of the long duration of their stagnant pay. Interesting as comparisons with 1653 are, however, no one alive in 1797 had served in the navy for those full 144 years,

and so the decline in purchasing power since that period was not felt directly. As such, now that the long-term trends have been discussed, it appears more appropriate to study the fluctuations in purchasing power across a shorter timeframe. Several of these have been adopted. First is a generational comparison of twenty-eight years' duration (1769-97) intended to capture the experiences of those at the end of long naval careers. Second is a decade-long comparison (1788-97) intended to portray the experience of skilled seamen in the middle of their career. Finally, a shorter wartime comparison (1793-97) has been constructed to represent the changes experienced by the enormous number of new sailors who swelled the Royal Navy's wartime ranks.

If a generational measure³⁷ is adopted as the framework for comparison, the results contain continuities, but also important differences to the *longue durée* presented above. Generally put, the situation for bread appears worse than in the long-term analysis, and that for beer appears better. This suggests that the majority of the rise in the price of beer in the period 1653-97 occurred pre-1769. This is borne out by Figure 2.1. The price of bread, on the other hand, rose significantly after 1769, particularly in the case of the nadir year of 1796. In that year, sailors saw their purchasing power of bread reduced to 58.76% of its 1769 level. The figure for soldiers, again aided by their 1792 and 1795 pay rises, was much more favourable at between sixty-eight and seventy-eight per cent. The situation improved somewhat in 1797 and the pay rises of that year restored sailors' purchasing power of bread to ninety-one to ninety-four per cent of its 1769 level. Soldiers did still better, with a rate of 95-116% that of 1769. This data emphasises the extent to which the poor harvests of 1795 and 1796 had a sudden and dramatic negative impact on the purchasing power of bread, and that sailors' pay was devalued considerably more than that of soldiers.

In 1796-97 the sailors' purchasing power of beer hovered around the mark of eighty per cent of the 1769 level, before rising to parity after the rise in wages. The soldiers' purchasing power of beer did not dip below 94% that of 1769, and rose to 102-117% of the 1769 level after the pay rise. As such, viewed on this shorter timescale, the 1795-97 sailors' wage crisis appears to have been one of bread rather than of beer, and one which largely spared soldiers. The drop in purchasing power of bread rather than beer would have had a disproportionately large impact on those sailors who were heads of families. These men were more likely to be older and more skilled, such as the petty officers and skilled, experienced seamen who were observed to provide the majority of the mutineer leaders.

³⁷ Calculating values every five years from 1770 to 1795, as well as the individual years 1769, 1796, 1797 (1), and 1797 (2).

C. Final decade, 1788-1797

(See Table 2.5)

The pattern observed for the decade 1788-97, is similar, though slightly more optimistic. Bread appears much more adversely affected than beer, and the nadir year remains 1796. The purchasing power of sailors is again shown to have deteriorated by ten to twenty per cent further than that of soldiers from the 1788 index value. The reduced bread prices for 1797 allowed a significant restoration of purchasing power among sailors, up to approximately the eighty-five per cent mark of the 1788 rates, even before the naval pay rise. Once this pay rise is factored in, the purchasing power of sailors as regards bread actually slightly exceeded that of 1788, while beer shows an even more notable improvement to a full ten to fifteen per cent above the levels of 1788. Yet again, however, sailors are left significantly behind soldiers who, after the 1797 pay rise, could purchase between eight and thirty per cent more bread and between eighteen and forty-five per cent more beer than in 1788.

D. Wartime trend 1793-1797

(See Table 2.6)

If the scope of analysis is further narrowed to concentrate on the war years, the trends remain essentially the same, but milder. Sailors who joined the Royal Navy in 1793 would have found that their wages would have procured them approximately thirty per cent less bread and seven per cent less beer in the nadir year of 1796. Despite their pay rise in 1795, soldiers were little better off with a purchasing power for bread reduced by twenty-five per cent since 1793, and that of beer by up to about three per cent, though privates actually saw an increase in this respect. Nevertheless, as shown by comparisons drawn in the mutineer petitions, the mere knowledge that soldiers' wages had been raised in 1792 and again in 1795 made the sailors acutely aware of the growing injustice represented by the stagnation of their own pay for over 140 years. Regardless of how effective the amendments to soldiers' pay had been in terms of preserving their purchasing power, the fact that those changes had been made at all seemed to suggest that the cause of the soldiers was remembered by a grateful

nation, and acted upon by a government with apparently honest intentions. The government were clearly aware that the rising cost of living had negatively affected soldiers and had taken modest steps to ameliorate the situation.³⁸ The sailors could share no such comfort.

For both soldiers and sailors, the eventual post-mutiny 1797 pay rise successfully raised their purchasing power above the 1793 level, with sailors slightly ahead of soldiers in most respects. Limiting the scope of analysis to the years 1793-97, therefore, reverses the observed trend in tables 2.3 to 2.5 whereby even after the 1797 pay rise, the purchasing power of the soldiers was higher than that of the sailors relative to the index value at the start of the period of analysis. This, though, is due to the fact that the starting index of 1793 already includes the soldiers' pay rise of 1792. Raising sailors' pay in line with that of soldiers in 1797, therefore, would represent a larger increase on the 1793 index for the former than the latter. Once again, this implies that those sailors with the longest service would have had the greatest cause for complaint in the period 1795-97, and would have been least compensated by the eventual post-mutiny pay rise. These older sailors were also most likely to have had families to support, thereby rendering their fall in purchasing power even more onerous.

IV. Comparing Ranks

The analysis has so far concentrated on falls in purchasing power that would have been observed by individuals across our period. Figures 8.11 and 8.12 instead take the purchasing power of able seamen in 1793 as the point of comparison for all ranks up to the pay rise of 1797. These figures reveal that, until the pay rise of 1797, army NCOs enjoyed a

³⁸ These pay rises, and particularly that of 1797 fitted into a wider context of government concern to maintain the loyalty of the army (perhaps as the 'last ditch' against potential revolution) and prevent the spread of seditious influences within its ranks. This tendency is also visible in the Incitement to Mutiny (Seduction of Armed Forces from Duty) Act, of 1797. *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. 54, 1796-1797 (1801), pp. 634-635; *Hansard* vol. 33, March 1797- November 1798 (London: Hansard, 1818), pp. 808-9. For the loyalty of the army as a motive of the army pay rises, see 'Accounts of Extraordinary Services of the Army for the Year 1797' in Sheila Lambert (ed.), *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century* vol. 107 (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1975), p. 107; and David, *All the King's Men*, p. 367. A further link between pay and loyalty is the fact that proclamations explaining the 1797 army pay rise were printed and distributed on the orders of the Duke of York at Horse Guards for officers to read to their men, see Durham University Archives, Papers of the 1st Earl Grey, GRE/A1096a & b, 25 May 1797.

superior purchasing power to sailors; sergeants possessed greater purchasing power than able seamen, and that of corporals was equal to or greater than that of ordinary seamen. Only landsmen bucked the trend with greater purchasing power than army or marine privates. While the experience of army NCOs was invaluable, they were not skilled in the same way as veteran seamen, who could use their trade to earn higher wages in the merchant service. The worse position of sailors when it came to purchasing power, therefore, might well have added to a sense of injustice among naval sailors, with the greatest cause for complaint belonging to the most experienced sailors.

It has been shown that much depends on the timeframe of analysis adopted. Wartime sailors would have seen a fall in their purchasing power of bread by approximately one third between 1793 and the nadir of 1796, but the scale of the decline would have been much greater to those of ten years' service. Across this period, the decline in the purchasing power of bread appears to have been much more of a cause for complaint than beer. The experience of soldiers was starkly, indeed insultingly, different to that of sailors. Put succinctly, the reduction in the value of sailors' wages in absolute terms was enough to cause significant concern. Perhaps even more hurtful, however, was the still greater decline in sailors' wages relative to those of the soldiers. This could not fail to hurt sailors' pride. It is no surprise that, in their petitions, the Spithead mutineers demanded to know whether their loyalty and courage were not 'as unquestionable as any other description of men in His Majesty's service'.³⁹ In absolute terms, the value of naval pay was in notable decline, particularly in the years of poor harvest of 1795-96. Mutiny might yet have been avoided if not for the added sense of unjust treatment caused by the repeated rises in the pay of soldiers, and particularly that of 1795. This the sailors had 'observed with pleasure', but pleasure turned to frustration when their expectation 'that they should in turn experience the same munificence' came to naught. Instead, when 'no notice' was paid to them, 'nor the smallest provision made for their wives or families',⁴⁰ it must have appeared that their services were thankless and had been forgotten. It was likely the diverging fortunes of soldiers and sailors that made the sailors' situation unbearable. The *relative* wages of sailors were more influential as a cause of mutiny than the *absolute* wage rate.

At this stage it is useful to consider the uses to which sailors tended to put their wages. The first point to recognise is that naval sailors received payment only very infrequently: often months, sometimes over a year in arrears. This was a source of some

³⁹ Spithead petition quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 359.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

complaint, but less than one might expect, and this issue was not emphasised by the 1797 mutineers. This was likely largely due to the limited opportunities sailors had in the course of their day-to-day lives to spend money.⁴¹ Much of their wages were often spent purchasing extra or replacement food, tobacco, clothes (slops), and bedding from the ship's purser. These transactions did not require physical currency as the purchases could simply be recorded in the ship's books and deducted from the sailors' wages once they eventually came to be paid. Myriad exchanges and purchases were made between shipmates. Notably, when a sailor died his effects were usually auctioned to raise money for his family. It is likely that a certain amount of gambling also took place. When visiting a port, those sailors allowed on shore often spent their wages indulging in the conventional pleasures of food, drink, and women, all three of which were sometimes transported in boats out to the ships at anchor for the benefit of those sailors still on board. On voyages to distant lands, exotic pets were also a favourite drain on sailors' wages. Finally, as discussed in section five, a proportion of a sailor's wages could be sent to their family through the allotment system.⁴²

It is also worthwhile to consider the pay of merchant sailors. Simon Ville has presented pay data for merchant seamen engaged in a range of trades for the 1790s including the East coast coal trade, the Mediterranean, Baltic, and West Indies trades.⁴³ Table 2.7 shows a comparison between the wages of an able seaman in the navy and sailors engaged in these merchant trades. Ville presents his data in the form of an annual average of monthly wages, but does not specify whether this is a calendar or lunar month. It seems safer to assume the former, which would have the effect of slightly overestimating the superiority of civilian over military sailors' wages. Nevertheless, the civilian wages are always so far above those of the navy that adjusting for this incompatibility of the data would do little to change the overall picture. Table 2.7 makes clear that the wages of merchant sailors in this period were both higher than those of naval sailors and more responsive to changing price conditions in the 1790s. All four of the civilian trading routes studied show that the high prices of c.1795 were met by an increase in wages of between 290 and 380% compared to the mid to late-1780s, while the wages of naval sailors remained static. The absolute rates of pay in these

⁴¹ Improved victualling and coppering of ships, as well as fear of desertion all conspired to reduce the amount of time sailors spent on shore, as did the practice of 'turning over' the crew of a ship ending its commission straight into another.

⁴² Geoff Quilley, 'Duty and Mutiny: the aesthetics of loyalty and the representation of the British sailor c.1798-1800' in Philip Shaw (ed.), *Romantic Wars: Studies in Culture and Conflict, 1793-1822* (Aldershot: Ashgate, c2000), pp. 80-85; Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 125-29.

⁴³ Simon P. Ville, *English Shipowning During the Industrial Revolution, Michael Henley and Son, London Shipowners, 1770-1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987), pp. 163-68.

civilian trades represent between 1.2 and 8 times the wage of a naval able seaman. These trends would have represented a significant grievance to naval sailors, and particularly to the most skilled sailors, who were in greatest demand and so could command the highest wages in the merchant fleet. One contrary point that we should remember, however, is Jeremiah Dancy's warning that merchant sailors worked longer hours than man of wars' men, and that their pay was subject to unpredictable deductions depending on loss of cargo. Therefore, while the overall wages of merchant seamen were higher, they were riskier, required harder work, and did not guarantee better conditions in terms of food, discipline, and treatment than those prevalent in the navy.⁴⁴

Key to Table 2.7

Those columns labelled '1' give the annual monthly salary in d. For the Royal Navy able seaman this is for a lunar month of twenty-eight days whereas the civilian trades are more likely to record the total per calendar month.

The columns labelled '2' present an index value to show the changing trends of wages within the given trade to measure responsiveness to price conditions. The index = 100 year is given in brackets for each of these columns.

The columns labelled '3' show the merchant sailors' monthly wage expressed as a percentage of that of the naval able seaman in the given year.

As before, the row labelled 1797 (1) refers to the naval sailors' pay rate before the pay rise of that year, whereas 1797 (2) represents the situation once the 1797 pay rise is taken into account.

It is important to note that the majority of merchant sailors, like their naval counterparts, received their food free of charge.⁴⁵ As such, the figures for wages of naval and merchant sailors quoted in Table 2.7 are directly comparable.

⁴⁴ Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, pp. 94-98.

⁴⁵ Ville, *English Shipowning During the Industrial Revolution*, p. 106.

Table 2.7 Comparison of naval and civilian sailors' wages c. 1780s - 1800

Year	Able Seaman RN	East Coast Coal Trade			Mediterranean Trade			Baltic Trade			West Indies Trade		
		1	2 (1784)	3	1 (1785)	2	3	1 (1786)	2	3	1 (1789)	2	3
1784	270	600	100.00	222.22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1785	270	600	100.00	222.22	330	100.00	122.22	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1786	270	600	100.00	222.22	348	105.45	128.89	374	100.00	138.52	N/A	N/A	N/A
1787	270	N/A	N/A	N/A	360	109.09	133.33	360	96.26	133.33	N/A	N/A	N/A
1788	270	639	106.50	236.67	360	103.45	133.33	354	94.65	131.11	N/A	N/A	N/A
1789	270	672	112.00	248.89	N/A	N/A	N/A	416	111.23	154.07	348	100.00	128.89
1790	270	990	165.00	366.67	540	163.64	200.00	756	202.14	280.00	N/A	N/A	N/A
1791	270	720	N/A	266.67	N/A	N/A	N/A	714	190.91	264.44	N/A	N/A	N/A
1792	270	807	126.29	298.89	360	109.09	133.33	466	124.60	172.59	N/A	N/A	N/A
1793	270	1641	273.50	607.78	960	290.91	355.56	864	231.02	320.00	960	275.86	355.56
1794	270	1719	286.50	636.67	1320	400.00	488.89	1206	322.46	446.67	960	275.86	355.56
1795	270	2229	371.50	825.56	1200	363.64	444.44	1230	328.88	455.56	1020	293.10	377.78
1796	270	1266	211.00	468.89	1020	309.09	377.78	1194	319.25	442.22	N/A	N/A	N/A
1797													
(1) 1797	270	1170	195.00	433.33	960	290.91	355.56	1140	304.81	422.22	N/A	N/A	N/A
(2) 1797	336	1170	195.00	348.21	960	290.91	285.71	1140	304.81	339.29	N/A	N/A	N/A
1798	336	1461	243.50	434.82	954	289.09	283.93	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
1799	336	1701	283.50	506.25	1041	315.45	309.82	1198	320.32	356.55	N/A	N/A	N/A
1800	336	1890	315.00	562.50	1014	307.27	301.79	1230	328.88	366.07	1020	293.10	303.57

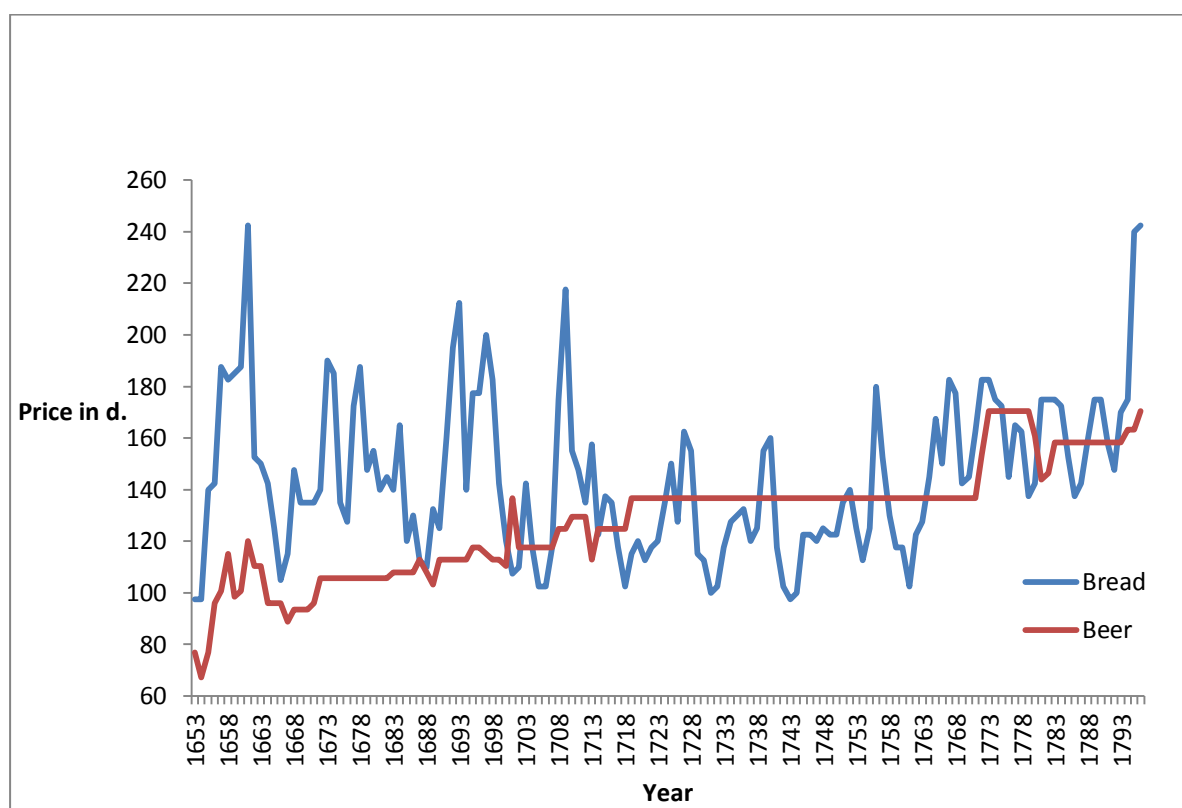
Stagnant pay was a strong grievance among Royal Navy seamen. It must be argued, therefore, that this interpretation of the causation of the mutinies should be given greater weight than that of revolutionary intentions. At the same time, however, fairness and the perception of fairness have arisen as consistent themes throughout: often of equal or greater import than the absolute standard of naval conditions themselves. This theme will be fully developed in chapter three, but it is enough here to say that a keen awareness of fairness represents a new way to interpret the mutinies which avoids the pitfalls of both strands of the revolution-naval conditions dichotomy and reconciles the behaviour and aims of the mutineers to Rodger's more positive impression of naval conditions. Sailors could tolerate and even thrive in naval life, but unfairness, real or perceived, was another matter entirely. With some justification, sailors appear to have felt that they deserved the celebrated place that they had earned in British society. In 1780, during the American war, women were heard to sing that:

Sailors they get all the money,
Soldiers they get none but brass;
I do love a jolly sailor,
Soldiers they may kiss my arse.⁴⁶

By 1797, the positions seemed to have reversed; the soldiers were provided with pay rises by a country grateful for their service and determined to prevent dissention in the ranks. The cause of the sailors, it seemed by comparison, had been forgotten.

⁴⁶ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 135-36.

Figure 2.1 Changes in price of one barrel of beer and of 100lb of bread, 1653-1796



V. Naval Allotments

The Spithead petitions complained that not ‘the smallest provision’ had been made ‘for their Wives and Families, except what they themselves sent out of their Pay to prevent their being burdensome to the Parish’.⁴⁷ This sentiment found collaboration in a petition presented to the Lords of the Admiralty by the ‘Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of Portsmouth’,⁴⁸ who complained that, due to ‘the General Rendezvous of His Majesty’s Ships at this Port, the Parish of Portsmouth labours under a particular hardship in being obliged to relieve the greate number of sailors and soldiers, their wives and families, and others, who Daily resort there’. They noted that ‘it frequently happens that women and

⁴⁷ Petition of the crew of the *Queen Charlotte* to Admiral Howe, 28 February 1797, Admiralty Petitions, 1793-1800, TNA, ADM1/5125.

⁴⁸ This petition is undated, but must have been written between 1793 and 1798, Admiralty Petitions, 1793-1800, TNA, ADM1/5125.

children are left fixed burthens to the Parish'.⁴⁹ This would seem to suggest that sailors' families were disproportionately likely to need assistance from the parish.⁵⁰ As the petition of the Spithead mutineers alludes, however, there was a system in place to allow sailors to send part of their pay to their families: the naval allotment system.

The naval allotment system was first introduced in 1728 and reformed in 1757, but uptake was low, and the system was significantly altered in 1795.⁵¹ An official history of the allotment system compiled in 1857-58 by Mr J. Pitcairn records that, from 1 May 1795, petty officers were allowed to allot up to half of their pay to their families, while other ranks could allot up to a set maximum. The pay would be released to their nominated individuals every twenty-eight days and would be paid by state officials. These included the closest customs or excise officer to the beneficiary's address, a naval clerk of the cheque in the environs of Portsmouth or Plymouth, or the Treasurer of the Navy for those living in London. In order to take advantage of the allotment system, a sailor could sign a declaration to that effect at any muster of the ship's company.⁵² These declarations, in triplicate, had to be signed by three commissioners of the navy, with one copy retained, one sent to the beneficiary, and the last to the official responsible for making payment. The named beneficiary, usually a sailor's wife or mother, had to collect the allotted pay personally, unless medically incapacitated. Anyone guilty of forgery or abusing the allotment system would 'suffer death as Felons without benefit of Clergy'. The pay rise secured by the Spithead mutiny counted for allotment payments from 24 April 1797, from which time all ranks were able to allot up to fifty per cent of their pay. Initially in 1795, only seven clerks were assigned to administer the allotment system. A separate allotment office was established in January 1797 with nine clerks under the direction of a chief clerk. By 1800, their numbers had swelled to sixteen.⁵³ As an appendix, Pitcairn provided estimated uptake figures for the allotment system, though he noted the inexact nature of the early estimates. These figures are shown in Table 2.8.

⁴⁹ Petition of the Churchwardens and Overseers of the Poor of the Parish of Portsmouth to the Admiralty, 1793-1798, Admiralty Petitions, 1793-1800, TNA, ADM1/5125.

⁵⁰ This matter is investigated for an earlier period in Margaret Hunt, 'The Sailor's Wife, War Finance, and Coverture in Late Seventeenth-Century London' in Tim Stretton, and Krista J. Kesselring (eds.), *Married Women and the Law: Coverture in England and the Common Law World* (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ Rodger has suggested that in 1759 just 4.6% of men were allotting pay, but that these men received 5.6% of the net pay of the ship, suggesting that older and more skilled men were most likely to send pay home to their families. These men were also most likely to be higher paid and to be married. See Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 131-32, 134-35; Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 317; Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, p. 96.

⁵² Usually a regular occurrence: often at least bi-weekly.

⁵³ 'Report on the Allotment System in the Navy' Compiled by Mr J. Pitcairn in the winter of 1857-58, TNA, ADM7/719, pp. 1-29. This is an excellent history of the allotment system created by an Admiralty civil servant with an insider's knowledge of the surviving records.

Table 2.8 Estimated rate of uptake in the naval allotment system, 1796-1812⁵⁴

<u>Year</u>	<u>Navy Strength</u>	<u>Men Allotting Pay</u>	<u>Approximate Uptake (%)</u>
1796	106,708	3,346	3.14
1797	114,603	5,239	4.57
1800	114,617	8,514	7.43
1801	118,247	13,582	11.49
1802	117,202	15,000	12.8
1804	118,005	15,188	12.87
1806	119,627	20,540	17.17
1812	138,204	27,019	19.55

Several points stand out here. First is the extremely low uptake in the allotment system in 1796. While the uptake for 1797 shows a notable increase, the rate is no higher than that suggested by Rodger for 1759.⁵⁵ It is likely that the pay rise secured by the Spithead mutiny led to an increase in the uptake of the allotment system (a possibility supported by a detailed study of a small sample of ships presented below), but Table 2.8 suggests that fewer than one in ten sailors were allotting pay by 1800. The naval strength figures presented in column two include officers and boys, few of whom allotted pay, with the result that the uptake estimates in column four will understate participation, though their numbers were few and so the effect will be slight. Overall, though, these figures might lead one to question the sincerity of the mutineer rhetoric deployed in their petitions; they complained that no provision had been made for their wives and families except what they sent out of their pay,⁵⁶ but Table 2.8 suggests that only a small minority were sufficiently concerned to take that step.

Prescient here is Rodger's caution that 'it was more plausible to demand pay for a starving family than for a drunken spree', and that modern historians have been too 'credulous of this improbable tale' when sailors were 'overwhelmingly young single men'.⁵⁷ Dancy has shown that seventy per cent of the lower deck were twenty-nine or younger, with forty-four per cent under twenty-five.⁵⁸ While it appears that married sailors were a minority,

⁵⁴ 'Report on the Allotment System in the Navy' Compiled by Mr J. Pitcairn in the winter of 1857-58, TNA, ADM7/719, Appendix 2.

⁵⁵ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 131-32, 134-35.

⁵⁶ Spithead petition quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 359.

⁵⁷ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 78-79; Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, p. 64.

⁵⁸ Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, pp. 48-50.

this does not preclude the importance of allotting pay, for example to parents or siblings.⁵⁹ At the same time, it appears likely that the Quota Acts might have resulted in an increase in the number of married men in the navy from 1795. In addition, Ellen Gill has recently emphasised the ‘domestic virtues’ of naval sailors and their apparent determination to ‘fulfil their domestic roles’.⁶⁰ Several of the Spithead petitions made this clear when they explained that their demands were to make them ‘better able to support our Wives and Families’ who they were ‘Duty Bound to Support’.⁶¹ Meanwhile, the role of ‘sailor’s wife’ carried significant social currency with strong connotations of membership to the ‘deserving poor’.⁶² As such, family welfare was a serious concern to an important minority of sailors, but a much larger group might have aspired to such familial responsibilities in their future.

To investigate this question more fully, this chapter now turns to an analysis of the allotments made on board a small sample of warships in 1797. A total of eight ships have been studied, with three from the Spithead mutiny (*London*, *Mars*, and *Marlborough*), three from the Nore mutiny (*Sandwich*, *Standard*, and *Monmouth*), and two which remained loyal on the periphery of the mutiny drama (*Venerable* and *Neptune*). The sources utilised were Admiralty allotment registers⁶³ and individual ships’ muster books.⁶⁴ Together, they allow a reconstruction of one side of the workings of the allotment system in miniature. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 2.9.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Patricia Lin has suggested that 25% of soldiers and sailors were heads of household by 1812, not including those responsible for the welfare of dependent parents or siblings, though it appears likely that soldiers would have made up the majority of this figure. See Patricia Lin, ‘Citizenship, Military Families, and the Creation of a New Definition of “Deserving Poor” in Britain, 1793-1815’, *Social Politics* vol. 7 (2000), pp. 5–46, p. 9; Ellen Gill, *Naval Families, War and Duty in Britain, 1740-1820* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), p. 218.

⁶⁰ Gill, *Naval Families*, p. 223.

⁶¹ Petition of the crew of the Spithead Mutineer Delegates to Parliament, February 1797, Admiralty Petitions, 1793-1800, TNA, ADM1/5125.

⁶² Hunt, ‘The Sailor’s Wife’ in Stretton and Kesselring (eds.), *Married Women and the Law*, pp. 154-55.

⁶³ Admiralty Book of Allotments, 1795-1805, TNA, ADM27/2.

⁶⁴ Admiralty Muster Books, 1797, TNA, ADM36/12572 (*HMS London*); TNA, ADM36/11759 (*HMS Marlborough*); TNA, ADM36/12233 (*HMS Mars*); TNA, ADM36/12398 (*HMS Sandwich*); TNA, ADM36/12858 (*HMS Monmouth*); TNA, ADM36/12239 (*HMS Standard*); TNA, ADM36/11649 (*HMS Venerable*); TNA, ADM36/12564 (*HMS Neptune*).

⁶⁵ Sources for table 2.9 calculations are Admiralty Book of Allotments, 1795-1805, TNA, ADM27/2 for all ships listed; and the following specific Admiralty ship’s muster books for 1797: TNA, ADM36/12572 (*London*, 3 April Muster); TNA, ADM36/12233 (*Mars*, 3 April Muster); TNA, ADM36/11759 (*Marlborough*, 3 April Muster); TNA, ADM36/12398 (*Sandwich*, 6 May Muster); TNA, ADM36/12239 (*Standard*, 7 May Muster); TNA, ADM36/12858 (*Monmouth*, 8 May Muster); TNA, ADM36/11649 (*Venerable*, 8 May Muster); TNA, ADM36/12564 (*Neptune*, 6 May Muster).

Table 2.9 Allotment details of eight ships, spring 1797

Ship	London	Mars	Marlborough	Sandwich	Standard	Monmouth	Venerable	Neptune
Mutiny	Spithead	Spithead	Spithead	None	None	None	None	None
Crew	578	507	483	245	405	383	462	81
Number of men Allotting	38	80	61	35	56	47	73	0
Proportion Allotting	6.57%	15.78%	12.63%	14.29%	13.83%	12.27%	15.80%	0
To Wives	30 (79%)	57 (71%)	42 (69%)	29 (83%)	37 (66%)	29 (62%)	46 (63%)	0
To Mothers	8 (21%)	23 (29%)	19 (31%)	6 (17%)	18 (34%)	18 (38%)	26 (37%)	0
Men skilled able or above	21	47	33	23	33	33	51	0
Men skilled ordinary or below	16	32	27	12	22	14	22	0
Marines	1 (out of 84)	1 (out of 65)	1 (out of 69)	0 (out of 0)	1 (out of 50)	0 (out of 48)	0 (out of 70)	0 (out of 17)

Several points from Table 2.9 require immediate explanation. Firstly is the fact that *Neptune* was in the process of fitting out in the river Thames, and so was not yet fully in commission. This is reflected in its small crew and lack of any allotments. Nevertheless, the

Neptune was chosen to form the nucleus of the force that would, if necessary, have been sent to end the Nore mutiny by force. As such, the loyalty of the *Neptune*'s crew was trusted implicitly, thereby suggesting that loyalty was not correlated with the proportion of the crew making allotments. The second point of interest is the relatively small number of men listed on board the *Sandwich*. This is partially due to the role of *Sandwich* as a receiving ship, with only a small permanent crew but where new naval recruits (supernumeraries) would be housed until they could be assigned to active ships.

From Table 2.9, with the exception of the *London*, the proportion of men allotting pay to their family was relatively consistent at between twelve and sixteen per cent: a level of uptake considerably higher than the rate of under five per cent suggested by Pitcairn for 1797.⁶⁶ This might be taken to suggest several alternatives. On the one hand, this higher rate of allotment might have been the product of a higher number of family men, or non-professional sailors, entering the navy in this period, perhaps partially due to the Quota Acts. Alternatively, the higher than expected proportion of sailors allotting might have resulted from the increasing cost of living and basic foodstuffs analysed in this chapter. Either way, Table 2.9 demonstrates that the welfare of their families at home in a context of rising food prices was a concern to the significant minority of sailors allotting by spring 1797. These were Ellen Gill's dutiful sailors displaying their 'domestic virtues'.⁶⁷ This is not necessarily mutually exclusive with Rodger's point about 'starving families' providing a powerful tool in negotiations over pay where the intentions of many sailors were likely quite different.⁶⁸ At the same time, however, Table 2.9 makes clear that an important minority of sailors in 1797 were sufficiently concerned about the welfare of their families to allot pay.

Returning to Table 2.9, the number of men allotting money to wives outnumbered those allotting to mothers in every case, and usually by a proportion of some two to one. On every ship studied more men ranked 'able' and above allotted than their juniors. As these skilled seamen were usually outnumbered by 'ordinary seamen' and 'landsmen', it is clear that, proportionally, experienced sailors were more likely to allot pay. This is unsurprising as it reflects that group's higher pay, greater average age, and likelihood of being married.⁶⁹ Just

⁶⁶ See Table 2.8 for Pitcairn's estimates made in 1857-58.

⁶⁷ Gill, *Naval Families*, p. 223.

⁶⁸ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 78-79.

⁶⁹ This matches Rodger's observation that it was the most skilled, highest paid sailors who were most likely to allot pay: Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 131-32, 134-35. Similarly Dancy has observed the connection between sailors' ages, ranks, and wages: Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, pp. 89, 149.

as Pitcairn observed in his 1858 report, uptake in the allotment system was particularly low among marines who, in terms of both pay and the skill-based culture of respect on board ship, were below ordinary seamen.⁷⁰

All of these points tend in the same direction; those with the most to worry about, and the greatest grievances, were the most skilled and experienced seamen. They were the people who had seen the greatest fall in their purchasing power, and precisely the ones who could expect to earn much more outside the navy. Nevertheless, a sizable minority of these skilled sailors allotted what pay they could to their families. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the rhetoric and petitions of the 1797 mutineers were suffused with the language of ‘fairness’, when soldiers had received a pay rise from a grateful nation, while the sailors, it appeared, had been forgotten. The evidence suggests that the pay rise resulting from the Spithead mutiny was followed by an increase in uptake in the allotment system. This is visible in Pitcairn’s figures and in the case of the *London*. Whereas only thirty-eight members of the crew were allotting pay on 1 April 1797, this figure had risen to sixty-five exactly a year later.⁷¹ It is possible that, as well as reversing much of the recent decline in sailors’ purchasing power, the 1797 pay rise also allowed more men to contribute to the upkeep of their family through the allotment system.

Conclusion

Stagnant pay was the source of legitimate grievances among sailors and, consequently, this interpretation of the causation of the 1797 mutinies should be accorded more weight than that of revolutionary intentions. At the same time, however, the *absolute* wage rate was, to an extent, less significant than the sailors’ perception of their pay *relative* to

⁷⁰ ‘Report on the Allotment System in the Navy’ Compiled by Mr J. Pitcairn in the winter of 1857-58, TNA, ADM7/719, p. 2.

⁷¹ Admiralty Book of Allotments, 1795-1805, TNA, ADM27/2; Muster Book, *HMS London*, 1797, TNA, ADM36/12572.

others. Whether implicitly or explicitly, perceptions of fairness often took on a comparative character, with sailors considering their own lot alongside that of soldiers or merchant sailors.

Quantitative analysis has shown that sailors' purchasing power had fallen significantly since 1653. It was, however, the shocks of recent lived experience which formed the basis for mutiny. In particular, the lean years of 1795 and 1796 represented an especially potent financial challenge to the sailors, creating a particular problem for those with families to support. Here the most long-serving, skilled, and experienced sailors stood to lose most. At the same time, however, it was the insult added to this injury in the form of the soldier's pay rise of 1795 that appears to have lit the fuse of mutiny.

The sailors could not have doubted their importance to their country; it was plain for all to see. Nor could they doubt that their skills and successes exceeded those of their counterparts in the army. When the mutineer petitions declare, therefore, that the sailors had 'observed with pleasure' the pay rise granted to the army in 1795, it is difficult not to imagine some bitterness behind their words.

3. 'GOOD USAGE' AND PERCEPTIONS OF FAIR TREATMENT

Introduction

Chapters one and two have demonstrated that the interpretation of the mutinies as failed political revolutions is irredeemably at odds with the evidence but that sailors' wages and purchasing power likely had a significant causal role. Nevertheless, it is argued in this chapter that a better explanation for the causation and timing of the mutinies is to be found in the theme of fairness, or 'good usage' as it appeared in the sailors' parlance.¹ These ideas of reciprocal social relations and moral sentiments had found expression in the work of Rousseau, Locke, and Smith, with the latter particularly emphasising the subjectivity of moral sentiments depending on social position, profession, and civil or military status.² It was accepted that a sailor's life was one of many hardships, but it was where insult was added to injury, where salt was rubbed into wounds, that seamen were driven to complaint and mutiny. Through their demands the sailors did not seek a comfortable or carefree life, but merely what they considered to be 'good usage'. Marcus Rediker recognised that the antonyms 'bad', 'ill' or even 'tyrannical-usage'³ were long-recognised terms in the sailors' vocabulary and were on occasion known to lead directly to mutiny or piracy.⁴ This contemporary concept of 'good usage' should become a central theme of social histories of the navy in this period as

¹ For examples of eighteenth-century Royal Navy sailors employing terms such as fair, unfair, good, bad, better, or ill-usage, or used well, see N.A.M., Rodger, *The Wooden World, An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fantana, 1988), pp. 173, 233, 235; Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 205, 256. This term was not confined to sailors and Helen Berry has recently presented several examples of its use by Foundling apprentices, see Helen Berry, *Orphans of Empire: The Fate of London's Foundlings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp. 186, 208.

² Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 234-38. For a more recent interpretation of attitudes to fairness in the eighteenth century, Charles Walton has charted the rise of the concept of 'reciprocity' in the second half of the eighteenth century and its changing connotations ever since, see Charles Walton, 'Capitalism's alter ego: the birth of reciprocity in eighteenth-century France' *Critical Historical Studies* vol. 5 (2018), pp. 1-43.

³ TNA, ADM 1/2734, Letters from Captains, Surnames Y, fol. 305.

⁴ Marcus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations, Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (London: Verso, 2012), pp. 137-38.

it has the potential to provide a ‘bottom-up’ view that captures the expectations and priorities of lower-deck sailors. The term combines otherwise disparate elements of naval life into one lived experience and so presents a foil to officer-centred studies of discipline or mutiny.

Because the mutineers sought to legitimise their demands with reference to customary rights and traditions of reciprocity, comparison is drawn with the concept of ‘moral economy’ in the sense in which Edward Thompson first applied the term to food rioters in eighteenth-century England. Thompson’s focus was on patterns of popular protest in defence of traditional rights or customs when these were encroached upon by economic liberalism or the socio-economic challenges posed by industrialisation.⁵ The first section of this chapter will question the utility of moral economy thesis to an understanding of the fleet mutinies. Section II demonstrates that the period of petitioning and mutiny fell significantly *after* the worst economic conditions had passed, which suggests that a purely economic explanation for the mutinies would be unsatisfactory. The third section argues that the general quality and quantity of naval food was sufficient for sailors’ needs, and that it is a feeling of being cheated, embodied in the dishonest naval scales that was a greater cause of discontent. Section four investigates the theme of naval discipline and suggests that its severity was accepted, as long as it was consistently and predictably applied. The injustice of inflated bounty payments for unskilled naval recruits is the subject of Section V, while Section VI considers mutineer rhetoric and writings in light of the argument regarding ‘good usage’.

I. Application of Moral Economy to the Mutinies

In *The Making of the English Working Class* Edward Thompson largely misinterpreted the fleet mutinies.⁶ He did not return to them in his work on moral economy six years later, but the behaviour, rhetoric, and sentiments of the mutineers of 1797 shared much more in common with the restorative workers of Thompson’s moral economy than they

⁵ E.P. Thompson, ‘The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century’, *Past and Present* vol. 50 (1971).

⁶ This point is made at greater length in the introduction of this dissertation and is then explained in detail in chapter one. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 2013), p. 184.

did with seditious revolutionaries.⁷ The generally loyal sentiments of the mutineers, their claims grounded on established norms and customary rights, and their appeals to fairness all find reflection in Thompson's description of moral economy. John Bohstedt's criticisms of moral economy thesis are a useful framework for an evaluation of those of its aspects that are applicable to the 1797 fleet mutinies and those that are not.⁸ It is argued here that most elements of moral economy thesis are pertinent to the fleet mutinies, and that Bohstedt's observations in fact demonstrate this pertinence. Nevertheless, it appears preferable to employ the sailors' own term of 'good usage', though this is closely equated with moral economy.

Bohstedt's first criticism of moral economy was the suggestion that it overstates the 'restorative' nature of popular protest. He argued that the 1797 mutinies were based around demands for increased naval pay and were (therefore not restorative but) something new. Bohstedt identifies low *absolute* naval wages as the continuity and so considers demands for higher wages to be a forward-looking break from the past. Instead, chapter two of this dissertation has shown that low *relative* naval wages were a recent development in 1797 and that demands for higher pay, therefore, represent a restorative desire to return to the *relative* status quo ante.⁹ In this respect the mutinies were restorative in three ways. Firstly, they were meant to reinstate the original nature and intention of naval pay. The *Queen Charlotte* petition made this clear when it explained that when sailors' pay was set in 1653, it was meant as a 'comfortable support both for themselves and families' but that this was no longer the case due to price rises. As a result 'the intention of the legislature is counteracted'.¹⁰ The mutineers expressed faith that the intention of the authorities in this respect had not changed and merely asked for practical measures to return that intention to reality. Secondly, the pay rise was meant to restore the balance between sailors and other groups; particularly in the ratio between the pay of sailors and that of soldiers and naval officers (beneficiaries of recent

⁷ Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century'.

⁸ John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810* (London : Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 211.

⁹ Relative, for example, to the raised wages of soldiers (1795), or commissioned naval officers (1796-97), or relative to the intended purchasing power when the wage rate had been introduced 144 years before. The high prices of 1795, in particular, had a strong *relative* impact on naval wages.

¹⁰ Philip Patton, *Account of the Mutinies at Spithead and St Helens in April and May 1797*, NMM, TUN/212 p. 30.

pay rises, 1795-97).¹¹ Thirdly, linked to both of these, a pay rise would thereby restore the pride of sailors and their self-respect through demonstrating that their value and services were recognised.

Bohstedt's second criticism of moral economy was that protests were not as deferential as Thompson suggested. Again, the example of the mutinies does not agree with Bohstedt's view. The sailors were generally deferential in their language and behaviour. The first petitions were reverent in their tone and addressed to 'the sailor's friend', Earl Howe. They expressed a confidence that the authorities would care for them.¹² Deference is also evident in the letters written to the captains of HMS *Mars* and *Venerable* after the end of the mutinies by their previously mutinous crews.¹³ These letters express regret for their actions and reaffirm their loyalty to their captain and the service of their king.¹⁴ The respectful deference of the mutineers complemented the elements of paternalism present in the naval social structure, with officers feeling a strong sense of *noblesse oblige*. Recently Gill has emphasised the paternalistic structure of the Royal Navy by demonstrating that many captains saw their officers, petty officers, and even some seamen as their 'sea children' and tried to advance their careers within complex networks of naval patronage. In exchange, they expected their loyalty and deference.¹⁵ The feeling was often reciprocated. At the end of the Spithead mutiny the crew of the *Eurydice* wrote asking their captain to return to 'our Family of which you are the Father'.¹⁶ The result was a hierarchical but inherently reciprocal relationship.

Bohstedt's third criticism was that the presentation of moral economy as a hostile reaction to economic liberalism is unconvincing. This point is relevant here as opposition to laissez-faire market economics was not an element the 1797 fleet mutinies. Nevertheless, a case can be made that the mutinies were a protest against changes to the terms of a long-established economic relationship. Whereas in previous conflicts commissions of naval

¹¹ Soldiers received a pay rise in 1795, naval lieutenants in 1796, and naval captains appeared set to follow in early 1797 (with the mutineer petitions written c. January 1797). Captain Thomas Pakenham, Letter to Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 11 December 1796, quoted in Julian S. Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801* vol. II (London: Naval Records Society, 1914), pp. 105-107.

¹² Philip Patton, *Account of the Mutinies at Spithead and St Helens in April and May 1797*, NMM, TUN/212 p. 30.

¹³ In the case of the *Venerable* Admiral Duncan nipped possible mutiny in the bud at the first sign of an outbreak.

¹⁴ An Address to the Captain of HMS *Mars*, 25 June 1797, NMM, MKH/15; Robert Adam Philips Haldane Duncan Camperdown, *Admiral Duncan* (London: Longmans, Green, 1898), pp. 123-24.

¹⁵ Ellen Gill, *Naval Families, War and Duty in Britain, 1740-1820* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), p. 87.

¹⁶ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Portsmouth: 1797, ADM 1/1023, fol. 434.

vessels were relatively short, with frequent stops in port, and crews usually ‘paid off’ at their end, improved technology, such as copper-sheathing ships’ hulls, better naval victualling, and an increase in the practice of ‘turning over’ crews straight from one ship to another, all coalesced to keep men at sea and tied to the service for longer periods.¹⁷ As such, without formal acknowledgement or compensation, the terms of naval service had changed enormously, and it was the longest-serving sailors who were most likely to notice and resent this. One result was to make desertion a more appealing prospect, which in turn made officers reluctant to allow their men shore leave: a further source of complaint. While the 1797 fleet mutinies, therefore, cannot be seen as protests against laissez-faire market economics in the original sense of moral economy, they were protests against changes to traditional understandings of the terms of naval employment as agreed between state, officers, and sailors. As such, this places the mutinies comfortably within the wider meaning of moral economy that has seen the concept applied to many diverse places and periods and to all sorts of challenges to traditional socio-economic relations, not just the onset of economic liberalism.¹⁸

Bohstedt listed the conditions under which moral economy could survive and thrive as the existence of traditions of collective action, the presence of experienced leaders who could command respect, the context of a stable and intimate community, and durable relationships between the rioters and their superiors. All four existed in the Royal Navy of 1797. On board a ship, survival relied upon well-honed collective action and the mutineers were generally led by the most skilled sailors, who commanded respect among officers and men.¹⁹ Furthermore, ships were stable and intimate communities which were isolated for long periods of time. The officers and men knew each other closely and had well-developed hierarchical structures and negotiated power relationships. By Bohstedt’s own criteria, therefore, one can argue that something approximating to moral economy was a powerful motive force during the 1797 fleet mutinies.

¹⁷ Brian Lavery, ‘Lower Deck Life in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars’ in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 194-97, 201.

¹⁸ For example, the concept has continued to be applied to topics as diverse as international trade in food in the modern world and transatlantic consumption from the seventeenth century onwards. See Frank Trentmann, ‘Before “Fair Trade”: Empire, Free Trade, and the Moral Economies of Food in the Modern World’ *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* vol. 25 (2007), pp. 1079–1102; and Michelle Craig McDonald, ‘Transatlantic Consumption’ in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Consumption* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁹ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean A Naval History of Britain 1649-1815* (London: Penguin, 2005), p. 452.

In *Customs in Common*, Thompson recognised that his moral economy thesis had been applied to many varying contexts which shared most, but not all, of the elements that he described as part of the phenomenon. He therefore suggested that historians seeking to employ the concept in their own work should redefine it and alter the name so as to be more specific and prevent ‘some loss of focus’.²⁰ To avoid confusion in this highly nuanced case, it would appear preferable to employ the terms of the mutineers’ themselves. Specifically, the importance attributed by the sailors to ‘fair’ or ‘good usage’ provides a contemporary crux for the better analysis and understanding of the fleet mutinies: and one which allows us to move beyond a blinkered focus either on seditious intent or naval conditions defined in narrowly absolute terms. Throughout this chapter several comparisons will be drawn with aspects of moral economy thesis, but these will be related back to the concept of ‘good usage’. This is defined as terms of naval service consistent with precedented conditions and traditionally-observed standards deemed fair and agreeable by the sailors. Central to good usage is an awareness of trends in the conditions of naval service over a prolonged period. For this to have played a central causal role it is necessary to demonstrate that the timing of the 1797 fleet mutinies was not simply a reaction to short-term price pressures but a more holistic protest against the worsening terms of naval life.

II. Short-term Fluctuations in Grain Prices

The effect of long-term inflation and medium-term price changes on sailors’ purchasing power has been established in chapter two. It is, however, also necessary to consider the impact of short-term fluctuations in prices, as these would often have been felt more keenly than half-forgotten recollections of conditions a decade before, or second or third-hand tales of the situation fifty years or a century ago. The sailors’ descent into mutiny was unlikely to have been caused by short-term fluctuations in prices as this situation was

²⁰ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991), p. 338.

growing better, not worse. The immediate spark for the Spithead mutiny was the order to put to sea on 16 April 1797. If the sailors' decision to draw up petitions had its own immediate spark, then it was not short-term price trends.²¹

As Allen's dataset provides only one price per year for each consumer item, it cannot capture the yearly cycle of grain prices nor short-term trends with their potentially dramatic ramifications. This was sufficient for our purposes in the previous chapter, but another source has had to be employed here. From 1770, *The London Gazette* published inspectors' weekly reports of the average price of grains at markets across inland and coastal counties.²² From these reports I have tabulated and studied the recorded price of wheat, rye, and barley for Middlesex across the eighteen month period from January 1796 to June 1797, giving a total of seventy-eight weekly reports.²³ The case study of Middlesex was chosen to complement the focus of the Allen dataset on London prices. The price of wheat and barley was recorded in all seventy-eight reports, but that of rye was absent from thirteen, which could be suggestive that sales of that grain were low in those weeks, but might equally have been a fault on the part of the inspector. This price data is shown in full in Figure 3.1 and in Appendix 4.

It must be remembered that people do not eat the grains themselves, but eat the bread, and drink the beer of which they are principal ingredients. This marks a significant break with the Allen dataset, which gave prices for the consumer goods. Nevertheless, the *London Gazette* price data can serve as a useful proxy for bread and beer prices, and so for short-term fluctuations in sailors' purchasing power. Wheat was predominantly used for bread, whereas the coarser grains are included to consider the possibility of substitution during times of scarcity or high prices. Rye and barley could be used for bread of an inferior quality, and barley was widely used for beer. Both were important sources of animal fodder. As shown in Figure 3.1, there is some correlation in the price fluctuations of wheat and rye (though the former was always significantly more expensive), while barley prices were more stable. The fact that rye prices were significantly above those for barley at times when wheat prices were at their highest, but below barley when wheat was more reasonably priced, is suggestive of consumer substitution.

²¹ A better candidate would be the increase in wages of naval lieutenants in 1796 with that of naval captains expected to follow suit in 1797. Captain Thomas Pakenham, Letter to Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 11 December 1796, quoted in Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer* vol. II, pp. 105-107.

²² Introduction to the 'Corn Returns Online' website, <https://www.cornreturnsonline.org/>, Accessed 02/07/19.

²³ *The London Gazette*, 02.01.1796 to 24.06.1797.

When the Spithead petitions were drafted in January 1797, the foregoing three months had seen stable wheat prices, preceded by a month of rapidly declining prices. Notably, the overall average price of wheat in January 1797 was only fifty-two percent that of the year before (January 1796).²⁴ In short, the worst was far behind, current price conditions were favourable, and there seems no *a priori* reason to have feared deterioration. These observations raise questions of temporality as to why longstanding naval tensions boiled over into mutiny on such an unprecedented scale in spring 1797. Nevertheless, several qualifying points should be made. Firstly, the sailors drawing up their petitions were not party to our hindsight, and the previous months of falling and then stable prices did not necessarily mean that this would continue.

Secondly, it is questionable the extent to which the sailors could have been responsive to short-term price fluctuations. The time that their ships spent in port was irregular in distribution and duration, and shore leave was rarely permitted due to fears of desertion. As such, the sailors could have had little direct experience of market prices, and much of their information on such matters likely came from letters from family members on shore, the contents of which might have been shared widely, perhaps being embellished along the way.

Recent work by Gill, Watt, and Hawkins goes some way towards explaining this connection. Gill has emphasised that the 1797 mutineers grounded their demands on the notion that they had families to support, and so appealed to masculine and familial values. Approximately twenty-five per cent of sailors are believed to have been heads of household, with many others responsible for dependent parents or siblings.²⁵ Watt and Hawkins' work has revealed examples of direct communication of price data between sailors and their families at home. Edward Nosworthy wrote to his wife from the Mediterranean in October 1798 that 'you complain of the hardness of the times, I doubt not of the truth when I consider the exorbitant price of every species of provisions'. In August 1805, William King wrote to inform his sailor brother that 'provisions continue very dear. Flour 4/6 per peck, meat 8d. [...] but we are like to have an Abundant Harvest Crops of every kind being Good'. Seaman James Whitworth repeatedly wrote to his wife asking about the price of bread, and Richard Greenhalgh never lost his interest in agricultural affairs during his ten years at sea. In 1799 he

²⁴ The average price of wheat recorded in the five weekly observations for January 1796 was 1,248.2 pence per quarter compared to 645.25 for the four weekly observations for January 1797.

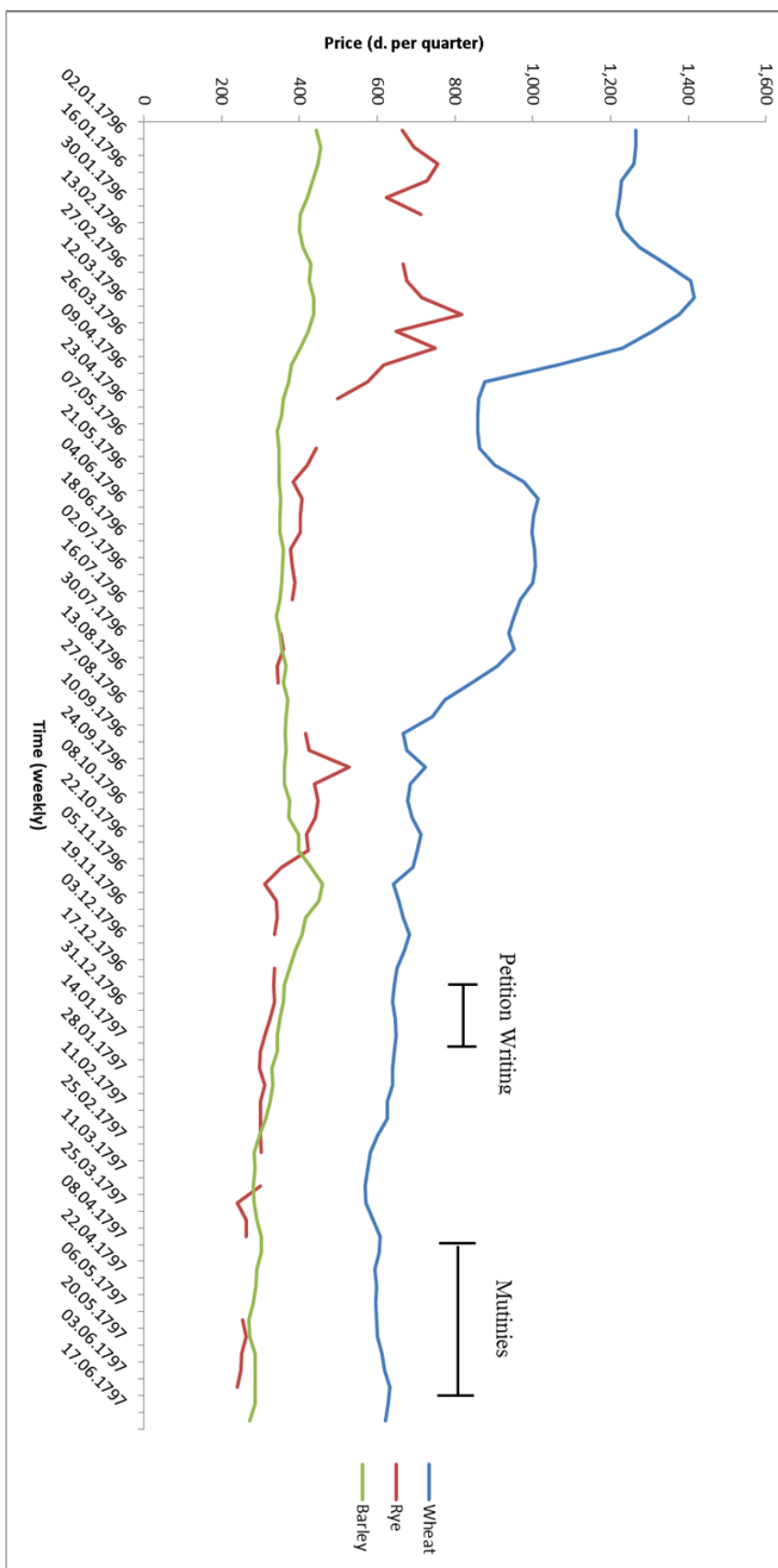
²⁵ Gill, *Naval Families, War and Duty in Britain, 1740-1820*, pp. 218-22.

responded with great concern to his fathers' reports of a poor harvest. Richard wrote again in 1800 expressing hopes for a better harvest and confiding that 'there is great talks of a plentiful one and I hope yours is the same'.²⁶

None of these examples are drawn from our period of interest (mid-1796 to mid-1797), but they provide clear evidence that sailors were anxious for information on prices at home. Crucially, Greenhalgh's observation that there were 'great talks' among the sailors about harvest conditions suggests that news on prices drawn from letters were widely shared and discussed by seamen. The resulting picture is, unsurprisingly, of sailors eager to understand the economic conditions of their families, and of correspondents willing to satisfy them, but at a necessary (and variable) remove of distance and time. Given this imperfect information, it is perhaps not surprising that the actions of the sailors appear poorly correlated to the recent trends and immediate economic conditions. Even so, it appears possible to rule out short-term price activity and its impact on sailors' purchasing power as explanations for the timing of the Spithead petitions and mutiny.

²⁶ Helen Watt and Anne Hawkins (eds.), *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France, 1793-1815* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 72, 154, 175, 225, 508.

Figure 3.1 Average weekly Middlesex grain prices, January 1796 - June 1797²⁷



²⁷ *The London Gazette*, 02.01.1796 to 24.06.1797.

III. Naval Food

Food was pivotal to sailors' perceptions of 'good usage'. Whereas soldiers were expected to provide a significant amount of their food out of their own wages, sailors were fully provided for. Food rations were distributed to sailors according to set weights but, for their own budgeting purposes, the Admiralty also estimated their financial value. Rodger has suggested that, by the 1750s, the Royal Navy spent approximately twenty-five shillings per lunar month per man on provisions.²⁸ If this remained the case in the 1790s and is added to the rates of naval pay presented in the previous chapter, then an able seaman's lunar monthly wage would rise from 270d. to 570d. Furthermore, as a bulk customer, the navy 'generally paid at least 12 per cent below usual wholesale prices' in the eighteenth century.²⁹ This would appear to more than make up for the repeated increases of army wages, but the picture is a complicated one. For example, the rises in the price of food items due to the poor harvests of 1795 and 1796 have been discussed. Though the prescribed rations of naval food did not decrease in these years, nor was there an increase in the naval food allowance of twenty-five shillings per man per lunar month. Consequently, it seems likely that the quality of the food must have decreased, perhaps noticeably. The quality and quantity of naval food will be considered in detail.

The starting point should be the recognition that the Royal Navy was an effective and successful fighting force. Since daily activities such as climbing the rigging, raising the anchor, and man-handling cannon, required hard and calorie-intensive labour, it immediately appears unlikely that the sailors can have been malnourished. An underfed workforce could not have achieved the notable naval successes of the period 1793-1815. A weak and emaciated crew would have been a constant threat to the safety of the ship and all on board. Modern conceptions of balanced diets with scientifically-determined guideline daily intakes must be set aside. What mattered was providing enough fuel to sailors to facilitate their herculean exertions. Whatever the state and quantity of naval provisions, it was evidently sufficient to enable the high naval effectiveness of this period.

²⁸ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p. 117. Conrad Gill, however, suggested that the figure was 19 shillings, which was costed for full pounds of 16 ounces. Since, according to the purser's eight (see below), food was issued in pounds of 14 ounces, the Admiralty was able to pocket the difference (the equivalent cost of two ounces in the pound) both before and after the 1797 pay rise. See Conrad Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913), p. 98.

²⁹ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p. 117.

Using the Victualling Board's standard weekly ration, provided by Rodger,³⁰ Craig Muldrew has estimated that eighteenth-century Royal Navy sailors were provided with 7,250 calories each Tuesday and Saturday; and 6,906 each Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The totals for Thursday and Sunday were slightly less as pork was substituted for beef.³¹ While dull and repetitive, naval provisions provided ample calories.

Janet Macdonald has produced the most detailed assessment of naval food. She concludes that Royal Navy rations stood at between 4,888 and 5,134 calories per day, depending on a few common changes and substitutions: principally the kind of alcohol served.³² These totals compare favourably to those for the rival navies of France, Spain, the United States, and the Batavian Republic, though these fleets generally spent a greater proportion of their time in port and so might have had access to fresher supplies.³³ From Macdonald's calculations it appears that Royal Navy rations provided sufficient calories for the rigours of naval life. This led Macdonald to reject the suggestion that naval food was a prominent cause of the 1797 fleet mutinies.³⁴ This impression clashes, though, with the mutineer petitions of 1797. When the Spithead delegates petitioned the Admiralty and listed six grievances for redress, the second and third related to naval food: making it the next most prominent issue after wages.³⁵

The answer to this apparent paradox lies in the petitions themselves. The mutineers' third request was that, when in a British-owned port, flour should not be served to them and that local vegetables should be provided.³⁶ Far from being an attack on the overall substance of naval provisions, this is merely a reasonable request for a little variety on the occasions when it could be achieved most easily.

The mutineers' second request, and the only other relating to food, is more revealing. They asked 'that our provisions be raised to the weight of sixteen ounces to the pound, and of a better quality; and that our measures may be the same as those used in the commercial code

³⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

³¹ Craig Muldrew, *Food, Energy, and the Creation of Industriousness: Work and Material Culture in Agrarian England, 1550-1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 124. Muldrew gives details for Tuesday and Wednesday, but Rodger makes clear that these two menus applied to five days of the week.

³² Janet Macdonald, *Feeding Nelson's Navy, The True Story of Food at Sea in the Georgian Era* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2006), pp. 177-78.

³³ Ibid., pp. 141-45.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 13, 151.

³⁵ Petition of the Spithead Delegates to the Admiralty, 18 April 1797, NMM, TUN/212, also quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 363. The Nore, mutineers, though, did not mention naval provisioning in their additional demands of 6 June 1797, NMM, HSR/Z/33.

³⁶ Petition of the Spithead Delegates to the Admiralty, 18 April 1797, NMM, TUN/212.

of this country'.³⁷ The clause about quality might well be a reflection of the likely decline in food quality brought about by the poor harvests of 1795 and 1796, the consequently higher food prices, and the set naval expenditure of twenty-five shillings per man each lunar month. The concern with weights and measures, however, is highly significant. In the eighteenth-century Royal Navy, the 'purser's eighth' was a fact of life. In effect, one eighth of key commodities were to be held back by the purser. Consequently, while the Victualling Board declared that each seaman should receive one pound of pork each Thursday, it would be a 'pound' of fourteen, rather than the full sixteen ounces. As Macdonald has argued, this was not a greedy or self-serving conspiracy on the part of the Admiralty or pursers, but an official recognition that the realities and duration of seaborne life would lead to significant wastage. The purser's eighth was, therefore, an officially condoned 'buffer' to allow each purser 'to balance his accounts'.³⁸ Pragmatic as this may have been, the sailors' sense of injustice at this measure is clear from their petition; the officially-distributed naval scales deceptively declared that they received a full pound of pork while they were, in fact, deprived of two ounces.

The purser's eighth was a clear grievance of the mutineers: one on which they did not compromise and on which they were eventually successful. As shown, the overall quantity and calorific provision of naval rations was more than sufficient to fuel the demanding lives of naval sailors. In this respect, and in its dependability, naval food was likely, for many, an improvement on what they could hope to gain on shore, and served as a positive incentive for naval service.³⁹ Many land-based professions were almost as energy-intensive as sailing, and with less certainty of three 'square meals' a day.⁴⁰ In this case as well as that of wages, therefore, it would appear that the *perception* of being cheated or receiving unfair treatment was more important than the realities of naval conditions. The sailors were unsatisfied about being told that fourteen was sixteen, and being expected to accept it.⁴¹ After all, English and British society had a long tradition of legislation regulating measures and outlawing false weights and scales which went back to the tenth century, with 'Weights and Measures Acts'

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Macdonald, *Feeding Nelson's Navy*, pp. 13-14; Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 93-94.

³⁹ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 87, 117; Macdonald, *Feeding Nelson's Navy*, p. 14; J. Ross Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang: Volunteers, Impressment and the Naval Manpower Problem in the Late-Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2018), pp. 98-99.

⁴⁰ This phrase is widely believed to have come from the square wooden plates used in the Royal Navy of this period with 'square' denoting both a sufficient portion, and a fair one, thereby implying that such was the established practice in the navy. See Martin Robson, *Not Enough Room to Swing a Cat, Naval Slang and its Everyday Usage* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), pp. 94-95.

⁴¹ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 267, 369.

passed in both 1795 and 1797.⁴² Others, perhaps, looked to the Bible and found in Proverbs 11 that ‘the Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favour with him’. Though naval rations provided more than enough nutrition, the perception of being cheated, of receiving less than the full measure of their entitlement, appears to have hurt sailors’ pride. In negotiations, the Spithead mutineers remained adamant that ‘we should have 16 ounces to the pound’ and the crew of *Glory* gave three cheers ‘for an Act of Parliament and an honest three pounds of pork’.⁴³ These appeals to honesty and fairness suggest that sailors were being denied their reciprocal rights and that the state was renegeing on some of its obligations. Though naval rations were generally good to the extent that they encouraged volunteers to join the service, the sense of unfairness occasioned by the pursers’ false scales was a genuine grievance.⁴⁴ Whether or not the extra two ounces would make a nutritional difference, they had the potential to assuage sailors’ pride. The mutinous sailors achieved a larger ration but, more importantly, a fairer one.

Though the Spithead mutineers were willing to drop some of their demands in the course of negotiations with the Admiralty, they prioritised this request for new scales and full sixteen-ounce pounds. This concession was granted and swiftly acted on by the Lords of the Admiralty. On 29 April, Admiral Bridport at Spithead ordered the officers of all of his ships to serve provisions ‘sixteen ounces to the pound’ as best they could ‘until the proper weights and measures should be sent on board’.⁴⁵ On 2 May, the Admiralty wrote to Bridport to confirm their approval of his policy, but warned that new scales would not be ready for another week. In the meantime, they suggested giving every man an ‘additional indulgence’ of cheese, which ‘their Lordships trust will remove every cause of dissatisfaction on the article of provisions’.⁴⁶ The Lieutenant’s log of the *Director*, then actively engaged in the Nore mutiny, records that new scales and weights were issued and arrived on board on 23 May: just eight days after the end of the Spithead mutiny.⁴⁷

On 6 July, just after the Nore mutiny came to an end, a brief mutiny on the *Saturn* was concluded when Admiral Keith informed the crew that ‘he had given orders for the weights and measures to be inspected by three captains and two pursers’. This inspection found the measures to be ‘short’ with the result that, two weeks later, the log records that the ‘purser paid the ship’s company 6 shillings 3¹/₂d. per man on account of short measure agreeable to

⁴² *Journals of the House of Commons* vols. 51 and 52.

⁴³ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 267, 369.

⁴⁴ Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, pp. 98-99.

⁴⁵ Admiralty Petitions, 1793-98, Order from Lord Bridport, 29 April 1797, TNA, ADM 1/5125.

⁴⁶ Admiralty Rough Minutes, TNA, ADM3/137, Admiralty to Bridport, 2 May 1797.

⁴⁷ Lieutenant’s Log of HMS *Director*, kept by Lieutenant J. Griffiths, NMM, ADM/L/D/129.

the sentence of a court martial'.⁴⁸ This episode further suggests that sailors were acutely aware of their rightful measures. Any deviation from these was considered incompatible with 'good usage' and felt with a keen sense of grievance.

On 8 May, Parliament had approved the Admiralty's estimate that an additional £185,250 would be required each year to increase sailors' victuals to the full 16-ounce pound measure. Combined with the extra £351,545 needed to raise naval wages, the two concessions on wages and food would cost the country an additional £536,795 per year: almost seven times the cost to build and fit out the *Ville de Paris* in 1796: Britain's latest first rate ship of the line at the time of the mutinies.⁴⁹ Parliament voted £372,000 of this immediately in order to cover the remainder of 1797.⁵⁰

Six months earlier, in December 1796, Captain Thomas Pakenham had written to Earl Spencer, the First Lord, to warn him that, as soldiers and naval lieutenants had both recently received pay rises, with naval captains soon to join them, seamen would expect the same. Pakenham recommended an immediate rise in the wages of skilled sailors for the duration of the war.⁵¹ Spencer thanked him for his letter, but pointed out the 'utter impossibility in the present state of the country', by which he meant the financial shocks which soon led to an alarming suspension of cash payments in February,⁵² 'of adopting the measure you mention'. Raising the wages of seamen would be 'an enormous increase to our disbursements, already sufficiently burthensome'. Sagaciously, Spencer expressed his relief 'that your suggestions have gone no further, as I am fully convinced that the public discussion' of the matter 'would infallibly be productive of much mischief from the absolute impracticability of carrying into effect anything of the kind'.⁵³

The Spithead mutiny changed the basis on which these calculations had been made and successfully brought about an increase in the wages of naval seamen. Curiously, the Admiralty's estimate suggested that there were twice as many petty officers and able seamen

⁴⁸ NMM, ADM/L/S/256 Lieutenant's Log, HMS *Saturn*, Feb-Sept 1797.

⁴⁹ Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2010), p. 6.

⁵⁰ *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, 1796-1798 (1801), 5 May 1797, p. 552.

⁵¹ Captain Thomas Pakenham to Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 11 December 1796, quoted in Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer* vol. II, pp. 105-107. Interestingly, Pakenham's concern for the sailors might have been linked to personal guilt. Due to his humane reputation, Pakenham was instructed to mediate an end to the 1793 *Culloden* mutiny. This was ended largely due to Pakenham's promise that no men would be punished. In fact, ten were court martialled and five hanged. Sailors were thereafter much less willing to trust the word of an officer. This explains the determination of the Spithead mutineers to await a full royal pardon, with the crew of the *Marlborough* specifically mentioning that 'men had been hung on the *Culloden* after promise of forgiveness'. Letters from Flag Officers, Channel Fleet: 1797, TNA, ADM1/107, fol. 224. See also Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 445.

⁵² Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 5.

⁵³ Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty to Captain Thomas Pakenham, 12 December 1796, quoted in Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer* vol. II, pp. 108-109.

in the navy (58,000) as ordinary seamen and landsmen (14,000 each).⁵⁴ This seems unlikely, and one wonders whether this was a deliberate sleight of hand on the part of the perpetually cash-strapped Admiralty. The naval pay rise was hurried through Parliament in early May.⁵⁵ As the Parliamentary estimates were being prepared, Prime Minister William Pitt wrote to Spencer and approved his plan to concede several of the mutineers' core demands. He reassured Spencer that, in a matter of such national importance, 'the amount of the expense is comparatively of no consequence'.⁵⁶ If proof is needed of the success of the Spithead mutiny, it is found in this dramatic governmental *volte-face*.

IV. Flogging and Corporal Punishment

If inedible, weevil-infested food is one persistent misconception about naval conditions, flogging represents another. Naval discipline will be treated in more detail in chapter six, and discussion will concentrate here on flogging: a term almost synonymous with naval punishment. Rodger has argued that the eighteenth century was an age when people were more accustomed to settle disputes with violence, and when 'even in the highest levels of society fights, brawls or duels were not uncommon'.⁵⁷ Furthermore, flogging clearly worked as a deterrent; across the eighteenth century, fewer than one in ten naval seamen were ever flogged and recidivism was low.⁵⁸ Fundamentally to shipboard life, dereliction of duty or a mistake by one individual could spell doom for everyone: a fact that gave sailors a stake in order and discipline. At both Spithead and the Nore, the mutineer leaders made use of flogging and do not appear to have objected to the practice.⁵⁹ On the whole, the sailors consented to the severity of naval justice as long as it was applied equitably and consistently.

⁵⁴ *Journals of the House of Commons* vol. 52, 1796-1798 (1801), 5 May 1797, p. 538.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 8 May 1797, p. 552.

⁵⁶ Prime Minister William Pitt, to Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 20 April 1797, quoted in Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer* vol. II, pp. 115-16.

⁵⁷ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p. 212.

⁵⁸ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 493.

⁵⁹ Kathrin Orth 'Voices from the Lower Deck' in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 100.

It has often been pointed out that Royal Navy captains were not allowed to order a flogging of more than twelve lashes without recourse to a court martial, but it appears to have been a very rare captain indeed who never transgressed this rule. The more legally-minded of them justified this by flogging men for multiple offences at once of up to twelve lashes per offence, but others felt no qualms about ordering floggings in excess of twelve lashes. At first glance, this appears to be an unjustifiable and brutal case of executive overreach by captains, but this was not necessarily so. As Rodger and Dacam have pointed out, the illicitly harsh summary punishment on the part of the captain might well have been mercifully calculated to avoid a court martial as, after the lengthy delays and rigmarole usually required to assemble a quorum of senior officers, these typically awarded much more severe floggings than individual captains.⁶⁰ Instead of a rapid summary punishment of 24 lashes, a court martial might sentence a defaulter to 200. As such, captains were often correct to conclude that it would be both more practical and more humane to exceed the limit of twelve lashes rather than to insist on a court martial.⁶¹

These facts, and particularly the mutineers' own apparent endorsement of flogging, support the growing suggestion in the literature that seamen did not object to the system of naval discipline, but to perceived insults and abuses by individual officers.⁶² Denning, for example, has argued that Captain William Bligh was less violent than average for a naval captain during his *Bounty* voyage, but that his bad language and deviations from tradition undermined discipline and hurt the pride of his crew.⁶³

Rodger came to similar conclusions in his explanation of the singularly violent and shocking mutiny on the *Hermione* in September 1797. He explained that *Hermione*'s captain, Hugh Pigot, was not just brutal, but 'inconsistent and irrational' too. 'Men could put up with a great deal so long as they knew where they stood, but Pigot was completely unpredictable'. Pigot declared that he would flog the last man down from the rigging, which would inevitably be one of the yardarm men: those with the most skilful and dangerous job. He was 'punishing men for being the best'. When, in the ensuing pell-mell, three of these experienced sailors fell to their deaths on the deck below, Pigot ordered his men to 'throw the lubbers overboard'.

⁶⁰ Bruno Pappalardo, *How to Survive in the Georgian Navy, A Sailor's Guide* (London: Osprey, 2019), pp. 37-38.

⁶¹ John H. Dacam, 'Wanton and Torturing Punishments': Patterns of Discipline and Punishment in the Royal Navy, 1783-1815' (PhD Thesis, The University of Hull, 2009), p. 39; Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 219-20.

⁶² The Spithead sailors did not object to the existing structure of naval justice. Their successors at the Nore did demand juries composed of sailors' peers, but, as will be discussed in chapter six, this does not appear to have been universally popular among sailors, and was certainly not a priority for them.

⁶³ Greg Denning, *Mr Bligh's Bad Language: Passion, Power and Theatre on the Bounty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 58-61.

Not content to punish his most skilful seamen, Pigot also scorned them with the name ‘lubber’: ‘the worst insult in the seaman’s vocabulary’. For Rodger, it was this insult added to injury that sparked the mutiny and massacre of most of *Hermione*’s officers, including Pigot.⁶⁴ These views are consistent with sentiments expressed in mutineer letters, which single out individual officers for rebuke. Thomas Scott of *Sandwich*, for example, wrote of the ‘Tyranny of Lieut. Archibald’ and ‘Mr. Moore’s Neglect’.⁶⁵ Similarly, James Wood of *Cygnets* complained that they had ‘a very bad Lieut.’ who was turned out of the ship.⁶⁶ Rather than complaining about the overall severity of law and order in the fleet, the mutineers concentrated on individuals guilty of ‘ill-usage’. Naval discipline was bearable as long as it was applied consistently. The problem was with individuals, like Pigot, who underappreciated and hurt the pride of their sailors.

A telling illustration of links between sailors’ pride and punishment comes from the mutiny of the *Cumberland* in the wake of the Spithead mutiny. The crew presented three grievances. Two were punitive wine stoppages and overly-severe punishments. Their first and greatest complaint, however, was the removal of men’s pigtails, or ‘queues’ as a punishment. These long, thin strands of platted hair were symbols of a sailor’s experience and identity, and so their removal was a severe blow to their pride.⁶⁷

To give one final example, Orth has drawn attention to the skilled sailors’ hatred of starting.⁶⁸ This practice involved petty officers beating sailors with small canes or knotted ropes to speed them up. Such behaviour undermined the pride and dignity of sailors, who resented such treatment, and starting was abolished by Admiralty order in 1809.⁶⁹ These examples show that sailors accepted the necessity of corporal punishment in the navy and broadly approved of the general practice of naval discipline. It was those individual officers or methods that appeared unfairly inconsistent or challenged the pride of skilled sailors which could lead to discontent and claims of ‘ill-usage’. In other words, the system of naval discipline was not considered to be a grievance, but the implementation of that system by a minority of individuals was.

⁶⁴ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 452.

⁶⁵ Watt and Hawkins, (eds.), *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France*, p. 429.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

⁶⁷ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Portsmouth: 1797, TNA, ADM 1/1023, fol. 469.

⁶⁸ Peter Kemp (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Ships and the Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 830.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*; Orth ‘Voices from the Lower Deck’ in Coats and MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 101.

V. Bounty Payments

Bounties were paid to volunteers and quotamen who agreed to join the navy.⁷⁰ The value of these bounties varied enormously across time and place. By 1797 this had developed into a significant injustice as inexperienced landsmen frequently received payments far in excess of the £5 earned by able seamen who had volunteered in 1793, despite the fact that they were much less valuable to the navy. Richard Parker, for example, received £20 as a bounty, which Gill described as ‘an amount that covered his debt with a considerable surplus’.⁷¹ Though Parker did have some sea experience, the navy did not get good value for their £20 in his case.

Though the sailors’ sense of fair play was outraged by the unfairness of bounty payments, this did not feature among the grievances listed by the 1797 fleet mutineers.⁷² One possibility is that they saw high bounties as a necessary recourse in order to man the navy, and one preferable to the press gang. Another interpretation is that sailors hoped to profit from the high bounty prices themselves in future conflicts or, perhaps, following desertion from their current ship. Either way, in their demands the mutineers focussed on increasing their income through pay rather than seeking a reduction in bounty payments.

Emsley’s edited volume contains details of the bounties paid to 424 quotamen for the North Riding of Yorkshire in the years 1795-97.⁷³ I have tabulated and analysed these bounty payments and the results are displayed in Table 3.1. We see that the mean average bounty paid to those with sea time was greater than that for those without, but not dramatically so. Furthermore, the bounty averages for those without sea time are still almost five times the £5 received by able seamen at the start of the war, nearly ten times the £2,10s for ordinary seamen, and between sixteen and seventeen times the £1,10s for landsmen (among whom most of the quotamen would have been numbered). The overall modal value of a bounty of

⁷⁰ Often men cornered by the press gang would be given the opportunity to ‘volunteer’ in order to gain the bounty.

⁷¹ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 127. On page 256 Gill contradicts himself and suggests that Parker received a bounty of £30, but if this higher figure is true then this further strengthens my point about the inflation of bounty payments far in excess of the £5 received by able seamen in the first years of the war.

⁷² Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, p. 446.

⁷³ Clive Emsley (ed.), *North Riding Naval Recruits, The Quota Acts and the Quota Men 1795-1797* (North Yorkshire County Council, 1978).

£42 would represent a payment of almost three years' salary for an able seaman after compulsory deductions. Conversely, the original bounty payment of £5 represented approximately one third of an able seaman's annual salary after deductions.⁷⁴

The Quota Acts were implemented in a decentralised manner with each parish given a quota of men to raise and left to do so on their own initiative. As such, there were significant disparities in record keeping and the size of bounties. These source inconsistencies make it difficult to ensure that one is comparing like with like. Whenever possible, however, which proved to be the vast majority of cases, the figure included in calculations was the total agreed bounty payment. Though typically only one third of this was paid to the recruit up front, the rest was held by a treasurer for their family or to pay off their existing debts. As such, generally speaking, the full agreed bounty was for the benefit of the recruit and was analysed on that basis.

Some parishes appear to have paid a premium for those with sea experience, but the majority did not. For example, of the four quotamen recruited for the parish of Pickering and Snainton in 1795, two of them had four years' sea experience, and received bounties of £29. 1s., and £37, 16s. respectively. The lower amount of the former was perhaps due to this man's youth (seventeen compared to thirty-nine). Furthermore, a third recruit who had only two and a half years' sea experience received the same £37, 16s., as did the fourth recruit, who had no sea experience at all.⁷⁵ As such, for this parish it would appear that the bounty was set at a default £37, 16s. regardless of whether or not the individual had experience at sea (or the duration thereof), with variations made for other reasons, such as the deduction likely for youth and lack of a family to support. Preferential financial terms do not appear to have been given to residents of the parish for which recruits would serve; three of the four recruits discussed were natives of Pickering, including the youth who received £8, 15s. less than his fellows. The fourth hailed from Penrith, Cumberland. The same picture emerges from the three men who served for a conglomeration of eight small parishes including Middleton.⁷⁶ The two sailors among them earned bounties of £30 and £37. 16s. respectively, but a miller also received the higher payment of £37, 16s. Likewise, the three men who served for Richmond (two mariners and a joiner) all received a uniform £22, 1s.⁷⁷ Of the nine men recruited for Scarborough, the three seamen among them earned lower bounties than a

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁷⁶ Ebberston, Habtons, Middleton, Wrelton, Sinnington, Seamer, Kirby Misperton, and Barughs.

⁷⁷ Emsley, *North Riding Naval Recruits*, pp. 103-104.

cabinet maker, carpet weaver, and two clothiers.⁷⁸ On the whole, differences in the bounties paid appear to have been more dependent on the parish in question than on occupation, sea experience, or possession of useful maritime skills. Where individual circumstances do seem to have been considered, they likely related to age and number of dependants. The size of the bounty payment itself is, therefore, a poor proxy for the value of a particular recruit to the navy.

Due to the disparities in the information recorded from parish to parish, it was sometimes impossible to determine whether or not recruits had any sea experience, and some that did likely slipped through the net undetected. In a handful of cases, recruits with previous experience at sea have the duration of their sea time enumerated. In approximately half of cases, the current occupation of the recruit is listed. In order to reach my total of 51 out of 424 quotamen with experience of life at sea I combined those few men with specified sea time with those who list a maritime profession such as ‘mariner’, ‘seaman’, and ‘ship’s carpenter’. I have also included ‘keelman’ in this number as, even though these were mostly confined to rivers, their occupation would have given them sailing and boat-handling experience, as well as familiarity with sailors and nautical vocabulary. This method of identifying recruits with sea experience is, like the sources themselves, imperfect, but was sufficient to demonstrate that, though some parishes paid higher bounties for experienced sailors, this was far from general, or even majority, practice.

Parishes were fined £30 for each man they failed to raise out of their quota.⁷⁹ We have seen that some of the bounties paid, even to recruits without sea experience, were well over £30, and so unless the funding came from elsewhere, such as private benefactors, it would have been cheaper for the parish to take the fine. From the passage of the first Quota Act until 5 January 1797, a total of £169,816, 17s., 3d. was spent on bounty payments for sailors.⁸⁰ One can imagine that the serving experienced sailors, waiting in vain for an expected pay rise and having seen their purchasing power fall (especially after the disappointing harvests of 1795 and 1796), might have resented the scale of this expense and thought that it could have been put to better use.

The only overall pattern when it comes to the size of bounty payments seems to be the lack of an overall pattern. The system was highly arbitrary and localised. One can understand how this might have operated as an administrative strength: with each locality able to tailor

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 109-110.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸⁰ Sheila Lambert (ed.), *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century* vol. 107 (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources, 1975), p. 66.

its approach to its circumstances and offer the lowest effective bounty independent of practice elsewhere, but it is also easy to imagine how sailors might have come to resent this lottery, which nevertheless consistently valued the enlistment of unskilled ‘jolly come lately’ landsmen at four to five times the bounty received by an able seaman who enlisted straight away in 1793. It is perhaps intriguing that the injustice of the bounty system was not a chief grievance of the mutineers, though we have suggested some possible reasons why this might have been the case. Nevertheless, taken alongside the other factors discussed in this chapter, the bounty payments could be considered symptomatic of a wider climate in which skilled and experienced naval sailors could have come to feel that their services were being undervalued and their sense of individual and occupational pride challenged. That was the view of Admiral Owen, writing twenty-eight years after witnessing the Spithead mutiny as a lieutenant. Of the sailors at large, Owen wrote that ‘their pride was roused’ not only by the army pay rise ‘without equivalent indulgence to the sailors’ but also by the ‘enormous sums’ paid as bounties to men who were ‘in many instances of the worst and most useless description’.⁸¹ Incensed personal and professional pride was a powerful motivating force. The written and spoken forms taken by this incensed pride is the subject of the next section.

Table 3.1 Analysis of bounties paid to 424 North Riding quotamen, 1795-97⁸²

<u>Average (£)</u>	<u>All (n=424)</u>	<u>With Sea Time (n= 51)</u>	<u>Without Sea Time (n=373)</u>
<u>Mean</u>	25.36	29.67	24.78
<u>Mode</u>	42*	42**	21***
<u>Median</u>	26.25	31.58	25.38
<u>Maximum</u>	74	74	61.25
<u>Minimum</u>	0	3.15	0

* 33 appearances

** 10 appearances

*** 24 appearances

⁸¹ Sir Edward William Campbell Richard Owen, ‘Reflections on the Mutiny at Spithead’ (1825) NMM, COO/2/a, p. 38.

⁸² Source: Calculations of the data presented in Emsley, *North Riding Naval Recruits*.

VI. Written and Spoken Mutineer Expressions

In their analysis of mutineer rhetoric, historians have usually drawn a sharp contrast between the Spithead and Nore mutinies. The courteous, proper, and respectful language employed by Valentine Joyce and his fellows at Spithead is set in sharp relief by the sedition, threats, and insolence of Richard Parker and his confederates at the Nore in a Jekyll and Hyde-style relationship that polarises and sensationalises both. The Nore court martial transcripts (for which we have no parallel source at Spithead due to the blanket pardon)⁸³ furnish ample examples of seditious language for any historian keen to find them. However, the nuance that has been lost on many historians, though all too obvious to contemporaries, was that the overall tone, language, and behaviour of the Nore mutineers was notably inconsistent and liable to enormous variation. The fact that the Nore mutiny went further and enacted greater excesses and outrages than its predecessor at Spithead is not at all surprising when the overall arc of the two mutinies is considered. We should not be shocked that the Nore mutiny, on its path towards failure, cut off and surrounded by the hostile forces of an impersonal state that refused to negotiate, took a darker aspect than that at Spithead, where steady negotiation and the personal intervention of popular naval hero, Lord Howe, ended in success and pardon⁸⁴ for the mutineers. The one experienced a virtuous upward cycle of negotiation, the other a vicious cycle of distrust and desperation. A similar point will be made in chapter four in relation to mutineer counter-theatre. This dissertation presents mutiny as a process of negotiation. It takes two to negotiate, but at the Nore the authorities refused to do so and must consequently take a share of the blame for the ‘excesses’ of the Nore mutiny.

On their path towards the defeat and collapse of their cause, the Nore mutineers were subjected to greater strains, stresses, and frustrations than were the Spithead mutineers, and these sentiments are naturally reflected in the more colourful language recorded at the Nore. Crucially, though the trials often involved picking and choosing the most incriminating expressions by individual defendants, isolated and unrepresentative as they might have been,

⁸³ This raises the question of whether many of the Spithead mutineers might have been as seditious and hostile in their speech as were the Nore mutineers but that, without court martial records, their expressions were lost to history. This is certainly a possibility, but the surviving witnesses’ accounts and officers’ logs that I have consulted suggest to me that this was not the case, as they make no mention of such behaviour and certainly not on such a scale as the Nore court martial transcripts.

⁸⁴ Lest there be any doubt among the sailors as to the reliability of the royal pardon, a copy was sent to Spithead with the royal seal attached so as to remove any doubt as to its veracity and authority. Admiralty out-letters, Secretary’s Letters Flag Officers, Home Squadrons, TNA, ADM 2/943, fol. 355.

they often also provided sufficient context to demonstrate that these expressions were frequently made in the heat of the moment at times of extraordinary stress or frustration. One might argue that many a true word was spoken in anger, but the oscillations and inconsistencies of mutineer rhetoric and behaviour should give us pause before we conclude that the mutineers meant every word of what they said. If their positions had been reversed, we cannot be confident that the celebrated men at Spithead would not have used the same seditious expressions (or worse) as their counterparts at the Nore. As such, the extreme nature of some of the mutineer rhetoric at the Nore should not be seen as ipso facto evidence of revolutionary or hostile intent; they had ample reason to lose their tempers.

Senior naval officers called to give evidence at the Nore courts martial were aware of oscillations on the part of prominent mutineers between loyal and seditious expressions. Asked by the court if Parker had spoken disrespectfully to him, Admiral Buckner replied ‘frequently he did, but not uniformly so — sometimes there was a great deal of apparent respect and modesty in his behaviour’.⁸⁵ Captain Knight was also questioned on the incompatibility of mutineer expressions. He related loyal expressions by leading mutineers: that ‘they venerated and esteemed their sovereign’ and promised to seek out and destroy the Dutch fleet if it put to sea, as well as their eagerness to confirm to the authorities on shore that they had ‘no communication with any Jacobins or people of that description whatever’. The mutineers made this assurance, however, on the king’s birthday, while the red flag of rebellion was flying above (and so superior to) the royal standard. Knight admitted that he found these contrasting messages of loyalty and sedition to be ‘irreconcilable’.⁸⁶

Returning to Parker’s reported rhetoric, the extremes are readily explained by their context. At one end of the spectrum, early in the mutiny, Parker showed significant respect to Buckner and personally apologised when the admiral was received on board the *Sandwich* without due ceremony attendant on his rank.⁸⁷ Similarly, in a moment of renewed hopes, when sending Lord Northesk to London to negotiate with the king, Parker ordered the band to play ‘God Save the King’ and several other patriotic tunes and the entire committee declared their loyalty to the monarch.⁸⁸ On the other hand, Parker’s most incendiary expressions (of great interest to the court) were made during a particularly dark moment when the mutineers’ hopes reached a nadir. When the *Leopard* and *Repulse* fled the mutiny on the evening of 9 June, Parker furiously ordered guns on several ships to fire at the deserting vessels and was

⁸⁵ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/1, p. 8.

⁸⁶ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/3, pp. 33-37.

⁸⁷ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/1, p. 12.

⁸⁸ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/3, pp. 27-28.

heard to say of *Leopard* that he wished to ‘send her to hell, where she ought to go’.⁸⁹ The contrast between these examples is profound, but easily explained. While Parker’s words on the latter occasion counted against him at his trial, they were not representative of his overall words and behaviour or of consistent policy. On the other hand, while flattering Northesk and playing ‘God Save the King’ were deliberate and rather transparent devices, they were at least considered and planned policy rather than furious spur of the moment expressions. Other examples of mutineer rhetoric at its most seditious also correspond to the greatest crises of the Nore mutiny, such as the initial scuffles to take over the ships at the start of the mutiny, the brawls between loyalists and mutineers to control the *Leopard*, and when the removal of the marker buoys from the Thames estuary trapped the mutineers and seemed to tighten the state’s noose about them.⁹⁰

Such mutineer expressions cannot be fully understood without an appreciation of the centrality of pride and ‘fair usage’ to the sailors. For example, the Nore mutineers were aggrieved that the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty attended the Spithead mutiny almost immediately and engaged in meaningful negotiations but initially declined to visit the Nore. Even when they did arrive at Sheerness, they refused to meet, let alone negotiate, with any of the Nore mutineers, but merely demanded, through their chosen intermediary, Admiral Buckner, that the mutineers accept the king’s pardon and return to duty.⁹¹ The initial non-attendance of the Board of Admiralty at Sheerness was considered to be a great insult by the leading mutineers, who decided that no agreement could be made until the Board had paid them the same courtesy as their fellows at Spithead.⁹² Parker wrote in a letter to Buckner on 22 May that ‘the Lords of the Admiralty have been remiss in their duty in not attending when their appearance would have given satisfaction’.⁹³ In the event, the Board, unwilling to entertain the idea of any concessions whatever, had little to say to the mutineers.⁹⁴ Consequently, far from giving ‘satisfaction’, their visit to Sheerness merely inflamed the Nore mutineers due to the Board’s snub in refusing to meet them personally and the marked contrast between their behaviour at Spithead and the Nore. When the mutineers had met outside the Board’s lodgings in Sheerness expecting to meet them, Buckner informed them that such a meeting would be ‘highly derogatory to the dignity of the Board’ and so would

⁸⁹ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/2, p. 53.

⁹⁰ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/31, pp. 42-43; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/6, pp. 37, 45; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/15, p. 15.

⁹¹ Admiralty out-letters, Secret Letters, TNA, ADM 2/1352, fols. 111-14.

⁹² Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/727, fol. 339.

⁹³ Quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 147.

⁹⁴ Admiralty out-letters, Secret Letters, TNA, ADM 2/1352, fol. 90.

not be permitted.⁹⁵ Naturally, this decision was highly derogatory to the pride and dignity of the leading mutineers. This episode highlights the centrality of matters of hurt pride, insult, and perceptions of unjust treatment to the course of the Nore mutiny, and serves as further explanation of the different course of the Spithead and Nore mutinies, with the latter subject to greater frustrations and stresses.

These themes of pride and perceived injustice are also visible in the rhetoric of several mutineers. Though the focus of the courts martial was those examples of mutineer rhetoric that could be considered seditious, and so beneficial to the prosecution, several instances were recorded of sailors appealing to their perceived right to fair treatment. George Shave spoke of the mutiny as the way to have wrongs ‘righted’, while George Gainer ‘damned the king’s pardon and said “we don’t want pardon, we want our grievances redressed”’.⁹⁶ While this latter expression was more severe than the former, both share a sense that the mutiny was a necessary and justified recourse to restore justice to the terms of naval service. In these restorative and, they felt, legitimate aims, the rhetoric and behaviour of the mutineers has much in common with Thompson’s idea of moral economy. A statement drawn up by several leading Nore mutineers for publication and circulation as a public bill includes a complex mix of legitimising imagery that appears to combine themes of revolutionary French rhetoric, older ideas of natural rights, and concepts of traditional customary rights of freeborn Britons associated with moral economy thesis. This document appeals to ‘the laws of humanity, honour, and national safety’, heralds the arrival of ‘the age of reason’, expresses determination to be treated fairly as men, and, while reaffirming their loyalty to king, government, and country, demands the restoration to them of ‘the common rights of men’.⁹⁷ This is far from a revolutionary manifesto and its goals remain restorative, though the wording would appear to allude to the international context. The result is a strange and somewhat confusing marriage of meanings. The ‘laws of humanity’ and ‘age of reason’ could perhaps point to foreign, including dangerously revolutionary considerations, but this is balanced by a keen awareness of ‘national safety’ coupled to an appreciation of the ‘common rights of men’. These last expressions, described very much in the national context, appear equally suggestive of precedented moral economy-style protests for the freeborn rights of Englishmen (a concept coined in the early-seventeenth century by John Lilburne, and widely used by 1797) as they are of a French-inspired view of *les droits des hommes*. A petition from

⁹⁵ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 152.

⁹⁶ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/5, p. 30; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/12, p. 6.

⁹⁷ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/9, pp. 47-51.

the *Nymphe* at Spithead, for example, specifically complained that they were kept ‘more like Criminals than true-born Britons’.⁹⁸ This impression is furthered by the mutineers’ explicit statement that ‘we do not wish to adopt the plan of a neighbouring nation’.⁹⁹

All such petitions and documents contain, one could argue, an implicit sense of threat, but several of the later Nore examples make this much more explicit. The Nore demands conveyed to the government via Captain Northesk began with the customary loyal and reverential addresses to the King, but then became threatening: promising that, if a satisfactory reply promising redress of their grievances was not received within fifty-four hours ‘such steps by the fleet will be taken as will astonish their dear countrymen’.¹⁰⁰ Some of the potency of this threat comes from its deliberately obscure nature; perhaps the mutineers intended to sail up the Thames and bombard London, perhaps to sail to join the enemy, or anything besides. Perhaps, which seems most likely, there was no consensus on this point among the delegates, still less the crews at large. We have noted the stark divide between mutineer expressions that were the product of carefully considered policy and the spontaneous angry remarks described by court martial witnesses. In these two written documents from the later stages of the Nore mutiny, however, it appears that the growing anxiety of the leading mutineers resulted in a parallel pattern in written correspondence.

The key to reconciling the inconsistent rhetoric of the Nore mutineers is to pay careful attention to the timing and context of their loyal and seditious expressions, which were closely correlated with their fortunes. It is notable that our analysis is confined to rhetoric because, even as the mutineers gave up all hopes for success, their threats were not translated into actions: not a single ship made sail to defect to the enemy, nor were any blown up by death or glory mutineers.¹⁰¹ In the end, the most sensational threats proved mere bluster and the Nore mutiny died not with a bang but with a whimper. The closest we come to an exception in the form of a threat actually carried into execution was the cannonades fired by the mutineers as the *Leopard* and *Repulse* abandoned the mutinous fleet. As explained in chapter four, however, this expense of powder and shot proved uniquely (and surely deliberately) ineffective in the annals of British naval gunnery of this period. All of this is consistent with the interpretation that most of the seditious expressions pointed to by

⁹⁸ Letters from Flag Officers, Channel Fleet: 1797 ADM 1/107, fol. 228.

⁹⁹ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/9, p. 51.

¹⁰⁰ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 30.

¹⁰¹ For examples of threats that were not carried out and appear to have been rather empty (to hang sailors opposed to the mutiny, defect, damn the king, and destroy the ship by blowing up the powder magazine), the product of lost tempers, see CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/6, pp. 6, 9-12, 19; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/15, p. 28; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/24, pp. 2-9.

prosecutors at the courts martial, and by subsequent historians, were spontaneous and impulsive remarks by individuals at moments of lost temper and that these contrasted markedly both with overall mutineer policy, and with majority sentiments.

These majority sentiments explain why the threats of the most committed mutineers proved empty. Though seditious expressions are the clearest focus of the court martial transcripts, these also provide several notable samples of loyalist rhetoric. For example, when James Lurar suggested sailing the *Sandwich* to France, steward Alias Broadbury declared that ‘I would rather see his neck at the yard arm than the Convention of France should taste one fourth part of a biscuit belonging to the Crown of Great Britain’ and ‘would sooner be hung myself’ than allow such an eventuality.¹⁰² When studying examples of seditious language employed at the Nore, one must not forget that these impromptu expressions were not reflective of the majority of the mutinous sailors, who were not willing to see the worst threats of the ringleaders enacted no matter how desperate their cause became.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that when it comes to the causation of the 1797 mutinies, perceived insult was more significant than actual injury. The fact that the increase in soldier’s pay of 1795 (as well as raises for naval captains and lieutenants in 1796 and 1797) had not been mirrored by a similar increase for sailors was an insult, and one made all the worse by the contrasting roles of army and navy. Up to 1797 the performance of the British army in the French Revolutionary War had been undistinguished, whereas what successes Britain had enjoyed had been naval successes including the Glorious First of June (1794) and the Battle of St Vincent (February 1797). Meanwhile, in domestic affairs the two services played very different roles, with the army performing an often unpopular policing function, whereas the navy was less controversial as the protector of British freedom and prosperity. The sailors had ‘observed with pleasure’ the soldiers’ 1795 pay rise in the hope and expectation ‘that

¹⁰² CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/21, p. 6.

they should in turn experience the same munificence'.¹⁰³ The fact that 'no notice' was paid to them, despite their services, was a bitter blow to their pride and self-respect. In a further petition the Spithead mutineers noted that 'we profess ourselves as loyal to our sovereign and zealous in the defence of our country as the army and militia can be', and indeed they could justly have added, more successful in their martial endeavours to date. They thought themselves 'equally entitled to His Majesty's munificence' and so 'jealously we behold' the increased army pay.¹⁰⁴ The overall impression is that the sailors could bear the necessary hardships of naval service, but that they would not accept or endure a sense of injustice.

The first three chapters of this dissertation have analysed the traditional causal explanations of the 1797 fleet mutinies and suggested an alternative. Whereas others have pointed to revolutionary intentions or to broad conditions of service, I suggest that the sailors' concept of 'fair usage' should be placed at the heart of any explanation of the 1797 fleet mutinies. Chapter one demonstrated that the interpretation of the 1797 fleet mutinies as failed political revolutions holds little water. Chapter two showed that sailors' purchasing power had suffered notable decline across the period 1652-1797, and that even across much shorter periods, such as the war years of 1793-97, reduced purchasing power would have been plainly observed. As is clear from the current chapter, however, the petitions and mutinies occurred long after the worst price conditions, which were in winter 1795 and spring 1796. As such, the causal role of sailors' demand for an increase of pay, though undoubtedly significant, has been somewhat misunderstood. It would appear that *relative* rather than *absolute* conditions of naval service were central to the timing of the mutinies, particularly the pay rises of soldiers (1795), naval lieutenants (1796) and naval captains (early 1797).¹⁰⁵ The sailors were not motivated simply by hunger or the amount of money in their pockets, nor by an aversion to naval discipline, but by an acute awareness of having been undervalued for too long by the country that they served. Matters of pride and self-respect were front and centre in their considerations. In this respect, I readily agree with Thompson's statement that the mutinies were much more than a 'parochial affair of ship's biscuits and arrears of pay'.¹⁰⁶ While Thompson saw instead a 'revolutionary movement' aimed at achieving political change, this chapter has argued that the sailors' aggrieved sense of their own self-worth was

¹⁰³ Spithead petition quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 359.

¹⁰⁴ Spithead petition to Parliament, Petitions together with a related instruction from George III to Admiral Howe, 1797, TNA, ADM1/5125.

¹⁰⁵ Captain Thomas Pakenham, Letter to Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 11 December 1796, quoted in Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer* vol. II, pp. 105-107.

¹⁰⁶ Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 184.

pivotal to their behaviour. The fleet mutinies shared much in common with Thompson's outline of moral economy protests, but within the context of established expectations of the terms of maritime labour encapsulated in the term 'good usage'.

In support of this conclusion we need look no further than sailors' own ballads: invaluable examples of the oral tradition through which they retold and historicised their own version of the mutinies. One such ballad was entitled 'The Floating Parliament', with appropriate constitutional connotations, as opposed to the seditious implications of a 'Floating Republic'. Another entitled 'The Seventeen Bright Stars' was sent to the Admiralty in a letter by Admiral Bridport. Explaining their reasons for mutinying, the sailors relate 'we resolved to refuse the purser's short weight' in hopes that 'our provisions and wages that they might augment'. The next verse appeals to the idea of fair usage through a contrast: 'although to the army they granted more pay, while we sons of Neptune neglected did lay'. Two 'insidious songs' found on board the *Revenge* meanwhile, both spoke of gaining redress by overcoming 'tyrannies', but nevertheless remained staunchly loyal to king and country.¹⁰⁷ In all of these respects, perceived injustice and unfairness were pivotal to the causation and course of the 1797 fleet mutinies.

¹⁰⁷ Richard S. Holdstock, 'Ballads of the Great Mutiny of 1797' (2006) accessed at <https://www.mustrad.org.uk/articles/mutiny.htm>, on 27/08/2019.

4. COUNTER-THEATRE DURING THE FLEET MUTINIES¹

Introduction

When the frigate *Prompte* arrived at Spithead from the Caribbean in summer 1797, its crew were unaware of the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, which had lately paralyzed two British fleets. As usual when entering a friendly port, the sailors assembled to give three cheers for the local flagship. Before these cheers could be given, however, a lieutenant in a nearby boat shouted that ‘You are not to cheer at all’, as ‘there has been too much cheering already’.² The cause of this excessive cheering was the practice, shared by the mutineers at Spithead and the Nore, of starting and ending each day with three cheers as a sign that all was well. Cheering was an established naval tradition: a means of instilling loyalty and shared identity in a ship’s company. Captain Bligh, of *Bounty* fame, for example, recorded in his log for the *Director* that on 6 March 1797 he ‘cheered ship on receiving the intelligence of Sir John Jervis’ victory over the Spaniards’.³ The act of cheering was, therefore, associated with victory, loyalty, and duty. The Spithead and Nore mutineers deliberately appropriated this element of naval custom and repurposed it to serve as a reaffirming symbol of their own control and unity. This was just one of many examples of the conscious adaptation of well-established naval conventions to serve mutineer ends during the 1797 fleet mutinies. At the same time, the mutineers supplemented these familiar naval symbols with structures and practices of their own. The result was a hybrid system through which the mutineers combined the appropriation of symbols of naval order with the creation of their own hierarchies and structures of authority. The interface between these actions: contrasting in style but mutually-supporting in practice, are the subject of this chapter.

¹ Most of this chapter has previously been published as ‘Counter-Theatre During the 1797 Fleet Mutinies’, *International Review of Social History* vol. 64 (2019), pp. 389-414.

² James Dugan, *The Great Mutiny* (London: Deutsch, 1966), p. 323.

³ Captain’s Log, HMS *Director*, Monday 6 March 1797, TNA, ADM51/1195.

Markus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh have presented the ‘rough, improvised, but effective egalitarianism’ that characterised life on the lower-decks as sailors organised to regulate the terms of their ‘semi-unfree labour’.⁴ Their cosmopolitan and internationally mobile ranks, united by professional solidarities, developed a complex oppositional culture, or ‘hydrarchy’, with which to resist violations of their traditional terms of service.⁵ Rediker emphasised the sailors’ ability to devise ‘various tactics of resistance and forms of self-organisation’. In larger disturbances, these tactics saw sailors ‘expropriate the workplace and arrange it anew’.⁶

Steven Pfaff, Michael Hechter, and Katie Corcoran used a quantitative sociological approach to argue that coercion was the crucial factor in explaining the duration of the Nore mutiny. Mutineer leaders controlled the spread of information, monitored opponents, and issued ‘credible threats’ of punishment. While this study offers new perspectives on the mutiny, it is argued here that their conclusion that ‘sometimes ideology or the bonds of community can attain the requisite compliance, but not at the Nore’ assigns too little significance to social and community factors on board Royal Navy warships.⁷ This is not to deny that coercive elements were present during the fleet mutinies; they undoubtedly were. Instead, it should be emphasised that these formed just one strand of a broader and more nuanced strategy to foster unity.

In several respects the appropriation and adaptation of symbols and rituals of naval order by the mutinous sailors was consistent with the ‘counter-theatre’ identified by John Brewer as a common element of collective protest on shore. Counter-theatre involved the appropriation of symbols and rituals associated with one particular message or meaning, and their subversion and application to another. These acts were considered especially impudent and worthy of severe punishment.⁸ Through devices like the Riot Act, the British state made some provision for legitimate protest and this was also true of the navy,⁹ but mutiny and

⁴ Markus Rediker, *Villains of All Nations, Atlantic Pirates in the Golden Age* (London: Verso, 2012), p. 61; Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra. Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 143-44.

⁵ Linebaugh and Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra*, pp. 151, 158-59.

⁶ Markus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea. Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 7, 77-78, 106.

⁷ Steven Pfaff, Michael Hechter and Katie E. Corcoran, ‘The Problem of Solidarity in Insurgent Collective Action: The Nore Mutiny of 1797’, *Social Science History* vol. 40 (2016), pp. 247-270, 267.

⁸ John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp. 181-83.

⁹ There were recognised forms of protest, such as petitioning superior officers, but the mutineers had exhausted these avenues without success.

inversion of symbols of order were beyond the pale.¹⁰ The level of attention devoted to such inversions in courts martial and naval officers' accounts reveals the concern of the naval authorities.¹¹ There were legitimate grounds to fear that the mutineer usurpation of authoritative symbols undermined the rituals on which naval officers rested their day-to-day rule by consent.¹²

The transcripts of the courts martial that followed the Nore mutiny provide an excellent source to study mutineer counter-theatre. Courts martial where men spoke with their lives in the balance provide imperfect sources, but also a rare opportunity to read the words of ordinary sailors. The officers leading the questioning expended much court time and energy in investigations of counter-theatrical behaviour. It should be noted that, as no trials followed the Spithead mutiny, court martial records are only available for the Nore mutiny. Nevertheless, multiple other sources including personal accounts, captains', masters', and lieutenants' logs allow for easy comparison of the emblematic and theatrical features present at Spithead and the Nore. Due to their notable commonalities of practice in this regard, the instances of allegorical disobedience observed at these two mutinies will be discussed together throughout this chapter.

I. Usurping the Space and Role of Officers

In the cramped confines of eighteenth-century warships, physical space was correlated with power. The captain inhabited his spacious 'great cabin', lit by the magnificent stern windows. Commissioned officers had cramped private cabins which opened onto their shared wardroom. They also enjoyed the right to walk the 'quarterdeck': simultaneously a physical space and a collective term for the senior men who held that privilege. The humble

¹⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, found similar behaviour among religious rioters in sixteenth-century France, who occupied churches in support of their cause. Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London: Duckworth, 1975), pp. 161-63.

¹¹ For Nore courts martial see, for example, CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/4, p. 7; For officers' accounts of the Spithead mutiny see, for example, NMM, COO/2/a *Reflections on the Mutiny at Spithead, 1797, Papers of Sir Edward William Campbell* (1825), pp. 1-6.

¹² The letter from the panel of Nore judges can be interpreted as an expression of this concern. Letter from Nore courts martial judges to government law officers, 11 July 1797, NMM, MRK/100/5/8.

status of the sailors was also described in spatial terms; they were said to be ‘before the mast’ (quartered forward of the central main mast), and collectively referred to as the ‘lower decks’. For the majority of the crew their only official allocation of space was fourteen inches of width in which to sling their hammock.¹³ Recent work by Elin Jones, however, has done much to emphasise the power of imagined spaces and boundaries among sailors.¹⁴

During the Spithead and Nore mutinies this carefully stratified demarcation of physical space was turned on its head, with many senior officers sent on shore. Of those officers ejected from their ships, the majority appear to have taken local lodgings (in Portsmouth for those displaced by the Spithead mutiny and in Sheerness for the Nore). This allowed them to keep a close eye on developments and to remain on hand to exploit any changes or opportunities that might arise. In some cases, this also allowed them to maintain some contact with the officers allowed to remain on their ship.¹⁵ On occasion, some exiled captains and admirals were permitted to make brief repeated visits to their ship, often in order to read the latest declaration from Parliament or offer of pardon from the King. There was great variation in the number of such trips by officers, but their pattern was mostly determined by the flow of new information from London. In most cases the appeals of these officers for the crew to return to duty ended in failure and their hasty return on shore.¹⁶ Some notable exceptions to this general rule were Captains William Bligh, John Knight, and William Northesk, all of whom were caught up in the Nore mutiny. Bligh was despatched by the Admiralty to liaise with Admiral Duncan at Yarmouth and to secretly enquire whether his North Sea Fleet could, if necessary, be relied upon to end the Nore mutiny by force. Knight and Northesk were both sent to London by the Nore mutineers, bearing their demands or latest terms to the Admiralty and the king.¹⁷

¹³ In practice this was usually 28 inches as half of the crew would be on duty at any given time. N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World, An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 61.

¹⁴ Elin Jones, 'Masculinity, Materiality and Space on Board the Royal Navy Ship, 1756-1815' (PhD thesis, Queen Mary, University of London, 2016).

¹⁵ For example, the senior officer left on board the *Tisiphone*, the ship's master, Edward Tippet, appears to have remained in close contact with the captain on shore. Tippet acted in a mediating role between crew and captain and even facilitated a visit by the captain to try to persuade the sailors to end their mutiny. Master's Log, HMS *Tisiphone* May 1797 to April 1798, Edward Tippet, TNA, ADM52/3496/6.

¹⁶ Log of William Bligh, Captain of HMS *Director*, May to June 1797, NMM ADM/L/D/128; Log of J. Griffiths, Lieutenant of HMS *Director*, May to June 1797, NMM ADM/L/D/129; Master's Log, HMS *Tisiphone* May 1797 to April 1798, Edward Tippet, TNA, ADM52/3496/6.

¹⁷ G.E. Manwaring, and Bonamy Dobrée, *The Floating Republic* (London: Frank Cass and Co. LTD., 1966), p. 170; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 29; Conrad Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1913), pp. 215-219.

As well as those officers exiled from their ship, others were confined to their cabins. In both cases, the mobility of officers was restricted, while mutinous sailors gave orders from the great cabin and quarterdeck. For a sailor to walk on the quarterdeck, unless to perform an essential function, was not merely to trespass; it was to lay claim to a status and legitimate power which were far above his station. Therefore, by issuing orders from that location the mutineer simultaneously put himself in the physical place of officers and assumed their authoritative role. These appropriations allowed for continuity of familiar social practice, but in support of a different regime. Such continuity asserted the legitimacy of the mutineer cause and involved an appeal to unity: a theatrical attempt at persuasion rather than coercion.

The association between the quarterdeck and authority was a powerful one, and this was not lost on the prosecutors at the Nore courts martial. When witness John Lapthorne was asked who had commanded *Leopard* during the mutiny, he responded by naming those sailors who had ‘walked the quarterdeck’.¹⁸ This link between the occupation of an officer’s space and pretensions to usurp his jurisdiction was directly explored during the trials. Witness, Edward Dawson implicated William Vance of *Monmouth* for giving orders from the quarterdeck. The court interjected to clarify, ‘Do you mean to say that he gave those orders in the same manner as the officers were accustomed to when they had the command?’¹⁹ Similarly, when Joseph Borley related that Thomas Linnes had issued orders throughout the mutiny, the court asked if these had been delivered in the manner ‘of an officer giving orders proceeding from himself?’²⁰ Vance and Linnes were both sentenced to hang, not least for their temerarious presumption in usurping both the place and role of officers.

At Spithead too it was observed that the mutineers administered the ships from the quarterdeck. On board *London*, for example, mutiny began with an assembly of sailors taking possession of the quarterdeck.²¹ It is important to note that there were practical as well as symbolic attractions to the occupation of the quarterdeck by mutineers. Firstly, as a raised platform towards the rear of the vessel, the quarterdeck had a commanding view of the length of the ship and its environs.²² This had obvious benefits for the maintenance of order: both for officers and mutineers. The same practical advantages, however, were also true of the

¹⁸ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/4, p. 29.

¹⁹ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/19, p. 17.

²⁰ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/31, p. 23.

²¹ NMM, COO/2/a *Reflections on the Mutiny at Spithead, 1797, Papers of Sir Edward William Campbell* (1825), p. 2.

²² Jones, 'Masculinity, Materiality and Space on Board the Royal Navy Ship, 1756-1815', pp. 100-104.

forecastle, which was much more strongly associated with lower deck culture.²³ Secondly, the quarterdeck was home to the ship's helm, which cemented its status as the centre of command and navigation. The occupation of the quarterdeck by mutineers might therefore be interpreted as a defensive move to protect their own control of the vessel. On the other hand, once involved in the Spithead and Nore mutinies, little movement of ships took place and it was more important to guard the anchor cables located forward and below decks. These points suggest that the practical reasons for occupying the quarterdeck, while important, were not sufficient to explain mutineer behaviour. Furthermore, while there were practical benefits to the mutineer usurpation of the quarterdeck, the same cannot be said of the captain's cabin, the appropriation of which represented a potent statement, but provided little tangible advantage. As such, the mutineer occupation of spaces of authority appears to have been motivated, at least in part, by symbolic considerations.

To dissect an example in detail, it must be recalled that the significance of the quarterdeck came, at root, from the king. The senior officers held the king's commission and it was on the quarterdeck that they exercised that commission by giving orders. The quarterdeck was exalted because it was the place where the king's appointed deputies administered 'His Majesty's Ship'. In practice, however, social convention bred a reverence for the deck itself: a place of honour where few could tread.²⁴ Taking possession of the quarterdeck and maintaining its function conveyed clear messages; firstly, the officers' regime had been replaced, secondly, the new order spoke with power and legitimacy just like the old and, thirdly, it had the same expectations of loyalty and obedience.

While possessing themselves of the quarterdeck, the mutineers also maintained the autonomous maritime tradition which cast the forecabin as a rival space to the quarterdeck: a place of congregation and discussion for sailors symmetrical to that of the officers.²⁵ Mutiny typically began with an assembly of the crew on the forecabin 'in a great body' which then rushed aft to the quarterdeck where mutineers assumed control of the ship.²⁶ In some cases, forecabin guns were turned to face the quarterdeck as an added threat to the officers.²⁷ The forecabin thereby represented an assertion of the collective strength and identity of the ship's crew: an *imperium in imperio* for the humble sailors to set against its privileged counterpart.

²³ The forecabin was a raised platform at the front of the ship, of roughly equal height to the quarterdeck.

²⁴ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, pp. 24-25.

²⁵ Jones, 'Masculinity, Materiality and Space on Board the Royal Navy Ship, 1756-1815', p. 103.

²⁶ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/9, pp. 2-3; Captain's Log, *HMS Agamemnon*, November 1796 to November 1797, TNA, ADM51/1194.

²⁷ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/9, pp. 2-3; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/4 p.2; Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 104; Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 32.

Crucially, the forecastle was a meeting place out of earshot of officers on the quarterdeck; at Spithead when mutineer delegates arrived on board the *London* they ‘were hurried to the forecastle[...] where they might be more free from the restraint the presence of their officers had hitherto imposed on them’.²⁸ One clear indication of the centrality of the forecastle to lower-deck protest occurred on the *Royal Sovereign* at Spithead. On 8 May (the day after the fatal incident on the *London*), ‘the arms chest was removed from the poop to the forecastle’ by the mutinous crew.²⁹ On the *Mars* an arms chest was removed from the captain’s cabin and the marine sentry outside the door was transfigured from the captain’s guard to his gaoler.³⁰ They thereby disarmed the quarterdeck officers to the advantage of the lower-deck sailors, perhaps hoping to prevent any similar debacle as that on the *London*.

As a centre for discussion and resistance, the forecastle fulfilled a similar function to that identified by E.P. Thompson for the market place. These were centres of civic pride and identity, of association and discussion. Significantly, they could accommodate large crowds. As Thompson recognised, crowds created a form of anonymity where the individual ceased to be distinguishable from the whole.³¹ Witnesses, such as Thomas Dove, often found it impossible to distinguish individuals among ‘the general voice’ of the ship’s crew.³² The forecastle proved its worth as a traditional site of seamen’s resistance and paralleled patterns of popular protest on shore.

If the forecastle acted like a market square, then the terrestrial equivalent of the quarterdeck was a court bench or church pulpit. It was from there that the captain would address his crew, perform divine service, and read the Articles of War (naval law code). These two symmetrical spaces, one forward, the other aft, served different strata of naval society. When mutiny began with a congregation on the forecastle which surged aft to secure the quarterdeck, it was equivalent to a market crowd taking possession of a church, courthouse, or guildhall.

The mutineer appropriation of space extended to the inner sanctum of the captain’s cabin. The outrage that this inspired in officers is clear from their court testimony. Lieutenant Flatt of *Sandwich* recalled that mutineer committee meetings were at first held ‘in the

²⁸ NMM, COO/2/a *Reflections on the Mutiny at Spithead, 1797, Papers of Sir Edward William Campbell* (1825), p. 2.

²⁹ Captain’s Log, HMS *Royal Sovereign*, June 1796 to June 1797, William Bedford, TNA, ADM51/1178/1.

³⁰ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Portsmouth: 1797, ADM 1/1023, fol. 426.

³¹ E.P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin Press, 1991), pp. 70–71.

³² CMP TNA, ADM/1/5340, *HMS Montagu*.

starboard bay and afterwards in the great cabin'.³³ The ship's surgeon, John Snipe, described with horror his appearance before the committee 'then assembled in Captain Mosse's cabin', which Snipe considered 'the most daring piece of outrage that I had ever seen in my life'.³⁴ Most reflective of a sense of the maritime world turned upside down was the testimony of Lieutenant Forbes. When asked if the mutineers moved between the revered places 'just as they pleased', Forbes replied 'Constantly. Day after day they went from the quarterdeck down the aft ladder into the captain's cabin[...] without any restriction or control'.³⁵ This practice was common to both the Spithead and Nore mutinies. At the former, the captain's cabin of *Queen Charlotte* played host to the meetings of the thirty-three delegates of the mutinous fleet, while *Sandwich* performed the equivalent function of 'parliament ship' at the Nore.³⁶

Through their usurpation of spaces of authority, the mutineers of Spithead and the Nore simultaneously adopted some of the roles of officers. This can be interpreted as an attempt to encourage unity and obedience on the part of the crew by claiming legitimacy for their cause. Amidst the uncertainties of mutiny, a string of orders issued, as usual, from the quarterdeck and captain's cabin might have represented a comforting and persuasive continuity, which could bind crews together without need for coercion. This inverted continuity would have been all the more important because it was, in several respects, only superficial: a façade blurring the lines between the power structure of the officers, and that of the mutineers, which was notably different and reflected their own traditions.

II. Mutineer Expressions of Authority

The orders emanating from the captains' cabins of *Queen Charlotte* and *Sandwich* might have been normal, but the source of those orders was anything but. Whereas such orders had previously come from the captain, those of the mutineers originated with a

³³ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/9, p. 22.

³⁴ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/1, pp. 30, 33.

³⁵ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/12, pp. 31.

³⁶ Coats and MacDougall, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 41.

committee of elected delegates drawn from the most skilled and experienced seamen of each ship, who could command the respect of their peers.³⁷ The mutineer committees of Spithead and the Nore met to draw up rules, formulate policy, conduct negotiations, and liaise between ships. As such, they were crucial to the duration of the mutinies and the maintenance of unity across the fleet. Their new-born egalitarian and discussion-based system was significantly different to the rigid hierarchy of the officers. These mechanisms of representative democracy, and particularly the use of the term ‘delegate’ led some in government to fear seditious associations between the mutineers, the LCS, UI, or even the French. As shown in chapter one, however, these fears were groundless.

Though hierarchically divided by skill, sailors were a clearly-defined occupational group with many shared interests, whose survival and success depended on cooperation and coordination. As such, it is not surprising that they repeatedly proved highly effective at organising protests. The lower decks had hierarchies of their own based on skill and experience, but there were also egalitarian elements. For example, crews were divided into ‘messes’ of six to eight men who cooked and ate together. In most cases, these messes were self-selecting, proud, and tight-knit communities. While sailors tended to mess with men who shared similar jobs, significantly they chose with whom to associate.³⁸

It was within character, therefore, for sailors to select who would speak for them during a mutiny.³⁹ Furthermore, the collective responsibility inherent in a committee structure is also reminiscent of established traditions of sailors protest: notably the ‘round robin’ petition. This involved a statement of grievances with the names of the crew signed in concentric rings so that it would be impossible to identify and punish ringleaders.⁴⁰ Nor does the committee system itself appear to have been without maritime precedent. In 1768 a strike by merchant sailors paralysed the port of London. A band of forty leading sailors from many ships toured the quays checking terms of service on each ship. Appointed leaders met to draft petitions and demands.⁴¹ The climax of the strike came when a well-disciplined parade of over 10,000 sailors, with ‘several ringleaders with Boatswain’s whistles interspersed

³⁷ Ibid., p. 44; Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, pp. 262-63.

³⁸ Jones, ‘Masculinity, Materiality and Space on Board the Royal Navy Ship, 1756-1815’, pp. 85-87, 161, 365; Michael Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy, 1793-1815* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1960), pp. 270-71.

³⁹ During several Nore courts martial, defendants claimed they had been forced to serve as delegates against their will: through social pressure, or threat of violence. While these claims should be taken seriously, they were also self-serving in the context of a mutiny trial.

⁴⁰ Several examples of surviving round robins can be found in TNA, ADM1/5125, Admiralty Petitions, 1793-98.

⁴¹ Thompson, *Customs in Common*, p. 76; Richard Sheldon, ‘The London Sailors’ Strike of 1768’ in Andrew Charlesworth (ed.), *An Atlas of Industrial Protest in Britain, 1750-1990* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 12-17.

throughout' which 'regulated the whole body' marched on Parliament to present their petition.⁴² Organisation, collective responsibility, and discipline were established elements of sailors' tradition of protest decades before the 1797 fleet mutinies.

The committee-based power structure of the mutineers was very different to the hierarchical disciplinary regime of the officers. At the Nore, however, the picture was more complicated. There, several mutineers are known to have usurped titles of rank. John Davis, for example, signed orders with the words 'John Davis, Captain of the *Sandwich*' and exercised day-to-day control of the ship.⁴³ It should be noted, however, that the roles of such mutineer 'captains' were complementary to the committee system, as they administered individual ships while the committee determined overall fleet policy. The legitimising device and theatrical continuity of written orders⁴⁴ signed by a mutineer 'captain' was combined with a committee-based system of rule drawn, it could be argued, from sailors' traditions of resistance. The two were mutually supporting: the reassuring and unifying theatrical emblems of the rule of officers, and more egalitarian structures of mutineer order. Similarly, leading mutineer, George Gainer, appropriated the role of an officer when he was observed giving orders but also the perks attendant on that role when, according to a proud letter home, he persuaded the crew of *Sandwich* 'to pipe the side for me and pay me as much respect as if I was the Admiral of the Ship'.⁴⁵ Once again, familiar rituals were used to ornament a radically new regime.

The same could not be said of the adoption by Richard Parker of the title 'President'.⁴⁶ Unlike the title 'captain', there could be no suggestion of continuity of naval practice here. 'President' held connotations of republicanism and particularly of the United States. This might suggest elements of 'Atlantic' radicalism of the kind suggested by Frykman, but does not necessarily convey revolutionary intent.⁴⁷

On the other hand, the fact that both 'Captain' Davis and 'President' Parker made use of the written word as an expression of authority suggests a syncretism of usurped naval theatre and mutineer organisation. At the Nore, mutineers ordered the captain of *Montagu*, the Earl of Northesk, to carry a petition and list of demands to London. They issued written

⁴² *Public Advertiser*, 12 May 1768.

⁴³ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/12, p. 28; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/1, p. 6; Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 124.

⁴⁴ For another example of a written mutineer order see Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Portsmouth: 1797, ADM 1/1023, fol. 428.

⁴⁵ Helen Watt and Anne Hawkins, *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2016), p. 436.

⁴⁶ NMM, HSR/Z/33/3, Nore Letters, 1797.

⁴⁷ Frykman, 'Connections between Mutinies in European Navies', p. 107.

instructions which began ‘You are hereby commanded and directed[...]’.⁴⁸ These were the words with which the Admiralty traditionally began their written orders to naval captains. Through their choice of words, the mutineers usurped the jurisdiction of the Admiralty by subverting, not only the medium, but the very words of Admiralty commands. Here mutineer leaders claimed the role of the supreme naval authority by adopting legitimising cultural practices.

The security and privacy of written correspondence was denied to officers, as demonstrated when Captain Parr of *Standard* wrote to the Admiralty to explain events on board his ship. The mutineers insisted that he read the letter to the ship’s company. The subsequent court martial heard that ‘Upon Captain Parr’s reaching the words “His Majesty’s Ship *Standard*, under my command”’, the crew laughed and said ‘that he could not call the ship under his command’. Parr returned to his desk and redrafted the letter to omit ‘under my command’. Only then would the crew permit its postage.⁴⁹ Parr’s writing was subjected to public scrutiny and censorship previously unimaginable for correspondence between a captain and his superiors at the Admiralty. By removing the privacy of that correspondence, the leading mutineers had undermined its power. Once aired in public, the captain’s writing lost its force, which the mutineers appropriated to themselves.

Sailors were used to many details of their lives being regularly recorded in official documents: pay books, muster books, and punishments in captains’ logs, and Watt and Hawkins have recently shown that literacy rates on the lower decks were higher than has often been assumed.⁵⁰ It appears likely, therefore, that the mutineers were not impressed by the act of writing itself, but by an association between the written word and authority. The signature of a president on some of these orders marked this as a very different regime to its predecessor.⁵¹ The fact, however, that they chose established forms of expressing their command is consistent with a syncretism of traditional naval theatre and rival mutineer power structures drawn from an autonomous sailors’ written tradition epitomised by petitions and round robins.

A similar syncretism is visible in the mutineer assumption of punitive power. This was not a purely coercive measure, but also a persuasive one: representative of their new-found hegemony but also of their responsibility, the justice of their cause, and the virtue of their intentions. The reeved yardropes (nooses) present on most ships undoubtedly exercised

⁴⁸ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 29.

⁴⁹ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/18, p. 25.

⁵⁰ Watt and Hawkins, *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France*, pp. 22–23.

⁵¹ Admiralty out-letters, Secret Letters, TNA, ADM 2/1352, fols. 111-14.

a coercive function.⁵² The fact, however, that they were only used to hang effigies challenges their usefulness as a deterrent. While several sailors at the Nore were flogged for lack of dedication to the mutineer cause, more were punished in both mutinies for drunkenness and disrespecting officers.⁵³ Both represent continuity rather than change. This was no anarchy or simple coercive regime. Crucially, the new order borrowed the style and methods of the old to claim legitimacy and minimise need for punishment.

There was little violent coercion during the Spithead mutiny. Yardropes were displayed threateningly, but reports that a sailor had been hanged by the mutineers were quickly found to be false.⁵⁴ Reports that four men had been hanged at the Nore were similarly unfounded.⁵⁵ At the Nore several sailors and petty officers were flogged or ducked in the sea for opposing the mutiny, but these were few in number.⁵⁶ Ships that deserted the mutiny were fired upon, but the fact that no fatalities and little damage resulted from this (even when *Repulse* ran aground during its escape and remained a sitting duck for ninety minutes), suggests that there was no fatal intent.⁵⁷ Further evidence that the mutineers did not intend to kill comes from the *St Fiorenzo*, which fled the mutiny on 31 May under heavy fire. The frigate captain's and master's logs both give detailed lists of damage done to the rigging but record not one man injured despite having to 'pass through the fleet' while they poured 'a tremendous fire upon us'.⁵⁸ This suggests that the mutinous ships fired deliberately high. As under the officers, coercion was just one part of a broader strategy within which violence was a last resort. Familiar theatrical aspects of judicial authority were instead deployed to persuade the crews to remain obedient.

A telling example of mutineer judicial subversion occurred on the *Mars* at Spithead where delegates met to court martial Samuel Nelson. He was accused of spreading false rumours that the ship's company were unsatisfied with the Admiralty and should defect to France with their ship. The record of this trial shows that the mutineers who sat as judges

⁵² Pfaff, Hechter and Corcoran, 'The Problem of Solidarity in Insurgent Collective Action', p. 256; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/10, p. 18; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/1, p. 31; though they also reminded the sailors 'that mutiny was not anarchy', Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 27.

⁵³ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/6, p. 3; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 12.

⁵⁴ *Whitehall Evening Post*, 20 April 1797.

⁵⁵ *London Evening Post*, 3 June 1797.

⁵⁶ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/4 p.22; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/6, pp. 3, 9-10; CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/25, pp. 22, 39-43, 52, 60; CMP TNA, ADM/1/5340, *HMS Montagu*.

⁵⁷ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 235.

⁵⁸ Captain's Log, HMS *St Fiorenzo*, June 1796 to June 1797, Harry Neale, TNA, ADM51/1182/8; Master's Log, HMS *St Fiorenzo*, January to October 1797, Joseph Kitcatt, TNA, ADM52/3388/1. These sources are further corroborated in Admiralty out-letters, Secret Letters, TNA, ADM 2/1352, fol. 131; Letters from Captains, Surnames A, TNA, ADM1/1448, fol. 327.

deliberately adopted the same form and structure as official courts martial. The case for the prosecution was heard first, followed by the defence and character statements. As at official naval courts martial the 'judges' were listed, notes taken, witnesses heard and cross-examined. According to regular procedure, the court was cleared while the judges deliberated. The form of the judicial proceedings by the Spithead mutineers can be seen, therefore, as a legitimising but satirising continuity of official process. The sentence of the *Mars* mutineers was thoroughly ordinary; the prisoner would 'receive at the gangway 24 lashes upon his bare back with a cat of nine tails and then [be] put into irons'.

The charge for which Nelson suffered, however, was surely unprecedented in naval law. His seditious utterings, tried by officers, would have earned punishment for 'incitement to mutiny'. Before the mutineers, he was charged with 'betraying the confidence entrusted him by his shipmates' and 'breaking the oath of fidelity'.⁵⁹ Under normal circumstances, a sailor's duty was to the monarch, so his offences were against the king. In this case, the mutineers considered the legitimate source of sovereignty to rest in the collective will of the ship's company; Nelson's offence was a breach of trust and an affront to the entire crew. As such, Nelson's trial shows an incongruous but effective marriage of official naval process to a different value system. This mutineer trial was reminiscent of the improvised mock-court plays among bored pirates described by Rediker, with the crucial difference that the mutineers were in earnest and their sentence was actually carried out.⁶⁰ Mutineer courts martial also took place at the Nore, particularly for drunkenness. Revealing of the enduring loyalty of the sailors, the witnesses to speak for the prosecution were sometimes listed as 'evidence on the part of the crown'.⁶¹

Similarly, one of the first acts of the mutineers at both Spithead and the Nore was to compose and circulate written rules.⁶² These functioned like the Articles of War, and supplemented rather than replaced those articles.⁶³ Before a punishment on board *Montagu*, prominent mutineer, John Durack declared that he 'wanted the articles of war for they were going to punish Jack Hanford'.⁶⁴ On the one hand, it is not surprising that the mutineers used

⁵⁹ Trial of Samuel Nelson, NMM, MKH/15.

⁶⁰ Rediker, *Villains of All Nations*, pp. 156-57.

⁶¹ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/727, fol. 380, nos. 3,12.

⁶² Letters from Captains, Surnames F, TNA, ADM 1/1797, fol. 24; D. Bonner Smith, 'The Naval Mutinies of 1797', *Mariner's Mirror* vol. 22 (1936), pp. 65-86, 67.

⁶³ CMPNM TNA, ADM1/5486/1, p. 26.

⁶⁴ CMP TNA, ADM/1/5340, *HMS Montagu*.

and mimicked the familiar in seeking to shore up their regime. At the same time, the comparable form and function of the Articles of War and the mutineer ‘laws’ might suggest that the mutineers hoped to extend the legitimacy of the former to the latter.

A more carnivalesque approach to justice was evident at the Nore. Officers ejected from *Montagu* were subjected to a histrionic form of public humiliation. Five officers were escorted off the ship and into a rowing boat to take them on shore. On the way, however, they were brought alongside *Director*, where they were obliged to stand up and receive the derision of its crew while one was tarred and feathered. All the while, a drummer played The Rogue’s March.⁶⁵ This tune was traditionally heard during punishments, such as when a sailor was flogged round the fleet.⁶⁶ It was, therefore, associated with the shame of punishment and the rule of officers. The application of The Rogue’s March to humiliate officers was a social inversion that simultaneously tied mutinous crews together in a festival atmosphere and conveyed the power of the mutineer regime.

A final mutineer usurpation was their widespread adoption of the red flag as the emblem of their cause and (when used in the place of an admiral’s standard) a statement of their own self-government. Typically one of the first acts of defiance at Spithead and the Nore was to raise the red flag, which often remained in place throughout the mutiny. As well as their myriad practical purposes, flags carried connotations of loyalty and power, but these symbols were easily subverted.⁶⁷ The King’s birthday fell in the middle of the Nore mutiny: on 4 June. On board *Sandwich*, the royal standard was raised at the foretopmast and a salute was fired to mark the occasion. This represented a scandalous breach of protocol and a flagrant challenge to the state, as the royal standard should have been flown from the highest point on the ship: the main topmast. The substitution had been made to allow the red flag to continue flying from the most prestigious point on the ship, thereby giving the mutineer ensign both physical and metaphorical precedence over the symbol of the king.⁶⁸ The red flag had been used unofficially by the Royal Navy for centuries, and as part of a codified system since 1647. Its use during the 1797 mutinies, however, rendered it so politically charged that it was dropped entirely from the Royal Navy’s signal system in 1799.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ CMP TNA, ADM/1/5340, *HMS Montagu*.

⁶⁶ In this punishment a sailor would receive a set number of lashes alongside each ship of a fleet.

⁶⁷ Practical uses of flags included identification, communication, signifying distress, and as marks of authority in the case of admiral or commodore’s pennants (from which we get the terms ‘flag officer’ and ‘flagship’).

⁶⁸ NMCMB TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 34; Journal of the Mutiny at the Nore by Captain W.J. Gore, aide de camp to Sir Charles Grey, NMM, HSR/B/12.

⁶⁹ William Gordon Perrin, *British Flags, Their Early History, and Their Development at Sea; with an Account of the Origin of the Flag as a National Device* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922), pp. 160–61.

The effectiveness of mutineer counter-theatre was observed with concern by naval officers. Perhaps the clearest expression of this unease was a letter sent from the senior officers who composed the panel of judges at the Nore courts martial. They asked the government legal officers if the existing Articles of War adequately covered those whose main crime was ‘assuming the station of officers’.⁷⁰ The realisation that the officers’ theatrical tools of order could prove equally effective when applied to an unlawful and potentially dangerous cause was disquieting and appeared to threaten future naval discipline. Edmund Burke, for example, commented that ‘as to our Navy, that has already perished with its discipline forever’.⁷¹

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which the mutinies influenced or inspired reformist or revolutionary societies on shore, but two points can be made. Firstly, as discussed in chapter one, Elliott suggested that the mutinies awoke the UI to the possibility of infiltrating and disabling the navy.⁷² Secondly, the Spithead and Nore mutinies resulted in an increased recognition of the significance of oaths. Magistrates Graham and Williams recognised the seriousness with which the sailors obeyed their oaths long after the mutiny was over, and even suggested the introduction of an oath of loyalty for the navy.⁷³ Whether these oaths were inspired by illicit groups on shore, or in turn inspired such groups to expand their own use of oaths is unclear. Oaths were, however, an established part of the eighteenth-century military code of conduct, particularly among prisoners of war of officer rank.⁷⁴ It is possible, therefore, that the mutineer oaths represented another appropriation by sailors of a recognised practice among their superiors. What is known is that Parliament feared one or more of these possibilities sufficiently to abolish ‘Unlawful Oaths’ soon after the mutinies.⁷⁵ The recommendation for a naval oath was not acted upon, but some crews, directed by the Admiralty and Admiral Lutwidge, made solemn promises of loyalty of a striking similarity to the proposals of Graham and Williams.⁷⁶

⁷⁰ Letter from Nore courts martial judges to government law officers, 11 July 1797, NMM, MRK/100/5/8; Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM 1/728, fol. 579. The legal officers advised that the existing Articles of War were sufficient to cover such offences.

⁷¹ Gilson, *Correspondence of Edmund Burke and William Windham*, p. 241. Letter from Burke to Windham, 26 April 1797. Some naval officers also felt that their personal authority was irretrievable on their respective ships, see ADM 1/1516, Letters from Captains, Surnames B, fol. 17.

⁷² Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France*, pp. 143-44.

⁷³ Report of Magistrates Mr Graham and Mr Williams, 24 June 1797, TNA, HO42/41/68, fols. 213-214.

⁷⁴ Renaud Morieux, ‘French Prisoners of War, Conflicts of Honour, and Social Inversions in England, 1744-1783’, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 56 (2013), pp.55-88, 62-63.

⁷⁵ Unlawful Oaths Act 1797 (37 Geo. III).

⁷⁶ Letters from Captains, Surnames F, TNA, ADM 1/1797, fol. 90.

Conclusion

A distinction has often been drawn between the respectable Spithead mutiny and the ‘more serious’ or ‘uglier’ Nore mutiny.⁷⁷ These views are substantiated by some actions of the Nore mutineers, which went far beyond those of their predecessors at Spithead, such as blockading the Thames, humiliating the officers of the *Montagu*, and firing upon Royal Navy ships. However, this interpretation understates the continuities of counter-theatrical behaviour across the two mutinies: the use of spaces of authority, the creation of written rules, regular cheering, and disciplinary procedures. Far from implying a greater nascent radicalism among the Nore mutineers, their increasingly drastic actions could, with equal plausibility, suggest growing desperation and frustration at their lack of progress. This interpretation would explain how the initial practical similarities between the two mutinies were taken to increasingly desperate extents at the Nore. Faced with Admiralty intransigence, the Nore mutineers exceeded the restraint of the Spithead mutiny; the committee was supplemented by a ‘President’, officers were not just confined but humiliated, and the Thames was blockaded in order to acquire much-needed supplies.

As the mutineers used rather than subverted the symbols of naval order, the determination of the naval authorities to punish this behaviour might appear contradictory, but this is based on a false distinction. For the mutineers to use these instruments of naval authority *was* to subvert them, as they were not theirs to use. Though the threat of coercive violence was omnipresent, the rule of officers generally rested on ritual, ceremonial, and symbols. The realisation that sailors had not only recognised these strategies but used them for their own ends, even if predominantly marked by moderation and continuity, was dangerous and discomfiting. If a magician reveals his tricks, the magic is lost. When the mutineers usurped the methods of naval authority, some, with Burke, wondered if the spell of naval discipline was broken forever.

The forms of counter-theatre employed by the mutineers offer direct parallels to similar practices during crowd action on shore. Referring to protests on land in eighteenth-century Britain, Brewer argued that crowds used symbols, flags, and music (all present in

⁷⁷ Peter Hore, *The Habit of Victory, The Story of the Royal Navy, 1545 to 1945* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 2005), p. 142; Roger Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon, The Organization of Victory, 1793-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 89.

mutineer parades at Sheerness) to support their cause, and that these represented a “belief system” made concrete’.⁷⁸ Often, symbols of authority were repurposed to aid the protesters. It was common, for example, for crowds to ‘execute’ effigies while observing ‘the proper forms and customs of a public execution’.⁷⁹ These effigies were sometimes incarcerated in the local gaol overnight and then paraded to the usual place of execution in the same wagon used to convey condemned criminals. These wagons were also occasionally employed by crowds to evict unpopular local officials from a parish.⁸⁰ The similarities are clear between these practices and the expulsion of officers from *Montagu* via small boat while the Rogue’s March was played. The officers were conveyed away in the same craft and to the same tune as convicted criminals going to be flogged round the fleet.

At the same time, the mutineers did not simply step straight into the vacated shoes of their officers. Instead they complemented their own new power structure using familiar theatrical representations of naval discipline. The result was a hybrid marriage of lower-deck traditions of organisation to the reassuring, legitimising, and unifying continuity of established elements of naval order. This composite strategy, with mutineer counter-theatre at its heart, was instrumental to the scale and duration of the 1797 fleet mutinies, and to their overwhelming reliance on persuasion rather than coercion.

⁷⁸ Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics*, p. 182.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁸⁰ Carl J. Griffin, *The Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012); p. 174.

5. PRACTICAL CHALLENGES AND THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF FLEET MUTINY

Introduction

The opening three chapters of this dissertation were concerned with why the 1797 fleet mutinies happened. This chapter asks instead how the course of the mutinies was affected by two specific practical challenges and how the mutineers sought to respond to them. These challenges were safe navigation and maintenance of ships. This task is dependent upon an understanding of the mundane and quotidian aspects of the mutinies: what we might call the everyday life of extended fleet mutiny.

‘Everyday life’ is a useful frame of analysis here as it offers the opportunity to look beyond the brief dramatic episodes that have received the lion’s share of historical attention and to instead consider the much longer periods of relative calm that characterised the majority of a sailor’s experience of mutiny. Inspiration is drawn from the German tradition of *alltagsgeschichte*, of which Alf Lüdtke identified two principal foci. The first ‘stresses everyday activities in which an element of repetitiveness predominates’ thereby relieving individuals of uncertainties while serving to encourage submission to a stable authority. The second foci, in contrast, emphasises how participants were ‘simultaneously both objects of history and its subjects’, and can thereby move beyond the static-structure approach of the first.¹ The mutineers of 1797 had transcended the everyday and overturned the usual stability of their disciplined existence when they refused to submit to a portion of their officer’s authority by refusing to sail. They also substituted elements of their own authority in search of a new stability. Nevertheless, a mundane continuity of labour predominated for sound

¹ Alf Lüdtke, ‘What is the History of Everyday Life and Who are its Practitioners?’ in Alf Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life, Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 5-6.

practical reasons. In this extraordinary context, the endurance of familiar features of the 'everyday' were formative to the character and lived experience throughout the duration of the mutinies.

It has become a cliché to describe warfare as 'long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of extreme terror'. Similarly, lasting a month each, the 1797 fleet mutinies can be characterised as perhaps nine parts relative calm to one part fervent, sometimes frightening, excitement. Nevertheless, their historiography has overwhelmingly concentrated on the one part to the exclusion of the nine. Consequently, the study of the more peaceful periods of the mutinies would have enormous ramifications for our understanding of these events. Crucially, this approach offers a partial remedy to the distorting effects of the disproportionate attention that has been paid to the brief flashes of excitement, such as the first and last moments of mutiny, as well as crises of confrontation and violence.

This chapter examines two practical considerations that have so far received little attention in the study of the fleet mutinies, but which were pivotal to their form and course. In Section I, the unenviable position of ships' masters is analysed in relation to the functional challenge of safe navigation. Sailing was one of the most obvious elements of everyday life on board ship, but the mutinies threatened to undermine this. It is argued that the specialist role of the masters placed them in an uncomfortable situation where they were forced to choose between partially cooperating with the mutineers or risking the safety of the ship, its crew, and themselves. Section II argues that, mutiny or no mutiny, many crucial tasks still had to be carried out, leading to significant continuity of activity. On one superficial level, therefore, a visitor to one of the mutinous ships might often have observed few differences or obvious evidence of mutiny. This suggestion of mundane regular work differs greatly from the more sensationalised elements of mutiny that have usually attracted most attention.

The central sources for this chapter are the logbooks kept by officers during the mutinies. It was a legal requirement for commanding officers and ship's masters to keep a daily log and these were submitted to the Admiralty at regular (roughly annual) intervals. As such, these documents were available for scrutiny by senior Admiralty officials. Since the majority of officers' logbooks have survived, they provide unparalleled daily descriptions of the situation on board almost every ship involved. Furthermore, while surviving documents from the mutineers themselves are extremely patchy, the logbooks represent the most systematic account of what the ordinary sailors were doing each day and on each ship. As longstanding official documents, the daily entries in the logbooks usually conformed to a similar pattern; beginning with a description of the weather, they then describe any notable

events or observations that day, and then end with a list of the tasks in which the crew were engaged. As an example, a short but otherwise structurally typical log entry reads ‘p.m. strong breezes and cloudy a.m. light breezes and clear [crew] employed as necessary’.² It is precisely the regularity of these sources that facilitates an analysis of daily life during the mutinies and a comparison with normal, non-mutinous circumstances.

Throughout this period the Royal Navy had more commanding officers than it had ships for them to command with the result that competition for a ship was often fierce. Captains used family connections and patronage networks to the full in order to favourably catch the eye of the lords of the Admiralty, and also sought to avoid any black mark against their name that could harm their prospects.³ Nicholas Rodger has demonstrated for the mid-eighteenth century that many officers, including captains, underwent courts martial as a result of complaints of cruelty or unjust treatment from members of their crew, as well as for all cases where a ship was lost.⁴ Having one’s conduct poured over by fellow captains in this way could be highly embarrassing.⁵ In such cases the officers’ logbooks were valuable sources for the investigation. These practices continued in the French Revolutionary War and would have been familiar to officers caught up in the 1797 fleet mutinies. Niklas Frykman and Jonathan Neale have argued that many small-scale mutinies in this period went unreported as neither officers nor crew ‘had any interest in the navy administration getting wind’ of them and that the total number of mutinies might have been twenty times higher than those reported.⁶ The officers involved in the 1797 fleet mutinies, having temporarily lost control of their ships and aware that accident or desertion might lead to their permanent loss, would have had good reason to fear that this would count against them in the contest for naval preferment, which would have encouraged them to think carefully about what to set down in their logbooks.

² Captain’s Log, HMS *Pylades* March 1797 to September 1798, Adam Mackenzie, TNA, ADM51/1222/3 (Entry for Monday 22 May).

³ For a description of the intense competition for naval preferment see Evan Wilson, ‘Social Background and Promotion Prospects in the Royal Navy, 1775–1815’ *The English Historical Review* vol. 131 (2016), pp. 570–95; and Catherine Beck’s recent PhD thesis ‘Patronage and the Royal Navy, 1775–1815’ (University College London PhD Thesis, 2017).

⁴ N.A.M Rodger, *The Wooden World, An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), pp. 212–14, 234–37.

⁵ Bruno Pappalardo, *How to Survive in the Georgian Navy, A Sailor’s Guide* (London: Osprey, 2019), pp. 36–39.

⁶ Niklas Frykman, ‘Connections between Mutinies in European Navies’ *International Review of Social History* vol. 58 (2013), pp. 87–107, 87–88; Jonathan Neale, ‘Forecastle and Quarterdeck: Protest, Discipline and Mutiny in the Royal Navy, 1793–1814’ (Warwick, PhD thesis, 1990), p. 25.

I. The Challenge of Safe Navigation and the Dilemma of Ships' Masters

The 1797 mutinies forced difficult decisions on everyone involved, but perhaps the most uncomfortable position was that of the ships' masters. The nature of their rank and responsibilities tore masters in two directions. Due to the fact that masters were required to keep daily logs, their experiences are among the best documented, but they have barely featured in existing histories of the mutinies. Crucially, the masters' behaviour provides the key to one notable, though little-used, challenge of the day to day life of the mutinies: navigation.

The master was generally considered the most skilful navigator on board the ship. Usually among the oldest members of the crew, the master spoke with the authority of perhaps decades of experience. Despite their skill, the master's position was an uncomfortably liminal one, even without the added complications of mutiny. As a warrant officer, the master was subordinate to the commissioned officers: the captain and lieutenants. Furthermore, masters were drawn from two broad strands: from midshipmen (apprentice commissioned officers) who failed to receive their lieutenant's commission, and lower-deck sailors who rose through the ranks to midshipman and master's mate. By convention, the master was a member of the wardroom and so dined with the lieutenants, but his status as an officer and gentleman was always somewhat uncertain. While, therefore, the most valuable individual on board when it came to the professional arts of seamanship, in terms of rank the master could not feel true belonging among the senior officers with whom he had to associate, nor among the sailors from whose number he might himself have risen. Nevertheless, it was a foolish captain indeed that ignored the advice of this 'old salt'. Like other warrant officers, the master was appointed to a ship while it was still being built or fitted out, and helped to oversee those processes. Whereas commissioned officers might move between ships with some frequency, the master usually remained with his allotted ship until the end of its, or his, career. Consequently, as well as the most experienced mariner in general, the master likely had unparalleled experience handling his ship in particular.⁷

⁷ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p. 20; N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean, A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 394; Mark Adkin, *The Trafalgar Companion, A Guide to History's Most Famous Sea Battle and the Life of Admiral Lord Nelson* (London: Aurum Press, 2005), pp. 119, 124-25, 143-46.

The master's skill commanded respect from commissioned officers and lower-deck sailors alike, all of whom knew that their lives were often placed in his hands. On the *Pylades*, for example, it was reported that the officers were stripped of all authority, except for the master, who the crew 'suffered to retain a slender degree of power'.⁸ Resident in the wardroom and stationed on the quarterdeck, the master could speak to the senior officers in their own terms and as a near-equal, while his origins and experience might also help him to understand the viewpoint of the sailors. As such, the master was well-placed to act as a potential intermediary between officers and crew. The main responsibility of the master was navigation, and his principal concern was for the safety of the ship and its crew. It was for the captain to determine the ship's destination and for the master to set the appropriate course to arrive safely, avoiding any hazards and responding to any hostile weather along the way. At times during the 1797 mutinies, this fundamental duty for the safety of the ship would pull the master in an opposite direction to his perceived obligations towards his brother officers. Several masters, particularly those of mutinous ships that sailed from Yarmouth to join the Nore mutiny, were faced with an unenviable choice between overseeing the safe movement of the ship, even if it meant aiding and abetting the mutineers, or refusing to provide any help to their illegitimate regime, with attendant risks to the safety of the vessel.⁹ In either case the stakes: professional, personal, and to life and limb, were high. Some masters were willingly helpful to the mutineers, others refused to play any part during the mutineer tenure of command, and most charted a middle course as best they could. The differences between their approaches, and the ways in which they sought to justify them to themselves and their superiors through the medium of their master's log books are the subjects of this section. Their actions are a window into some of the previously overlooked practical considerations of the mutinies, while their tactical inclusions, emphasis, and omissions in their log books are revealing of the heavy psychological toll that resulted from their awkward professional position.¹⁰

⁸ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/727, fol. 373.

⁹ For a description of the defection of the North Sea Fleet and its movements see Conrad Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913), pp. 165, 173-77.

¹⁰ The actions of ships' masters in two of the most famous mutinies in this period are also worth considering. To take the case of the mutiny on the *Bounty* in 1789, the sailing master John Fryer sided with Captain Bligh and left the ship with him. The chief mutineer, Fletcher Christian, was however himself a master's mate and so a competent navigator. In the case of the bloody mutiny on the *Hermione*, the master, Edward Southcott was one of only four surviving officers and was saved by the crew's esteem for him. He was held below and so took no part in navigating the mutinous ship. When it reached the Spanish Main he and the other officers gave themselves up as prisoners of war. See Pitcairn Islands Study Centre Online Encyclopaedia of Bounty Crewmen at <https://library.puc.edu/pitcairn/bounty/crew2.shtml> (accessed 29.11.19); Niklas Frykman, 'The Mutiny on the

During the Spithead mutiny, navigation was not a significant challenge. The mutiny occurred among a fleet of ships that remained in port. Many of the ships did move from Spithead to St Helens as a first step towards heading out to sea, but this took place during a brief intermission in the mutiny during which time the officers had resumed command. Safe navigation and the problem of divided duty that it posed to masters was much more in evidence during the Nore mutiny, and the evidence for this section is drawn from there. At the Nore there was greater movement among the mutinous fleet as ships were variously reordered into a more defensive formation, arranged to blockade the Thames, and shifted to intimidate wavering crews.¹¹ The greatest navigational challenges were encountered by mutinous ships of the North Sea Fleet. These mutinied near Yarmouth and then made their way to join the ships at the Nore under the command of their mutinous crews. Dangers along the way included reefs, a hazardous coastline, and labyrinthine channels between treacherous sandbanks. The actions of the masters of these ships are among the most interesting.

At one end of the spectrum of masters' behaviour were those who appear to have denied all aid to the mutineers. The master of the *Monmouth*, James Murray, simply omitted from his log the entire period of that ship's involvement in the Nore mutiny with the observation that 31 May to 13 June was 'a period mark'd with every species of crime that a lot of cruel and barbarous mutineers could think up and by much too black for pen to print'.¹² This in itself does not rule out his having helped or overseen mutineer navigation, but his vitriolic tone suggests that he would not have done so. A clearer, but at the same time slightly more nuanced example was that of Michael Dunn, the master of the *Ardent*. Mutiny broke out shortly after this ship had left Yarmouth with most of the North Sea Fleet and the mutineers insisted on *Ardent* returning to port. Dunn's log book makes clear that he navigated the ship back to Yarmouth, or at least supervised this journey, as he recorded hourly observations of wind, course, and tide. When, however, five days later the mutineers 'ordered the Master to take charge of the ship up to the Nore he refused'.¹³ This statement appears identically in both the captain's and master's logs for 5 June 1797, but Dunn further embellished his own with the defiant declaration that he 'would suffer death first'.¹⁴ Denied Dunn's professional skills, the *Ardent* mutineers were forced to acquire a pilot from the *Leopard* to take them

Hermione: Warfare, Revolution, and Treason in the Royal Navy', *Journal of Social History* vol. 44 (2010), pp. 159-187, 165; Neale, 'Forecastle and Quarterdeck', pp. 6-7.

¹¹ Master's Log, HMS *Pylades* March 1797 to January 1798, Thomas Taylor, TNA, ADM52/3328/1; Admiralty Rough Minutes, 1797, TNA, ADM 3/137, fol. 128.

¹² Master's Log, HMS *Monmouth* September 1796 to September 1797, James Murray, TNA, ADM52/3233.

¹³ Master's Log, HMS *Ardent* June 1796 to June 1797, Michael Dunn, TNA, ADM52/2632/6.

¹⁴ *Ibid*; Captain's Log, HMS *Ardent* May to October 1797, Captain Richard Burgess, TNA, ADM51/4411/1.

down the coast to the Nore.¹⁵ This recourse in turn makes it more likely that it had been Dunn who personally guided the ship back to Yarmouth. If so, his contrasting behaviours are revealing in that he was willing to steer a mutinous ship back into the harbour from whence it had come when there was no safe alternative, but not to plot its course to join an already infamous mutiny down the coast. Perhaps he vainly hoped that his refusal would be enough to prevent the movement of the *Ardent* altogether, or alternatively it is possible that the intervening five days of mutineer rule had been enough to convince Dunn that he wanted no part in it. Either way, his staunch refusal to aid the mutineers on their way to the Nore places him at one extreme of masters' behaviour. It appears likely that the master of the *Belliqueux*, Joseph Behenna, followed the same policy as he makes clear in his log that 'the ship's company' unmoored the ship, rather than him. He then left the 'course' section of his logbook blank for the duration of the mutiny, suggesting that he was not the one to navigate to the Nore or, if he was, that he was too ashamed to record as much.¹⁶

The fact that other masters acted in an almost opposite fashion demonstrates the extent to which the unparalleled situation was addressed not according to any established professional rubric, but according to individual conceptions of duty. Some prioritised the safety of the ship under their charge over a rigid adherence to naval discipline, while others refused any help to mutineers, even if it meant risking a disastrous foundering and their own lives. Each man had to choose his own path while considering the present dangers and the potential impact on his future career. George Finn was one of those whose instincts took him in an opposite direction to Dunn. Finn was master of the *Isis* and it is clear from the detailed navigational notes in his log that he obeyed mutineer navigational orders. At the outbreak of mutiny on 31 May a ringleader, Andrew Bruce, gave 'orders to put the helm up' and return to Yarmouth. Finn did so and continued to record his hourly notes on tides, wind, and course. The same details are present in the entry for 6 June when *Isis* sailed with the other mutinous ships from Yarmouth to the Nore.¹⁷ In both cases it appears that Finn continued to operate as chief navigator, even though the course and destination orders originated from mutineers rather than the captain. Finn's log entries for these dates do not include the sorts of moral criticisms or doubts of Dunn or Murray. Instead, he appears confident that his duty was to ensure the safe movement of the ship, even if that meant tacitly obeying the commands of a regime whose legitimacy he rejected. Finn's one comment that might seem to diminish his

¹⁵ Master's Log, HMS *Ardent* June 1796 to June 1797, Michael Dunn, TNA, ADM52/2632/6.

¹⁶ Master's Log, HMS *Belliqueux* October 1796 to October 1797, Joseph Behenna, TNA, ADM52/2768/8.

¹⁷ Master's Log, HMS *Isis* March 1797 to March 1798, George Finn, TNA, ADM52/3130/6.

responsibility was the note that the *Isis* set sail ‘following the motions of *Agamemnon*’, rather than purely under his personal direction.¹⁸ William Blake, the master of the *Leopard* behaved similarly, also providing detailed notes of the journey from Yarmouth to the Nore, suggesting his involvement in the navigation, but stating unambiguously that it was ‘the ship’s company [who] unmoored the ship’, in this case ‘leaving Captain Hargood on shore’.¹⁹

The majority of masters placed in this disagreeable position seem to have plotted a middle course: neither continuing in their formal role as before like Finn, nor taking a combative stance like Dunn. Most of the masters’ logs when recounting the voyage of the mutinous ships from Yarmouth to the Nore continue to record several observations of wind direction and occasionally a course direction, but not as formally or completely as under normal circumstances. It is difficult to gauge from this what was going on during that journey. One interpretation would be that the masters of these ships performed their usual duties as master but recorded less information to reflect the breakdown of authority, or perhaps with an eye to their own future careers: not wishing to draw the Admiralty’s attention to their aiding the mutineers. This seems to have been true of *Repulse* as Captain Alms informed the Admiralty that the ship was brought to the Nore ‘under charge of the Master and Pilot’.²⁰

Another interpretation would be that these masters did not actively navigate their ships to the Nore, but nevertheless took their usual station on the quarterdeck and observed proceedings with a careful eye: ready to step in, whether with formal orders, or informal advice. In this way the masters, by their presence, could square the circle of their contradicting duties by passively ensuring the ship’s safety without lending aid or legitimacy to the mutineer regime. This state of affairs, with a master present but inactive (or at least unwilling to record his usual detailed level of navigational notes) appears to have been the experience on board ships including the *Standard*, *Agamemnon*, and *Ranger*.²¹ One example of this ilk was Henry Gooch, master of the *Inspector* sloop, who, in a stark contrast to his entries under normal circumstances, did not record the courses set on the journey to the Nore, but noted bearings of the eventual anchorage from the landmark ‘garrison point’ and specified that the ship anchored in ‘7 fathoms water’.²² Those captains able to do so likely

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Master’s Log, HMS *Leopard* September 1796 to September 1797, William Blake, TNA, ADM52/3160/7.

²⁰ Letters from Captains, Surnames A, TNA, ADM1/1448, fol. 321.

²¹ Master’s Log, HMS *Standard* July 1796 to June 1797, TNA, ADM52/3476/3; Master’s Log, HMS *Agamemnon* December 1796 to December 1797, John Decker, TNA, ADM52/2632/5; Master’s Log, HMS *Ranger* March to August 1797, Henry Webb, TNA, ADM52/3372/6.

²² Master’s Log, HMS *Inspector* April 1797 to April 1798, Henry Gooch, TNA, ADM52/3119/8.

also kept a watchful eye on deck. Henry Duncan of the *Comet*, for example, ‘thought it most prudent for the safety of the ship’ to ‘remain on Deck and if possible to prevent their [the mutineers] loosing His Majesty’s Ship under my command’.²³

Another way to reconcile the competing duties as an officer and as a navigator was to obey mutineer movement orders, but not immediately. This had the effect of ensuring safe movement while also registering personal disapproval to the mutineers and to the Admiralty. One master to employ this strategy was Thomas Taylor of the *Pylades*. He recorded that at 2 p.m. the mutineer delegates ‘sent me presumptuous orders to weigh and take a berth between *Clyde* and *St Fiorenzo*’. These he evidently ignored as at 4 p.m. ‘a person from the *Sandwich* came on board and ordered us down again’. Perhaps feeling that honour had been satisfied by his initial refusal and pleased at having annoyed the mutineers by the delay, Taylor pithily noted ‘dropped down and moored in 4 fathoms’ and recorded their exact position.²⁴ This account conveyed to his superiors at the Admiralty Taylor’s condemnation of the mutinies, but also his prioritisation of the safety of the ship and its crew.

The importance of this consideration is set in stark relief by a mutineer navigational accident which, while relatively minor, highlights the potent dangers of navigating sailing warships under mutinous conditions. The collision was recorded, albeit briefly, in the logs of both masters with each, perhaps unsurprisingly, blaming the other ship. Henry Gooch, master of the *Inspector* recorded on 1 June that ‘in consequence of the *Comet* fireship mooring too near us she did us damage when swinging’.²⁵ The *Comet*’s master, Thomas Hoskins, wrote ‘was foul of us the *Inspector* sloop and carried away our spare topsail yard’, though his description of the incident appears in his entry for 2 June.²⁶ Regardless of where the blame truly lies, it is clear that the two ships were moored dangerously close together, perhaps in an attempt to aid mutineer security or communication. While such accidents were not unheard of, it would be highly embarrassing for them to occur in a familiar anchorage like the Nore. There are several possibilities here. Firstly, the occurrence of this collision in such a well-known anchorage might lead one to doubt the amount of involvement that the ships’ masters had in the positioning and anchoring of their ships, but if so one would perhaps expect them to have made this fact clear in their logs. Secondly, it might be that the added stresses and confusion of the mutinous situation of those ships resulted in mistakes that, under normal circumstances, would have been recognised, avoided, or corrected. A comparison can be

²³ Letters from Captains, Surnames D, TNA, ADM1/1719, fol. 375.

²⁴ Master’s Log, HMS *Pylades* March 1797 to January 1798, Thomas Taylor, TNA, ADM52/3328/1.

²⁵ Master’s Log, HMS *Inspector* April 1797 to April 1798, Henry Gooch, TNA, ADM52/3119/8.

²⁶ Master’s Log, HMS *Comet* April to July 1797, Thomas Hoskins, TNA, ADM52/2869/2.

drawn here to the escape of the *Repulse* during which it ran aground on a sandbank. The Thames estuary was meticulously charted and the locations of the sandbanks well-known, but in this case the enormous strains and dangers of the moment seem to have led to preventable mistakes. The same might well have been true of the collision between the *Comet* and the *Inspector*. Above all, this accident highlights the notion that, during a mutiny with its attendant extra concerns and confusions, old certainties on which people usually relied could let them down in surprising and even dangerous ways. Furthermore, if mooring distances could be so badly miscalculated under mutinous conditions, it would seem doubtful that the mutineers could have safely reached the Nore without some professional help from the ships' masters.

Both the temporary grounding of the *Repulse* and the collision between these two smaller ships must have served as sobering warnings to the Nore mutineers with significant ramifications for the end of that mutiny. Well-charted and marked as the Thames estuary was, it was nevertheless a navigational challenge studded with numerous hazards: many of them invisible. When, therefore, on 6 June, the Trinity House Corporation, acting on government instructions, removed the marker lights and buoys from the safe channels linking the Thames to the sea, the mutineers effectively found themselves trapped.²⁷ The option remained to slip their anchors and head for the open sea, but this would involve enormous risk to their lives. Trinity House charts from the period, including Figure 5.1 below, convey the scale of the danger. Without the markers, the chances of avoiding the myriad shoals and sandbanks were slim. If the ships' masters refused the benefit of their skills, the odds would lengthen still further. With mutineer hopes on their final decline, on 9 June signal flags were raised on the *Sandwich* ordering the mutinous fleet to put to sea. This signal was acknowledged by every ship, but not one of them raised its anchor or set any sails.²⁸ If there was a point of no return for the Nore mutiny, it was this moment of motionlessness melancholy. As the signal to sail broke from the *Sandwich*'s halliards, the master of each ship instantly became the most important individual on board. His ready acceptance of this final mutineer 'order' would have given the crews their greatest hope of success; his refusal to lift a finger to help them would have proved their greatest impediment. Curiously, not one of the masters' logs studied makes any reference to this pivotal moment. It is important to note that majority opinion of the sailors appears always to have been strongly against absconding or defecting with their warships, so the order to set sail was significant in galvanising the sailors to support the

²⁷ G.E. Manwaring and Bonamy Dobrée, *The Floating Republic* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966), pp. 210-11.

²⁸ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 227-28.

loyalist cause.²⁹ The refusal of a single crew to raise anchor effectively ended the Nore mutiny and spared the ships' masters from potentially having to stand silently at their post while the mutineer leaders ineptly wrecked the ships upon sandbanks or shoals. Nevertheless, the apparent refusal of any master to countenance or aid the mutinous faction in getting under way was a further nail in the coffin for the mutineer cause.

The masters' skills could also mean that they had a significant say in the precise timing and manner of the end of the mutiny on their ship. On board the *Pylades* the red flag was hauled down on 13 June and the mutiny came to an end the following day. The crew's initial demand that the ship be sailed up the Thames to surrender to the authorities appears to have been met with stonewalling from the master. He recorded 'people insisting on going up the Thames, at 7 a.m. weighed when they consented to go into Sheerness'.³⁰ The impression is of the master practically holding the crew hostage until they agreed to his preferred destination. Ultimately the best navigator was the key individual when it came to moving the ship. That fact had made life uncomfortable for the masters during the mutiny, but at its end it also gave them substantial power. Nevertheless, the navigational quandary serves to highlight the ways in which the roles and responsibilities of ships' masters acted to pull them in different directions. That nothing more disastrous transpired from this dilemma than the minor collision between *Inspector* and *Comet* is a testament to the pragmatic professionalism of the masters.

This professionalism is particularly impressive when one remembers the indignities to which some masters were subjected. One of them was Thomas Taylor, master of the *Pylades*, who reported on 21 May that 'the people appointed by the Delegates of the fleet examined the master's log book'. With *sang-froid* and more than a hint of satisfaction, Taylor noted that these impromptu inspectors 'objected no statement in it'.³¹ This fits neatly into the theme identified in the previous chapter of mutineers appropriating the authority of the written word to themselves as one of the reins of shipboard power. This trend was continued on 3 June when the mutineers confiscated the purser's provision books. Six days later, the unfortunate 'purser's steward was ordered by the Delegates to acquaint them of the deficiency of three month's stores of all kinds'.³² This is suggestive both of the mutineer intention to control the documents of record, and of their overarching fear of having been cheated over an extended

²⁹ Roger Wells, *Insurrection, The British Experience, 1795-1803* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986), p. 109.

³⁰ Master's Log, HMS *Pylades* March 1797 to January 1798, Thomas Taylor, TNA, ADM52/3328/1.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

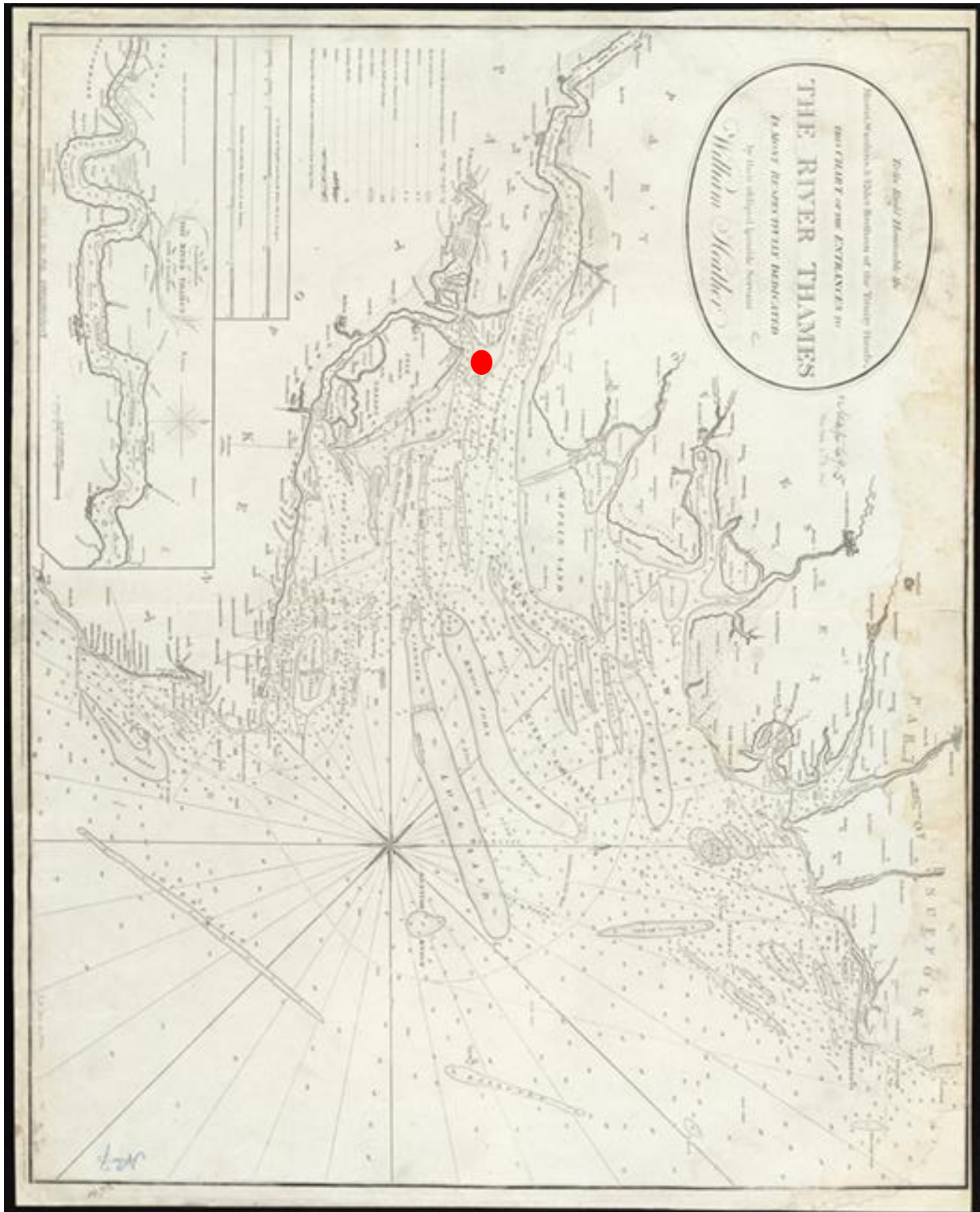
period of time. The calm manner in which Taylor traversed these impertinent difficulties is indicated by his including the mundane observation ‘at 5 p.m. cleared hawse’³³ in the same sentence as recounting the confiscation of his logbook.³⁴

³³ Tidying and neatly rolling and stowing loose ropes and cables.

³⁴ Master’s Log, HMS *Pylades* March 1797 to January 1798, Thomas Taylor, TNA, ADM52/3328/1.

Figure 5.1 Trinity House chart of the Thames Estuary, 1801³⁵

(Nore anchorage marked in red)



³⁵ William Heather, 'Chart of the Entrances to the River Thames, Dedicated to the Master, Wardens, and Brethren of the Trinity House' (1801), Map reproduction courtesy of the Norman B. Leventhal Map & Education Center at the Boston Public Library Call number G5752.T4 1801.H43.

Another master who demonstrated a calm professionalism during the Nore mutiny was Edward Tippet, master of the *Tisiphone*. Tippet used his position of master and the respect that it commanded both among sailors and commissioned officers to attempt to mediate between the two sides (a useful recourse after most of the officers, including the captain, had left the ship and gone on land). On 13 June Tippet landed with a flag of truce and ‘returned with the captain and two lieutenants in order to take the ship into the harbour but was prevented by the delegates’. One of these delegates waved to attract the attention of *Inflexible*, *Montagu*, and *Belliqueux*, each of which sent boats of armed mutineers to intervene. Tippet’s log records that ‘the captain and lieutenants then left the ship and went on shore’. Six hours later, the mutiny on the *Tisiphone* was over.³⁶ It is unclear on whose initiative the master went to collect the captain and lieutenants: whether his own, that of the captain, or a portion of the crew. Furthermore, it perhaps appears surprising that these officers were simply allowed to return to shore unmolested by the mutineers and that Tippet was left to continue on board *Tisiphone* as before. These examples of mutineer discretion might have been caused by respect for Tippet personally or his rank as master, or might equally have been a calculated reflection of the mutiny’s declining fortunes. Since the master was often the most senior officer remaining on board by the end of the Nore mutiny, in such cases it was to them that the mutineers surrendered the ship, as was the case, for example, on the *Inspector*.³⁷

At times the practical skills of the ships’ masters effectively forced them to decide whether or not to take a direct part in the Nore mutiny. In one sense, therefore, these men were trapped in a difficult and unenviable position by their own expertise and pulled in divergent directions by their contrasting duties. Individuals had to weigh up their options and prioritise such issues as the needs of the service, the safety of ship and crew, and their own career prospects. In this situation it is not surprising that different men chose different paths. Concurrently, however, the professional skill of the masters gave them considerable lee-way to try to reconcile their conflicting duties, to assuage their own consciences, and to work towards a satisfactory outcome to the mutiny. Consequently, the experiences of the ships’ masters offer a complex, nuanced, and previously unstudied understanding of the Nore mutiny in practical terms as a prolonged process of negotiation. This process existed cheek by jowl with more mundane considerations of daily life on board ship, and these are the subject of the next section.

³⁶ Master’s Log, HMS *Tisiphone* May 1797 to April 1798, Edward Tippet, TNA, ADM52/3496/6.

³⁷ Captain’s Log, HMS *Inspector* September 1796 to September 1797, Charles Lock, TNA, ADM51/1191/4.

II. Mutinous Crews and the Continuation of Routine Labour

Mutiny or no mutiny, life had to go on: men had to eat, sleep, and maintain their floating home. Reading the officers' logbooks as well as various first-hand accounts of the Spithead and Nore mutinies, it is surprising the extent to which daily life continued much as normal. Naturally, there was a certain amount of variation between ships and fleets, and exceptions can always be found, but the general experience appears to have been one of significant continuities of daily life. The extent to which the day-to-day existence of the mutineers represented 'business as usual' is the subject of this section.

Nicholas Rodger has noted that the outbreak of mutiny at Spithead and the Nore 'did not interfere with the ordinary routine' of shipboard life. Furthermore he has provided several examples of mutineer behaviour which, though not routine, display their apparent desire to do what was expected of them, mutiny notwithstanding. The first occurred at Spithead on 19 May when the Grand Duke of Württemberg paid a state visit to the fleet accompanied by the lords of the Admiralty as part of the celebrations marking his marriage to Princess Charlotte. Though in a state of mutiny, the sailors obligingly manned the yards and gave every appropriate sign of respect to their royal visitor, and to those same lords of the Admiralty with whom they were in dispute. Secondly, shortly after the end of the Nore mutiny, Vice-Admiral Onslow 'returned aboard his flagship the *Nassau* to find all his property and valuables untouched'. The mutineers of the *Inflexible*, meanwhile, diligently replaced 'some of Captain Ferris's crockery which they had accidentally broken'.³⁸ Both instances convey the limits of mutiny and are suggestive of a wish to maintain civility.

Further examples of this tendency abound. During the lull in the Spithead mutiny (approximately 24 April to 7 May), much of the Spithead fleet engaged in gunnery and small arms practice.³⁹ This is conclusive proof of the moderate intentions and behaviour of the mutinous sailors up to that point as, had they behaved in a worse manner, the officers would surely not have armed them. On the *Royal Sovereign*, they 'exercised great guns and small arms' three days in quick succession as though hoping that the smell of gunpowder and rumble of the guns would somehow exorcise the demon of mutiny and restore the sailors to

³⁸ Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean*, pp. 446, 450.

³⁹ Ships that engaged in gunnery and small arms practice include the *St Fiorenzo* (TNA, ADM 52/3388/1); the *Duke* (ADM 52/2959); the *Royal Sovereign* (ADM 52/3379/5); the *Marlborough* (ADM 51/1178/9); and the *London* (ADM 51/1182/1).

their duty.⁴⁰ On board the *Duke*, meanwhile, on 17 April (the day after the mutiny began), the crew ‘received six marines from quarters’.⁴¹ One of the key duties of marines was to enforce the rule of officers and to prevent mutinies. The fact that the mutineers of the *Duke* were willing to accept more marines on board when they could easily have prevented this is further evidence of the non-confrontational nature of the Spithead mutiny. This also reflects the fact that, despite their policing *raison d’être*, most marines sided with the mutineers, likely because marine grievances were given equal billing with those of sailors.⁴² Furthermore, during the lull in the mutiny, the captains of the *London* and *Marlborough* felt sufficiently confident to each punish a man with flogging. On the *London* this passed without disturbance.⁴³ On board *Marlborough*, however, the captain recorded that ‘the principal part of the ship’s company withdrew themselves to the other side of the deck with a murmuring noise’, but ultimately did nothing to interfere with the proceedings.⁴⁴ This withdrawal of consent for officers’ use of punishment complements the mutineers’ usurpation of the reins of justice identified in the previous chapter. As a further example of this, an officer’s log from the *Impetueux* specifically records that on the second day of the Spithead mutiny ‘the ship’s company punished David Scott, seaman, with one dozen lashes for drunkenness and drawing a knife’.⁴⁵

Neither the mutiny at large nor these more specialised events were allowed to seriously impinge on shipboard routine. Writing twenty-eight years after the events that he witnessed as a lieutenant, Admiral Owen remembered that ‘in the *London*, and it is believed in all the other ships, the officers still carried on the common duties’.⁴⁶ He neglects to mention that they were only able to do so with the consent of the mutinous sailors. The master’s log of the *Royal Sovereign* recorded that the ship’s elected delegates returned from their first meeting and ‘recommended orderly conduct and obedience to officers in everything but that of going to sea’.⁴⁷ This appears to have been the policy adopted throughout the Spithead fleet, and one widely replicated at the Nore. Even once many officers were sent on shore at both mutinies, day-to-day tasks were carried on practically as clockwork.

⁴⁰ Master’s Log, HMS *Royal Sovereign* June 1796 to June 1797, John Urquhart, TNA, ADM52/3379/5.

⁴¹ Master’s Log, HMS *Duke* October 1796 to October 1797, William Scott, TNA, ADM52/2959.

⁴² Ann Veronica Coats and Philip MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797, Unity and Perseverance* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), p. 41.

⁴³ Master’s Log, HMS *London* January 1797 to January 1798, John Douglas, TNA, ADM52/3154/7.

⁴⁴ Master’s Log, HMS *Marlborough* May 1796 to May 1797, Henry Nicholls, TNA, ADM51/1178/9.

⁴⁵ Lieutenant’s Log, HMS *Impetueux*, NMM, ADM/L/J/52.

⁴⁶ Sir Edward William Campbell Richard Owen, *Reflections on the Mutiny at Spithead* (1825), NMM, COO/2/a, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Master’s Log, HMS *Royal Sovereign* June 1796 to June 1797, John Urquhart, TNA, ADM52/3379/5.

The 1797 fleet mutinies contained a strong carnivalesque element, but if the mutinous sailors expected an extended holiday, then it was certainly a ‘busman’s holiday’. The captains’ and masters’ logs are full of descriptions of the crews performing mundane tasks as though normal circumstances prevailed. At the Nore, the sailors of the sloop *Swan* were ‘employed as needful’ on the very day that the mutiny began and continued to be throughout. This included setting up rigging, receiving beef, beer, and water, and loosing the sails to dry.⁴⁸ The logs of *Inflexible*, *Nassau*, and *Ranger* list similar tasks, while the master of the *St Fiorenzo* finished his sentence on having ‘found yard ropes upon each forward yard arm ready for hanging any opposers to the mutiny’ with the casual observation ‘people employed as necessary’.⁴⁹ Similarly, Lieutenant Griffiths of the *Director* recorded in his log that ‘the people seized upon all the arms and had a sentinel on each gangway and on the magazine. Shipwrights and caulkers employed on board. Received fresh beef’.⁵⁰ This juxtaposition of the extraordinary and the thoroughly mundane is arresting, but very revealing about the daily life of the fleet mutinies. Among the most common tasks observed across both mutinies were: clearing hawse,⁵¹ working up junk,⁵² provisioning, and washing between decks. These were among the dullest and most mundane jobs with which sailors could be tasked, and represent disciplined regularity rather than hedonistic abandon. As striking evidence of this, the master’s log of the *Duke*, at Spithead, bears an entry for 23 April which reads ‘Moderate and clear a.m. Nothing remarkable’.⁵³ Writing in the midst of the largest and most serious mutiny ever to hit the Royal Navy, the fact that the master, William Scott, found nothing remarkable to report is itself remarkable, and serves as evidence of the extent to which daily life was allowed to continue as normal. It is possible that Scott deliberately sought to understate the mutinies, but there was nothing to gain from dishonestly reporting mundane labour. As a final example of this, on the *London* (Vice Admiral Colpoys’s flagship) the mutiny was not allowed to interrupt the weekly ritual of collecting and scrutinising the account books of the ships of his division, even when this fell mere days after the fatal *London* incident of 7

⁴⁸ Captain’s Log, HM Sloop *Swan* December 1796 to July 1797, William Stap, TNA, ADM51/1191/1.

⁴⁹ Captain’s Log, HMS *Nassau* April to July 1797, Edward O’Byren, TNA, ADM51/1183/4; Captain’s Log, HMS *Ranger* December 1796 to December 1798, Charles Campbell, TNA, ADM51/1226/6; Captain’s Log, HMS *Inflexible* April 1797 to April 1798, Solomon Ferris, TNA, ADM51/1202/3; Master’s Log, HMS *St Fiorenzo* January to October 1797, Joseph Kitcatt, TNA, ADM52/3388/1.

⁵⁰ Lieutenant’s Log of HMS *Director* kept by Lieutenant J. Griffiths, NMM, ADM/L/D/129.

⁵¹ Tidying and neatly rolling and stowing loose ropes and cables.

⁵² Repairing old and weakened ropes and cables.

⁵³ Master’s Log, HMS *Duke* October 1796 to October 1797, William Scott, TNA, ADM52/2959.

May.⁵⁴ One reason that the mutineer leaders might have had for continuing such daily activities and tasks was that boredom is among the greatest enemies of good discipline. Allowing the mutinous sailors to grow idle and bored would risk the worst kinds of excesses. A combination of regular work with intermittent carnivalesque elements, such as the twice-daily cheering, therefore served the needs both of deposed officers and mutineer leaders and so encouraged moderation by both parties.

Nevertheless, daily life during the mutinies was not without its distractions. At the Nore the master of the *Pylades*, Thomas Taylor, reported that the crew generally continued with work as normal, including receiving fresh provisions and delivering an old cable to the dockyard. He complained, however, of the ‘people leaving their duty to cheer the delegates’, and the large number of visits paid to the ships by delegates, including ‘President’ Parker, to give speeches and hold discussions, provided a periodic disruption to work.⁵⁵ During its mutiny after Spithead, meanwhile, Captain Pellew of the *Greyhound* recorded in his entry for 19 May ‘little work done- the ship in a state of mutiny’.⁵⁶

One predictably alluring distraction was alcohol. On board the *Inflexible* at the Nore, the captain’s log records that the crew were issued extra grog on 4 June, presumably in honour of the king’s birthday, but it remains unclear whether this was on the orders of the officers or the mutineers.⁵⁷ A few days later, with their chances of success clearly beginning to wane, the leading mutineers of the *Sandwich* ordered extra grog to be served each day from 7 June to the end of mutiny on that ship on 14 June. It is perhaps revealing of Captain Mosse’s sense of vulnerability that on retaking command of the ship he continued this policy for a further four days.⁵⁸

Another element of normality, whose details in fact revealed the abnormality of the times, was the observance of divine worship on board several mutinous ships. Divine service was held on the *Lion* at the Nore, and on the *London*, and the *Royal Sovereign* at Spithead. In the last case, the captain’s log notes encouragingly that the service was ‘very reverently attended by the greater part of the ship’s company’.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, these occasions must have been uncomfortable, with the chaplain or, more often, senior officer lecturing his

⁵⁴ Master’s Log, HMS *London* January 1797 to January 1798, John Douglas, TNA, ADM52/3154/7; Lieutenant’s Log, HMS *Impetueux*, NMM, ADM/L/J/52.

⁵⁵ Master’s Log, HMS *Pylades* March 1797 to January 1798, Thomas Taylor, TNA, ADM52/3328/1.

⁵⁶ Captain’s Log, HMS *Greyhound* March to June 1797, Israel Pellew, TNA, ADM51/1186/1.

⁵⁷ Captain’s Log, HMS *Inflexible* April 1797 to April 1798, Solomon Ferris, TNA, ADM51/1202/3.

⁵⁸ Captain’s Log, HMS *Sandwich* March 1796 to September 1797, James Mosse, TNA, ADM51/1173.

⁵⁹ Captain’s Log, HMS *Lion* March 1797 to March 1798, Edmund Crawley, TNA, ADM51/4469/1; Master’s Log, HMS *London* January 1797 to January 1798, John Douglas, TNA, ADM52/3154/7; Captain’s Log, HMS *Royal Sovereign* June 1796 to June 1797, William Bedford, TNA, ADM51/1178/1.

captive, but not necessarily friendly, audience. One might well wonder what readings and themes were chosen by the officers in an attempt to remind the sailors of their duty. A partial answer may be found in a book of sermons preached by naval chaplain, James Stanier Clarke, on the *Impetueux*, some of them during the Spithead mutiny.⁶⁰ Clarke made liberal use of both carrot and stick. He warned the sailors that ‘men may imagine, for a short time, that they are happy in disobedience; but they will one day feel the painful repentance that awaits them’.⁶¹ Equally, though, Clarke appealed to the sailors’ pride when he argued that they were given ‘one of the most important trusts in the community’ so that ‘the smallest appearance of disobedience to a superior’ must be ‘considered as baseness and dishonour’ to those in ‘a profession whose predominant features are loyalty, courage, and active patriotism’.⁶² Employing a potent metaphor combining Plato’s concept of the ship of state and the wreck of Saint Paul’s ship on Malta, Clarke told his congregation ‘except you fulfil the service attached to your stations, you cannot be honoured of men, nor claim the promises of the Gospel’.⁶³ It is uncertain the impact the expression of such sentiments had upon the mutinous crews, but none renounced their cause immediately on hearing such a sermon. Nevertheless, Clarke’s respect for naval sailors was not dampened by the mutinies. It is fitting that the national day of naval celebration and thanksgiving on 19 December 1797 found him delivering a sermon in London which overflows with admiration for the sailors.⁶⁴

Surely the most peculiar service during the mutinies occurred on the *Isis* at the Nore after two fatal incidents on a single day. On 10 June, having just witnessed the *Leopard* and *Repulse* escape from the mutinous fleet, a loyalist faction attempted to achieve the same on the *Isis*. The attempt failed, leaving two men dead and eight wounded. That same day, a loaded pistol being stored away in an arms chest was accidentally discharged, killing David Black. Captain Watson’s log records that, two days later, he performed a service and ‘committed to the deep[...] Mr Joshua Holmes, Mid., Antonio Rump, seaman, and David Black, gunner’s mate’.⁶⁵ As a midshipman, Holmes was surely of the loyalist faction, while Black, supervising the stowage of loaded weapons, was most likely of the mutineer party. Rump might equally have belonged to either faction. These three men, who appear to have been divided (and fatally so) by the mutiny, were united in the treatment they received after

⁶⁰ James Stanier Clarke, *Naval Sermons Preached on Board His Majesty’s Ship The Impetueux* (London: T. Paigne, 1798).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 212-19.

⁶⁵ Captain’s Log, HMS *Isis* July 1796 to August 1797, Robert Watson, TNA, ADM51/1185/3.

death, thereby presenting a spectacle of order restored similar to that sought in civil justice and executions on shore.⁶⁶ The three men were buried at sea together, with the captain officiating over loyalist and mutineer alike. It is uncertain whether this represents the impotency of the captain, or a conciliatory gesture on his part. As with the collision between the *Comet* and *Inspector*, one wonders if the accident with the arms chest would have occurred under usual supervision, or if the excitement and uncertainty of the mutiny contributed decisively to this fatal accident.

Contemporary newspaper reports and subsequent histories have often concentrated on the sensational elements of what were, after all, unprecedented mutinies. Nevertheless, awareness of their more mundane elements is equally important to a full understanding of the fleet mutinies. These were events that placed the spectacular, terrifying, and carnivalesque cheek by jowl with familiar drudgeries of everyday life and this fact affected the ways in which officers, sailors, and mutineer leaders behaved at this crucial time. A certain amount of day-to-day work was required simply to maintain the ships, but beyond that, continuity of labour likely helped to prevent the dangers of boredom and maintain a peaceful and conciliatory atmosphere that served the needs of deposed officers and mutineer leaders alike.

Conclusion

This chapter has investigated two hitherto unstudied practical aspects of the 1797 fleet mutinies. Previous analyses of the mutinies have considered their causation, their start, their end, and the course of negotiations between the leading mutineers and the British state, but have had little to say about daily life beyond isolated or dramatic incidents. It has been argued here that, in fact, these more mundane considerations have a significant bearing on how the mutinies ought to be viewed and understood. In particular, they serve to highlight elements fundamental to the lived experience of the majority of sailors caught up in these mutinies. Collectively, they emphasise precisely those elements that are too often omitted from more sensationalist works: continuity and moderate, conciliatory behaviour.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 43-50.

Studies of everyday life, including those that investigate mundane matters during periods of crisis, have repeatedly shown their ability to force a reconsideration of long-held beliefs. One of these is Keith Wrightson's study of the life and work of Newcastle scrivener Ralph Tailor during an outbreak of plague in 1636.⁶⁷ Wrightson used the wills and inventories drawn up by Tailor in this period of enormous stress to access and unpick the practical and day-to-day elements of death in a seventeenth-century city. He was able to analyse the complex nature of community and inter-personal obligations in processes of mourning, commemoration, and inheritance. By so doing, Wrightson challenged the widespread view that the plague had a divisive impact on seventeenth-century society. It was precisely the mundane and everyday nature of his sources that allowed Wrightson to determine that, even in the face of fatal pestilence, social, familial, and corporate bonds frequently held firm.⁶⁸

Similarly, it is only by studying the more mundane elements of the 1797 fleet mutinies that we can escape the disproportionate focus that has heretofore been accorded to, often brief, moments of particular drama or danger. With mutinies each lasting a month, such blinkered emphasis on short periods of excitement has led to an underappreciation of some of the key practical challenges faced by individuals caught up in those events, whatever their personal views, and the ways in which they sought to address them.

⁶⁷ Keith Wrightson, *Ralph Tailor's Summer: A Scrivener, His City and the Plague* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 106, 109, 144.

6. THE REASSERTION OF OFFICIAL POWER

Introduction

The fleet mutinies of 1797 represented a nightmare scenario for the British government. The nation's 'wooden walls', its surest defence, had been incapacitated by the brave tars who manned them. The need to restore naval order and effectiveness was paramount. The public demand for revenge, in several quarters, was palpable. If ever there was a time for desperate or extraordinary judicial measures, this was it. Nevertheless, when the judicial response of the naval authorities is studied in detail and placed in the context of existing civil and naval practice, the picture that emerges is one of continuity, rather than change; calculated clemency, rather than brutality; and conciliation, rather than retribution.

One objective of this chapter is to place the naval-judicial response to the 1797 fleet mutinies within the context of the practical experience and conceptual rationale of late eighteenth-century British justice. The methodology employed is twofold. Firstly, a detailed analysis of near-verbatim trial transcripts from the naval courts martial and Old Bailey trial reports¹ is used to directly compare the format, actions, and results of naval and civil trials both qualitatively and quantitatively. This original and previously untried primary research allows comparisons to be drawn between the processes, as well as simply the outcomes of civil and naval justice. It is recognised that Old Bailey cases were not representative British trials. For example, the Bailey's jurisdiction extended only to London and Middlesex, with the result that its cases and defendants were overwhelmingly urban. Furthermore, Peter King and Richard Ward have argued that judicial attitudes and sentences were sometimes markedly different on the northern and Celtic peripheries of the British state to those in London.² Nevertheless, it is contended that the comparison of Old Bailey trials and naval courts martial

¹ Old Bailey Online Reports of Trials t17970712-1 to t17970712-74, 12 July 1797.

² Peter King and Richard Ward, 'Rethinking the Bloody Code in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Capital Punishment at the Centre and on the Periphery', *Past & Present*, no. 228 (2015), p. 185.

is a valid and useful one as both the Royal Navy and London had polyglot populations from right across Britain, as well as foreigners. Additionally, as the central court of the imperial metropole, close to the legislative arm of government, the Old Bailey can be considered as setting the benchmark or standard of British justice and, therefore, of providing an appropriate yardstick against which to measure and compare other strands of that justice. The almost complete survival of Old Bailey trial reports for this period facilitates their analysis alongside the naval courts martial.

This chapter is divided into eight sections. The first examines the often overlooked practical aspects of the 1797 naval courts martial, including personnel, setting, and duration in order to emphasise the scale and magnitude of the task that faced them. Section II quantitatively grounds the response to the crisis of 1797 in the context of the wider pattern and trends of naval trials for mutiny across the second half of the eighteenth century. This permits an informed discussion of the extent to which the fleet mutinies required deviation from established practice. The third section considers the potentially thorny issue of the ‘fairness’ or otherwise of the courts martial which followed the Nore mutiny.³ A range of methodologies are employed here continued across several sections. Section IV provides a careful literary analysis of one prominent case study concerning Richard Parker’s experience of the judicial process, demonstrating the depth of sentiment and detail that can be gleaned from naval records. Section V presents a qualitative comparison between the format and procedure of civil and naval justice to challenge several assumptions about their relative merits. This comparison is then developed quantitatively in Section VI, where statistical analysis of Old Bailey and naval trials are placed side by side. Finally, Sections seven and

³ The concept of ‘fairness’ or ‘justice’ was much-discussed in eighteenth-century Britain. Theorists in that century, such as Sir William Blackstone and Adam Smith, also looked back to the work of Sir Edward Coke and Thomas Hobbes for inspiration, and to visitors such as Montesquieu and Voltaire. One notable feature is that, while modern sociologists and legal theorists tend to view equity (the principle that the rules of law should be adjusted to take account of the unique peculiarities and context of each particular case) as a problem: an unfair deviation from impartial law applicable to all equally, and so privileging some groups over others, James Shaw and Peter King have shown that equity and discretion were, in fact considered to be fundamental and conducive to fair justice in the eighteenth-century and early-modern periods. For modern criticism of equity see Keith Hawkins, ‘The Use of Legal Discretion’ and Carl E. Schneider, ‘Discretion and Rules’ in Keith Hawkins (ed.), *The Uses of Discretion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), pp. 11, 13, 47, though in the same volume M. P. Baumgartner asserts that discretion, far from being capricious and unpredictable, operates in predictable patterns. For the essential place of equity and discretion in eighteenth-century justice, see James Shaw, ‘Writing to the Prince: Supplication, Equity, and Absolutism in Sixteenth-century Tuscany’, *Past and Present* no. 215 (2012) pp. 51-83, esp. pp. 52-53; Peter King, ‘Decision-Makers and Decision-Making in the English Criminal Law, 1750-1800’, *Historical Journal* vol. 27 (1984), pp. 25-58, esp. pp. 56-57; Peter King, ‘“Illiterate Plebeians, Easily Misled”: Jury Composition, Experience, and Behaviour in Essex, 1735-1815’ in J. S. Cockburn and Thomas A. Green (eds.), *Twelve Good Men and True: The Criminal Jury Trial in England, 1200-1800* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 255.

eight of this chapter examine the social and cultural rationale behind the judicial response to the fleet mutinies, as well as the limitations and expectations imposed by British society, opinion, and tradition.

I. The Form of Naval Courts Martial

To understand the reimposition of order in the wake of the Nore mutiny it is necessary to appreciate the practical elements of the courts martial that followed. These functional issues should not be dismissed as they presented significant challenges to the authorities in their attempts to restore normality as quickly as possible. The enormous scale of the mutinies demanded an unprecedented naval-judicial response. To deliver such a response safely, securely, sufficiently quickly, and to the satisfaction of all parties (including a captivated public) was no mean feat. The priorities were to rapidly provide a punitive spectacle to deter further naval disorder and reassure a nervous public, to return the Royal Navy to full frontline duty and preparedness as quickly as possible, and to show that fair and impartial British justice had been done.

The full complement of the judging panel required the attendance of thirteen senior naval officers for the duration of the trials. At the Nore courts martial this panel was composed of eleven captains, one commodore, and was chaired by a Vice Admiral.⁴ For reasons of impartiality, only officers who had not been involved in the mutinies served as judges.⁵ In addition, the prosecutions were led by the captains of the mutinous ships, who invariably called their senior officers as prosecution witnesses. The captain and these officers were frequently called as character witnesses at the end of trials, and so their attendance was required from start to finish of the trials of the men from their ship. The cumulative result was that a fleet recently paralysed by mutiny for over a month continued in its immobilised state much longer while the trials continued, and served to draw in and trap many other ships whose officers were needed as judges or witnesses. Going through the full and proper ritual

⁴ *The Whitehall Evening Post*, 24 June 1797.

⁵ *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 21 June 1797.

of courts martial and examining each case in exhaustive detail showed that correct precedent was being followed and that these trials were legitimate judicial instruments, but also kept the fleet in port.

These judges were valuable front-line commanders without formal legal training, but deeply experienced in the traditions of the service. None were strangers to the format of naval courts martial or the precedents and purposes of naval justice.⁶ Even for them, however, the fleet mutinies represented a new and unprecedented challenge to naval order and it fell to them to respond. To help them, they were joined by a judge advocate, who was a legal professional and could advise on legal matters.

The courts martial took place in the great cabin of HMS *Neptune* at Longreach in the Thames. The great cabin of the *Neptune* would have looked quite familiar to several of the leading mutineers. Though *Neptune* was a new ship, and so somewhat larger than the *Sandwich*, both were second-rate ships of ninety-eight guns and with a very similar layout.⁷ Consequently, the great cabin of the *Neptune*, where the mutineers stood as powerless prisoners to await their fate, would have been notably like the equivalent space on the *Sandwich*, where some of them had met to exercise their power as delegates. To further the sense of poetic justice, *Neptune* was the designated flagship of the force being collected in the Thames to subdue the Nore mutiny, and Commodore Sir Erasmus Gower was its designated commander.

Longreach was a sensible location for the courts martial (see Figure 6.1). It was at once safely removed from the recently mutinous Nore fleet, which remained downriver at Sheerness, but still close enough for the easy transportation and attendance of officers and witnesses.⁸ The distance served to insulate proceedings from the potential pressure of fleet opinion and prevent further outbreaks of mutiny or rescue attempts as the trials progressed. The ease of transport to Sheerness ensured that prosecution and defence witnesses could quickly be summoned, and so helped to ensure full and fair trials. The *Neptune*, meanwhile, remained ready and in position to protect London and the Thames trade, and to move offensively against the fleet at Sheerness if necessary.

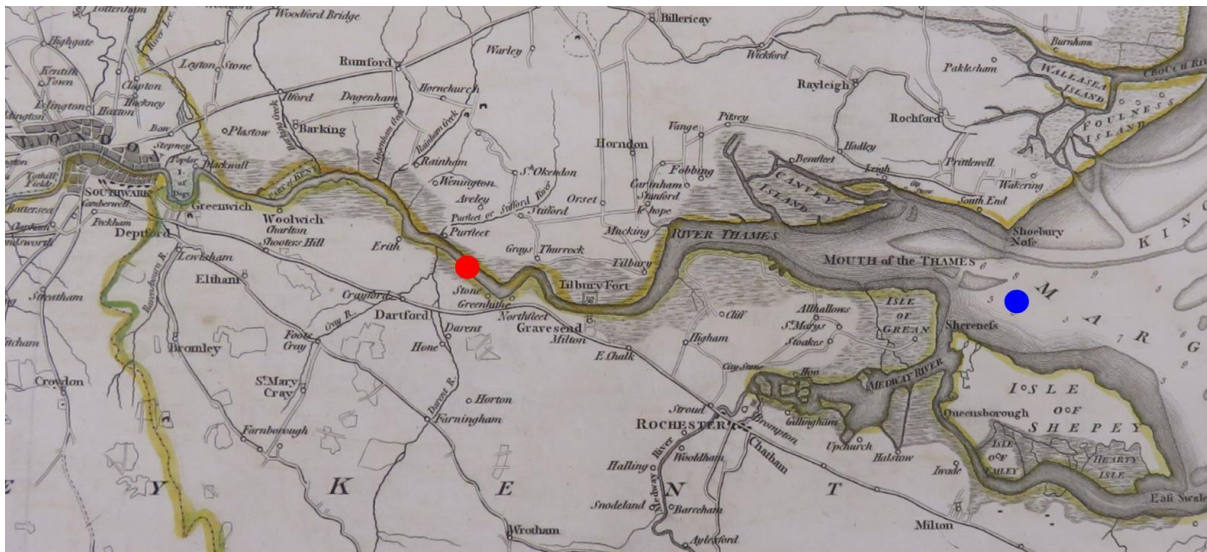
⁶ In this period, several guides and manuals of the duties of naval officers, including the procedures for courts martial, were also available eg. David Steel, *The Ship-master's Assistant and Owner's Manual* (London: Navigation Warehouse, 1801), pp. 22, 57-61.

⁷ Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2010), pp. 17, 25.

⁸ Admiral Pasley requested a small vessel be sent for this purpose of ferrying people between the Nore and Longreach, but does not seem to have received one. Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM 1/728, fol. 524.

Figure 6.1 Map of the Thames, 1796⁹

(The Nore marked in blue, Longreach in red, and London visible on the left.)

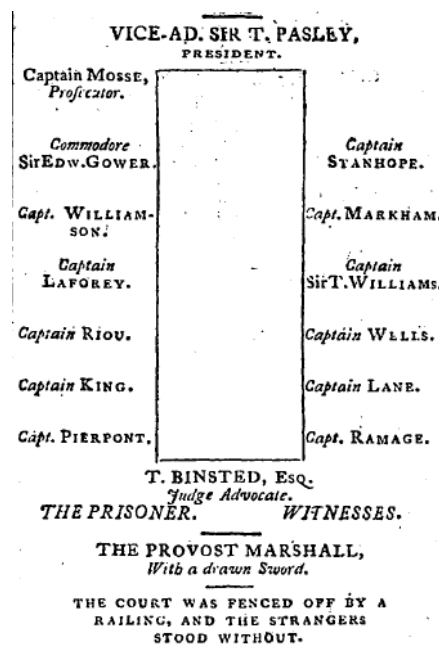


The outline of the courtroom itself cannot be reconstructed with certainty, but several sources provide useful clues. The *Whitehall Evening Post* printed a rough diagram of the court for their readers (Figure 6.2).¹⁰ This shows a long table with six of the judging captains on each side. The president of the court, Vice Admiral Pasley sits at the head of the table with the judge advocate opposite him at the far end. The prisoner(s) stood behind the judge advocate guarded by a provost marshal with drawn sword. Witnesses and the court scribe sat to the prisoner's right. The newspaper described how 'the court was fenced off by a railing, and the strangers stood without'.¹¹ It is unclear who or how numerous these 'strangers' were. As the reports of the trials across a wide cross section of newspapers were virtually identical, it appears highly unlikely that they were newspaper correspondents for the different publications.

⁹ Map of the River Thames Published by J. Stockdale, Piccadilly, 5 October 1796, BL Map XVIII.25, BLL01016460709.

¹⁰ The *Whitehall Evening Post*, 24 June 1797.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Figure 6.2 Diagram of the courtroom on board HMS *Neptune*¹²

The chance survival of a private letter gives us further information on the identity of some of the ‘strangers’ in court. In a letter to his friend, John Frewen, Thomas Bishopp briefly described his first-hand impressions of the first day of Richard Parker’s court martial. It is clear that Bishopp must have been a friend or relation of the Fancourt family. The entire family spent two days with a friend in Kent and then ‘went down to Gravesend & Capt. Fancourt of the *Agamemnon* took us to the Court Martial on the 1st day of Parker’s trial’.¹³ Captain Fancourt was one of many captains summoned as witnesses that day simply to confirm that they had never seen Parker before, and that he had never, to their knowledge, been on board their ship.¹⁴ It appears that this brief appearance was sufficient justification for Fancourt to bring his family and friends to witness proceedings which Bishopp described as ‘a great novelty to us’. The fact that Bishopp wrote to Frewen simply of ‘Parker’s’ trial demonstrates the notoriety that Richard Parker had achieved. Though presumably standing among the ‘strangers’ beyond the railing, Bishopp was able to boast that ‘we were fortunate enough to stand very near to the judge [presumably the Judge Advocate] and prisoner’.¹⁵

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Thomas Bishopp to John Frewen, 29 June 1797, East Sussex Record Office, FRE 2594.

¹⁴ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/1.

¹⁵ Thomas Bishopp to John Frewen, 29 June 1797, East Sussex Record Office, FRE 2594.

The duration of the trials presented practical challenges. Of the eighty-three courts martial directly related to the Nore mutiny, all but twelve were conducted on board the *Neptune* by the same judging panel under Pasley. This panel sat almost incessantly between 22 June and 24 August, pausing only over weekends.¹⁶ For naval officers familiar with courts martial but unused to months of desk work, the pace and intensity were clearly uncomfortable. On 19 July the Admiralty received a letter from the judging panel ‘requesting a few days respite from their duty’.¹⁷ The Judge Advocate, Mr Binstead, also felt the strain. It was reported to the Admiralty on 2 July that Binstead’s health was failing. After overseeing the trial of just nine out of the seventy-one mutineers tried by that panel, he had to be replaced by Mr Litchfield.¹⁸

It is important to recognise that, despite the immense pressures of their responsibilities and the gruelling duration of the courts martial, the judging panel remained committed to following due process. On 1 July the Admiralty received a letter from Vice Admiral Pasley ‘reporting that the proceedings of the courts martial upon the mutineers of the Nore are much prolonged by the evidence being written down’.¹⁹ The suggested remedy of the judging panel is revealing. They did not seek to reduce their own workload by limiting the amount of evidence that would be admitted, and nor did they propose to reduce the transparency of the court by ceasing to have a transcript taken. Instead, they recommended that an experienced short-hand writer should be employed for the purpose. With his letter, Pasley included ‘a letter from Mr Gurney, the short-hand writer to the House of Commons, offering his services’.²⁰ Gurney was immediately engaged and, one month after the completion of his task, the Admiralty paid him a total of £514: an extraordinarily large sum.²¹ It was admirably reported in mid-July that the court martial judges had ‘not yet gone through one third of the men to be tried, as they go in the fullest manner, not only in the evidence against the unfortunate men, but attend to the defence of the prisoners, in a manner that

¹⁶ Calculations on CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486; CMP TNA, ADM/1/5339, ADM/1/5340, ADM/1/5341.

¹⁷ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference C555, 19 July 1797; Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM 1/728, fol. 555. Their request was granted.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, letter reference Solr, 2 July 1797.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, letter reference C469, 1 July 1797.

²⁰ *Ibid.* Though it appears that he was, in fact, already transcribing the courts martial before he was officially engaged to do so, as he transcribed all trials from the very first: that of Richard Parker.

²¹ *Ibid.*, letter reference Solr, 15 September 1797. Gurney likely earned more besides by selling his short-hand notes to eager publishers and newspapers as verbatim extracts of several of the courts martial appeared in newspapers and dedicated pamphlets. See, for example, *London Evening Post*, 24 June 1797; and *The Whole Trial and Defence of Richard Parker, President of the Delegates for Mutiny &c. on board the Sandwich and other of His Majesty’s Ships at the Nore*[...] published by G. Thompson of London in 1797 and sold priced at sixpence.

reflects great credit on them'.²² Once again, the impression is of a dutiful panel of judges, backed up by an Admiralty willing to expend significant time and money in order to follow traditional form and precedent for naval courts martial, but on the unprecedentedly large scale required in the wake of the Nore mutiny.

II. Precedents of Naval Justice

Due to the enormous and unprecedented threat posed by the fleet mutinies, the task of reimposing naval discipline was a correspondingly daunting one. It appears, however, that the infrastructure of naval authority was sufficiently robust to survive the ordeal of 1797 without significant change. The desperate times did not lead naval officers to resort to desperate measures. The existing structure was deemed adequately resolute to bear the burden of retribution which necessarily followed the fleet mutinies.

During the courts martial which followed the Nore mutiny, the presiding captains wrote to the government legal officers to enquire whether the existing code of naval discipline, the Articles of War, were sufficient to stand against the new threat posed by coordinated fleet mutiny. They wondered if reform or additions to the articles might be necessary in order to allow sufficient punishment of the mutineers, and the desired deterrent effect. The law officers reassured them that, in their judicial form and power, the existing Articles of War were sufficiently all-encompassing and resilient for the task of reasserting legitimate naval authority, even in the wake of events of such previously unimagined magnitude as the fleet mutinies.²³ The resulting consistency of naval practice was itself a reassuring statement of the constancy and stability of the Royal Navy.

²² *Evening Mail*, 12 July.

²³ Letter from the judges of the Nore mutiny courts martial to government law officers, 11 July 1797, and their reply of 17 July 1797, NMM, MRK/100/5/8.

Niklas Frykman has argued that the 1797 mutinies were followed by a judicial ‘reign of terror’ that ‘rivalled in intensity that which swept through Revolutionary France in 1793-94’.²⁴ This interpretation is crude in that it recognises the increase in trials for mutiny in the period between 1797 and 1799, but ignores the high rate of clemency. To take the example of the Spithead and Nore mutinies, all of the tens of thousands of men involved were technically guilty of the capital crime of mutiny, but only a tiny minority were ever tried. Of those who were, the exact number of executions remains a matter of debate. However, a previously unused document among Admiralty minutes outlines the sentences carried out, suggesting that the likeliest number of men executed was twenty-eight (see appendix 5).²⁵ Frykman’s comparison to the excesses of the Jacobins and their Committee of Public Safety is out of all proportion to the number of individuals executed, and fails to recognise that the mutineers received trials which observed due process. When seeking to understand the aims of naval officers in their measured response to the fleet mutinies, it is unhelpful to think in terms of ‘terror’. The subtle social ideas at the heart of their judicial response will be the subject of Section VII, but it is first necessary to quantitatively situate the punishments meted out following the fleet mutinies within the established pattern of naval justice (see Table 6.1).

²⁴ Niklas Frykman, ‘The Wooden World Turned Upside Down’ (University of Pittsburg, PhD Thesis), p. 300. Frykman was far from the first to use the term ‘Terror’ in the context of Britain during the 1790s. See, for example, Clive Emsley, ‘An Aspect of Pitt’s “Terror”: Prosecutions for Sedition during the 1790s’, *Social History* vol. 6 (1981), pp. 155-84; John Dinwiddy, *Radicalism and Reform in Britain, 1780-1850* (London: Hambledon, 1992) pp. 205-206. These investigate the rich vein of terms and sentiments expressed by frustrated British reformers and Foxites during the period when Pitt abandoned his favour for Parliamentary reform due to the French Revolution. These reformers mourned ‘Pitt’s Terror’, often associated with the suspension of *habeas corpus* in 1794 and 1798, and the ‘Two Acts’ of 1795, and cursed ‘the English Robespierre’ (Emsley, p. 155). Both Emsley and Dinwiddy dismiss the idea of a British ‘Terror’ in the 1790s.

²⁵ Admiralty Rough Minutes, TNA, ADM3/137, fols. 306-22; Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 277.

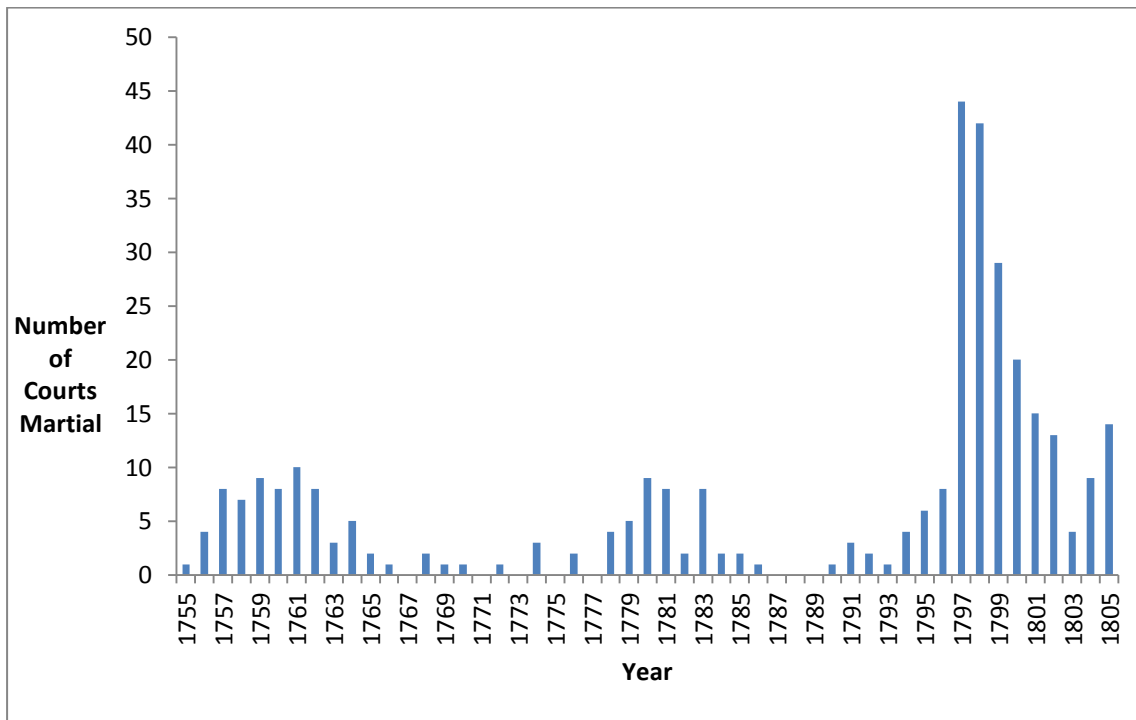
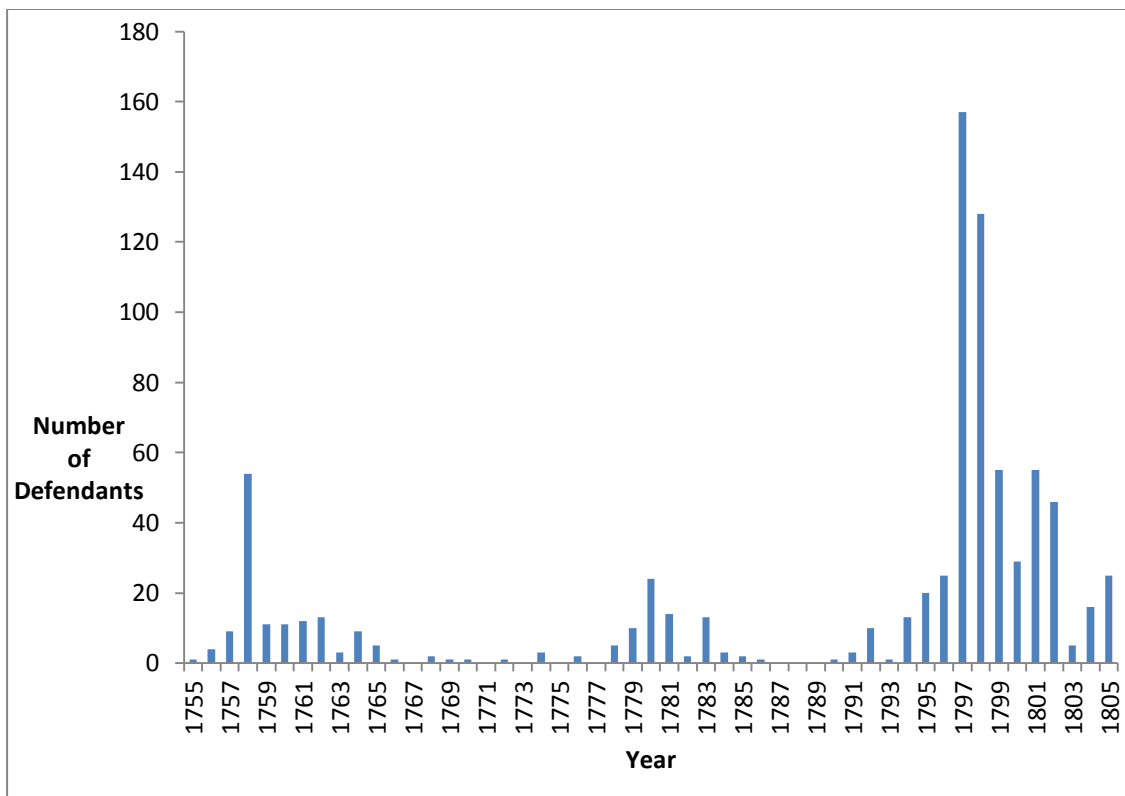
Table 6.1 Punishments for mutiny in the Royal Navy, 1758 - 1805²⁶

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number of Trials for Mutiny</u>	<u>Number of Defendants Accused of Mutiny</u>	<u>Number of Men found Guilty of Mutiny</u>	<u>Number of Capital Convictions for Mutiny</u>	<u>Approximate Size of the Royal Navy²⁷</u>	<u>Mutiny Defendants as a Percentage of RN Strength</u>
<u>1758</u>	7	54	7	4	63,250	0.085
<u>1772</u>	1	1	1	0	26,299	0.004
<u>1780</u>	9	24	24	1	105,000	0.023
<u>1787</u>	0	0	0	0	19,444	0
<u>1797</u>	44	157	141	97	120,000	0.131
<u>1803</u>	4	5	5	0	78,000	0.006
<u>1805</u>	14	25	22	1	>100,000	<0.025

The peaks of 1758, 1780, and 1797 are clearly observed to correspond to wartime mobilisation for the Seven Years War, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolutionary War respectively. The year 1797 appears as a striking anomaly, even compared to the peaks of other wartime years. A small part of this would be accounted for by the increase in the overall size of the Royal Navy, as naval manpower was higher in 1797 than any other single year displayed in Table 6.1. On the other hand, the large figures for 1797 are not as high as proportionally might have been expected when it is remembered that significantly more than one quarter of all Royal Navy sailors had direct experience of mutiny in that year. While the figures for 1797 are far in excess of those of any other year in Table 6.1, they are not necessarily draconian for a year when Britain's two main fleets for home defence each spent a month in coordinated mutiny. The long-term trends of naval punishment for mutiny are even more clearly visible in Figures 6.3 to 6.7.

²⁶ Court Martial Summaries, 1755-1805, TNA, ADM/12/24.

²⁷ Jeremy Gregory and John Stevenson, *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Eighteenth Century, 1688-1820* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p. 199.

Figure 6.3 Royal Navy courts martial for mutiny, 1755-1805²⁸Figure 6.4 Number of men court martialled for mutiny in the Royal Navy, 1755-1805²⁹

²⁸ Source: Calculations based on a tabulation of TNA, ADM12/24, Summaries of Courts Martial organised Alphabetically by Offence, 1755-1805.

²⁹ Ibid.

Figure 6.5 Number of men found guilty of mutiny at Royal Navy courts martial, 1755-1805³⁰

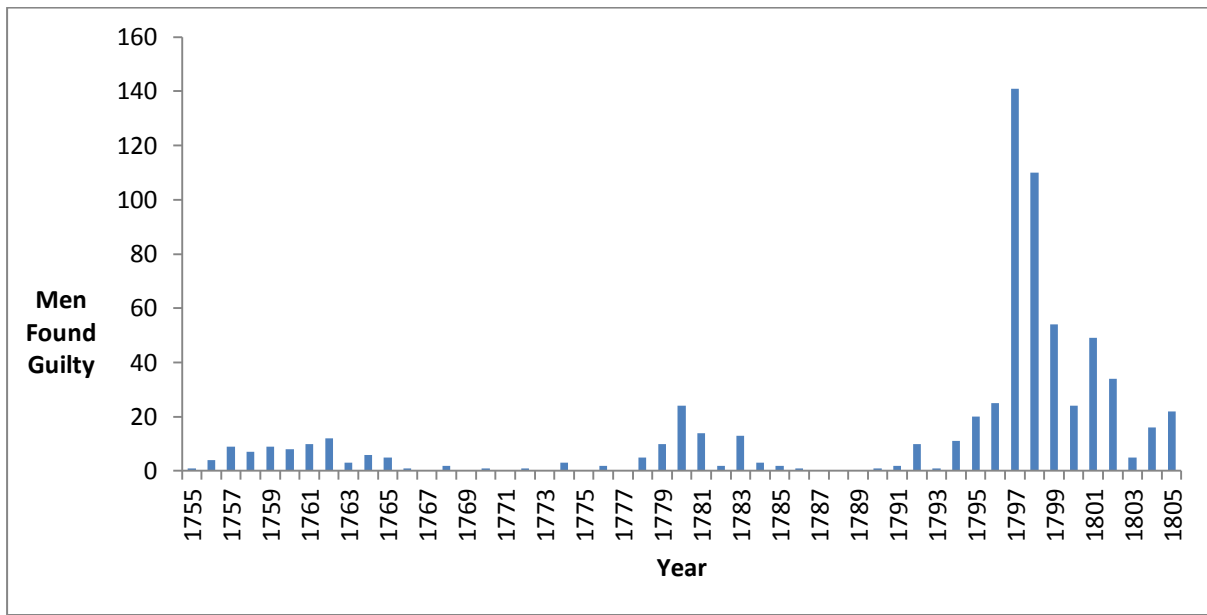
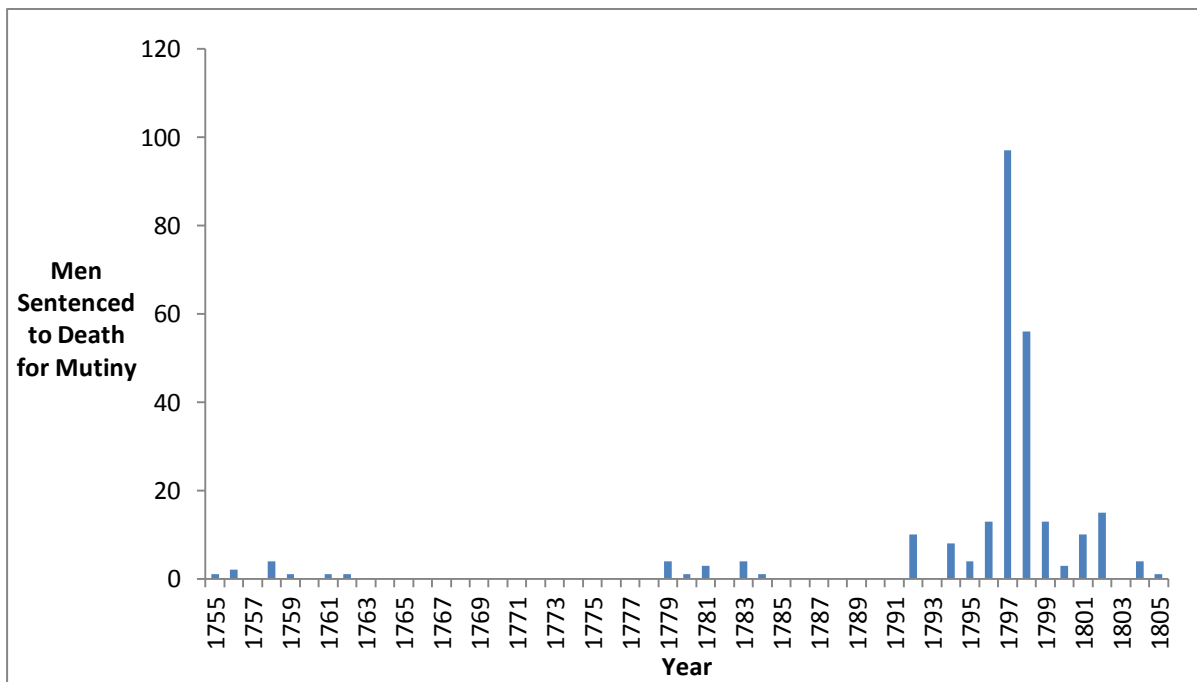


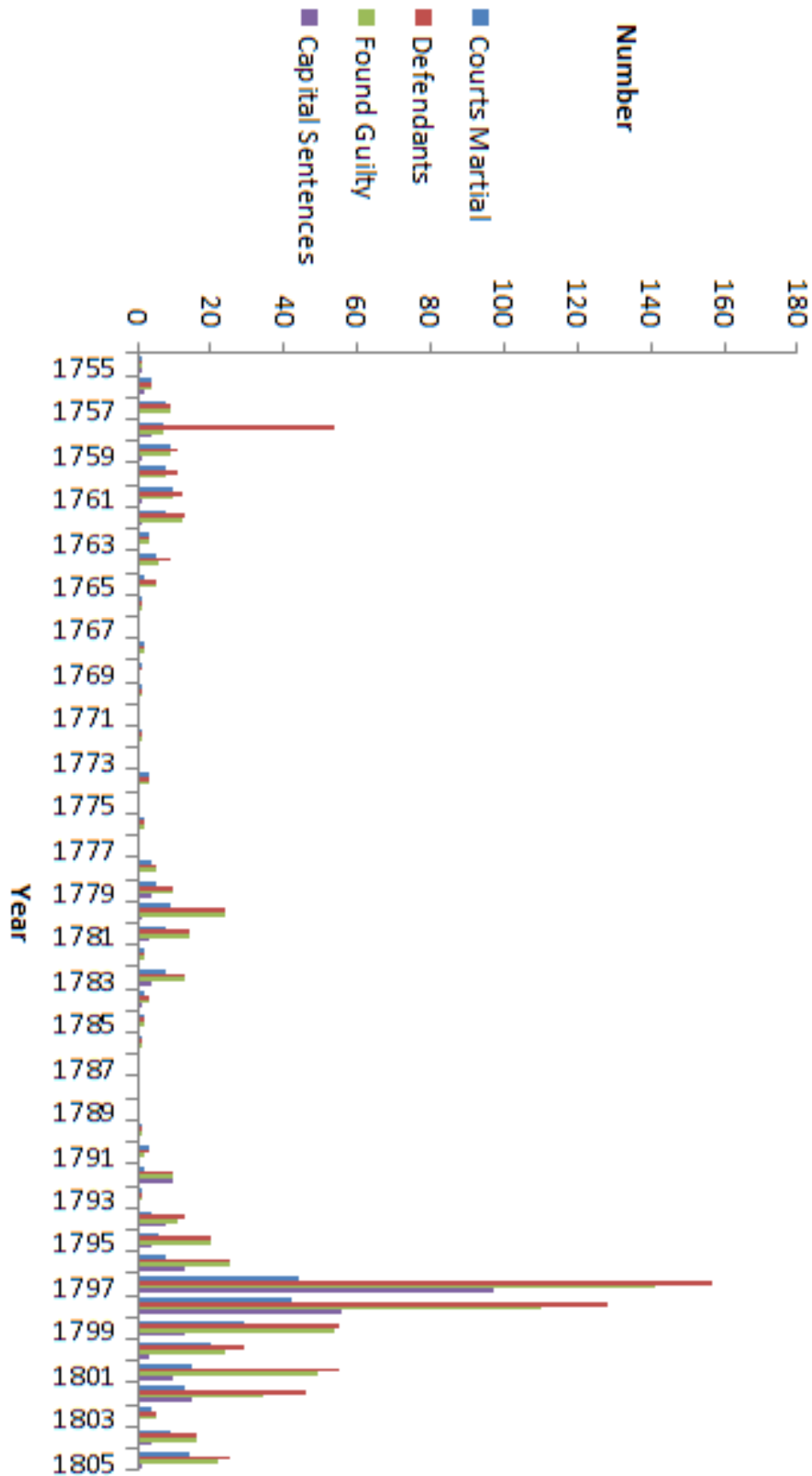
Figure 6.6 Number of death sentences for mutiny at Royal Navy courts martial, 1755-1805³¹



³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Figure 6.7 Overview of Royal Navy mutiny courts martial, 1755-1805



On all five figures, the year 1797 stands out as a dramatic break from the previous scale of naval justice, which might be taken to suggest that Frykman was correct in his assessment of the ferocity of the judicial response to the fleet mutinies. On closer inspection, however, this is found to be mistaken, as continuity of naval precedent was much more apparent than change.

Firstly, an important function of naval justice (and equally of civil justice) was to balance the countervailing needs of deterrence and clemency. The persistent solution to this problem was to make examples of a few of the most evidently guilty individuals, but to then pardon the other prisoners. Justice was seen to be done; the punishment reimposed order and cautioned others against sharing the same fate. Meanwhile, the mercy shown to the majority of the prisoners earned the gratitude and affection of the wider community and made the law appear discerning rather than weak. This was an effective way to combine a bloody and preventative legal code with a much less fatal enforcement.³² This tendency is partially visible in Figures 6.4 to 6.6, whose subjects are of increasing severity. This growth in severity is matched by a reduction in the number of men involved, which had the effect of decreasing executions to an acceptable minimum. Furthermore, the reality was more complex than the graphs suggest, as a large proportion of death sentences were never carried out, but were instead commuted or pardoned. Tens of thousands of sailors were guilty of mutiny. To subject them all to trial and punishment would have been socially, practically, and militarily impossible, so only those whose guilt could be most clearly established were tried. It is therefore unsurprising that so many more men were sentenced to death for mutiny in 1797 than in previous years.

Many death sentences were ‘recommended to the King’s mercy’ and later commuted.³³ An upper estimate of the ratio of executions carried out to capital sentences for mutiny in 1797 was approximately fifty-seven out of ninety-seven (fifty-nine per cent). The upper estimate of this ratio for those directly related to the Nore mutiny was thirty out of fifty-eight (fifty-two per cent), with my own estimate being twenty-eight out of fifty-eight

³² Douglas Hay, ‘Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law’ in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, and Cat Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree, Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1975). p. 48.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.50.

(forty-eight per cent): a rate comparable to trends in civil justice.³⁴ In this respect too, therefore, the judicial response to the fleet mutinies conformed to established traditions of naval justice.

It is striking from Figures 6.3 to 6.7 how quickly the rate of punishments for mutiny returned to a 'normal' wartime level. This is particularly clear in the case of the most severe series, that of capital convictions, shown in Figure 6.6. Following the exceptional year of 1797, the number of capital convictions fell by forty three per cent in 1798, and returned to typical wartime levels from 1799. The fact that trials and convictions (Figures 6.3 to 6.5) took longer to fall to pre-1797 levels suggests that naval officers remained especially concerned about the threat posed by mutiny in the years after 1797, but acted upon moderate deterrent motives rather than vengeful ones.

Finally, it is useful to deconstruct and analyse the 1797 figures in isolation. These are shown in Table 6.2. The dominant impact of the courts martial of those directly involved in the fleet mutinies in the spring of 1797 is clear, but even without them, the number of capital convictions is three times the figure for 1796. This reflects the fear experienced on the part of naval officers that mutiny would recur or spread further, and their resulting resolve to deter such behaviour.³⁵

³⁴ As stated, this represents an upper estimate rather than an exact figure (which can never be known). The true total was almost certainly lower. This figure is arrived at by adding the accepted upper estimate for executions in direct response to the mutinies (30) to all capital sentences in 1797 which were not recorded as 'recommended to mercy' (27). It is highly unlikely that the king rejected any of the recommendations for mercy in this period. Assuming that all other executions went ahead would undoubtedly represent an upper limit on executions. Source: Calculations based on a tabulation of TNA, ADM12/24, Summaries of Courts Martial organised Alphabetically by Offence, 1755-1805; For Civil rates of clemency see King and Ward, 'Rethinking the Bloody Code in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Past & Present*, no. 228 (2015), p. 185.

³⁵ For example, Admiral St Vincent avoided a general mutiny in the Mediterranean Fleet through strict discipline but complained of being made 'hangman to the fleet'. See Admiralty out-letters, Secret Letters, TNA, ADM 2/1352, fol. 73; Sam Willis, *The Fighting Temeraire* (London: Quercus, 2009), p. 111.

Table 6.2 Mutiny statistics before, during, and after the 1797 fleet mutinies³⁶

	<u>Mutiny Trials</u>	<u>Mutiny Defendants</u>	<u>Guilty Verdicts</u>	<u>Death Sentences</u>
<u>1796</u>	8	25	25	13
<u>1797 (Pre-Fleet Mutinies)</u>	3	4	4	0
<u>1797 (Fleet Mutinies)</u>	10	83	79	58
<u>1797 (Post-Fleet Mutinies)</u>	31	70	58	39

Table 6.2 demonstrates that sixty per cent of the death sentences for mutiny in 1797 were as a result of direct involvement in the fleet mutinies. Many of the remaining forty per cent can be considered to have been attempts to prevent the spread of mutiny. All of these were for alleged attempts to incite mutiny, none of which came to fruition. It can certainly be said that this fear and determination to root out and crush nascent mutinous sentiments resulted in a dramatic increase in convictions and capital sentences for mutiny (though it cannot be known exactly how many were actually carried out). This must, however, be distinguished from the relatively moderate direct response to the fleet mutinies themselves. Over 30,000 men could have been tried for the capital crime of mutiny due to their participation at Spithead and the Nore. Instead, all of those involved in the Spithead mutiny and all but 412 of those in the Nore mutiny received a blanket royal pardon. Of those 412, 83 were court martialled, 58 were sentenced to death, and approximately half of these sentences were later commuted.³⁷

Though the scale of convictions for mutiny rapidly increased as both a direct and an indirect response to the 1797 fleet mutinies, the substance of naval law remained unchanged. The Articles of War were first introduced during the Interregnum, but were heavily amended in 1749. With few further alterations, these articles remained in force in 1797 and were considered sufficiently comprehensive to frame the judicial response to the fleet mutinies without need for changes. While the fleet mutinies presented an exceptional new threat to

³⁶ Source: Calculations based on a tabulation of TNA, ADM12/24, Summaries of Courts Martial organised Alphabetically by Offence, 1755-1805.

³⁷ Estimates of the number actually executed vary between 25 and 30. Consequently, the percentage of those spared execution was between 57% and 48% of those sentenced to death.

naval discipline, the all-encompassing nature of the Articles of War made their adjustment unnecessary. The articles already provided for a sufficiently clear and firm response to this new threat. Furthermore, as the existing articles had been regularly read to every crew in the Royal Navy since 1749, their legitimacy was unquestionable and ignorance no excuse, both of which would have been open to question if frantic additions had been made in response to the crisis. The most relevant articles were numbers nineteen to twenty-two.³⁸

Articles nineteen and twenty made it a potentially capital crime to assemble in a mutinous manner, use seditious expressions, show contempt for superior officers, or simply to be aware of any of these without informing officers and doing all in one's power to prevent them. Article twenty-one made clear that sailors with a legitimate grievance should 'quietly make the same known to his Superior or Captain or Commander in Chief' without attempting 'to stir up any Disturbance, on Pain of such Punishment as a Court Martial shall think fit to inflict'. By petitioning their commander in chief, Admiral Howe, the Spithead mutineers had acted in accordance with the part ascribed to them by the articles. It must have appeared to them that their officers had not, in turn, done their part in 'caus[ing] the same to be presently remedied'. Article twenty-two declared that men could suffer death for verbally or physically assaulting a superior and Article fourteen prescribed death for refusing service 'on Pretence of Arrears of Wages'.³⁹ Simply put, every sailor and marine on board every ship involved in the Spithead and Nore mutinies who did not risk his life to resist them, was guilty of multiple potentially capital crimes. There was no need to change the Articles of War in order to ensure the punishment of the leading mutineers. Instead, the problem facing the naval authorities was one of how to limit the number of capital sentences to an 'acceptable' number.

It is a point of some interest that, while the fabric of naval justice rode out the storm of the fleet mutinies unchanged, the civil law was altered in direct response to the mutinies: an unprecedented measure. On 3 June the Incitement to Mutiny Act received royal assent and passed into law. This made it a capital crime to 'attempt to seduce any sailor or soldier from his duty or incite him to mutiny'.⁴⁰ The first conviction for this offence was that of Richard Fuller on 12 July for offences committed on 8 June, just five days after the passage of the act.

³⁸ Bruno Pappalardo, *How to Survive in the Georgian Navy, A Sailor's Guide* (London: Osprey, 2019), pp. 32, 112-14.

³⁹ Markus Eder, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy of the Seven Years War, 1755-1763* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 161-64.

⁴⁰ *Journals of the House of Commons vol. 52, 1796-97* (1801), pp. 634-35; *Hansard vol. 33, 3 March 1797-30 November 1798* (London: Hansard, 1818), pp. 808-809; For the debates and process of changing these civil laws, see Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's "Terror"', p. 159; Clive Emsley, 'Repression, "Terror" and the Rule of Law in England during the Decade of the French Revolution' *The English Historical Review* vol. 100 (1985), pp. 814.

The prosecution was conducted by the attorney general, Sir John Scott.⁴¹ Two days after the Mutiny Act, a further law was passed which made it a capital crime to have any communication whatsoever with any ship officially declared to be in a state of mutiny.⁴²

Whereas the mutinies resulted in a tightening of the civil law through the introduction of several new capital offences, they did not lead to a similar tightening of the letter of naval law, which remained unchanged. Instead, concerted efforts were made to temper and moderate the effects of that naval law when put into practice. It was unnecessary to make the Articles of War harsher after the fleet mutinies; the existing provisions were phrased with individual guilt in mind, and so could be applied equally well to one man or to one thousand men. Needless to say, it was impossible to respond to unparalleled levels of indiscipline in the Royal Navy by reducing the severity of the Articles of War. Consequently, the naval authorities were presented with a familiar problem: how to balance deterrence and clemency, but on an enormous scale. According to well-established precedent they chose to make examples of a small number of the most blatantly guilty individuals, and then to come down heavily on the side of clemency. When these points are considered, it is continuity in the practice of naval justice which appears most clearly, and Frykman's claims of a frantic knee-jerk judicial 'terror' recede into the background.⁴³

III. The Nore Courts Martial within the context of British Judicial Fairness

When considering matters of subjective judgement, such as 'fairness', there is considerable risk of succumbing to presentism: a presentation of our current system as a paragon of virtue against which historical examples cannot but fall short. 'Fairness' must not be measured against a modern yardstick, but grounded in the currents of late-eighteenth

⁴¹ Old Bailey Online, Reference t17970712-54, trial of Richard Fuller, 12 July 1797. It appears, however, that this was the only prosecution for this offence. Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's "Terror"', p. 159.

⁴² *Journals of the House of Commons vol. 52, 1796-97* (1801), pp. 634-35; *Hansard vol. 33, 3 March 1797-30 November 1798* (London: Hansard, 1818), pp. 813-815.

⁴³ The mechanics and motives of the moderate judicial response, based on the balancing act of deterrence and clemency is the subject of Section VII of this chapter.

century opinion and practice.⁴⁴ One must establish whether the trials were conducted in accordance with the existing laws and procedures as written and understood by contemporaries.

Majority opinion in eighteenth-century Britain appears to have been that the judicial system was fair and proper, that Britons were among the freest people in the world, and that this was largely due to long-established British liberties. Thomas Hobbes had attributed this condition to the role of equity in British law, particularly as exercised through a jury who were judges ‘not only of the Fact, but of the Right’:⁴⁵ arbiters of the spirit, not just the letter of the law. Blackstone had similarly celebrated the fact that ‘trial by jury ever has been, and I trust ever will be, looked upon as the glory of the English law’, and Montesquieu wrote approvingly of trial by one’s peers ‘drawn from the body of the people’.⁴⁶ While in *Candide* Voltaire presented his fictional title character as horrified by British military justice and unwilling to step foot in England, he had previously written favourably of the British constitution and governance.⁴⁷ Consequently, most seem to have viewed the judicial system as legitimate and fit for purpose. Furthermore, Peter King and Tim Hitchcock have suggested that the concept of a ‘fair trial’ was in flux from 1780, characterised by professionalisation, higher standards of evidence, a presumption of innocence, and increasing prevalence of defence counsel.⁴⁸

In order to gain the most representative sample to act as the basis of comparison between civil and naval trials, it was decided not to seek out particular offences in the Old Bailey records, but to study all cases which were heard in a specified period. The period of June to July 1797 was chosen to correspond to the most intense period of Nore courts martial. There was one session at the Old Bailey during this time, which took place on 12 July. The survival of its extant records allows direct comparison of that session’s seventy-four trials, involving ninety-two defendants, with the eighty-three men tried for their involvement in the Nore mutiny. Based on the strength of these comparisons, it is argued that, in terms of official process, thoroughness, and the opportunities available to the defendants, those who occupied

⁴⁴ See footnote 3 for details of the discussion and perception of ‘fairness’ in the eighteenth century.

⁴⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Penguin, 1985), pp. 323, 328.

⁴⁶ Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England Book III* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765-69), p.379; Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 72, 158-59.

⁴⁷ Voltaire, *Candide or Optimism* (London: Penguin, 2005), pp. 69-70; Idem, *Letters on England* (London: Penguin, 2005), letters 9 and 10.

⁴⁸ Peter King, *Crime, Justice, and Discretion in England, 1740-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 221-29; Tim Hitchcock, ‘Renegotiating the Bloody Code: The Gordon Riots and the Transformation of Popular Attitudes to the Criminal Justice System’ in Ian Haywood and John Seeds (eds.), *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture, and Insurrection in Late-Eighteenth Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 194.

the dock during the naval courts martial were, in several respects, better off than their counterparts at the Old Bailey. This is not to say that they were more often acquitted (indeed the opposite was true). Instead, it is argued that the formula of naval courts martial provided more opportunities for intervention by or in the interest of the accused, and allowed greater time and consideration of the particulars of each case, including mitigating factors. Firstly, the trial of Richard Parker, the mutineer president, is analysed. This is followed by a qualitative and quantitative comparison of naval and civil trials.

IV. Fairness and the Trial of Richard Parker

In his instructions to Vice Admiral Pasley, the president of the Nore courts martial, the secretary to the Admiralty, Evan Nepean, wrote of Parker that ‘you may prove almost anything you like against him, for he has been guilty of everything that’s bad. Admiral Buckner will be a material evidence to state the proceedings which took place on his visit to the *Sandwich*, and which, indeed, of itself appears to be enough to dispose of a dozen scoundrels of Parker’s description’.⁴⁹ Once Parker’s trial was concluded, Pasley wrote to Nepean that ‘the conviction of this villain Parker must have been so very dear to you at the Admiralty that the place and time of his execution might have been previously settled’.⁵⁰ This official correspondence suggests that Parker’s fate was sealed from the moment he was captured, and that his court martial was a mere formality. These quotations have been used to suggest that the naval authorities were determined to see mutineers hanged, and were prepared to undermine the fairness of the trials in order to achieve this object.⁵¹ This, however, is a mistaken view.

⁴⁹ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference C 395, 19 June 1797, and ADM 1/727 C395; Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/727, fol. 395; also quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 247.

⁵⁰ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference C 444, 27 June 1797; Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/728, fol. 444; also quoted in Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, p. 248.

⁵¹ Frykman, ‘The Wooden World Turned Upside Down’, p. 248.

The confidence expressed by Nepean and Pasley that Parker would be found guilty was not due to a conspiracy to deny him a fair trial, but because of the sheer weight of ‘material evidence’ that could be brought against him by even a single witness. Coupled with the notoriety that Parker had gained (he had been labelled ‘president’ of the mutinous fleet in the press,⁵² and had repeatedly signed himself as such in letters to the Admiralty⁵³), and the broad scope of the Articles of War, a reasonable individual would see that Parker’s fate was a foregone conclusion: but on account of the lack of doubt, rather than injustice. Parker suggested that ‘I have reason to think the Civil Power would have acquitted me, but by the Articles of War my destruction was irremediable’. It is, however, difficult to disagree with Manwaring and Dobrée in their assertion that ‘it is doubtful if even the most humane civil court could have pronounced a sentence other than that of death. For weeks Parker had been the ostensible head of a mutiny which had threatened the country’s ruin, and during which many acts deserving of death, even under the civil code, had been committed’.⁵⁴ His was a trial, not a lynching.

In fact, no effort was spared to ensure that Parker’s court martial was above reproach for fairness and procedure. Considering Parker’s notoriety and the fears of further naval insurrection, it was potentially dangerous to allow him free range to speak his mind, but the court martial went to great lengths to hear all that he had to say. Parker extensively cross-examined prosecution witnesses, including senior admirals and noblemen, and was allowed to call anyone he wished as witnesses during his defence. This led to the incredible scene of Parker, then the most infamous criminal in the country, questioning the Earl of Northesk.⁵⁵ If Parker’s trial was a sham, it seems inconceivable that peers of the realm, like Northesk, would have been subjected to the embarrassment of undergoing examination by Parker. This instance renders even more unsupportable Frykman’s claim that the naval courts martial resembled the rigged revolutionary tribunals and hasty executions of the Committee of Public Safety during the French Terror.⁵⁶

The court showed great patience towards Parker. On the first day of his trial, while cross-examining Surgeon Snipe, Parker asked about the state of discipline on board in a way which confirmed his own usurpation of authority. At this point, one of the judging captains interceded to warn Parker ‘you will be cautious not to put questions that may injure yourself’.

⁵² *Evening Mail* 7 June 1797; *Oracle and Public Advertiser* 13 June 1797.

⁵³ Nore Letters, NMM, HSR/2/33/1, 3. Both signed ‘Richard Parker, Pesident’.

⁵⁴ Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 238.

⁵⁵ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/3, pp. 27-28.

⁵⁶ Frykman, ‘The Wooden World Turned Upside Down’, p. 300.

Parker immediately replied that ‘I will beg leave to withdraw the question’.⁵⁷ The next day, when Parker indicated he would dispense with two defence witnesses, the court insisted on hearing them anyway.⁵⁸ It might well be argued that, confident in the overwhelming weight of evidence that they could bring to bear against him, the court could afford to be generous. Nevertheless, this does not detract from their evident dedication to providing a full and fair trial.

At the conclusion of the case for the prosecution, Parker was asked how long he would require to prepare his defence. He declared that he would be ready on Monday morning, giving him the weekend to prepare, and this was readily agreed by the court.⁵⁹ This gave him enough time to consider the evidence presented against him and formulate his defence. When it came, this defence was given full attention by the court and Parker was guided on legal process by the judge advocate throughout. At its conclusion, Pasley, informed the prisoner that ‘if you have any more witnesses, the court will wait any time to hear them’.⁶⁰ After due deliberation, and surely to no one’s surprise, Parker was found guilty and sentenced to death. Parker’s trial bore out Manwaring and Dobrée’s assessment that ‘as anybody who has ever sat on a court martial knows, such tribunals are scrupulously fair, and this one was no exception’.⁶¹ By even the most lenient assessment, Parker was guilty of capital offences many times over. Furthermore, any rumours of injustices in Parker’s case risked civil unrest or renewed mutiny. The best possible course of action was to follow due process. In a final act of mercy from the court, Parker received a brief stay of execution of three days in order to put his affairs in order.⁶²

It is interesting to note that this trial was not the first time that Parker had appeared before a naval court martial. On 12 December 1793, Midshipman Parker⁶³ of HMS *Assurance* had been reduced to the ranks for ‘disobedience of orders and contempt’.⁶⁴ This fact has often been mentioned by historians of the mutinies, but it has not previously been analysed for insight into Parker and the course of the mutinies. When John Richards, first lieutenant of HMS *Assurance* went below decks at about 11:30 a.m. on the morning of 30

⁵⁷ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/1, p. 36.

⁵⁸ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/2, p. 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁶⁰ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 56.

⁶¹ Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 238.

⁶² CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 57.

⁶³ A junior officer rank of liminal standing between petty and commissioned officers. Midshipmen, or ‘young gentlemen’, were often considered to be commissioned officers in training, pending their passage of the lieutenant’s examination.

⁶⁴ CMP, May 1792 – January 1794, TNA, ADM1/5330, Part IV pp. 616-627.

November 1793 he was surprised to find a hammock swinging there. This was in defiance of the standing orders of the ship, which dictated that hammocks should be stowed by 8 a.m. The hammock belonged to Midshipman Parker. Richards ordered him to stow the hammock at once, but Parker refused. Three witnesses observed Parker tell Richards in a ‘contemptuous manner’ that ‘I am an officer in this ship and cannot think of degrading myself so far’ and even exclaimed ‘that he would see himself damned first’. Parker was placed under arrest.⁶⁵

This incident reveals Richard Parker to be uncommonly sensitive in matters of pride and self-respect: very conscious of slights, real or imagined. Lieutenant Richards told the court that ‘as a midshipman myself I had never felt my consequence hurt in taking up my hammock’, which gives the impression that Parker’s behaviour was out of all proportion to the situation.⁶⁶ Parker’s unusually inflated sense of pride was considered to have rendered him unsuitable for a life of naval discipline a full three and a half years before his fatal court martial after the Nore mutiny. On 12 December 1793, his first court martial ended with Parker’s demotion to ‘a common seaman’.⁶⁷ Apart from his brief spell as mutineer ‘admiral’, Parker never again attained officer’s rank. Nevertheless, this earlier incident sheds light on why Parker was an appealing choice for leader of the Nore mutiny; he was a man of greater than average education and had himself served as an officer. He was, therefore, conversant (though apparently inept) in the methods, niceties, and appropriate forms of negotiation with officers. It can be suggested that, as mutineer president in 1797, Parker retained his sense of pride and his speed to take offence. When soldiers were sent to man the Sheerness garrison, Parker wrote to Admiral Buckner that he had not yet consulted the fleet, but that ‘as to my own feeling, it is an insult’.⁶⁸

Parker’s trial was not entirely representative of the Nore courts martial. He was one of only three of the eighty-three men court martialled after the Nore mutiny to be tried individually. Since his was the first trial and he was already a household name, Parker was also the subject of greatest public interest. In most other respects, however, the other courts martial were very similar. The judging panel, location, and process of the trials all remained the same.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 616-23.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 621.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 616.

⁶⁸ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/727, fol. 370, no.5.

V. Qualitative Comparison of Naval and Civil Justice

Several historians have compared British naval and civil justice in the eighteenth century.⁶⁹ These provide a useful theoretical and methodological basis for such comparisons, but none are entirely relevant to the 1797 fleet mutinies. Though the work of Byrn and Malcomson covers the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic period, including 1797, both of their case studies are across the Atlantic, on the Leeward Islands and North American stations respectively.⁷⁰ Eder's work takes a sample of six ships from each naval station per year, but during the Seven Years War, over thirty years before the fleet mutinies. These studies employ detailed quantitative analysis, but do not include direct comparison to a similar quantification of Old Bailey data, as is offered here. Despite the temporal and geographical differences in their scope, these works reach a clear consensus. All three agree that the system of naval justice should be seen as an extension of the British civil justice system.⁷¹ They stress the discretionary nature of naval and civil punishment, combining exemplary execution of ringleaders with ample opportunity for clemency.⁷² The argument of this chapter goes further by arguing that, even in response to the unprecedented crisis of the 1797 fleet mutinies, naval justice was characterised more by continuity than change. A qualitative comparison of civil and naval justice is presented first, followed by a quantitative comparison.

One noteworthy way in which naval courts martial (as well as regimental and general courts martial in the army)⁷³ differed from civil trials was that military courts had no jury. This has often been assumed to be a strong disadvantage for defendants at courts martial. The

⁶⁹ John D. Byrn, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy: Discipline on the Leeward Islands Station, 1784-1812* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989); Eder, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy of the Seven Years War*; Thomas Malcomson, *Order and Disorder in the British Navy, 1793-1815: Control, Resistance, Flogging and Hanging* (Martlesham: The Boydell Press, 2016).

⁷⁰ Byrn, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy*; Malcomson, *Order and Disorder in the British Navy, 1793-1815*.

⁷¹ Byrn, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy*, pp. 9-10, 63.

⁷² Eder, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy of the Seven Years War, 1755-1763*, p. 149; Malcomson, *Order and Disorder in the British Navy, 1793-1815*, pp. 26, 72.

⁷³ On army courts martial see Arthur Gilbert, 'The Regimental Courts Martial in the Eighteenth Century British Army', *Albion* vol. 8 (1976), pp. 50-66; Ala Alryyes, 'War at a Distance: Court-Martial Narratives in the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* vol. 41(2008), pp. 525-42; G. A. Stepler, 'British Military Law, Discipline, and the Conduct of Regimental Courts Martial in the Later Eighteenth Century', *The English Historical Review* vol. 102 (1987), pp. 859-86. Gilbert and Stepler agree that Regimental courts martial were open to a great deal of abuse by officers and were subject to little scrutiny. Excessive summary punishments were observed, as were cases where the regimental court tried serious offences which were above their jurisdiction simply by labelling them as a less serious crime. General courts martial, though, they contend, were more regulated and much closer to the patterns and practices of both civil justice and naval courts martial.

right to trial by a jury of one's peers was a proud and widely celebrated British liberty.⁷⁴ This celebration permeated popular culture, such as through prints by James Gillray, which contrasted British justice with Revolutionary French practice.⁷⁵ It is clear that some sailors in the Royal Navy resented that, while serving to defend Britain and British liberties, they were denied the right to trial by jury. Consequently, the demand to such a right featured prominently among the demands of the Nore mutineers. The seventh article of their demands read 'that at a trial of a sailor who may be deemed guilty of any offence nine seamen and four marines shall judge on the measure of the offence & punishment with able councillors to explain the civil law & at the trial of a marine nine marines to attend and four sailors'.⁷⁶ This represents an unambiguous attempt to extend civil law practices to the Royal Navy instead of military law, with a peculiar call for thirteen jurors, rather than twelve.

It must be noted, however, that this demand does not appear to have enjoyed wide, let alone unanimous, support among sailors. It is not present among the demands or petitions of the Spithead mutineers,⁷⁷ and when the sailors of the *Mars* performed their own trial of Seaman Samuel Nelson, they did not employ a jury system, but closely emulated the practice of naval courts martial.⁷⁸ Similarly, when the demand for trial by jury was communicated to the *Nassau*, one of the mutinous ships of the Nore fleet, Midshipman Hardy recorded that 'our ship's company, who are all well-disposed, will not agree to it, saying it was unjust to make a proposal of this kind and would sooner be tried by Capns. of men of war than their own shipmates'.⁷⁹ It is, therefore, evident that, among much of the population of the Royal Navy, courts martial were not considered to be a grievance, and were in some cases actively preferred to civil-style trials by jury. This should caution against assumptions that the presence of a jury necessarily made a trial more 'just' in this period. Naval courts martial were presided over by between five and thirteen officers of at least the rank of post captain.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ Trial by jury was seen as a fundamental British liberty and was celebrated by writers including Hobbes, Blackstone, and Thomas Jefferson. More critical debates about the role and usefulness of juries are a more recent development. See, for example, Reid Hastie, Steven D. Penrod, and Nancy Pennington, *Inside the Jury* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983); Valerie P. Hans and Neil Vidmar, *Judging the Jury* (New York: Plenum Press, 1986); Margaret Bull Kovera (ed.), *The Psychology of Juries* (Washington D. C.: American Psychological Association, 2017).

⁷⁵ See, for example, prints by James Gillray, 'Consequences of a Successful French Invasion' (1798), BM 1935,0522.5.61; 'The Tree of Liberty' (1798), BM 1868,0808.6739; 'The Genius of France Triumphant' (1795), BM 1868,0808.6409.

⁷⁶ Nore Letters, Demands of the Nore Mutineers, NMM, HSR/2/33/3.

⁷⁷ Admiralty Petitions 1793-1798, TNA, ADM1/5125; Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, pp. 359-64.

⁷⁸ Trial of Samuel Nelson of HMS *Mars* by mutineers at Spithead, 12 May 1797, NMM, MKH/15.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Christopher Lloyd, 'New Light on the Mutiny at the Nore', *Mariner's Mirror* vol. 46 (1960) pp. 286-95, p. 292.

⁸⁰ Pappalardo, *How to Survive in the Georgian Navy*, p. 38.

As stated above, all of the courts martial of Nore mutineers had the full complement of thirteen senior officers. As such, the judging panel could perform the discursive function of a jury, but was also composed of experts in naval matters, who were themselves responsible for day-to-day order, discipline, and punishment on board naval vessels. Finally, one cannot assume that those tried in civil courts were in fact judged by their ‘peers’. Many defendants were members of the lower strata of society, whereas jurors (practically always men) usually had to fulfil property qualifications, and were typically members of the professional or ‘middling’ sorts.⁸¹ As such, naval courts martial should not necessarily be considered less favourable to the defendant than civil trials by jury.

With the unusual exception of Richard Parker’s trial, naval courts martial also differed from civil cases in their lack of a public gallery. This might lead to suggestions that naval trials lacked transparency. After all, these usually occurred on board carefully guarded ships beyond the prying eyes of the public, sometimes in ports on the other side of the world from the makers and arbiters of British laws. There were, however, systems in place to ensure accountability. Whenever possible, the presence of a judge advocate as a professional expert helped to ground the naval court in correct legal form and precedent. Furthermore, precise transcripts were taken of all courts martial. These were sent to the Admiralty where they were checked, documented, and kept with such care that the majority still survive. In addition, many of the potential problems with a lack of transparency do not apply to the case of the Nore courts martial. These took place in home waters in the middle of the Thames, within scrutiny of the government, legal authorities, and, to an extent, the general public. Lengthy and accurate extracts of many trial transcripts appeared in multiple newspapers mere days after the events they described. Moreover, as Eder has pointed out, the lack of a public gallery in the naval courts martial would have removed an often loud, riotous, and distracting factor from the courtroom, which would tend towards the more careful analysis of evidence.⁸²

One final qualitative difference between civil and naval courts was that the latter were, excepting the judge advocate, not composed of legal professionals. This sometimes resulted in judgements which have been characterised as ‘more irregular than unfair’.⁸³ For example, courts martial were known to ignore mandatory death sentences imposed by the

⁸¹ J. M. Beattie, ‘London Juries in the 1690s’; Peter King, ‘“Illiterate Plebeians, Easily Misled”: Jury Composition, Experience, and Behaviour in Essex, 1735-1815’; and Douglas Hay, ‘The Class Composition of the Palladium of Liberty: Trial Jurors in the Eighteenth Century’ in J. S. Cockburn and T. Green (eds.), *Twelve Good Men and True: The Criminal Trial Jury in England, 1200-1800* (Princeton, 1988), pp. 233, 302, 357.

⁸² Eder, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy of the Seven Years War, 1755-1763*, p. 153.

⁸³ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 223.

Articles of War, go to great lengths to find extenuating circumstances, and even find a defendant not guilty of the charge with which they were indicted, only to find them guilty of a lesser charge.⁸⁴ All of these examples would seem irregular to eighteenth-century barristers, but they demonstrate a form of justice of their own. In particular, these interventions tended to have a mitigating effect by tempering the harsh and unbending legal code and exercising their discretion on a case by case basis. In common with civil courts, naval courts martial were known to acquit defendants due to minor typographical errors in dates or names provided to the court.

These considerations, coupled with an observed reluctance of naval courts to order and then actually implement capital sentences, led historian, David Hannay, to conclude that ‘charges of frivolity and indifference of evidence cannot be brought against naval courts martial’ and even that ‘the humblest sailor who appeared before a court martial had more fairplay than he would have had at Assizes, if he had been on trial for a burglary’. Hannay contrasted a civil trial where the defendant would have faced crown lawyers, likely without a defence counsel, where his witnesses could not be sworn, but witnesses for the prosecution were, with a court martial. In the former, the defendant was ‘a deliberately disarmed man pitted against fully-armed opponents’ who, though they ‘would not play the game unfairly[...] would play the game of which they were masters and he was ignorant’. In the latter, the prisoner had no defence counsel, but nor was there a counsel ranged against him. His defence witnesses were sworn, and so placed on equal footing with prosecution witnesses, and the naval officer who conducted the prosecution ‘had no more training in that game than the prisoner’.⁸⁵ Hannay’s conclusion was that naval courts martial were not guilty of ‘disregarding evidence and punishing men by mere tyranny’, but that ‘they meant to do what was right’,⁸⁶ even if that did not necessarily correspond exactly to the letter of the Articles of War. When all of these points are considered, it appears far from certain that civil trials were, in qualitative terms, invariably preferable to naval courts martial, and in fact there is some evidence to suggest that there were some advantages to facing a naval, rather than a civil court. The comparison will now move to a quantitative one.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp. 222-23.

⁸⁵ David Hannay, *Naval Courts Martial* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), p. 193–94.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 195.

VI. Quantitative Comparison of Naval and Civil Justice

This section will be based on a quantitative comparison of the reports of all seventy-four trials involving ninety-two defendants at the Old Bailey session of 12 July 1797 and the transcripts of the courts martial of the eighty-three men tried for their direct involvement in the Nore mutiny.⁸⁷ Fifty-nine of the Old Bailey trials had an individual defendant while fifteen had multiple defendants ranging from two to five. The salient features of each trial were tabulated in order to gain a sense of overall practice. This data is used to argue that naval courts martial were, in several respects, more advantageous to the defendant than were contemporary civil trials. In particular, the greater length of courts martial, usually stretching over several days, gave the defendant enough time to consider the evidence presented against them, determine how best to refute it, arrange for the presence of their own witnesses, and prepare their defence.

Despite Hannay's statement above, by 1797 an increasing number of defendants were able to call upon the services of a defence counsel, whereas these services were entirely denied to prisoners at courts martial.⁸⁸ The tangible benefit of a defence counsel, however, appears doubtful. A defence counsel was present at only twenty-four of the seventy-four Old Bailey trials, and in most cases confined themselves to brief cross-examination of one or two witnesses. Crucially, the data raises questions about how much time a defence counsel could commit to each case. Six men acted as defence counsel at the 12 July session. Two of these spoke in only one case, and a third spoke in only two. The remaining three, however, acted as counsel for the defence in five, eight, and ten trials respectively — all in one day.⁸⁹ In addition, most of them also conducted multiple prosecutions.⁹⁰ As such, the level of concentration, knowledge, and time invested in the defence of each individual case must have been minimal. These facts strongly support the suggestion, below, that the defences offered at the naval courts martial were generally more sophisticated than those at the Old Bailey, despite their lack of defence counsel.

⁸⁷ Comparison of Old Bailey Online Reports of Trials t17970712-1 to t17970712-74, 12 July 1797, with the CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486 and CMP, TNA, ADM/1/5339, ADM/1/5340, ADM/1/5341.

⁸⁸ With two ambiguous exceptions: see note 3 to Table 6.5 below.

⁸⁹ These figures add up to 27, whereas it is claimed above that only 24 cases made use of a defence counsel. The difference is explained by the fact that two counsel shared a defence on three occasions.

⁹⁰ Tabulation of Old Bailey Online Reports of Trials t17970712-1 to t17970712-74, 12 July 1797.

Old Bailey judges also faced formidable caseloads. The seventy-four Old Bailey trials were presided over by just five judges. As with defence counsel, the level of work varied considerably between them, but the majority heard enough trials that each case could only have enjoyed brief consideration. These details are shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 The number of trials presided over by Old Bailey judges, 12 July 1797⁹¹

<u>Judge</u>	<u>Number of Trials</u>	<u>Capital Sentences</u>
Mr Justice Lawrence	21	4
Mr Justice Buller	22	7
Mr Common Serjeant	24	1
The Lord Chief Baron	6	3
Mr Recorder	1	0

To take the most extreme example, even if one was to assume that Mr Common Serjeant worked for twelve hours without a break at the 12 July session, each case would still have had to be concluded within half an hour. The trials before Justices Lawrence and Buller must also have been similarly short on average. These trials, let us not forget, made life-changing decisions; of the ninety-two defendants, fifteen were sentenced to death (including those simultaneously recommended to the king's mercy), and eighteen transported for seven years.⁹²

Though the length of trial reports is an imperfect measure of the duration of trials, it can be considered to be an acceptable proxy, as the great body of the evidence was recorded nearly verbatim. The results of these calculations are given in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4 The approximate length of Old Bailey trials, 12 July 1797

<u>Sample of Trials</u>	<u>Mean Word Count</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Range</u>
All 74 trials	736	470	60 to 4,600
Trials ending in guilty verdicts (50)	848	510	163 to 4,600
Trials ending in capital sentences (13)	1,714	1,000	380 to 4,600
Per capital sentence (15)	1,485	N/A	N/A

⁹¹ Source: Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

These figures are not exact measurements as one cannot be sure that the reports recorded everything that was said exactly as it was said. Nevertheless, they give the clear impression that the Old Bailey trials, even those ending in capital sentences, must have been brief affairs. Even if 1,485 words were not an acceptable average to be spoken in court to secure a death sentence, it was certainly an acceptable level of detail to provide as the official record and justification of that sentence. Looking beyond average figures, the shortest report of a trial which reached a guilty verdict was just 163 words, and the shortest report to end in a death sentence was a mere 380 words in length.⁹³ Old Bailey trials must, generally speaking, have been over very quickly, and so left little time for thorough cross-examination of witnesses, critical deliberation, or the submission of a detailed defence. Crucially, the defendant can have had no time to actually construct a defence in response to the evidence presented against them. Based on these figures, it is doubtful the extent to which supposed advantages like the presence of a defence counsel or jury could have had much of an impact in so short a time. For example, Thomas Lingham, accused of grand larceny, left his defence entirely to his counsel, Mr Knowlys. In a trial reported in just 420 words it can surely have done him little good, and indeed, found guilty, Lingham was transported for seven years.⁹⁴

Turning from the Old Bailey reports to those of the Nore courts martial, it is immediately striking the extent to which the latter are greater in length. Almost all occupy two or three booklets and run to several tens of thousands of words. This greater length is such as to defy easy quantification, but as a rough estimate, one might offer the approximate figure of 27,500 words as a typical length of a Nore court martial.⁹⁵ Even when one allows for the fact that, in most cases, six mutinous sailors were tried at once, one arrives at a figure of almost 4,600 words for each of the 83 individual sailors. Only one of the 74 Old Bailey trial reports at the 12 July 1797 session reached this length, while only 5 of 92 individuals had trial reports of 2,000 words or more. The inescapable conclusion is that the Nore courts martial took considerably more time, and looked into significantly more detail than their civil law counterparts. It must be argued that this approach had substantial advantages for the

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Old Bailey Online Report of Trial of Thomas Lingham, t17970712-26, 12 July 1797.

⁹⁵ The calculation behind this figure is as follows. A random page of one of the court martial transcript booklets was found to contain 202 words (CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 19. This was multiplied by 55 as a (rather conservative) estimate of the average number of pages in each transcript booklet. Finally, this was multiplied by 2.5, as the majority of the courts martial transcripts filled two or three booklets. This (admittedly crude) calculation results in a figure of 27,775 words.

defendants. These advantages are clearly reflected in the greater complexity of the defences offered by the mutineer prisoners compared to their fellows at the Old Bailey, shown in Table 6.5 below.

Table 6.5 Comparative complexity of defences offered by naval and civil prisoners⁹⁶

	Old Bailey (out of 74)	Nore Courts Martial (out of 83)
Defence Counsel Present	24	2 ^{***}
Defence Witness(es) Present	3 [*]	65
Cross-examination of Prosecution Witnesses	28	68
Character Witness(es) Present	21	37 ^{**}
Submitted a Spoken Defence	45	38
Submitted a Written Defence	2	26
Made a Short Statement resigning themselves to the mercy of the court	0	13
Defence left to their Counsel	11	0
Made no defence, or no defence recorded	16	0

^{*}Plus one (rather unhelpful) interjection from the public gallery.

^{**}Plus a further three character witnesses who were called but refused to give the prisoner a good character.

^{***}It is generally believed that defendants at courts martial were not permitted a defence counsel, and this holds true of all but two of the trials of the Nore mutineers. Thomas Brady asked that his ‘defence be read for me by my counsel’. One might suggest that he had simply confused the role of the judge advocate, but this cannot be the case as the transcript records that his defence was indeed ‘read by his Counsel’.⁹⁷ Similarly, it was recorded that ‘Mr Ally was permitted by the Court to read the prisoner Charles McCarty’s defence’.⁹⁸ It appears possible that this may have been the same ‘Mr Alley’ who acted as defence counsel at no less than ten of the trials during the Old Bailey session of 12 July (just four days after McCarty’s defence).⁹⁹ In both cases, however, these defence counsel took no part in these two trials

⁹⁶ Source: Comparison of Old Bailey Online Reports of Trials t17970712-1 to t17970712-74, 12 July 1797, with the CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486 and CMP, TNA, ADM/1/5339, ADM/1/5340, ADM/1/5341.

⁹⁷ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/14, p. 5.

⁹⁸ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/11, p. 1.

⁹⁹ Old Bailey Online Reports of Trials t17970712-1 to t17970712-74, 12 July 1797.

other than reading the defence, which might have been done equally well by the judge advocate. It might also be assumed that the counsel helped these prisoners to draft their defence, but otherwise, their presence contributed nothing to the trial. Notably, Parker began his defence by apologising for his inarticulacy which might have been ameliorated ‘could I have procured a lawyer’s constant attendance’, demonstrating that he lacked this service.¹⁰⁰ The identity of Brady’s counsel is unknown but cannot have been Mr Alley of the Old Bailey as Brady’s defence was delivered on 12 July when, as stated, Alley was fully engaged at the Bailey. The presence of these defence counsel had no impact on these trials and it is curious to wonder why they were present at all. One might speculate that they took a professional interest in the proceedings but, apart from helping to draft defence statements, they played no part in the trials. Put simply, they did not act as defence counsel and so do not counteract the point that prisoners at courts martial did not benefit from the presence of defence counsel. As such, these examples must be considered as interesting anomalies: that two men recognised as prisoner’s counsel should be allowed to be present at several courts martial, but generally as exceptions that prove the rule.

Four elements from Table 6.5 require explanation and analysis, and all tend towards the same conclusion: that the greater complexity achieved in the court martial defences was the result of the greater length of those trials, which provided more opportunities for thought and preparation. Firstly, the presence of defence witnesses was dramatically higher at the courts martial than the Old Bailey. This was possible because mutinous sailors had enough time to summon witnesses, the naval court repeatedly showed its willingness to listen to anyone requested, and the witnesses were under naval discipline so that their presence could be ensured. Secondly, and for the same reasons, there was a markedly higher rate of character witnesses called to the courts martial. Thirdly, the naval prisoners were much more likely to cross-examine witnesses than were their counterparts on shore. Of the twenty-eight occasions where prosecution witnesses were cross-examined at the Old Bailey, only five were conducted by the prisoner themselves. The other twenty-three were handled by a defence counsel. Consequently, the two-thirds of Old Bailey defendants who faced the court without benefit of defence counsel were disadvantaged compared to the Nore mutineers, who appear more confident speaking out in their own interest. Finally, there is a stark disparity between the number of written defences submitted to the courts martial and the Old Bailey. While a

¹⁰⁰ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/3, p. 1.

written defence is not necessarily any more skilful or persuasive than a spoken one, it is suggestive of care, thought, and preparation. Precisely these facets were denied to defendants in the civil court due to the brevity of Old Bailey trials. Court martial prisoners benefitted from greater thinking time, could engage critically with the evidence presented against them, and offer their own considered defence.¹⁰¹ As such, court martial defendants were able to prepare and present a more complex defence than their counterparts on shore.

Crucial to this complexity was the fact that most Nore trials spanned several days. It is important to note here that, in this respect, the Nore courts martial were not representative of such trials overall. It was recognised that these were unusually important and complicated cases, which required more than average time and attention to detail. More generally, courts martial for serious offences might take one day, while less serious ones, such as Parker's 1793 trial, might occupy a naval court for an afternoon, but still considerably longer than can have been possible at the Old Bailey.

To return to the specific case of the courts martial which followed the Nore mutiny, the trials of sixty-three out of the total of eighty-three men spanned several days, providing plenty of time for reflection and preparation. Where possible, prisoners were given the span of the weekend to prepare their defence. Even in those courts martial which were concluded in a single day, because the men were tried in groups of six, they would have had ample time to consider ways to refute prosecution witnesses and construct their own defence while the court was investigating the charges against the other five individuals. In some cases, they were even able to retire from court to do this.¹⁰² Old Bailey trials, on the other hand, were a whirlwind in which the defendant had no time to consider one piece of evidence before the next was presented, leaving them little hope of assembling a credible defence.

It might be contended that the Nore mutineers were more active in their own defence because they were all charged with a capital crime. This is not particularly persuasive, however, as a large proportion of the Old Bailey defendants could also have faced death, and it would have been worth efforts to avoid even lesser sentences of transportation, or corporal punishment. It appears more credible that the mutineer defences were more complex because they had enough time to consider the case against them and prepare their response.

This greater opportunity for defence at the courts martial was based on the court's willingness to spend the time to hear what the prisoner and their witnesses had to say. This sentiment is clear from the trial transcripts. The court commonly granted time specifically for

¹⁰¹ On the brevity of most civil trials, see King, *Crime, Justice, and Discretion in England*, p. 223.

¹⁰² CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/28, pp. 3-4; CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/29, p. 26.

prisoners to prepare their defence, often adjourning for the day for this reason.¹⁰³ In one case, the judging panel declared ‘prisoners, the Court being willing to grant you every indulgence, will therefore give you till tomorrow morning to prepare for your defences’¹⁰⁴ and defendants were repeatedly warned that ‘the court has no objection to any question you ask but only consider whether these questions will tend to your advantage or not’.¹⁰⁵ These were not rushed tribunals, but detailed trials conducted in an even-handed manner. The courts martial showed themselves eager to uncover extenuating circumstances, such as medical factors, which might mitigate responsibility, or allow them to find men ‘partially guilty’. Twelve of the eighty-three Nore mutineers tried by court martial received this verdict, which the civil courts would have found highly irregular, but which effectively allowed the court to bestow much milder sentences upon those concerned.¹⁰⁶ This supports Hannay’s conclusion that naval courts martial were keen to find an excuse to exercise mercy.

Furthermore, while inarticulacy was common to defendants of both the civil cases and the courts martial, it might be suggested that, here too, the naval prisoners had an advantage. Defendants at the courts martial and Old Bailey alike often began their defence by pointing out that their limited education had not furnished them with the eloquence to put forward their case with as much skill as they would wish, but that they would place their trust in the honour of the court and its judge(s).¹⁰⁷ Thomas Brady may be considered a typical example of this when he told his court martial that his defence would be weaker on account of his lack of education and ‘agitation of mind’, but that ‘when I recollect that I am now addressing myself to a court composed of British Officers of high rank and distinguished abilities, my fears subside’.¹⁰⁸ Some of this was likely self-serving flattery, but there is also a sense of belief that the judges, as officers and gentlemen, would be just and honourable in their conduct. Naturally, similar expectations existed of civil judges, but it could be suggested that naval officers would have been more likely to attach weight and consideration to claims of

¹⁰³ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/10, p. 48; and also booklets 13, 16, 18, 21, 25, and 31.

¹⁰⁴ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/21.

¹⁰⁵ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/15, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ Tabulation of CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486 and CMP, TNA, ADM/1/5339, ADM/1/5340, ADM/1/5341. Peter King has noted that approximately ten per cent of those found guilty in Essex trials in the period 1740–1805 received partial verdicts, but these were predominantly in the earlier decades of that period, and represent a lower instance than that of the Nore courts martial. King, *Crime, Justice, and Discretion in England*, p.231.

¹⁰⁷ Hillary Taylor, “‘Branded on the Tongue’ Rethinking Plebeian Inarticulacy in Early Modern England”, *Radical History Review*, no. 121 (2015), pp. 91–105. A good example from the courts martial was Joseph Glaves. His defence, read by the Judge Advocate, ran ‘I hope the honourable court will be pleased to consider that having no education nor any fluency of speech to communicate my thoughts, nor was I ever before any court of justice in my life before, therefore I am so confused that I scarcely know what I said or what was said’. CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/32, p. 96.

¹⁰⁸ CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/14, p. 5.

inarticulacy because they had spent their entire careers living, working, and fighting in close proximity to sailors of little or no education: conditions which usually bred a healthy respect for them and their skills.¹⁰⁹ Judges, on the other hand, would have existed at a greater remove from inarticulate prisoners and might, consequently, have been less prone to sympathy in this regard.¹¹⁰ Finally, at the courts martial, prisoners conscious of their own inarticulacy frequently requested that their defence be read by the judge advocate: a request that was never refused. Contrastingly, the majority of prisoners at the Old Bailey who did not enjoy the services of a defence counsel had no option but to present their own defence, notwithstanding their inarticulacy. This is, therefore, another case where the courts martial might be said to have shown greater patience and consideration for their prisoners than the civil courts.

One might argue that the naval courts martial were much harsher than the Old Bailey as the former resulted in seventy-nine out of eighty-three men being found guilty or partially guilty, and fifty-eight out of eighty-three sentenced to death (including those recommended to mercy).¹¹¹ The Old Bailey session of 12 July 1797, on the other hand, returned fifty-five guilty verdicts out of ninety-two defendants, and only fifteen death sentences (including those recommended to mercy).¹¹² This is, however, a deceptive comparison as all eighty-three defendants at the courts martial but only a small minority of those at the Old Bailey faced a capital charge. Furthermore, of the 58 mutineers sentenced to death, approximately half had their lives spared: a similar rate of clemency to London courts.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ This sentiment is clearly visible in the many character statements of mutineers from officers. A particularly poignant example was that of Captain Parr of the *Standard* who spoke enthusiastically in defence of his men, and said that ‘I am very sorry to say that the active mutineers that are here were amongst the best of the ship’s company’. Despite their mutinous actions, Parr showed considerable respect for the skills of these sailors. CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/19, pp. 37, 86.

¹¹⁰ Taylor, “‘Branded on the Tongue’”, p. 94, 96. Suggests some impatience and lack of sympathy on the part of judges with those defendants who failed to use the correct terminology in court, eg. by referring to the judge as ‘your Majesty’. Plebeian defendants might be the object of ‘mockery, pity, or punishment’. Naval courts might at least respect the skills of their prisoners, even if they were inarticulate.

¹¹¹ Tabulation of CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486 and CMP, TNA, ADM/1/5339, ADM/1/5340, ADM/1/5341.

¹¹² Old Bailey Online Reports of Trials t17970712-1 to t17970712-74, 12 July 1797.

¹¹³ King and Ward, ‘Rethinking the Bloody Code in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, p. 185.

VII. The Purpose of Discretionary Civil and Naval Justice

British civil justice in the eighteenth century was characterised by a balance of deterrence and clemency. The same was true of naval justice. Douglas Hay has argued that the eighteenth-century British judicial system was a discretionary one in which a stringent and bloody legal code was tempered by the frequent use of judicial clemency.¹¹⁴ It was recognised that to have executed every criminal found guilty of a capital crime would have been impractical and counterproductive. The public tolerance for executions was finite. Excessive executions would be socially unacceptable, might breed resistance, and could undermine the intended impact of punishment. The system produced ‘enough examples to inculcate fear, but not so many to harden or repel a populace that had to assent, in some measure at least’, to the ruling regime.¹¹⁵ In practice, this produced a large number of capital convictions but a high proportion of pardons or reductions to lesser sentences.¹¹⁶ Judicial clemency served as ‘a selective instrument’, as it was ultimately left to the civil authorities to decide who were most fit to be recipients of official clemency, and who should be left to a miserable fate *pour encourager les autres*. This systematic but discretionary mercy ‘allowed the class that passed one of the bloodiest penal codes in Europe to congratulate itself on its humanity’.¹¹⁷

This rationale was also applied to crises. Commenting on the Gordon Riots of 1780, Edmund Burke recommended that the government should manage the crisis with a balance of ‘firmness and delicacy’. He feared that ‘weak measures on the part of government’ would encourage the rioters, whereas the population might ‘very easily be exasperated by an injudicious severity’. Burke’s suggestion was, according to Hay, ‘for six executions with maximum publicity, a calculated blend of terror and mercy under the strict rule of law’.¹¹⁸ Near the end of his life, Burke came to the same conclusion regarding the fleet mutinies and

¹¹⁴ Hay, ‘Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law’ in Hay, Linebaugh, Rule, Thompson, and Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree*, p. 48. The British ‘Bloody Code’ is often associated with the ‘Black Act’ of 1723. This single Act prescribed the death penalty for over 50 crimes, mostly relating to poaching and other property offences.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

¹¹⁶ King and Ward, ‘Rethinking the Bloody Code in Eighteenth-Century Britain’, p. 185.

¹¹⁷ Hay, ‘Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law’ in Hay et al., *Albion’s Fatal Tree*, p. 48.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50. In fact 19 individuals were hanged for participation in the riots, but still only a tiny proportion of those who took part.

advocated a ‘union of persuasion and force’.¹¹⁹ The naval authorities were of the same mind. It appeared essential to send a strong disciplinary message to deter future mutinies, but it would have been impossible and undesirable to execute more than a tiny proportion of the tens of thousands of men guilty of mutiny. Just as Burke recommended the government respond to the crisis of the Gordon Riots with ‘a calculated blend of terror and mercy under the strict rule of law’, the Admiralty set out to do the same after the crisis of the fleet mutinies.¹²⁰ Lord Spencer wrote of the need to make ‘some examples’ in order to restore order and discipline, but his main priority was to return ships to service.¹²¹ As such, the judicial response had to provide an effective deterrent, but not harm the capability of the navy.

VIII. Public Perceptions of the Naval-judicial Response to the Fleet Mutinies

Though opinions oscillated considerably during the mutinies themselves, once these came to an end, the sentiments expressed in newspapers also called for the familiar balance of exemplary justice and judicial mercy. While these are certainly an imperfect measure of ‘public opinion’, they can be considered to have been influential in framing and informing the public debates on the issue. Adam Smith perfectly and presciently summarised the conflicting judicial sentiments regarding the mutineers when he wrote in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* that, in the case of military offences, such as a sentry who falls asleep on duty and could therefore face death, ‘the natural atrocity of the crime seems to be so little and the punishment so great’ as ‘such crimes do not immediately or directly hurt any particular person’. Their consequences can, however, cause ‘a considerable inconveniency or a great

¹¹⁹ Letter from William Windham to Earl Spencer, Bath, 17 April 1797, quoted in Roger Morriss (ed.), *The Channel Fleet and the Blockade of Brest, 1793-1801* (Ashgate: for the Naval Records Society, 2001), p. 206.

¹²⁰ The most eloquent and skilful defence statement by any of the Nore mutineers also explicitly explored the relationship between deterrence and clemency. Surgeon’s mate, William Redfern of the *Standard* declared that ‘the alarming nature and extent of the late mutiny will, I trust, be remembered. Although it may justify rigour towards those by whom it originated, yet it seems also with equal truth and energy to enforce the propriety of lenient discrimination[...] Indiscriminating severity defeats every purpose of punishment in as much as it discredits those who inflict and enrages those who behold it’. CMPNM, TNA, ADM1/5486/32, pp. 33, 35.

¹²¹ Julian S. Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801*, vol. II, (London: Navy Records Society, 1913), p. 155.

disorder in the society' so that 'this severity may, upon many occasions, appear necessary, and, for that reason, just and proper'.¹²² The mutineers had caused little damage or violence, but their actions had endangered British independence. These contradictory factors were reflected in the inconsistent retributory attitudes evident in contemporary newspaper reports.

With the mutinies still ongoing, several newspapers argued that 'there has been enough of concession, and the refractory seamen must be brought back to their duty by other than lenient and palliative measures',¹²³ and that 'some examples', must be made with 'firmness and promptitude'.¹²⁴ The newspaper debates were mirrored by similar discussions in the House of Commons over the 'Seduction of Sailors and Soldiers from Duty' Bill, and that for the isolation of mutinous ships. Mr Serjeant Adair, who reasserted his belief that there were too many capital crimes on the books, nevertheless called for 'death in more than usual horror' as the punishment for those responsible for inciting mutiny.¹²⁵ In contrast, Sir John Sinclair expressed his fear that Pitt had 'drawn the sword and thrown away the scabbard' and that his measures threatened to 'expatriate the British navy'.¹²⁶ Meanwhile, the Admiralty received several letters from members of the public with suggestions for how they should punish the mutineers, including one recommending that many of the mutineers should be transported to Botany Bay along with their entire (innocent) families.¹²⁷

As ships began to desert from the Nore mutiny, however, the publications reflected an increase in confidence that order would soon be restored. Rather than broad calls for firmness, the newspapers then corresponded much more closely to the sense of discretionary justice as a balance of punishment and mercy. The *General Evening Post* made the deterrent aspect of punishment clear when they wrote that 'the leaders of this unparalleled rebellion, Parker, Davies, Gregory, &c. have been secured, and will doubtless suffer the punishment due to their crimes. We hope this unhappy affair will prove a sufficient example to deter our gallant seamen from similar proceedings'.¹²⁸ This was a call to distinguish between the ringleaders, who should be punished, and the majority who should be spared to learn from the deterrent example. The same sentiments were expressed by the *St James's Evening Chronicle*.¹²⁹

¹²² Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 109.

¹²³ *London Chronicle*, 25 May 1797.

¹²⁴ *True Briton*, 25 May 1797.

¹²⁵ *Hansard vol. 33, 3 March 1797 – 30 November 1798* (London: Hansard, 1818), pp. 808-09.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 814-15.

¹²⁷ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/75.

¹²⁸ *General Evening Post*, 15 June 1797.

¹²⁹ *St James's Evening Chronicle or the British Evening Post*, 10 June 1797.

By the end of July the newspapers predominantly expressed their satisfaction with the level of bloodletting and suggested that this had gone far enough. The *Morning Herald* led the way when it emphasised the need to discriminate between the ‘traitor’, and the mere ‘innocent instruments of his treason’.¹³⁰ The *Oracle and Public Advertiser* eloquently expressed the model of discretionary justice:

It was necessary that examples should be made, and those who were selected for trial appear to have been very active in the mutiny [...] the prosecutions have been conducted with the fairness, candour, tenderness and humanity that might be expected from men whose characteristics are bravery and honour [...] [We now] express a wish that His Majesty’s Ministers would rest satisfied with the victims which have been already offered up to the discipline of the Navy. If more victims were *necessary*, we should remain silent [...] but we are of opinion that blood enough has been shed for every good purpose [...] [and that mercy] would be attended with effects more salutary than those which would proceed from a rigid adherence to the dictates of vindictive justice.¹³¹

The *Star* suggested that the continued trials went ‘much farther than prudence or sound policy can approve’ and asked if there was ‘not a possibility of destroying the very effect intended to be produced by punishments[?]’.¹³²

The same points occurred to naval officers, who actively sought ways to mitigate the sentences of the courts martial. Leading the charge were the thirteen officers who had composed the judging panel. They wrote to the Admiralty to offer their ‘assistance to their Lordships in sorting out the different shades of guilt attached to the criminals now under condemnation’ in the expectation that ‘from motives of compassion His Majesty may be inclined to extend his Royal Mercy’ to some of the men ‘under sentence of death’.¹³³

The members of the judging panel were confident that the king would commute sentences, not only of those whom the court had recommended to his mercy, but to other capitally-convicted mutineers besides. They were eager that the benefit of this mercy should fall on the most deserving. The Admiralty made clear that ‘their Lordships will be ready to receive and pay attention to such representations’.¹³⁴ This willingness to consider further recommendations to mercy is not surprising as the Admiralty had already been considering ways to mitigate the severity of the courts martial for almost a month. As early as 8 July they

¹³⁰ *Morning Herald*, 25 July 1797.

¹³¹ *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 28 July 1797.

¹³² *The Star*, 1 August 1797.

¹³³ Markham Papers, NMM, MRK/100/5/7.

¹³⁴ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference C608, 5 August 1797.

received a letter from government solicitors with their opinion of ways in which the mutineer death sentences could be ‘mitigated’.¹³⁵ On the same day the Admiralty also received the ‘opinion of the law officers that His Majesty can grant a pardon to mutineers upon conditions, but that the fulfilment of these conditions must depend upon their nature’.¹³⁶ Finding effective methods to reduce the capital sentences reached was, however, not a simple matter. A further query to the government law officers on 10 July determined that the naval courts martial ‘cannot pass a sentence of transportation or of imprisonment, save in the Marshalsea [a debtor’s prison, but also designated prison for crimes committed at sea]’.¹³⁷ In other words, the most popular alternatives to capital sentences in the civil system were not applicable to mutiny cases. A suitable method was quickly found to circumvent this problem, however, as many of the mutineers were indeed transported.¹³⁸ It appears most likely that this circle was squared by making transportation one of the ‘conditions’ of pardon already mentioned. The mutineers destined for transportation were held in prison hulks and then despatched to Australia on twin ships, the *Minorca* and the *Canada*, which docked at Sydney on the same day in December 1801.¹³⁹

The Admiralty had also received a large amount of correspondence from the captains of the recently-mutinous Nore fleet petitioning them for mercy for their men: in several cases the same men who had lately forced the captains from their own ships. Among the most determined officers in this regard were Captains Inglis, Northesk, and, perhaps surprising considering his reputation, Bligh.¹⁴⁰ In the end, Bligh fought so hard on behalf of his crew that not a single man from the *Director* was brought to trial, even though it was one of the last ships to abandon the mutineer cause.¹⁴¹ Captain Inglis of HMS *Belliquest* was even more energetic for his ex-mutineer crew. He wrote to the Admiralty twice in mid-June to request a blanket pardon for his men, and even claimed that their loyal actions had prevented the

¹³⁵ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference Solr, 8 July 1797.

¹³⁶ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference L.O. Opinions, 8 July 1797.

¹³⁷ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference L.O. Opinions, 10 July 1797. Jerry White has recently suggested that the significant number of Nore mutineers and other maritime criminals sent to the Marshalsea put pressure on the limited space of the prison, see Jerry White, *Mansions of Misery, A Biography of the Marshalsea Debtor’s Prison* (London: Bodley Head, 2016), p. 130.

¹³⁸ David Boyd Haycock and Sally Archer (eds.), *Health and Medicine at Sea, 1700-1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), p. 15. Surgeon’s mate, William Redfern, for example, was the highest ranked man court martialled for participation in the Nore mutiny. He was sentenced to death but recommended to mercy and his sentence was accordingly commuted to transportation. He went on to enjoy a distinguished career in Australia and became a respected and wealthy surgeon and physician in Australia.

¹³⁹ George Rudé, *Protest and Punishment, The Story of the Social and Political Protesters Transported to Australia, 1788-1868* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 183-84.

¹⁴⁰ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/75, letter reference C473, 2 July 1797.

¹⁴¹ Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 277.

Sandwich from destroying the *Hound* sloop.¹⁴² His efforts were rewarded, and none of his men were punished.¹⁴³ Captain the Earl of Northesk also successfully lobbied the Admiralty to pardon fifteen men of his ship, the *Monmouth*.¹⁴⁴ Finally, Admiral Duncan, who had been abandoned by all but two ships of his mutinous fleet, was active interceding for mercy.¹⁴⁵ During the summer of 1797 the correspondence of King George III was full of discussions about the fate of the mutineers. In his capacity as First Lord of the Admiralty, Earl Spencer advised the king on which cases should be left ‘that the law may take its course’, and which were considered most meritorious of royal mercy.¹⁴⁶ The king invariably consented to the recommendation of his ministers and law officers.

There are several likely reasons for these interventions. Firstly, perennially short of men, particularly skilled seamen, such as those who provided the majority of mutineer leaders, the officers might well have wished to lose as few men as possible from their crews. Skilled sailors were too valuable to be given up unless absolutely necessary. Additionally, there was likely a willingness among captains to restore normality as soon as possible. They would have to live alongside their recently mutinous men, and so defending some of their number against prosecution would be an effective way to earn the gratitude and respect of the entire crew, and encourage harmonious future relations.

Conclusion

In the wake of the 1797 fleet mutinies there was not a draconian judicial knee-jerk reaction, or ‘terror’, as Frykman suggests, but a thoughtful and deliberate response more characterised by continuity than change. The authorities sought to reimpose their authority through judicial means, such as courts martial; and legislative means, such as the creation of

¹⁴² Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/75, letter reference Capt. I nos. 14 and 16, 12 and 19 June 1797; Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/75, letter reference C497, 6 July 1797.

¹⁴³ Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, p. 277.

¹⁴⁴ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/75, letter reference C535, 14 July 1797.

¹⁴⁵ For officers seeking mercy for their men or to limit the number to be court martialled, see Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM 1/728, fols. 472-23, 497, 507, 511, 535.

¹⁴⁶ A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 610, 618-20.

new laws. These were both in line with existing government and legal practice. They marked a change in the scale, though not in the substance of eighteenth-century British naval justice.

The naval courts martial were, by the standards of the day, including courts on land, reasonable and fair. In several respects, the court martial defendants might be said to have enjoyed some advantages over their counterparts at the Old Bailey. The practices of the courts martial were traditional and according to established norms. Furthermore, naval justice as a whole fits neatly into the discretionary pattern identified by Hay as a carefully-honed balance between deterrence through exemplary punishment, and loyal consent through clemency. The tens of thousands of sailors involved in the mutiny were liable to the death penalty, but fewer than thirty executions resulted from the fleet mutinies at Spithead and the Nore. As shown by Table 6.1, while over 25% of Royal Navy manpower had direct experience of mutiny in 1797, only 0.131 per cent of the navy's sailors were tried for mutiny in that year. Judicial practice was followed stringently throughout. This was no 'terror' precisely because such a response would have been socially unacceptable, pragmatically unwise, and, ultimately, counterproductive.

7. THE MUTINIES AS CONTESTED MEMORY

Introduction

It has been shown in the previous chapter that the number of executions which were ordered, and which actually took place, was the result of a careful balancing act of clemency and deterrence. It follows that the executions themselves were carefully managed in order to maximise their impact. The priorities were to reassure the public and to exude a sense of order restored.

At the end of the Spithead mutiny, an ‘Order of Oblivion’ was issued to officers ‘not to disquiet the minds of the seamen by ever mentioning what had passed during the Disturbances, but to let the whole be buried in oblivion’. It was planned that once the seamen of the Nore returned to duty, ‘the same order of oblivion will be given to their officers’.¹ Within the navy, official policy was that the mutinies were to be forgotten as soon as possible, but they did not pass as easily into oblivion as might have been wished.

This chapter is divided into six sections. Section I outlines the features and intentions of the naval executions that followed the Nore mutiny. The second demonstrates the ways in which the execution of Richard Parker corresponded closely to these intentions and to the desire to achieve a monopoly of memory for the official narrative of the mutinies. Section III shows that this monopoly was a failure, and that widespread discussion of the mutinies and their meanings continued. Section IV argues that the naval victory of Camperdown offered the state a welcome chance to overwrite the memories of the mutinies, and to reassert a perception of the Royal Navy as a glorious protecting force. In order to achieve this, unprecedented methods were employed. Sections V and VI analyse the long-term memory of the mutinies.

¹ Rough Admiralty Minutes, TNA, ADM3/137, Letter from the Admiralty to Admiral Buckner, 29 May 1797; BL Add. Ms. 35197, fol. 197.

First, however, the 1797 fleet mutinies must be analysed as a *‘lieu de mémoire’*. In *Realms of Memory*, Pierre Nora defined a *lieu de mémoire* as ‘any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community’.² These could exist in three senses: material, symbolic, and functional.³ This definition is suitably broad, but a *lieu de mémoire* also required a persistent longevity of cultural currency; by definition, it had to be remembered. Here success or failure was not necessarily decisive. Nora argued, for example, that it was, above all, the failure of the French Revolutionary calendar which secured its position as a *lieu de mémoire*; if this calendar were used every day it would be in danger of receding imperceptibly into the background. Concurrently, however, its failure was not absolute as several events are still known by its designation, such as Thermidor and Brumaire.⁴ Nor is status as a *lieu de mémoire* determined by whether or not a society wishes to remember that entity. In his chapter on Vichy, Philippe Burrin quotes the judge at Pétain’s trial speaking of ‘four years to be stricken from our history’ but then reflects that ‘the past that we try to forget has a way of coming back to haunt us’.⁵

It would be possible to argue, therefore, that the 1797 fleet mutinies qualify for consideration as a *lieu de mémoire* since neither the failure of the Nore mutiny nor any British desire to forget these potentially embarrassing episodes would be grounds for their exclusion. Clearly, however, the 1797 mutinies are not a *lieu de mémoire* for the simple but crucial reason that they are not, generally speaking, remembered (or even misremembered); they are not a ‘1066’, a ‘Magna Carta’, or a ‘Waterloo’. Their footprint in the collective British memory (in so far as such a thing can be said to exist) is miniscule. *Realms of Memory*, and the debates that it created, continues to be useful when questioning why this might be.

One possible explanation centres on location. Some of Nora’s most potent *lieux de mémoire* were physical places that can be visited, such as Valmy, Verdun, the Palace of Versailles, or Rheims Cathedral.⁶ This works against the 1797 fleet mutinies, which occurred in open stretches of water at the mouth of the Thames and in the Solent between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. These areas are visible from shore and traversed by ships, but are not

² Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory vol. I, Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. xvii.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Philippe Burrin, ‘Vichy’ in Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory vol. I*, p. 196.

⁶ Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory vol. I*, p. 18; Pierre Nora (ed.), *Realms of Memory vols. II-III*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996-98).

attractions; there is nothing to see and they are not visited for their own sake. One can, however, be moved by the memory of Verdun whether or not one has personally visited, or even seen photographs of the battlefield.

A more compelling idea is that the 1797 mutinies could not become a *lieu de mémoire* because they stood in opposition to a much more powerful British *lieu*: a feeling of historical naval exceptionalism. To explore this idea more clearly in relation to the 1797 fleet mutinies, location is again useful. The sites of the fleet mutinies are also places associated with the stronger and lasting *lieu de mémoire* of British naval success as Portsmouth and the Thames were two crucial nodes of the British fiscal-naval state. Portsmouth was, and is, Britain's foremost naval base, the *de facto* home of the Royal Navy, while the Thames was the arterial gateway to the imperial metropole and the facilitator of a vibrant exchange of goods and wealth. Temporally too, the mutinies occurred between the two great victories of St Vincent and Camperdown (both 1797), which relegated them to the status of inconsequential counter-currents to be ironed out in the macro-history of 'national memory'. Nora was clear that events could be *lieux de mémoire*, but the mutinies are smothered by more dramatic events, particularly naval victories.

I. Public and Institutional Executions

The executions that followed the Nore mutiny were choreographed in order to reassure a nervous public by conveying a clear message that order had been restored. This impression was communicated unambiguously in the account of Richard Parker's execution that was widely circulated in the press.⁷ The words of this report were carefully chosen to present the impression that the Royal Navy had once again returned to perfect working order. Parker's execution was described as 'ceremonial' and an 'awful ceremony': terms which exude a sense of control. The word 'exactly' was twice employed to emphasise a near-mechanical precision. It was reported that Parker 'suffered exactly at half past nine', and that

⁷ This is the only contemporary published account of Parker's execution that I have found and it appeared in identical or near-identical form in many newspapers including those listed in footnote 9. This account is discussed further in the following section.

‘he was interred exactly at noon’.⁸ This description of disciplined meticulousness was a reassuring message to a population recently shaken by the temporary impotency of their most stalwart defence.

In 1783 the parade to Tyburn was discontinued. Condemned prisoners on land were no longer escorted to the infamous Tyburn tree for execution, but met their fate on a platform outside the newly-rebuilt Newgate prison.⁹ This change also ended the common practice of executing criminals as close as possible to the scene of their crime. In the Royal Navy, however, the tradition persisted. Having been tried on board *Neptune*, Richard Parker was conveyed back down the Thames and was executed on board the *Sandwich*: his mutineer flagship.¹⁰ Later, mutineer leaders from other ships were also hanged on board their own vessels. Executing the men on the recently mutinous ships ensured that their crews would be exposed to the full deterrent effect of the spectacle. The population of the surrounding area, who had been terrified of hostile action by the mutinous fleet, were also able to observe the executions. Many, such as the clerk of Minster parish, Stephen Rouse, watched from hilltops, while, in a reflection of the traditional practice at Tyburn executions, a spectator stand was constructed on the Isle of Grain.¹¹ Meanwhile, a host of small boats had also assembled to provide their passengers with the best view of events. Among them was one Alderman Curtis who, reported the *Morning Post*, ‘to see Parker hanged [...] set sail in a pleasure yacht’.¹²

Naval executions always conformed to a set pattern.¹³ Early in the morning a gun would be fired and a yellow flag hoisted as a sign of punishment. When the allotted moment of execution arrived, one gun would be fired for each prisoner and they would simultaneously be hauled up by the neck to the yardarm, where they would be left to hang for a full hour. Each warship in the area would send a boat of armed men alongside the execution ship in order to witness justice take its course and to provide added security. At the yardarm Parker’s body would have been clearly visible to the sailors of the fleet, to Curtis and others in the

⁸ *English Chronicle or Universal Post*, 30 June 1797; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 1 July 1797; *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 1 July 1797; *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 3 July 1797.

⁹ Peter Linebaugh, ‘The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons’ in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E.P. Thompson, Cal Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree, Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 67; Clive Emsley, *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900* (London: Pearson Longman, 2005), p. 265.

¹⁰ *English Chronicle or Universal Post*, 30 June 1797; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 1 July 1797; *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 1 July 1797; *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 3 July 1797.

¹¹ David T. Hughes, *Sheerness and the Mutiny at the Nore* (Minster-in-Sheppey: Sheppey Local History Society, 1997), p. 34; G.E. Manwaring and Bonamy Dobrée, *The Floating Republic* (London: Frank Cass and Co. LTD, 1966), p. 241.

¹² *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 30 June 1797.

¹³ Letter from G. Thompson, officer of *HMS London* to his wife describing the format of naval executions, 9 September 1797, NMM, AGC/30/4/2.

boats, and to spectators on shore like Rouse. Within minutes, news of the execution was conveyed to the Admiralty in London using the system of naval semaphore towers. In these ways, the executions of mutineers, and particularly of Parker, were stage-managed to maximise the message of deterrence and restored normality.

On the day that the court martial found Parker guilty, the court received orders from London to make all necessary preparations to ‘hang the body in chains on the most conspicuous part of the Isle of Grain’.¹⁴ This gruesome punishment, which was becoming less common by the late-eighteenth century, had previously been used predominantly for murderers, but could also be employed in response to particular waves of other crimes, such as highway robbery or piracy.¹⁵ The proposal to gibbet Parker in this way was designed to maximise and prolong the deterrent message of his execution. Admiral Pasley replied to the instructions expressing that ‘the court hopes he [Parker] may be hung in chains’.¹⁶ The grisly spectacle of Parker’s body rotting at the gibbet was, in the end, averted. The government’s legal officers were consulted on the propriety of such a measure, but it is not known whether it was objections from them or simply the fear of provoking further unrest on land or in the fleet which proved decisive to the decision simply to provide Parker a rapid and anonymous burial.¹⁷ In these ways the executions which followed the Nore mutiny were the result of careful design in order to maximise the power of the desired messages of deterrence and restored normality. At first, these strategies met with considerable success.

¹⁴ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference C 432, 26 June 1797.

¹⁵ Peter King, ‘Rethinking the Bloody Code in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Capital Punishment at the Centre and on the Periphery’ *Past and Present* vol. 228 (2015), pp. 159-205, 171.

¹⁶ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/74, letter reference C 444, 27 June 1797.

¹⁷ Conrad Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, Forgotten Books (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1913), 248; Manwaring and Dobrée, *The Floating Republic*, 240.

II. The Execution of Richard Parker as a Model of Exemplary Justice

The first academic historian of the 1797 mutinies, Conrad Gill, argued that ‘Parker has received, both from his contemporaries and from more recent writers, a greater amount of consideration than he deserved’.¹⁸ This is an astute criticism; Parker’s importance has undoubtedly been overstated. He appears to have had no role in planning or instigating the mutiny at the Nore, and, despite the grand title of ‘president’, his ability to shape policy was always doubtful and never absolute. His role appears to have been that of glorified spokesman cum-chairperson. As such, the significant attention paid to Parker throughout this study requires some justification. Unlike most other works, our focus here is not on what Parker did or thought, but on the ways in which he came to symbolise the 1797 mutinies as a whole. For many, Parker represented the mutinies personified: a prism through which people engaged with and understood the mutinies.

Richard Parker was the first mutineer to be tried and executed, and so received significant press attention. Even while the Nore mutiny was still ongoing, Parker’s name and reputation had become infamous throughout the country. Alone amongst the mutineers, Parker achieved the status of celebrity criminal, and spawned stories, rumours, and even material culture.¹⁹ As such, in seeking to impose their own narrative on the mutinies, the civil and naval authorities could not afford to ignore Parker. The official narrative of Parker and the mutinies would be heavily contested and extensively discussed: precisely the opposite of what the authorities had intended.²⁰ The battle for Parker’s memory was pivotal to the popular interpretation of the mutinies as a whole, and it is this association that justifies the detailed study of Richard Parker and his legacy.

¹⁸ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, 249.

¹⁹ No other mutineer, for example, inspired anything like the wave of dubious biographies that quickly appeared on the market after Parker’s execution. See for example *Memoirs of Richard Parker, the Mutineer* (London: George Cawthorn, 1797); *Genuine Particulars of the Life of the Celebrated Richard Parker, Alias Admiral Parker* (Publisher unknown, 1797).

²⁰ This contestation of memory bore some resemblances to the debates that surrounded the meaning of the bicentennial commemorations of the French Revolution in 1989, as investigated in Steven Lawrence Kaplan, *Farewell Revolution: Disputed Legacies, France 1789/1989* (London: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 480-483.

As the Nore mutiny drew towards its end, the reading public received their first detailed information about Richard Parker.²¹ This came from official channels, through which the civil and naval authorities enjoyed an initial monopoly on communication about Parker. Worried that the famous mutineer might try to flee his disintegrating presidency, ‘wanted’ notices were issued and ships sent to guard the Thames estuary.²² Starting as they intended to go on, the authorities, led by the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, set out to ensure that Parker would be presented as a villainous object of hatred, and not as a sympathetic folk hero. A £500 reward was offered for the capture of Parker, ‘the Mutineer Chief at the Nore (who stands charged with various acts of mutiny, treason, and rebellion)’. He was described unflatteringly as ‘of about thirty years of age, five feet nine or ten inches high, of a dark complexion, thin visage, prominent nose, and dark eyes; dresses in a very slovenly manner, wears his own black hair, untied and uncropped’. Perhaps to discredit him further, and distance him from Britain’s loyal, skilful Jack Tars, it was made clear that Parker was mentioned ‘not as a sailor, but as a supernumerary seaman on board the *Sandwich*’.²³ While it is accurate that Parker was a supernumerary on board *Sandwich*, this ignores his extensive naval experience. As such, calling Parker a supernumerary might have been a deliberate insult. It appears more likely, however, that this was intended to reassure the public that the ringleader was not a true British Tar, thereby taking a tentative first step towards the rehabilitation of the navy.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault wrote extensively about the important role of the penitent sinner as a legitimising device within a judicial system. Foucault observed that, in cases of public execution, the condemned individual retained the freedom to decide how far to cooperate with the authorities by adopting the role prescribed to them in the judicial theatrics. In ideal cases, when ‘each of the participants played his role well, the penal ceremony had the effectiveness of a long public confession’.²⁴ Foucault gave the example of François Billiard, a postal worker executed for murdering his wife in 1772. When the executioner went to cover Billiard’s face to protect him from the torments of the crowd, he refused to permit it, saying ““This punishment, which I have merited, has not been inflicted upon me so that I should not be seen by the public””. Billiard was dressed soberly in mourning dress for his wife, and his appearance was smart, thanks partly to new shoes and

²¹ Parker’s name was already familiar to the public as the mutineer ‘President’ from a range of newspaper reports, but these gave scant details about him, and were often mistaken and contradictory.

²² Admiralty Board Minutes, 1797, TNA, ADM3/118, fols. 270-72.

²³ *Lloyd’s Evening Post* (London), 12.06.1797. An identical description was also printed and widely circulated in many other newspapers.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 44.

carefully presented hair. His countenance was ‘so modest and so dignified that those present [...] said that he must be the most perfect Christian or the greatest of all hypocrites’. It was noted that when the placard around his neck announcing his crime went askew, ‘he had straightened it himself, no doubt so that people could read it more easily’.²⁵ Through his conformity with the ideal of the penitent sinner, Billiard epitomised the ‘good condemned man’, and his was a ‘good execution’. The deterrent message of justice taking its course was reinforced by the recognition on the part of the condemned that the sentence was just, and their apparent consent to their fate. This was potent justice: uncomplicated by doubt, protestations of innocence, or contested legitimacy. As such, the prevailing message was a single, dominant, and officially-sanctioned one. The only risk, as demonstrated by the work of Peter Linebaugh, was that such a display of contrition could lead the assembled crowd to feel sympathy for the condemned, and perhaps momentarily forget their crimes.²⁶

Such a risk, though, was minimal compared to what was to be feared from an execution where the condemned refused to play their part. With nothing left to lose, the criminal could speak freely to a potentially impressionable and impassioned audience in a context where ‘nothing remained to prohibit or to punish’. Through these means, executions could become riots, and an event designed to convey ‘the terrorizing power of the prince’ could become a carnival in which ‘rules were inverted, authority mocked, and criminals transformed into heroes’.²⁷ Therefore, while the condemned surely feared the gallows: the hangman, the local authorities, and the state itself also had much to fear from the prospect of a public execution. In the case of a man such as Richard Parker, who had acquired notoriety on a national scale, these risks were multiplied. In such circumstances, nothing could be left to chance. Parker’s had to be a *good* execution.

Only one account of Parker’s execution was widely circulated in the press and subsequently in pamphlet form. It is not known who wrote it, but its style is strongly reminiscent of the Ordinary of Newgate’s accounts. These were frequently-published reports of the dying behaviour and final speeches of condemned criminals, written by the chaplain of Newgate prison, who accompanied the prisoner to the end. This account appeared verbatim in many newspapers of various different political allegiances and biases, and, at least in the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Linebaugh, ‘The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons’ in Hay, Linebaugh, Rule, Thompson, and Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree*, p. 79.

²⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, pp. 60-61. Examples of this phenomenon in Britain have been examined by, for example, Hay, Linebaugh, Rule, Thompson and Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree*.

short-term, achieved an effective monopoly on the news of Parker's execution.²⁸ The level of detail shown in the account of Parker's execution: down to the smallest gesture, expression, and speech from Parker, could (assuming it to be genuine) only have come from someone on board the *Sandwich*. This strongly suggests that the witness who put pen to paper was a naval officer, sailor, or perhaps the chaplain himself.²⁹ It is not known whether or not this account was endorsed or propagated by higher authorities in the Admiralty or government. At the same time, the fact that the execution took place on the confined and separate world of a warship means that they would have been in a good position to control or shape news as they saw fit.

From this account it would appear that Parker was willing to play his allotted part in the judicial drama.³⁰ With minute attention to detail, he was portrayed as a contrite sinner, full of regret, and ready to face the penalty for his crimes with calm decorum. Parker requested a barber and dressed himself in a neat suit. This was a far cry from the 'slovenly' dressed man of the 'wanted' announcements. Parker spoke of his will, in which he left everything to his wife, and reiterated his argument that the Nore mutiny had had nothing to do 'with any disaffected persons on shore'. His temporal matters attended to, Parker turned to matters spiritual, and joined the chaplain on the quarterdeck, where he appeared 'uncovered' and reverently 'bowed to the officers'. Consenting to the two psalms selected by the clergyman, Parker added a third of his own: psalm 51, 'that beautiful confessional of David and imploring of forgiveness, "Have mercy upon me, O God [...] according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offenses"', which Parker recited 'in a manner peculiarly impressive'.³¹ With this compunctious remorse, Parker assumed the mantle of the penitent sinner. The legitimacy of Parker's execution could not be reproached if he himself had seemed to endorse it.

²⁸ Hannah Barker, however, has argued that readership size and advertising revenue were much more important to the profitability of a newspaper than political subsidies, and has therefore cautioned against seeing newspapers wholly as organs of this or that political party. Instead, she suggests that they were reflections of the views of their readers: seeking at once to lead and to follow those views. Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), pp. 4, 52, 72.

²⁹ Chaplains of condemned criminals, and particularly the Ordinaries of Newgate, were accustomed to augmenting their income by selling written accounts of the behaviour of their charges during their final hours. Anthony Skirboll, *The Thief-Taker Hangings: How Daniel Defoe, Jonathan Wild, and Jack Sheppard Captivated London and Created Scandal Journalism* (Guilford, Connecticut: Lyons Press, 2014), p. 152; Old Bailey Online page on the Ordinary of Newgate's Accounts, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Ordinarys-accounts.jsp>, last accessed 14/02/20.

³⁰ See, for example, *The English Chronicle*, 30.06.1797; *A True and Particular Account of the Execution of Richard Parker* (Pamphlet, 1797).

³¹ *Ibid.*

The sound of the signal gun, announcing his present doom, Parker ‘heard without the slightest emotion’. He requested and was granted a small glass of white wine, which he used to toast first ‘to the salvation of my soul’, and then ‘to the forgiveness of all of my enemies’.³² At this point, Parker asked to shake Captain Mosse’s hand, and Mosse, who had seen his ship and command usurped by Parker, consented. Parker also requested that his last best wishes might be conveyed to his fellow mutineer prisoners waiting on board the *Neptune*, along with his advice to ‘prepare for their destiny and refrain from unbecoming levity’. The judicial party processed forward from the quarterdeck to the place of execution on the forecastle, with the prisoner displaying ‘a firm deportment’. There Parker knelt once again in obedient prayer.

When the sentence of the court martial was read, Parker declared that ‘I acknowledge the justice of the sentence under which I suffer, and I hope that my death might be deemed a sufficient atonement, and save the lives of others’.³³ The appeal of the condemned that those in attendance should learn from their sad example was a significant tenet of a ‘good execution’. By complying, seemingly voluntarily, Parker did much of the work of the authorities for them. Others, on occasion, required reminding of their role at this stage of the judicial drama. At his execution in August, Richard Brown of the *Monmouth* stood ‘ready to resign himself to the executioner’ when an official ‘stopped him and whispered a few words to him; whereupon he turned around to the ship’s crew, and, in a very impressive manner, “desired them to take warning by his fate; that he was going to suffer for having violated the laws of his country”’.³⁴ Parker, by contrast, had required no prompt, and nor had his fellow *Sandwich* mutineers, who made similarly satisfactory dying declarations.³⁵

After a minute of silence ‘to collect himself’, Parker moved into position, ‘holding his head up with considerable dignity’ while the noose was placed around his neck. Turning to his shipmates on the forecastle, Parker gave an affectionate smile and bid them ‘Goodbye to you’. Moments later, the hood was lowered over his face and he was run up to the yardarm.³⁶ The widely-circulated official account of these proceedings concluded with evident satisfaction that ‘the whole conduct of this awful ceremony was extremely decorous and

³² One wonders if the clear description of ‘white’ wine here was considered necessary to avoid connotations of the Eucharist, the Last Supper, or the fate of Jesus Christ, with the spilling of innocent blood.

³³ See, for example, *The English Chronicle*, 30.06.1797; *A True and Particular Account of the Execution of Richard Parker* (Pamphlet, 1797).

³⁴ *The London Chronicle*, 17.08.1797.

³⁵ Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM1/729, fol. 601.

³⁶ See, for example, *The English Chronicle*, 30.06.1797; *A True and Particular Account of the Execution of Richard Parker* (Pamphlet, 1797).

impressive' and that 'it was evident, from the countenances of the crew of the *Sandwich*, that the general feeling for the fate of their mutinous conductor was such as might be wished' with 'not a word and scarce a whisper' heard among them.³⁷

The account concludes in a surprisingly conciliatory manner, as though providing a post-mortem reward for Parker's willingness to deliver a 'good' execution. While the readers were reminded that Parker's apparently not inconsiderable gifts were 'so unfortunately misdirected against the interests of his country', it was readily conceded that,

his decent contrition, and candid acknowledgement of the justice of his sentence, have proved the best atonement in his power for his national offence. His last words of manly submission cannot fail to have a proper influence on the minds of British seamen [...] it was not the exit of a *desperado* [...] but that of a man who, conscious of the enormity of his offences, was resolved at the same time to maintain his fortitude to the last.³⁸

The authorities had good reason to be satisfied.³⁹ Every word of this account of Parker's behaviour emphasises the restoration of order and the just atonement of a repentant criminal. This message was also spread using other mediums. Figure 7.1, for example, shows a famous contemporary image of Parker's death. Here Richard Parker appears twice: as both officer and criminal, but the latter appears as a peripheral figure at his own execution. The focus of the image is unquestionably the naval officer: the embodiment of retributive naval justice, and an unambiguous return to ordered normality. The lifeless Parker, a scarecrow-like figure confined to the top left corner of the image, might escape notice altogether if it were not for the triumphant gesture of the officer's sword in his direction. Parker's appearance as the officer in the foreground represents his usurpation of the role of an officer, and the direction of his sword indicates the price that he paid for this daring. As such, the image can be seen as 'a visual equivalent of the, often repentant, gallows speeches rushed out in popular editions [...] after the public executions of notorious criminals.'⁴⁰

The physical representation of Parker here is also worthy of comment. He is depicted wearing an odd ensemble that does not match the regulation uniform for any naval officer. His long plain tailcoat is out of keeping with the rigours of a life at sea and the

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ For a sense of satisfaction among senior naval officers at Parker's execution, see Letters from Commanders-in-Chief, Nore: 1797, TNA, ADM 1/728, fol. 463.

⁴⁰ The Execution of Richard Parker (1797) NMM, PAH5441, as described at <http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/145388.html>, last accessed 14.04.18.

embellishments of sash, belt, and neckerchief appear equally out of place. This gives the impression that his aping the role and bearing of an officer was never altogether convincing and is perhaps also suggestive of seditious civilian or French Revolutionary inspiration. Coupled with Parker's odd pose and somewhat delicate appearance, it is possible that this image sought to make Parker look effeminate and rob him of the distinctive naval masculinity that Joanne Begiato and Isaac Land have identified as developing in this period.⁴¹ One might also wonder if the comically small pistol positioned suggestively at Parker's belt was a further attempt to emasculate him, while the juxtaposition of another small pistol beside a large cannon could represent a comparison of Parker's feeble power to the strength and masculinity of the navy as a whole.

Figure 7.1 The execution of Richard Parker (1797)⁴²



Parker's 'good execution' did much to reassure the political elites. At the height of the mutinies, several newspapers, like Edmund Burke, had called for peace with France. It was feared, however, that as long as the mutinies continued, 'no man in his senses can expect a good peace'.⁴³ With the mutiny suppressed and Parker hanged, confidence returned. Whereas the opinion 'that peace was absolutely necessary [...] was said during the existence of the

⁴¹ Joanne Begiato, 'Tears and the manly sailor in England, c. 1760–1860', *Journal for Maritime Research* vol. 17 (2015), pp. 117-133; Isaac Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750-1850* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 21, 89.

⁴² The Execution of Richard Parker (1797) NMM, PAH5441.

⁴³ *Whitehall Evening Post*, 13.06.1797; *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 09.05.1797.

mutiny at the Nore', and even a 'bad' peace was feared necessary, this was no longer the case by July. The British negotiator, Lord Malmesbury was encouraged to 'treat upon equal terms' and to 'spurn with indignation at any humiliating condition, should France, misled by folly or presumption, insult our importance'.⁴⁴ Letters of apology addressed by several ships' companies to their officers also suggested that normality was being restored. One such letter was that of the *Mars*, in which the crew promised 'to lay down our lives for our Officers, and in defence of our King and Country', which bore 493 signatures.⁴⁵ Unverified reports were soon circulating that the French, Spanish, and Dutch navies were themselves in a state of mutiny.⁴⁶ As the navy returned to loyal service, talk of peace at any price disappeared. The mood was captured by a poem, set to the tune of 'Hearts of Oak', which appeared in the press:

No longer, Britannia, with anger behold
Thy Guardians, thy Sailors in mutiny bold:
With sorrow, they bend, and thy pardon implore,
Insulting not now, but protecting thy shore.
O yet shall thy Flag be with lustre unfurl'd,
Our Sailors are ready, steady Boys steady,
And whilst they are true, we may fight all the world.⁴⁷

One problem with Parker's decorous behaviour at his execution was that it risked creating public sympathy and admiration. Six days after Parker's death, the *Oracle and Public Advertiser* questioned the intentions of those of their countrymen who had 'laboured so much to exalt the character of Parker', and asked what good purpose could be served by seeking 'to represent his fortitude as *heroic*'. Its readers were reminded that 'heroism does not consist in a contempt for death', which had often been demonstrated by even 'the most profligate, and the most criminal'.⁴⁸ Nor should sympathy for an 'afflicted widow' mitigate the fact that Parker's 'conduct exposed his country to carnage, depredation, and ruin'.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ *True Briton*, 01.07.1797.

⁴⁵ Letter of apology by the crew of the *Mars* (1797), NMM, MKH/15.

⁴⁶ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 19.05.1797 (French fleet at Brest); *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 09.08.1797; *Star*, 09.10.1797, (Dutch fleet); *Courier and Evening Gazette*, 16.08.1797 (Spanish Fleet).

⁴⁷ *St. James's Chronicle*, 29.06.1797.

⁴⁸ *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 06.07.1797.

⁴⁹ Anthony Skirboll has analysed the similar case of the celebrated criminal Jack Sheppard, who was the subject of admiration even at his execution. Skirboll, *The Thief-Taker Hangings*; *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 06.07.1797.

If all had gone to plan, the *Oracle*'s warning would likely have been unnecessary. After Parker's body had been left hanging for a full hour, in accordance with tradition, it was removed and hurriedly interred in an anonymous grave in the obscure naval graveyard ringed by a high fence between Sheerness and Minster on the Isle of Sheppey.⁵⁰ If it had remained there, as it should have done, then the lasting memory of the mutinies might have been uncontested. The civil and naval authorities would likely have seen their expectation fulfilled; Parker would quickly have been forgotten, or, if he had been remembered, the lasting recollection would have been that of the penitent sinner facing his just death with regret and a potent warning to his fellows.⁵¹ Parker's had been a 'good' execution with a simple but powerful message, and the Admiralty and government had every reason to feel satisfied.

III. Contested Memory

From the moment of his death, Parker's body was an inanimate, though symbolically charged, object. The physical struggle waged over Parker's body came to reflect the wider contestation of the memory of the mutinies. Peter Linebaugh has argued that eighteenth-century riots against surgeons at Tyburn, while centred around the physical remains of an executed individual, were expressions of social solidarity, cultural and religious beliefs, superstitions, and a desire for a decent, Christian burial.⁵² Modest as these aims were, they could represent a significant challenge to judicial authority and a threat to the public peace. Conflicts over dead bodies were understood to convey all of these meanings, and Parker's body commanded interest on a national scale.

⁵⁰ *The English Chronicle*, 30.06.1797.

⁵¹ Catriona Kennedy has demonstrated that many in Britain seemed to agree with the Admiralty in their desire to forget the mutinies as soon as possible and that these became 'subject to an enforced collective amnesia': Catriona Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Military and Civilian Experience in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 166.

⁵² Peter Linebaugh, 'The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons' in Hay, Linebaugh, Rule, Thompson, and Winslow, *Albion's Fatal Tree*; V. A. C. Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree, Execution and the English People, 1770-1868* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 84.

Like the relatives of many of the individuals executed at Tyburn, Ann Parker was determined that Richard should receive a Christian burial. Hearing of her husband's involvement in the Nore mutiny, and having herself undergone interrogation by the Provost of Edinburgh, twenty-seven-year-old Ann hurried south.⁵³ Ann reached Sheerness just two and a half hours before Richard's execution. It is thanks to the enormous interest felt in the fate of Richard Parker that we are able to reconstruct the events of the following hours and days. In the first week of July, several London newspapers published 'An authentic statement of Mrs Ann Parker[...] as related by herself' complete with a signed declaration of verification.⁵⁴

Immediately on her arrival in Sheerness, Ann hired a boat to take her out to the *Sandwich* in order to see her husband. Three times she made this increasingly desperate journey and three times the *Sandwich*'s marine sentries ordered her boat away. On the third occasion, Ann witnessed her husband process to the place of execution, at which point she fainted and was rowed back to Sheerness, having failed to speak to Richard. When Ann recovered, she instantly chartered a fourth boat, from which she could see the lifeless body of her husband hanging at the yardarm. Before she could reach the *Sandwich*, Richard's body was taken down and rowed ashore for anonymous burial.

Still determined to accord Richard Parker a decent burial, Ann quickly found the naval graveyard and, at ten o'clock that evening, with the help of three other women, they exhumed Richard's coffin 'with their hands alone', and lifted it over the gate. Ann paid several cart drivers to secretly transport the coffin to London. There she stored the body at the Hoop and Horseshoe Inn, not far from the Tower of London, while she made enquiries about a funeral. Arriving late on Saturday, however, it was reported that the cadaver of the infamous Richard Parker 'attracted a great number of idle people on Sunday'.⁵⁵ Contemporary newspapers reported that the increasing throngs of people eager to see the arch-mutineer and his widow were motivated predominantly 'through curiosity', but also expressed fears of those with 'other motives'.⁵⁶

⁵³ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/75, letter reference Pro P 23, 15 June 1797. The interrogation yielded nothing of substance other than Mrs Parker's claim that her husband suffered occasional fits of madness.

⁵⁴ See, for example, the *Evening Mail*, 05.07.1797; *London Evening Post*, 08.07.1797.

⁵⁵ *London Chronicle*, 04.07.1797.

⁵⁶ *Evening Mail*, 05.07.1797; *London Evening Post*, 08.07.1797.

The historian, Conrad Gill, dismissed this public sensation as of ‘no historical importance’ and merely ‘due to the deference shown by a certain class of people to notoriety of any kind’, but this misses the point, and the danger.⁵⁷ The popular perception of the mutinies was still potently fresh. The narrative of the mutinies was still in a fluid state; like molten metal it was still being poured, shaped and moulded; it had not yet cooled and set into solid iron. While it had enjoyed an initial monopoly, the officially-sanctioned narrative of the mutinies and what they meant could still be contested. The resurrection of Parker’s body had also resurrected the conversation. The Admiralty had buried Parker in obscurity at Sheerness and were confident that he and the mutinies would soon be forgotten. Suddenly he appeared on their own doorstep in London, lifted from the grave and exciting the lower orders of society into a dangerous frenzy: his cadaver acting as a macabre tourist attraction-cum holy relic.

As far as the civil authorities were concerned, Ann’s actions had snatched defeat from the jaws of victory. Alarmed at the popularity of the late Richard Parker, and concerned that curiosity might all too easily give way to sympathy, obscurity to martyrdom: they set to work to remedy the situation and restore the primacy of their own narrative of memory. This was like rushing to lock the stable door after the horse had bolted. On 4 July, the Admiralty received an evidently furious letter from the secretary of state complaining that large crowds had gathered ‘in Whitechapel to view the body of Richard Parker which had been taken up from the place of internment by Mrs Parker’. With some frustration, and likely conscious of the further mutineer executions to follow, the Admiralty was requested to give instructions ‘for preventing the removal of the bodies after internment’. Somewhat unhelpfully, the Admiralty replied that ‘their Lordships have no means of preventing the removal of the bodies after internment’.⁵⁸ This admission of impotence might equally be applied to the Admiralty’s inability to reimpose the primacy of their own mutiny narrative. They had failed to permanently remove Parker, and consequently they had lost control over the process of public memory formation. From then on, the rest of the executed Nore mutineers were buried at sea, where they could do no harm.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*, 251.

⁵⁸ Admiralty Correspondence Digests, TNA, ADM12/75, letter reference Secy State, 4 July 1797.

⁵⁹ Letter from Captain G. Thompson of *HMS London* to his wife, dated 9 September 1797, NMM, AGC/30/4/2.

With the curious crowds growing ever larger, the parish officials took action. The curious onlookers were dispersed, the body of Richard Parker secured and stored in a nearby workhouse, and Ann Parker interrogated by a local magistrate, Rice Davies.⁶⁰ Ann reiterated her intention to bury her husband ‘like a Christian’.⁶¹ Parker was secretly buried in the vault of St Mary Matfelon’s church, Whitechapel, in the early hours of the morning. Within hours, Ann had again located her late husband. At her request, ‘the funeral service was performed’ over Richard by the rector. Ann signed a declaration to confirm that she was ‘perfectly satisfied with the mode of his interment’.⁶² Richard had received his Christian burial.

The popular interest in Parker’s body placed him securely in the tradition of the ‘celebrity criminal’, for which there were notable precedents. In 1724, Jack Sheppard, a famous thief and gifted escape artist was hanged at Tyburn. He had previously escaped from prison four times, and a fifth escape was foiled on the morning of his execution, when a concealed dagger was found on him. After his death, however, Sheppard’s body managed a strange escape of its own. Fearing that the corpse might go to the surgeons for dissection, the crowd rushed forward and stole it. With some difficulty, the authorities reimposed order, found and secured the, now rather mangled, body, and conducted it under guard to burial.⁶³ Six months later, in May 1725, the famous-turned-infamous ‘thief-taker general’, Jonathan Wild, followed Sheppard to the gallows at Tyburn. The public mood at Wild’s execution was very different from that at Sheppard’s. Wild had become so despised that the crowd were determined that he should be dissected, and so suffer all of the cultural connotations identified by Linebaugh.⁶⁴ Like Parker’s second interment, Wild was buried at night to avoid disturbance, but he was soon dug up again. As the crowd had wished, Wild was dissected. His skeleton was kept, and rests in the Hunterian collection, and the remains — his skin, flesh, and entrails — were dumped on the riverbank by Whitehall.⁶⁵ Whereas Parker’s ‘resurrection’ had been a mark of love and respect on the part of his wife, seemingly mirrored by the sympathy of some in London, Wild’s disinterment was a mark of public loathing. In their own way, both represent a popular judgement: an illicit intercession of ‘the people’ into processes of justice and historicisation.

⁶⁰ *London Chronicle*, 04.07.1797.

⁶¹ *Evening Mail*, 05.07.1797; *London Evening Post*, 08.07.1797.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Skirboll, *The Thief-Taker Hangings*, p. 185.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 208; Linebaugh, ‘The Tyburn Riot Against the Surgeons’ in Hay, Linebaugh, Rule, Thompson, and Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree*, p. 115.

⁶⁵ The skeleton of the thief-taker Jonathan Wild, executed at Tyburn in 1725, The Hunterian Museum, Royal College of Surgeons, London, RCSHM/Osteo. 336; Skirboll, *The Thief-Taker Hangings*, p. 185.

Though it was easy to remove Parker from physical sight, he and the mutinies could not be put out of mind. The story of Parker's unusual afterlife was too compelling for that. As Thea Tomaini has recently argued in the case of, for example, Charles I and Oliver Cromwell, each successive exhumation of famous historical figures necessarily led to a renewed discussion and re-evaluation of their contribution and legacy to society.⁶⁶ Though Parker's initial interment had lasted only ten hours, the same discursive process accompanied his 'resurrection'. By losing control of Richard Parker's physical remains for some five days, the civil and naval authorities had irreparably lost control of the public memory and interpretation of the mutinies. Whereas they had previously set the terms of public perception and dominated discussion, this was no longer possible.

Like the contest over Parker's body, the lasting narrative and understanding of the 1797 fleet mutinies would be similarly contested. While the main result was, therefore, abstract rather than physical, there exists in the collection of the Royal College of Surgeons' Hunterian Museum in London a tangible reminder of the authorities' loss of control over the public memory of the mutinies. When the corpse of the infamous Richard Parker lay in the Hoop and Horseshoe Inn, William Clift, an assistant to Dr John Hunter, visited the body and created a death mask. The face of Richard Parker, a face which the British government believed would never be seen again after noon on 30 June 1797, can still be seen, immortalised in ghostly white plaster, little more than a mile from where his corpse proved such a public attraction (see Figure 7.2).

This is reminiscent of Kim Wagner's analysis of the skull of Alum Bheg, an Indian rebel of the 1857 uprising. For Wagner, the skull was potent as 'both a relic of Indian savagery and as a trophy of colonial retribution' with the result that it represented 'the ultimate proof of colonial power'.⁶⁷ Parker's death mask embodies a strange inversion of this. The fact of Parker's death was an expression of state power, but the existence of the death mask actually conveyed the opposite as it was made when the body was illicitly removed from state possession. As such, the mask speaks at once of state weakness and of Parker's celebrity; its very existence appears akin to a protest. Whereas skulls like Alum Bheg's were used to persuade Indian villagers that their leaders were dead and their cause with them, the surviving image of Parker was not created for such a purpose as the authorities did not need

⁶⁶ Thea Tomaini, *The Corpse as Text: Disinterment and Antiquarian Enquiry, 1700-1900* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2017); Thea Cervone, 'The Corpse as Text: The Polemics of Memory and the Deaths of Charles I and Oliver Cromwell' *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* vol. 2 (2013), pp. 47-72.

⁶⁷ Kim A. Wagner, *The Skull of Alum Bheg, The Life and Death of a Rebel of 1857* (London: Hurst & Co., 2017), p. xx.

to prove that Parker was dead and hoped that he would be forgotten.⁶⁸ The theatricality of the illicitly created death mask is also reminiscent of the dramatic wax tableaux displayed at Madame Tussauds in this period.⁶⁹

Figure 7.2 Death mask of Richard Parker, 1797⁷⁰



The drama of Richard's body intensified what was already an intense public interest in Parker as the figurehead of the mutinies. In the following days, rival newspapers engaged in stiff competition to acquire and present new details of an increasingly personal nature. What had begun with officially-sanctioned accounts of Parker's trial and execution quickly gave way to intimate documents presenting Parker's, rather than the authorities' view of matters.⁷¹ Several accounts of his trial and execution gave prominence to Parker's closing

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 193.

⁶⁹ Michelle E. Bloom, 'Staging the Execution of Louis XVI at Madame Tussaud's: Villiers De l'Isle-Adam's "Les Phantasmes De M. Redoux"', *Symposium* vol. 49 (1995), pp. 190-202.

⁷⁰ Death mask of Richard Parker by William Clift, 1797. The Hunterian Museum, Royal College of Surgeons, London, RCSHM/Z 31; Christie's Website:

https://www.christies.com/LotFinder/lot_details.aspx?intObjectID=6031650 (last accessed 02.03.2018).

⁷¹ Extensive sections of Mr Gurney's official transcripts of Parkers court martial were printed in newspapers including the *Evening Mail*, 23.06.1797; *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 23.06.1797; *General Evening Post*, 24.06.1797; *London Evening Post*, 24.06.1797; *St James's Chronicle*, 24.06.1797; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 24.06.1797; *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 23.06.1797; *Star*, 23.06.1797; *The Times*, 23.06.1797; *True Briton*, 23.06.1797; *London Chronicle*, 27.06.1797; *Ayres Sunday Gazette*, 25.06.1797; *Belle's Weekly Messenger*, 25.06.1797; *Morning Chronicle*, 28.06.1797; and the *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 28.06.1797. There was obviously enormous public interest; The official description of Parker's execution circulated equally widely.

statement, and ‘dying declaration’, and Ann Parker’s personal account of her body-snatching activities was widely published. The greatest coup went to the *Whitehall Evening Post*, which managed to view and print Parker’s last letter to his wife.⁷² There was clearly a voracious public demand behind this competition on the part of the press for Parker news and trivia. Whereas the officially-distributed narrative of Parker’s trial and execution had initially seemed poised to satisfy and reassure the British public, this was no longer the case.

This public fascination was reflected in a flowering of material culture. Even before Parker’s execution, a solitary advertisement had appeared announcing the preparation of a pamphlet of the complete trial of the mutineer president, ‘Embellished with a CORRECT LIKENESS of RICHARD PARKER’ from a sketch ‘taken from Life at the time of his Trial’. This compelling memento could be had for just one shilling. Predicting an avalanche of such pamphlets, the advert ended with a warning; ‘be careful to ask for Shrimpton’s Edition of Parker’s Trial, with his Portrait’.⁷³ They were correct; it was to be the first of many.

Pamphlets quickly appeared to satisfy different strata of society: from ornate illustrated publications for one or two shillings, to more modest editions for sixpence, or even basic pieces for tuppence.⁷⁴ Details about Parker were published to satisfy any budget, and there appears to have been at least a dozen separate editions.⁷⁵ Needless to say, with a voracious immediate public demand and information hard to come by (other than semi-official trial and execution accounts), the pragmatic publishers did not let the truth get in the way of a good story — or good sales — and many of these pamphlets contain a great deal of nonsense. Of particular note in this regard is the confident sounding *Genuine Particulars of the Life of the Celebrated Richard Parker, Alias Admiral Parker*[...] *By a Lady Many Years a Resident in Moscow — where she knew Parker intimately*.⁷⁶ This supposed account of Parker’s life incredibly includes a visit to Egypt and a long residence in Russia. It is clear that, thanks in great part to the conflict over Richard’s body, public interest in Parker and the

See, for example, *The English Chronicle*, 30.06.1797; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 01.07.1797; *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 01.07.1797; *Craftsman or Say’s Weekly Journal*, 08.07.1797.

⁷² *Whitehall Evening Post*, 08.07.1797. *Bell’s Weekly Messenger* was able to follow suit the next day.

⁷³ *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 28.06.1797.

⁷⁴ See for example *Memoirs of Richard Parker, the Mutineer* (London: George Cawthorn, 1797), ‘price one shilling’; and *The Trial at Large* (London: T. Shrimpton, 1797), ‘price one shilling’; *The Trial of Richard Parker, President of the Delegates, for Mutiny* (London: John Fairburn, 1797), ‘price sixpence’; *Genuine Particulars of the Life of the Celebrated Richard Parker, Alias Admiral Parker* (Publisher unknown, 1797), ‘price two-pence’.

⁷⁵ I have studied ten surviving Parker pamphlets, mostly at the British Library or available online, and have found multiple adverts in newspapers for separate editions that I have not been able to find extant.

⁷⁶ *Genuine Particulars of the Life of the Celebrated Richard Parker, Alias Admiral Parker* (Publisher unknown, 1797), ‘price two-pence’.

mutinies had expanded enormously; the trial and execution narratives were no longer sufficient to satisfy popular demand, and the terms of public discussion had moved beyond the control of the civil and naval authorities.

At the height of this ‘Parker mania’, the *Oracle and Public Advertiser* reported a (likely satirical) correspondent as recommending ‘the dismissal of certain subjects from the public prints as being fairly worn out’. Top of the list was ‘Richard Parker’.⁷⁷ The correspondent was to be disappointed. Even as newspapers became tired of reporting the ongoing courts martial and resorted to increasingly short summaries, the public fascination with all things Parker endured.⁷⁸

One of the forms taken by this fascination was a play, enterprisingly aimed to capitalise on public interest in Parker and the Nore mutiny. A theatre company in St George’s Fields, London, presented their latest piece with a strong maritime theme and under the title of ‘The Renegadoes’, which ‘greatly attracted the notice of the public’ due to its relation ‘to the late mutiny’.⁷⁹ Staying with the artistic world, in the days following Parker’s execution, adverts also appeared for “‘Britain’s Genius”; a Song occasioned by the late mutiny on board His Majesty’s Ships at the Nore by C. A., Price Sixpence’.⁸⁰

There was also significant interest in images of Parker, and here too one got what one paid for. At the lower end of the market, were crude and somewhat caricature-esque prints (see, for example, Figure 7.3). Portraits of Parker were even advertised for sale in France.⁸¹

⁷⁷ *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 07.07.1797.

⁷⁸ *E. Johnson’s British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, 02.07.1797 ‘The trials of the mutineers on board the Neptune still continue[...] yet they throw no new light on the original cause of the Mutiny; and the repetitious detail of circumstances yield but little amusement or information to the reader’; *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 12.07.1797, ‘Yesterday the trials of the Mutineers of the *Sandwich* was continued[...] As the evidence had no particular novelty in it, we omit it in this day’s paper’; similarly, *Craftsman or Say’s Weekly Journal*, 05.08.1797; *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 08.08.1797.

⁷⁹ *True Briton*, 21.08.1797.

⁸⁰ Christopher Anstey, *Britain’s Genius* (Bath, 1797); *Morning Post and Fashionable World*, 04.07.1797.

⁸¹ *Gazette Nationale ou Le Moniteur Universel*, 28 September 1797, inscribed by ‘Tassaert, citoyen français’ from a drawing done in Sheerness gaol.

Figure 7.3 Richard Parker by G. Thompson of the Old Bailey⁸²

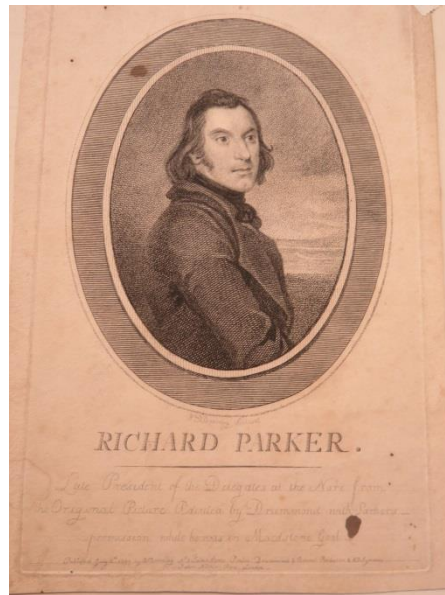
As with pamphlets, time pressure, lack of information, and public demand led to some underhanded practices by publishers and vendors. Of such images as Figure 7.3, the *Lloyd's Evening Post* warned its readers that 'An old print of Paul Jones [likely American naval commander John Paul Jones] has been new vamped, and is now sold with the trial as a striking likeness of Richard Parker'.⁸³ For those who could pay, however, a better option was available. In early July, the *Morning Chronicle* carried an advert for 'Richard Parker- Price 2s. A Genuine and Authentic Likeness [...] engraved by W. Bromley from an Original Picture Painted by Drummond (with Parker's permission) while in Maidstone Gaol, and which is the only one that he sat for' (see Figure 7.4). It was promised that 'the original picture may be seen' at the print shop on the day of publication.⁸⁴

⁸² Included in the front matter of *The Whole Trial and Defence of Richard Parker* (London: G. Thompson, 1797), 'price sixpence'.

⁸³ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 10.07.1797.

⁸⁴ *Morning Chronicle*, 08.07.1797.

Figure 7.4 Engraving of Richard Parker from a painting by Drummond⁸⁵



The importance placed on the authenticity and origins of this image are revealing of a desire to engage with Parker as a true individual, and also reflect the higher price of this print. For sixpence, one could buy Figure 7.3, basic as it is, along with an entire account of Parker's trial. The cost of Figure 7.4 alone was four times that of this first option. For that price, it seems, a certain accuracy was expected. The portrayal of Parker in Figure 7.4 bears a noticeable resemblance to Parker's death mask (see Figure 7.2), but the fact that Parker was only in Maidstone gaol for one night casts some doubt on this, unless Drummond was very quick with his brushes, or made preliminary sketches. Nevertheless, these images demonstrate the considerable appetite across social strata to own an image of Richard Parker: a form of personal commemoration far removed from the desires of the civil and naval authorities.

This necessarily begs the question of why people wished to memorialise Parker in art, verse, prose, and material culture. Their intentions must remain forever ambiguous: whether to celebrate the downfall of a dangerous villain, or to venerate a folk hero. Similarly, Stuart Semmel has emphasised the contested nature of relics collected in the wake of the Battle of Waterloo. For some, such material culture represented a heroic, almost Homeric tragedy as 'emblems of a lost cause', while for others the same items were 'trophies' and 'evidence of

⁸⁵ Engraving of Richard Parker from a painting by Drummond, July 1797. Found on the rear cover of 'A Narrative of Occurrences the took place during the Mutiny at the Nore in the Months of May and June, 1797' by Sir Charles Cunningham, NMM, CUN/3.

British triumph'.⁸⁶ These items, like Parker's cadaver and reproductions of his likeness, were part of a contested process of memory-formation. Comparisons have already been drawn to Aaron Skirboll's work on the London origins of the 'celebrity criminal' in the first quarter of the eighteenth century.⁸⁷ In many respects, the public tumults surrounding the execution of Jack Sheppard and Jonathan Wild appear as direct antecedents to the popular fascination with Richard Parker. The public process of memory-formation and reformation so evident in 1797, which centred heavily on the figure of Parker, must earn him a privileged place in the history of criminal celebrities.

If the public were interested in remembering, the Admiralty remained equally keen that the mutinies and Parker should be forgotten. It was reported in October that the *Sandwich*, the mutineer flagship of the Nore, had 'arrived in the River to be broken up, by order of the Admiralty, who are said to have passed a resolution not to rebuild her'.⁸⁸ The implication is that the Admiralty wished to remove the name *Sandwich* from the navy roll, and with it the shame of the mutiny. While *Sandwich* was removed from her role as Sheerness receiving ship, it was, in fact, recommissioned as a prison hulk, and only broken up in 1810.⁸⁹

The naval and civil authorities had, through the actions of Ann Parker, decisively lost control of the memory-formation process. The public stepped into the vacuum to have their say on Parker, the mutinies, their meanings and legacies. Whereas the Admiralty were initially confident that the debate closed with the favourable narrative of Parker's trial and execution, debate was reopened in a most sensationalist fashion, which could hardly have failed to excite public engagement and discussion. To the government's surprise, the memory and meaning of Parker and of the 1797 mutinies were contested. In the immediate and short-term after Parker's execution, it was a contest that they lost. Fortunately for the Admiralty and government, they received an opportunity to largely rewrite the memory of the mutinies just three and a half months later.

⁸⁶ Stuart Semmel, 'Reading the Tangible Past: British Tourism, Collecting, and Memory after Waterloo', *Representations* vol. 69 (2000), pp. 9-37, p. 25.

⁸⁷ Skirboll, *The Thief-Taker Hangings*.

⁸⁸ *True Briton*, 07.10.1797.

⁸⁹ Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2010), 16.

IV. Atonement at Camperdown, October 1797

Admiral Duncan's victory over the Dutch at the Battle of Camperdown on 11 October 1797 once again focussed public attention on the navy, but this time in a spirit of joy and pride. Since the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, doubts had lingered about the effectiveness of the navy, and no-one could say for certain how it would perform when the next great test arrived. These doubts magnified the sense of euphoria and relief that met the news of Duncan's victory, which, significantly, had been won by many of the same ships and men that had taken part in the Nore mutiny. As the British people breathed a collective sigh of relief, and felt again the old pride and affection for their navy, the civil and naval authorities did all in their power to use these new laurels of victory to wipe away forever the stain of the mutinies. The month-long mutinies at Spithead and the Nore were reduced to brief blips in the great continuous narrative of British naval glory. Increasingly, the public memory, and many subsequent histories, came to move rapidly from Jervis's triumph at St Vincent in February 1797 to Duncan's success in October without pausing to dwell on the awkward break in the story represented by the mutinies.⁹⁰ The naval and civil authorities exploited relief and victory to the full in order to overwrite the mutinies. Their previous attempt to hasten the retreat of the mutinies into obscurity through the primacy of their own ending to the drama had failed, but Camperdown gifted them a second chance, which they seized with both hands.

It is likely that a success like Camperdown would always do much to redeem the navy in the public imagination regardless of official policy. It is important to note, however, that the civil and naval authorities took unprecedented measures in order to celebrate Camperdown as no naval victory had been celebrated before. These measures make most sense when viewed as part of a deliberate attempt to eclipse forever the unpleasant memories of the 1797 fleet mutinies, and, to all intents and purposes, to make it appear as though they

⁹⁰ See for example Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793-1812*, vol. I (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1892). Mahan gives the largest mutinies in Royal Navy history (Spithead and the Nore) one passing reference (p. 248) and instead dedicates lengthy attention to Admiral St Vincent's distinctive force of personality in preventing and putting down mutinies in the Mediterranean fleet (pp. 236-39). Acknowledging the Spithead and Nore mutinies would have harmed Mahan's overall argument as to the overwhelming importance of naval power in world affairs.

had never happened. The fact that the mutinies are dwarfed in the national memory by the leviathans of St Vincent, Camperdown, the Nile, and Trafalgar, is an indication of their success.

In early October 1797 the impression reached the British press that the Dutch fleet would soon set sail from the Texel. As much of the fleet positioned to oppose them had recently been involved in the Nore mutiny, and had not had their resolve tested in battle since, this was a prospect considered with great concern

On 11 October, the very day of the Battle of Camperdown, the *London Packet* published for their readers a long and detailed biography of Richard Parker.⁹¹ People in London would have been reading details of the mutinous Nore fleet at the very moment that many of those same men and ships went into battle. Parker and the mutinies cast a long shadow. Public confidence in the fleet had by no means fully recovered from the nadir of the mutinies.

On the morning of the battle, the *Morning Post and Gazetteer* reported that Duncan's fleet had put to sea in search of the enemy. Once again, the report betrays a mixture of hope and fear. Readers would have been gratified to read that 'the Admiral has used unremitting diligence to provide his fleet with all necessaries, having worked night and day to get them on board', but this was followed by the warning that 'the sailors have conducted themselves with propriety, but the seeds of the Mutiny still exist'. Though the piece concluded with the observations that 'no executions have taken place' and 'Admiral Duncan and his officers have the confidence and regard of the Seamen as much as any part of the Naval force', it is hard to imagine that such caveats would have been made at all before the mutinies.⁹² Doubt remained. Some of those reading the account that morning might well have pictured Duncan's fleet leaving Yarmouth and wondered if it would return victorious; defeated; or refuse action altogether. The country could but hold its breath.

Camperdown was a decisive victory, but a hard-fought one. The British fleet captured nine Dutch ships of the line and two frigates without losing any of their own. This was an unprecedented haul for a battle of more or less equal forces. Duncan was much praised for his daring in breaking the enemy line despite the risks of placing his ships so close to a dangerous and hostile coastline.⁹³ The courage and skill of the Dutch sailors, however, had

⁹¹ *London Packet or New Lloyd's Evening Post*, 11.10.1797.

⁹² *Morning Post and Gazetteer*, 11.10.1797.

⁹³ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Penguin, 2005), 456; Robert Harvey, *The War of Wars: The Epic Struggle between Britain and France 1793-1815*

ensured that this was a costly victory; the ‘butcher’s bill’ of approximately 823 British killed and wounded to 1,160 Dutch was a less-favourable ratio than the British achieved in any other major fleet battle of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, excepting only Copenhagen.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, news of the victory caused jubilation in Britain, and fears of an invasion of Ireland subsided. *The Times* suggested that so much money would be spent toasting the health of Admiral Duncan that it would ‘increase the revenue’s duty by £5,000’.⁹⁵ Interestingly, the first intake of prisoners to the *Sandwich* following its conversion into a prison ship were Dutch sailors captured at Camperdown.⁹⁶ The headquarters of the Nore mutiny was filled with the defeated enemies with which the fleet had reaffirmed their loyalty.

Immediately, many saw Camperdown as an opportunity for retribution and atonement. As the recently mutinous ship, *Monmouth* approached the enemy at Camperdown, its new commander, Captain James Walker called out to his men ‘My lads, you see your enemy; I shall lay you close aboard and give you an opportunity of washing the stain off your characters in the blood of your foes. Now, go to your quarters and do your duty’. Safely back in port a few days later, Walker wrote triumphantly to the Admiralty to assure them that ‘the exertions of the Men strongly evinced how much they wished to expunge from the records of their Country the remembrance of their ever having forgot their duty’.⁹⁷ It would appear that the sailors themselves were intensely stung by the shame of their own past conduct, and that this motivated them to fight fiercely.

Many in the British press took the same view. In its outpouring of joy on the news of the victory, the *Oracle and Public Advertiser* can be considered typical, and will be studied in detail.⁹⁸ ‘Every class of our fellow subjects’, noted the *Oracle*, would feel the good effects of the blessings they owe to their ‘GALLANT TARS’, thereby emphasising the likely benefits of the victory to social order and cohesion across the country. These Tars, they continued, will be hailed by national gratitude as ‘the Saviours of their Country’. This was an incredible reversal for men who, just four months earlier, were being cursed as traitors for blockading the Thames and starving London of its much-needed trade. In a moment, the fears and doubts

(London: Constable, 2007), pp. 245–46; R. J. B. Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: The Organization of Victory, 1793-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 50.

⁹⁴ Sam Willis, *In the Hour of Victory: The Royal Navy at War in the Age of Nelson* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), p. 146.

⁹⁵ Harvey, *The War of Wars*, p. 246.

⁹⁶ *Whitehall Evening Post*, 30.11.1797.

⁹⁷ Willis, *In the Hour of Victory*, pp. 151–52.

⁹⁸ *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 14.10.1797.

evident in the press before Camperdown, the long shadow of the mutinies, were forgotten and the navy, and its sailors, were once again the darlings of the nation. Contrasting the failures and ‘miscarriages of our armies’, the *Oracle* boasted that ‘there never was a period in which OUR NAVY was so universally triumphant[...] Every Battle has been a Victory; and if we have not had more victories, it is because we could not [...] draw the enemy oftener out of port to measure strength with us’.⁹⁹ Suddenly Richard Parker, whose biography was being advertised and repeated on the very day of the battle, receded into the background, from which he never returned.

The *Oracle* then turned explicitly to the sailors’ atonement. After heaping praise on the government and the brave officers of Duncan’s fleet, the *Oracle* reminded its readers ‘let us not forget the no less gallant tars, who so bravely followed and executed the commands of their leaders’. Prior to the mutinies, this obedience would likely have been taken for granted and so escaped notice. Nevertheless, it was made amply clear that the sailors had redeemed themselves.

If they suffered in the opinion of the Public in a moment of delirium, when, seduced by designing men, they broke out in Mutiny and Rebellion; if the crews of Admiral Duncan’s squadron were for a time more mutinous than others, who will say that they are not now entitled to forgiveness? Who will say that they have not by their zeal, their loyalty, and their bravery, atoned for their crime? And who will now, who indeed can, remember anything but the signal service which they have done their country?

With a final rhetorical flourish, it is noted that ‘their guilt was recorded on sand, which is now no where to be found’. The beach, and with it the navy’s blotted copybook, was wiped clean by a wave of national thanksgiving. In contrast, ‘their patriotic conduct, on the late glorious occasion, will be recorded on the hearts of their grateful countrymen, and live in the Annals of History’.¹⁰⁰ The implication is clear: the mutinies were a brief and misguided mistake, the memory of which had been wiped out by a glorious victory, much more in keeping with the Royal Navy, and which would be celebrated as long as a British heart beat to remember it. In these ways, victory at Camperdown did much to rehabilitate the navy in the eyes of the British public, and rekindle its love affair with their sailors.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

Thanks largely to the post-mortem adventures of Richard Parker's body, the civil and naval authorities had failed to put the memory of the mutinies to bed for good. Camperdown represented a second chance, which they exploited to the full. They resorted to two unprecedented measures to celebrate Camperdown: the celebration of an ordinary sailor, Jack Crawford, and a national day of thanksgiving. Together, these measures effectively eclipsed the fleet mutinies.

While Camperdown did much to restore the pre-mutiny positive perception of sailors, this could never return exactly to the way that it was before. As Geoff Quilley has observed, the mutinies showed that Jack Tar was not 'unthinkingly loyal', and to be taken for granted, but that 'his loyalty was to be won by sophisticated and reasoned argument'.¹⁰¹ Sailors were not parts in a clockwork mechanism, but a diverse group of individuals. After Camperdown, for the first time, one of those individuals came to the fore in a positive light. Whereas traditionally only naval officers had become household names, with glorious connotations like Rodney, Hawke, Howe, and Jervis, or negative ones like Byng; the Nore mutiny had made Richard Parker infamous. It is likely not a coincidence, therefore, that the Battle of Camperdown produced a celebrated lower-deck hero who could stand as a foil for Parker and rival him for fame.

At the height of the battle, Admiral Duncan's flag on board *Venerable* was shot away and began to fall. In naval battles, lowering the flag was considered a sign of surrender, and so this accident might have had disastrous results if misinterpreted by British captains. At great personal risk, lower-deck sailor, Jack Crawford rapidly climbed the rigging and, braving the withering fire, famously nailed the colours to the mast, in a defiant act which made surrender impossible. Due to this courage, Crawford became the first regular sailor to be feted as a national hero. Like Parker, he became famous throughout the country, but with diametrically opposite connotations. In an upcoming work, James Davey argues that the civil and naval authorities connived in this process of hero-creation, and did their part to propagate and celebrate Crawford's story.¹⁰² The humble naval hero could usefully exorcise his dark counterpart, Parker.

¹⁰¹ Geoff Quilley, 'Duty and Mutiny: the aesthetics of loyalty and the representation of the British sailor c.1798-1800' in Philip Shaw (ed.), *Romantic Wars: Studies in Culture and Conflict, 1793-1822* (Aldershot: Ashgate, c2000), p. 80.

¹⁰² James Davey's forthcoming book will explore this issue in greater detail. Its provisional details are James Davey, *The Royal Navy and the Age of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2022).

From the first, no depiction of Camperdown was complete without Crawford. The first major painting of the battle was Daniel Orme's depiction of Duncan accepting the surrender of the Dutch Admiral de Winter. Right between the two men is Jack Crawford descending from the rigging (see Figure 7.5). In the months following the battle, Orme had carefully painted the portraits of Duncan and Crawford from life drawings taken on the *Venerable*. It was highly significant that a common sailor like Crawford should appear as a named figure in this piece, and that Orme, who had acted as a portrait painter for the king, should go to as much effort to accurately depict Crawford as he did for Admiral Duncan. This appears to place the two men in a rough equality as heroic brothers in arms: the one a flag officer, and the other a loyal Tar. With this comes a suggestion of harmony and mutual respect between officers and men.

The fact that Crawford is shown wearing an idealised sailor's outfit helps to emphasise the masculine virtues associated with the 'loyal Tar' which, as Begiato and Land have shown, were already familiar to the British public.¹⁰³ This presentation is in sharp contrast to the effeminate depiction of Richard Parker in Figure 7.1, discussed above. Begiato noted that Crawford was commemorated in widespread material culture as 'a beautiful example of British manliness' and as representing 'ideals of martial manliness'.¹⁰⁴ In this sense also, masculine Crawford perhaps served as a foil for the more feminine Parker, suggesting that the former was a true Jack Tar, while the latter a mere unwelcome and troublesome interloper. Nevertheless, the 'beautiful' elements that Begiato singles out in Crawford's imagery also have feminine connotations, such as his 'locks blowing in the wind' and his 'pretty face',¹⁰⁵ which has led James Davey to question the extent to which Crawford was presented as a paragon of masculinity.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Begiato, 'Tears and the manly sailor in England, c. 1760–1860', pp. 117–133; Land, *War, Nationalism, and the British Sailor, 1750–1850*, pp. 21, 89.

¹⁰⁴ Joanne Begiato, *Manliness in Britain, 1760–1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 122–23. This book is forthcoming. I extend my sincere thanks to Professor Begiato for allowing me to read this book ahead of its publication.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁶ James Davey's forthcoming book will explore this issue in greater detail. Its provisional details are James Davey, *The Royal Navy and the Age of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2022).

Figure 7.5 ‘Duncan receiving the surrender of de Winter’ by Daniel Orme¹⁰⁷



Crawford’s likeness did not just find its way onto the walls of galleries and the palaces of the mighty; like Parker, he was also represented on a wide array of material culture, much of which would have been affordable to a large proportion of society.¹⁰⁸ In the last years of the eighteenth, and the first of the nineteenth centuries, prints and etchings of Crawford were produced and sold, often presented on ceramics manufactured in Crawford’s native Sunderland (see Figures 7.6 and 7.7).¹⁰⁹ In this way, Crawford came to eclipse Parker

¹⁰⁷ ‘Duncan Receiving the Surrender of de Winter at the Battle of Camperdown, 11 October 1797’, by Daniel Orme, oil on canvas, produced 1797, NMM, BHC3100. Jack Crawford was also prominently visible in later paintings of Camperdown. See, ‘The Battle of Camperdown, 11 October 1797’, by Thomas Whitcombe, oil on canvas, produced 1798, NMM, BHC0505; ‘The Battle of Camperdown, 11 October 1797’, by Philippe-Jacques de Louthembourg, oil on canvas, produced 1801, NMM, BHC0504; and ‘Admiral Duncan Receiving the Sword of the Dutch Admiral de Winter at the Battle of Camperdown, 11 October 1797’, by Samuel Drummond, oil on canvas, produced 1827, NMM, BHC0506.

¹⁰⁸ See the forthcoming work by James Davey, *The Royal Navy and the Age of Revolution* (Yale University Press, 2022) for wider discussion of Crawford’s presentation in material culture.

¹⁰⁹ ‘John Crawford, Nailing the Flag to the Main top gallant mast head, on board the Venerable, October 11th 1797’, etching by H. S. Kirby, c.1804, NMM PAD3446.

as the most famous lower-deck tar. While Parker had represented a breakdown of order and a navy in disrepute, which had turned its strength and guns on their own countrymen, Crawford embodied loyalty and personal heroism.

Figure 7.6 Jack Crawford mug¹¹⁰



Figure 7.7 Jack Crawford plate¹¹¹



One striking factor which has so far escaped historians of the 1797 mutinies is that Crawford's celebrated actions at Camperdown possibly had a mutinous precedent. On 13 May, the *London Chronicle* reported on the Spithead mutiny as it drew to a close. All ships had ended their mutiny, it was suggested, other than the *Mars* and the *Duke*. The crews of these ships refused to haul down the red flag and instead 'had them nailed to the mast-head'.¹¹² No other account has been found to verify these events, and this could be a further example of the press getting its facts wrong, but the similarity with Crawford's actions is arresting. As was the case at Camperdown, the act of nailing the colours to the mast was a

¹¹⁰ Jack Crawford Mug, earthenware, early-nineteenth century Sunderland, NMM, AAA4498.

¹¹¹ Jack Crawford Plate, earthenware, early-nineteenth century Sunderland, NMM, ZBA4377.

¹¹² *London Chronicle*, 13.05.1797.

supreme statement of defiance as it made surrender all but impossible. Here, though, this stubborn defiance is exhibited in support of mutiny come what may, whereas at Camperdown the same action represented the exact opposite: loyalty and duty to the death. Nailing one's colours to the mast was far from a common occurrence, which partially explains the celebration of Crawford, and yet here there are two near-identical but diametrically opposite examples of the phenomenon just five months apart. It is unknown whether Crawford, or anyone at the Admiralty who helped to spread his story, had read this report or heard of this supposed incident, but the similarity of action with an antithetical meaning is very curious.

The second break with tradition that followed Camperdown complements this veneration of Crawford. The government declared that 19 December would be a national day of thanksgiving, centred around a triumphal parade and service at Saint Paul's Cathedral. The stated purpose of the event was to celebrate the three great naval victories of the Glorious First of June (1794), Saint Vincent (February 1797), and Camperdown (October 1797).¹¹³ The unprecedented¹¹⁴ service of thanksgiving: a powerful expression of strength and confidence, betrayed an earlier uncertainty. In the pre-mutiny context there had been no need to stage such events to reaffirm the affectionate bonds between navy and nation. Victory was expected and delivered without any cause for wider reflection. Capitalising on the public joy and relief after Camperdown, the day of thanksgiving was a deliberate strategy on the part of the government to rehabilitate the navy, heal the old wounds from the mutinies, and eradicate these from the public memory. As with the celebration of Jack Crawford, it is notable that ordinary sailors were allowed to play a prominent role in the thanksgiving festivities, further facilitating the process of rekindling love for the Jack Tars.

Holger Hoock has suggested that the service of naval thanksgiving marked a significant development in the British state's growing policy of official commemoration. This was intended to function as a cultural weapon to raise morale, reassure the nation, and refute rival French revolutionary ideology.¹¹⁵ Following the invasion scares, economic difficulties, and mutinies of 1797, a morale-raising spectacle was much-needed. Lord Grenville, the

¹¹³ *True Briton*, 04.12.1797

¹¹⁴ Comparison was drawn to a service of thanksgiving after the failure of the Spanish Armada in 1588, but in terms of eighteenth-century British naval successes, the service of thanksgiving was indeed unprecedented.

¹¹⁵ Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850* (London: Profile Books, 2010), pp. 135, 138-40. Hoock has also analysed the gradual creation of an officially-sanctioned national pantheon at St Paul's.

Foreign Secretary, spoke of the need for ‘raising peoples’ spirits’ as ‘if we had done in this war half that our enemies have done to raise the courage and zeal of their people, we should not now be where we are’.¹¹⁶ The St Paul’s ceremony did much to satisfy this demand.

On the day of thanksgiving a well-behaved crowd of approximately 200,000 people braved the December cold to line the parade route to the cathedral. Before them passed a long and colourful procession of admirals, government ministers, and royalty. Between them, naval ensigns captured from the French, Spanish, and Dutch were proudly borne by 250 common sailors and marines, the ‘brave fellows who had been accessory in gaining them’.¹¹⁷ Their presence on the streets of the capital so soon after the mutinies was highly significant, and had been approved by the king himself. People who had cursed the mutineers during their blockade of the Thames cheered some of the same men as they marched past bearing the trophies of victory. Rich and poor alike were able to participate in the spectacle in a spirit of shared jubilation. The service of thanksgiving, centred on Britain’s growing national pantheon of St Paul’s, served to strengthen the ties between the state, church, navy, city of London, and wider nation. Pitt tactfully asked the bishop to omit any mention of the mutinies from his sermon.¹¹⁸ The sailors and marines joined the elite of British society within the cathedral, where they stood beneath Wren’s great dome bearing the captured colours.¹¹⁹ Reporting on the mood of the crowd, the *London Chronicle* described ‘the loudest acclamations of the greatest concourse of people ever assembled upon any former occasion’. Following the service, which was printed in full to satisfy the intense public interest in every aspect of the event, the royal party returned to the palace amidst a ‘universal spirit of loyalty’, with men cheering, and ladies waving their handkerchiefs. The ‘same sentiment’ greeted the sailors, who were ‘everywhere greeted as welcome visitors’.¹²⁰ The distrust engendered by the mutinies was forgotten. Crowds that had feared a sudden mutineer assault on London in June cheered their beloved sailors in December.

The popular and inclusive aspects of these festivities were crucial to the desired effect, but they also received some criticism.¹²¹ If Grenville had written admiringly of the capacity of the French revolutionary governments to raise national spirits through spectacular

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-40.

¹¹⁷ *London Chronicle*, 21.12.1797.

¹¹⁸ Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination*, pp. 138-40.

¹¹⁹ *True Briton*, 14.12.1797.

¹²⁰ *London Chronicle*, 21.12.1797.

¹²¹ This was also the case with the inclusion of sailors and contested meanings of Nelson’s funeral, as explained by Timothy Jenks, ‘Contesting the Hero: The Funeral of Admiral Lord Nelson’, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 39 (2000), pp. 422-53.

public pageants, others protested any sign of British emulation of these practices for the same reasons. Ten days before the day of thanksgiving arrived, the *Morning Chronicle* dismissed the planned celebrations as a ‘Frenchified Farce’, and drew comparisons with French revolutionary festivals and levelling ceremonies associated with the ‘Goddess of Reason’.¹²² Participation of the lower orders of society might be acceptable in Revolutionary France, but not in Britain. The pro-government press was incensed by this suggestion, perhaps partly because, as Grenville’s remark demonstrates, it was so close to the mark.¹²³ Despite these misgivings, the day of thanksgiving proved a success. By presenting sailors as the harbingers of victory, any remaining demons left over from the mutinies were exorcised. The national day of thanksgiving announced Britain’s victories, not only over the French, Spanish and Dutch, but also over the mutinous sailors themselves.¹²⁴

The dominant mood appears to have been one of forgiveness. In the House of Commons, MPs agreed that ‘the navy, which had lately so disgraced itself by mutiny, had done away the remembrance of its errors by gathering new laurels’. Camperdown had ‘proved that the British Sailors were still our Hearts of Oak, and capable of carrying the British Flag triumphant over all the earth’. When Duncan was presented to Parliament in early November, he was met with a rapturous response.¹²⁵

Some campaigned to give this theme of forgiveness a practical manifestation. Reminding its readers that ‘there are still several sailors under confinement’ awaiting trial for their part in the Nore Mutiny, the *Oracle* expressed their hope ‘that all further prosecution may be put a stop to, and that the late gallant conduct of their brethren will serve to bury all former errors in oblivion’.¹²⁶ This hope was realised. The king proclaimed his ‘Royal Pardon to all those concerned in the Mutiny at the Nore who are under sentence of death’ and declared that ‘those under confinement and not yet tried, should be immediately released’. These acts of mercy were not reluctant, but celebrated, as Camperdown had demonstrated that the measured judicial response to the mutinies had been correct and successful. The punishments had been sufficient to deter mutiny and restore the effectiveness of the navy, but not counter-productively excessive. Camperdown showed that this strategy had been a formidable success; the old navy was back. As such, further punishments appeared unnecessary. Further blanket pardons appeared to be the best way to ensure the continued

¹²² *Morning Chronicle*, 09.12.1797; Quilley, ‘Duty and Mutiny’, p. 98.

¹²³ *True Briton*, 11.12.1797; *Anti-Jacobin or Weekly Examiner*, 11.12.1797; *True Briton*, 14.12.1797.

¹²⁴ Quilley, ‘Duty and Mutiny’, p. 98.

¹²⁵ *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 03.11.1797.

¹²⁶ *Oracle and Public Advertiser*, 21.10.1797.

loyalty of the Royal Navy. The *Evening Mail* opined that ‘extending mercy to so many guilty and misguided men [...] must make an impression which, we are confident, must be attended with the best effects with respect to the future allegiance and discipline of the Navy’.¹²⁷ This was an expression of confidence rather than weakness.

The ‘guilty and misguided men’ were greatly relieved by this sentiment of forgiveness, and did their part to persuade the decision makers that they deserved such generosity. Through the services of a chaplain, the imprisoned Nore mutineers presented a petition to the Lords of the Admiralty on 1 November. They began by congratulating their lordships on the victory at Camperdown, and communicated their wish that they could have been present, before requesting their intercession with the king on their behalf. The sailors expressed their regret at being rendered ‘useless members of society’ and wished that they, like their fellows, had had ‘an opportunity of distinguishing themselves in so glorious a cause where they should have had an opportunity of convincing their King and Country at large that they still remained true, firm, loyal, and Brave’. Finally, they concluded with their wish to be ‘restored to their Country as Useful and Ornamental Members to Society’.¹²⁸ The use of the term ‘ornamental’ is particularly interesting, as that was precisely how ordinary sailors like Jack Crawford were presented in the wake of victory, and particularly at the thanksgiving service: as ornaments to their country. The sailors’ petition is undoubtedly self-serving, but that does not necessarily mean that it was not sincere, particularly in light of the lasting loyalty of most seamen during the mutinies.

This request, in harmony as it was with stated policy, was quickly put into effect. Just three days later on 6 November, the newly released men wrote to express their thanks to the Lords of the Admiralty. They assured their lordships that:

Your goodness set at liberty a set of Men whose Breasts glow with ardour and impell’d with the double ties of Gratitude most ardently wish for the moment that will enable them to convince His Majesty, Your Lordships, their countrymen, and all Europe at large, that tho’ they have been under the Cloud of His Majesty’s heavy displeasure, yet, that dispelled, are now ready to fight

¹²⁷ *Evening Mail*, 30.10.1797. The conventions and workings of the royal pardon have been studied in detail by Douglas Hay in his chapter ‘Property, Authority, and the Criminal Law’ in Hay, Linebaugh, Rule, Thompson, and Winslow, *Albion’s Fatal Tree*, pp. 40-49.

¹²⁸ Petition by imprisoned Nore mutineers to the Lords of the Admiralty, 1 November 1797, Nore Petitions, TNA, ADM1/5125.

against the Common Enemy of our Country with an inspired Courage that will strike a terror which will resound through the utmost extent of the surrounding nations.¹²⁹

In a direct address to the king himself, they added the assurance that ‘Your Majesty has not in all Majesty’s Dominions Subjects more true, more firm, or more loyal’.¹³⁰ The polished and eloquent nature of these documents suggests that the chaplain acted as more than mere scribe to the mutineers, but this does not indicate that the sentiments were other than their own.

Eighty men went further and signed a solemn promise to ‘never at any time enter into, or be concerned in, any Mutiny or Sedition On Board any of His Majesty’s Ships’, and to ‘disclose any knowledge we may have of any mutinous Intention or design to our Superior Officers and to Repel the same with our utmost force’.¹³¹ This document is strange in that all of the promises made by the sailors were already expected of them under the Articles of War. The significance here, therefore, is that the sailors entered into a voluntary oath. The Admiralty did not act on the recommendation of magistrates Graham and Williamson to institute a loyal oath for the navy, but here we see that some of the redeemed sailors willingly bound themselves by oath on their own initiative as a powerful gesture of gratitude and loyalty.¹³² The measured judicial response to the mutinies had been vindicated and, aided by a victory, had successfully rehabilitated the navy.

The extent to which the Spithead and Nore mutinies had receded from the public consciousness was demonstrated three days before the day of national thanksgiving. Providing the first vague report of the mutiny of the frigate *Hermione* in the Caribbean, the press described this incident as ‘the most daring and sanguinary Mutiny that the Annals of the British Navy can record’.¹³³ It is true that the *Hermione* was a very different beast from the fleet mutinies, or any previous Royal Navy mutiny, involving, as it did, the brutal murder of most of the officers on board. In terms of scale and national importance, however, there could be no comparison. In May 1797 the Channel Fleet, Britain’s principal defence against

¹²⁹ Letter of thanks from released Nore mutineers to the Lords of the Admiralty, 6 November 1797, Nore Petitions, TNA, ADM1/5125.

¹³⁰ Letter of thanks from released Nore mutineers to the King, 6 November 1797, Nore Petitions, TNA, ADM1/5125.

¹³¹ Voluntary promise of loyalty by released Nore mutineers, 11 November 1797, Nore Petitions, TNA, ADM1/5125.

¹³² Paul Langford has investigated the importance of oaths in English society, including among military men. Paul Langford, *Public life and the propertied Englishman, 1689-1798* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 105.

¹³³ *Craftsman or Say’s Weekly Journal*, 16.12.1797.

invasion, rendered itself useless. In June, the Nore mutineers had blockaded the Thames. To describe the *Hermione* mutiny in such terms was an incredible exercise of forgetfulness. If, as it transpired, the temporary loss of a small frigate thousands of miles from home could eclipse the great fleet mutinies of spring 1797, then it appears that the Admiralty had finally succeeded in rendering the Spithead and Nore mutinies forgettable.

There was, however, a curious epilogue, though this does not seem to have posed a threat to later naval discipline. On 4 October 1798, a full fifteen months after the execution of Richard Parker, the frigates *Caroline* and *Flora* were cruising off the Azores when they spotted a French privateer and a prize that it had captured. After a short chase, these surrendered to the British frigates. The privateer of twelve guns and fifty men turned out to be *Le President Parker* of Dunkirk. Its prey had been the *Bird* merchantman of Liverpool.¹³⁴ If the British had largely forgotten Richard Parker, it appears that their enemies had not: and they were not going to miss an opportunity to remind the British of a shameful episode in their naval history. Almost sixteen months after ships under the command of ‘President Parker’ had impounded merchant ships at the mouth of the Thames, his namesake, *Le President Parker* was still harassing British trade. In both cases, however, the Royal Navy had the last laugh.

V. Long-term Memory of the Mutinies (1797–1957)

It is worthwhile to consider the longevity of the 1797 fleet mutinies in public awareness. In order to do so, an adapted form of Peter King’s¹³⁵ methodology of counting the number of newspaper columns dedicated to a particular subject across a set timeframe has

¹³⁴ Captain’s Log, HMS *Caroline* September 1798 to September 1799, William Bowen, TNA, ADM51/1381/7; Captain’s Log, HMS *Flora* July 1797 to June 1799, Robert Gambier, TNA, ADM51/1268/4; *The London Gazette*, 04.12.1798; Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817*, p. 146; Extract of a Letter from Earl St Vincent to Evan Nepean dated Gibraltar 15 November 1798, quoted in *The Naval Chronicle* vol. I, from January to July MDCCXCIX (London: J. Gold, 1799), pp. 76-77.

¹³⁵ Peter King, ‘Newspaper Reporting and Attitudes to Crime and Justice in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century London’, *Continuity and Change* vol. 22 (2007), pp. 73-112.

been employed.¹³⁶ Newspapers are an imperfect source for judging ‘public opinion’ due to their limited audience. At the same time, however, the news contained in these publications reached far beyond the individuals who actually read them.

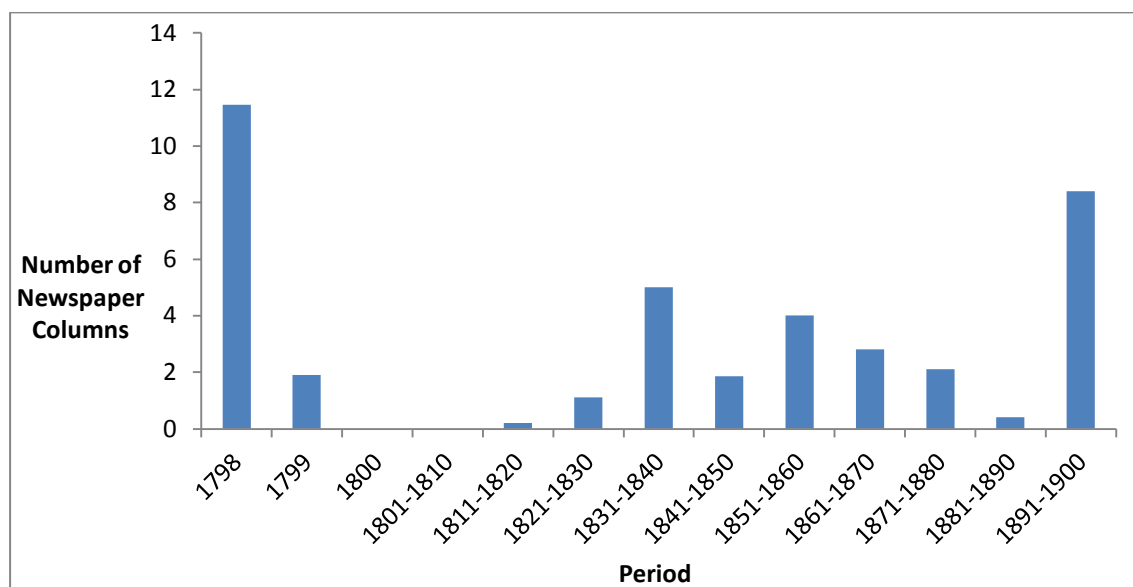
Discussion of the mutinies in newspapers fell to negligible levels surprisingly quickly. This might suggest that Camperdown and the national day of thanksgiving successfully laid fears to rest, and effectively reduced the mutinies to forgettable blips in the history of the Royal Navy. Throughout the nineteenth century, several separate, though small-scale, waves of interest in the mutinies are identifiable, and easily explained. Figure 7.8 shows these trends over the nineteenth century, and Table 7.1 provides explanations for them.¹³⁷ The rapid reduction in columns dedicated to the mutinies from 1,226 in 1797 to just 11.5 in 1798 is striking, and appears consistent with a return of confidence in the navy, with the mutinies retreating into irrelevance. One might wonder whether this great silence on a subject so recent and dramatic was not partially deliberate: an exercise in willing collective forgetfulness, as Kennedy has suggested.¹³⁸ While the years 1798-1800 are shown individually, the century 1801-1900 is divided into decades.

¹³⁶ Methodology: Online databases of historic newspapers were used to find references to the Spithead and Nore mutinies between 1797 and 1900, and to calculate the annual total of newspaper columns dedicated to this subject. These databases are not exhaustive, and there were undoubtedly references to the mutinies in newspapers which were not included within them, but the overall trends are likely to have been similar. For the period 13 April 1797 to 31 December 1799, the Burney collection of British seventeenth and eighteenth-century newspapers was used. A basic search for the keyword ‘mutiny’ in this period yielded 3,700 results, each of which was checked and a sum of the number of relevant columns calculated. For the period 1800 to 1900, the Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers database (parts I and II) was used. As a basic search for ‘mutiny’ this time produced 98,301 results, it was not practicable to consult every one of them, as had been done for the period 1797-99. Instead, a series of more specific searches were used, which returned a total of 141 results, of which, on inspection, only 101 were related to the 1797 mutinies. This figure appears surprisingly low over the course of a century, but the search terms employed were sufficiently broad that they should have picked up the vast majority of relevant results (a suggestion supported by their inclusion of 40 non-relevant results). Sources for the eighteenth century: Burney collection of British seventeenth and eighteenth-century newspapers, GALE Learning in association with the British Library. A basic search for ‘mutiny’ across the period 13.04.1797 to 31.12.1799 yielded 3,700 results. Accessed 12-16.03.2018. Sources for the nineteenth century: Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers database (parts I and II) GALE Learning in association with the British Library. Advanced searches (all for the period 01.01.1800 to 31.12.1900): 1. ‘mutiny’ and ‘Spithead’= 2 results. 2. ‘mutiny’ and ‘Nore’= 8 results. 3. ‘mutiny’ and ‘1797’= 0 results. 4. ‘mutiny’ and ‘Duncan’= 0 results. 5. ‘mutiny’ and ‘Howe’= 0 results. 6. ‘mutinies’ and ‘Spithead’= 0 results. 7. ‘mutinies’ and ‘Nore’= 0 results. 8. ‘mutiny’ and ‘navy’= 6 results. 9. ‘mutineers’ and ‘Spithead’= 0 results. 10. ‘mutineers’ and ‘Nore’= 0 results. 11. ‘Camperdown’ and ‘mutiny’= 0 results. 12. ‘Sheerness’ and ‘mutiny’= 6 results. Basic searches (all for the period 01.01.1800 to 31.12.1900): 1. ‘Richard Parker’= 8 results. 2. ‘Nore mutiny’= 30 results. 3. ‘Spithead mutiny’= 81 results. Total of 141 results. Accessed 20.03.2018.

¹³⁷ The number of newspaper columns dedicated to the mutinies in the year 1797 (1,226) has been omitted from Figure 7.8, as its inclusion would have rendered all other bars invisibly small.

¹³⁸ Kennedy, *Narratives of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, p. 166.

Figure 7.8 The number of newspaper columns on the Spithead and Nore Mutinies, 1798-1900¹³⁹



Because of the small numbers involved, a single example of a newspaper dedicating an entire column to the subject of the mutinies would have a dramatic impact on the trend for a whole decadal period in Figure 7.8. In contrast, though, the great majority of references to the mutinies across the nineteenth century (73 of the 101 relevant results for 1800-1900) were very short: just one or two lines.¹⁴⁰ These most often took the form of laconic entries in ‘This Day in History’ timelines, but also included passing comments or analogies in political debates, or followed the occasion of a small mutiny on board an American merchant ship at the Nore in 1877, which was described as ‘not so grave as that which is matter of history’.¹⁴¹

Lacking as these references were in detail, they tell us a great deal about the long-term memory of the mutinies. Firstly, they had become a reference point both temporally, as in the case of ‘This Day in History’ timelines to pique the curiosity of readers, and politically, half-remembered though they were, as metaphors for struggle, threat, and dangers overcome through careful statecraft. Secondly, the economy of words in these references, for example ‘8 June- The Black Prince died, 1376[...]Mutiny at the Nore, 1797.- Paine died, 1809.’,

¹³⁹ Calculations on tabulated numbers of newspaper columns dedicated to the 1797 mutinies, 1797-1900 based on the databases ‘Burney collection of British seventeenth and eighteenth-century newspapers’, GALE Learning in association with the British Library; and ‘Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers database (parts I and II)’ GALE Learning in association with the British Library.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. These were listed as comprising 0.1 columns, so that these 73 observations collectively comprised just 7.3 columns across the century.

¹⁴¹ *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 03.06.1843 (‘Calendar of the Week’); *The Morning Post*, 24.01.1829; *Daily News*, 18.10.1877.

suggests that the mutinies were considered sufficiently well-known to require no more explanation or introduction than the Black Prince or Thomas Paine.¹⁴² The mutinies: their names, and some of their associations, were remembered, but little-written about. Together, these two points suggest that the Spithead and Nore mutinies had a humble but lasting place in the common memory. The mutinies had not left a lasting wound or prominent scar, but only a subtle inner doubt, like an oblivious dream or nightmare. Setting aside these short references to the mutinies, their longer counterparts are more easily explained.

Table 7.1 Reasons for recurring spikes in newspaper discussion of the 1797 Mutinies¹⁴³

<u>Year</u>	<u>Newspaper Columns</u>	<u>Reason/Occasion</u>
1830	0.8	Adverts for the new book 'Tales of a Tar'.
1833	1.9	Parker's dying declaration printed twice, and also the obituary of the purser of the <i>Monmouth</i> during the Nore mutiny.
1837	0.8	Adverts for the new novel 'Gentleman Jack'.
1838	2.1	An account of the story of Mrs Ann Parker, who had then fallen into crippling illness and destitution. ¹⁴⁴
1842	0.5	Adverts for a short pocket history of the mutinies.
1849	0.25	Obituaries for a heroic pilot who helped ships escape from the Nore mutiny.
1853	1.6	An Exeter newspaper printing a biography of Richard Parker, who was native to that area.
1864	0.4	Adverts for the play 'The Mutiny at the Nore'.
1869	2.2	A long summary history of the mutinies printed to entertain their readers.
1876	0.2	Adverts for David Herbert's new book 'Great Historical Mutinies'.
1877	1	A small mutiny took place on board an American merchant ship at the Nore.
1878	0.3	Obituary of a 93 year-old man who had witnessed Parker's execution 81 years earlier.
1880	0.3	Destruction by fire of St Mary Matfellow Church in Whitechapel, final resting place of Richard Parker.
1897	2.7	Observations and commentary on the centenary of the mutinies.
1900	4.8	A long history of the mutinies published as part of a serialised history of Portsmouth. Heroic anecdotes from the mutinies also printed widely.

¹⁴² *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 03.06.1843 ('Calendar of the Week').

¹⁴³ Calculations on tabulated numbers of newspaper columns dedicated to the 1797 mutinies, 1800-1900 based on the 'Nineteenth-Century British Newspapers database (parts I and II)' GALE Learning in association with the British Library.

¹⁴⁴ The unfortunate Mrs Parker was called an object of 'national sympathy and compassion'. *Hampshire Advertiser & Salisbury Guardian*, 06.10.1838.

The three recurring categories that emerge from Table 7.1 can be summarised as, firstly, advertisements for new books which touch on the subject of the mutinies (1830, 1837, 1842, 1864, 1876), secondly, local interest stories (1838, 1853, 1880), and, thirdly, the mutinies appear to have been a popular ‘claim to fame’ in obituaries (1833, 1849, 1878). A notable commonality of these categories is that they were largely independent of time; books might just as easily have been released in one year as another, the fire at St Mary Matfellow Church, and the timing of individual deaths were by chance. Only the 1897 centenary was a fixed point.

The cumulative impression of these figures is that the 1797 fleet mutinies quickly passed out of public discussion, but that a broad and imprecise recognition of the mutinies persisted. The 1797 mutinies were mentioned infrequently and usually briefly in nineteenth-century British newspapers. Camperdown, subsequent naval victories, such as the Battle of the Nile (1798), and their skilful manipulation by the civil and naval authorities had effectively healed the wounds opened by the fleet mutinies, reassured the public, and rehabilitated the navy. Consequently, the 1797 mutinies could appear as casual curiosities, rather than lingering horror stories.

A similar picture results from a study of school history textbooks between 1800 and 1960.¹⁴⁵ An analysis of eighty-one textbooks dating between 1812 and 1957, though heavily concentrated in the period 1900-49, reveals that forty of them (49.38%) mention the 1797 fleet mutinies. These show very similar characteristics, which are shown in Table 7.2.

¹⁴⁵ Eighty-one British school history text books from the UCL Institute of Education Library Special Collection were studied. These had references UCL Institute of Education Historical TXBK3 to TXBK1896 and Mab CLA. Their dates ranged from 1812 to 1957 with the following distribution: 1800-24 (2); 1825-49 (1); 1850-99 (0); 1900-24 (16); 1925-49 (60); 1950-60 (2). These are heavily concentrated in the period 1900-49.

Table 7.2 Recurring features of school textbooks, 1812-1957

<u>Recurring Feature</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>As a % of the total (81 textbooks)</u>	<u>As a % of the textbooks that mention the mutinies (40)</u>
Attributes blame to poor naval conditions	25	30.86	62.5
Favourable presentation of Spithead mutiny	22	27.16	55
Suggests revolutionary origins of Nore mutiny	19	23.46	47.5
Presents the mutinies as a mere brief blip between victories	38	46.91	95
Presents 1797 as a dangerous year for the British state	13	16.05	32.5

There was considerable variation in the amount of attention dedicated to the mutinies in the forty textbooks that mentioned them: ranging from four words ('in spite of mutinies') to two pages. Table 7.2 conveys a notably homogenous narrative: that between the two great naval victories of St Vincent and Camperdown, British sailors briefly mutinied to improve conditions of service, which had too long been neglected. Spithead was benign, but the Nore less so. Fortunately, Britain's rising naval hegemony was soon restored at Camperdown. This simplified narrative places the mutinies between the totemic bookends of glorious naval victories, and so has the effect of relegating them to easily-forgotten footnotes: unimportant and momentary anomalies with no place in the Homeric metanarrative of British ascendancy, or, rather, an awkward counter-availing place which had to be explained away.

VI. The Invergordon Mutiny (1931): Institutional Memory of the 1797 Mutinies

If the long-term memories of the 1797 mutinies were not particularly robust among the general public, there is good reason to believe that the navy was a different matter. N.A.M. Rodger has argued that the Royal Navy possessed a strong institutional memory and

tradition, which furnished a form of community code of conduct. This code relied upon a set of “unwritten rules” which had long governed such affairs’,¹⁴⁶ and which extended even to illicit activities such as mutiny. These rules were simultaneously ephemeral yet deep-rooted in centuries of experience. This sense of institutional memory meant that there was a particularly ‘Royal Navy way’ to do things: even mutiny. Centuries of inherited tradition and identity bequeathed sailors a legacy of awareness when it came to which actions were likely to prove effective, and which were beyond the pale. In the case of mutiny specifically, Rodger has suggested that three unwritten rules summarise the behaviour of eighteenth-century sailors of the Royal Navy. First, no mutiny would take place ‘at sea or in the presence of the enemy’. Secondly, personal violence must be avoided. Finally, the objectives of the mutiny must be ‘sanctioned by the traditions of the service’.¹⁴⁷ When it comes to these rules, the level of continuity between the 1797 fleet mutinies, and the Invergordon mutiny of 1931, is striking. In terms of objectives and behaviour, there is little to separate them, despite an interlude of 134 years.

After 1797 there were many further mutinies in the Royal Navy, with a concentration at the end of the First World War, but to find anything comparable to the 1797 outbreaks, one must look to the 1931 Invergordon mutiny. As at Spithead in 1797, the Invergordon mutiny immobilised the pride of Britain’s principal fleet, including some of its most powerful capital ships, such as the *Rodney*, *Nelson*, *Hood*, and *Valiant*. In a further parallel with 1797, the mutiny was motivated by a feeling among the sailors that they were being asked to bear an unfairly disproportionate burden when it came to Britain’s financial difficulties. Once again, hurt pride and a keen sense of fairness were principal inducements to mutiny.

In September 1931, faced with a dire economic situation, Ramsay Macdonald’s young National Government instituted a blanket ten per cent cut in the pay of public sector workers, including the Royal Navy. In practice, however, naval ratings who had joined the service before 1925 would see their pay cut by a full twenty-five per cent. Due to an unfortunate series of events, the first the sailors learned of the pay cut was from local newspapers on arrival at Invergordon in the Cromarty Firth on 11 September. Finding out in this way caused significant bad feeling among the men, and led them to distrust their senior officers. There were also fears that all sailors would see a pay reduction of twenty-five per cent, as compared to the more general ten per cent in the case of, for example, soldiers and teachers. The insult

¹⁴⁶ N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana, 1988), p. 346.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 238.

of discovering this news from the local press, combined with the feared injury of a pay cut 150% worse than that imposed on other public sector workers was a potent cause of anger and hurt pride.

Between 11 and 14 September, a series of large-scale, raucous meetings took place among the sailors in their bar on shore, and open spaces like the football fields. When officers arrived, however, their orders to disperse were obeyed peacefully. Several ships left port to begin training exercises in this period, and naval authority appeared secure. In the early morning of 15 September, the crews of the principal ships, including Royal Marines, refused all but essential duties. Officers were shown continued respect, and obeyed up to a point, but it was made clear that the ships would not sail as ordered. Rear Admiral Tomkinson cancelled the planned exercises, communicated the cause of the mutiny to the Admiralty, requesting that they investigate the sailors' grievances, and asked that members of the Admiralty Board should travel to Invergordon to negotiate in person with the mutineers. The Board of Admiralty forwarded the sailors' complaints for debate in Cabinet, but declined to visit Invergordon. Tomkinson tactfully ignored several orders from the Admiralty which he considered likely to exacerbate matters, and perhaps lead to violence. After two days of mutiny, the Cabinet agreed that all sailors would receive a ten per cent pay cut, in line with the rest of the public sector, including those men who had joined the navy before 1925. With fears of a twenty-five per cent pay cut allayed, the fleet returned to duty. Though brief, the Invergordon mutiny had severely damaged British prestige. French and American newspapers predicted an imminent communist revolution, which never came and was, in reality, never likely to come. More tangibly, the mutiny caused a run on the pound, and helped to force Britain off the gold standard on 21 September.¹⁴⁸

The events at Invergordon bore striking similarities with those of 1797, particularly at Spithead. In both cases, officers were respected, mutineer violence was avoided, and the disturbance achieved notable success. In 1931, as in 1797, pay was a, if not the, key motive for mutiny, but in both cases concerns about the absolute pay rate were joined by feelings of hurt pride and a keen perception of unfair treatment. In these respects, both outbreaks were closer in character to occupational strikes (though under military law), than to failed political revolutions. However, at Invergordon, and in 1797, some found it persuasive or expedient to

¹⁴⁸ This narrative of the Invergordon mutiny is drawn from Alan Coles, *Invergordon Scapegoat* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993); David Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon* (London: Macdonald, 1970); Leonard F. Guttridge, *Mutiny, A History of Naval Insurrection* (Shepperton: Ian Allan Ltd., 1992); Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon* (London: The Camelot Press Ltd., 1937); Lawrence James, *Mutiny in the British and Commonwealth Forces, 1797-1956* (London: Buchan & Enright, 1987).

blame seditious elements in order to deflect blame away from the government and Board of Admiralty, or to save the reputation of the navy as an institution. Quotamen and Irishmen were unfairly made to shoulder much of the burden of responsibility for the 1797 mutinies. Writing in 1937, the heavily-invested retired lieutenant commander in the Royal Navy, Kenneth Edwards, presented Invergordon as the work of ‘subversive forces’ and ‘agents working for revolution’, who were ultimately defeated by the loyal and true British sailors. If this were more widely known, suggested Edwards, then no ‘blame’ or ‘stigma’ would have attached to the Royal Navy or its personnel.¹⁴⁹

Strikingly, and further evidence of the Royal Navy’s long institutional memory, some of those caught up in the events at Invergordon drew explicit comparisons to 1797. Lieutenant-Commander J. H. Owen wrote in 1931 that ‘this is much what happened in 1797, even to asking “*Nelson*” [the flagship at Invergordon] to lead as Howe’s flagship “*Queen Charlotte*” led the mutiny in the Channel Fleet’.¹⁵⁰ At the height of the Invergordon outbreak, meanwhile, the Admiralty Board informed the Cabinet that the ‘polite mutiny’ was ‘at the dagger-point of transforming itself from a Spithead to a Nore’.¹⁵¹

There are limits to the comparisons between 1931 and 1797, as several key differences must be recognised. Firstly, the Invergordon mutiny took place in a peacetime navy, whereas Spithead and the Nore occurred at a moment when invasion appeared likely. Secondly, despite the fact that the advent of air travel would have made it easier and faster for the Admiralty Board of 1931 to travel the 450 miles to Invergordon than for their predecessors to travel the approximately eighty miles to Portsmouth or seventy miles to Sheerness, no such effort was made. Finally, when one considers the developments in social mores and behaviours, it seems that the Admiralty response to Invergordon was less discriminate than its response to the Nore (it was undoubtedly more severe than Spithead). A score of the ringleaders were jailed and a total of 400 men dishonourably discharged from the navy, either for their behaviour at Invergordon, or suspected of trying to incite similar behaviour elsewhere.¹⁵² The fact that this occurred in peacetime makes the response seem even more heavy-handed, but also meant that there was less demand for naval sailors; in 1797, skilled sailors were too precious to be thrown away unnecessarily.

¹⁴⁹ Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, pp. 22-24.

¹⁵⁰ Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 114.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.15.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*; Coles, *Invergordon Scapegoat*.

It was far from inevitable that the mutineers of Invergordon would, whether consciously or unconsciously, take the Spithead mutiny as their model. There were several much more recent mutinies which they were likely to have been aware of. The mutiny of the *Potemkin* (1905), the mutinies at Cattaro and Kiel (both 1918), and at Kronstadt (1921) all ended in confrontation, violence, and fatalities.¹⁵³ Instead, as David Divine has argued, the sailors of 1931 chose to draw on the ‘latent tradition of mutiny in the British fleet, a community memory on the lower deck of success in the righting of past wrongs and the methods and rules to be observed in the event of future necessity’.¹⁵⁴ They also clearly followed the three ‘unwritten rules’ identified by Rodger.¹⁵⁵ To all intents and purposes, Invergordon was another Spithead, not a Kiel, Kronstadt, *Potemkin*, or even a Nore. It appears that, even if the 1797 mutinies had largely retreated from public awareness, they still held a prominent place within the institutional memory of the Royal Navy. More than that, they were remembered because they still had practical value: Spithead as a model for redressing grievances through mutiny, and the Nore as a helpful guide of what not to do.

If the 1797 mutinies receded to a curious footnote in the shared psyche of the nation, they remained a tangible piece of the institutional inheritance and identity of the Royal Navy. When legitimate grievances across the entire service again required redress in 1931, Spithead and 1797 provided a ready-made model which, in Rodger’s words, were compatible with ‘the traditions of the service’.

Conclusion

Between June and December 1797, the fleet mutinies passed from current affairs to history. This process should have been largely completed by the execution of Richard Parker, but this was not to be the case. Instead, it was the victorious Battle of Camperdown and subsequent day of national thanksgiving that proved decisive in historicising the mutinies. More than that, though, these events not only consigned the mutinies to history, they largely

¹⁵³ Guttridge, *Mutiny, A History of Naval Insurrection*.

¹⁵⁴ Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁵ Rodger, *The Wooden World*, p. 238.

rendered them irrelevant history at that: a brief and, in the grand scheme of things, insignificant anomaly: an awkward and uncharacteristic caesura in the history of the Royal Navy. Falling between the glorious laurels of St Vincent and Camperdown, the fleet mutinies appeared near-inexplicable, or at least too fleeting to require explanation. The excitement of victorious fleet battles presented a more alluring subject for statesman and historian alike; the same can be said of national memory as a whole.

The continued effectiveness of the navy rendered the nuances of the mutinies moot, but these nuances and the measured response of the authorities were crucial to that resumed effectiveness. Among these were the official attempts to mould the memory of the mutinies through the presentation of an approved narrative of a familiar pattern: that of the penitent sinner. Despite some early success, this strategy was overturned by the public sensation of Parker's 'resurrection'. Beyond the control of civil and naval authorities, discussion thrived. The lasting memory of the mutinies would not be that of the official *fait accompli* (forgotten or centred on the 'good execution'), it would be contested. It was the exploitation of victory at Camperdown that did most to overwrite the memory of the mutinies. Even then it required two unprecedented policies: the celebration of an ordinary sailor, Jack Crawford, alongside the victorious Admiral Duncan; and a national day of thanksgiving centred on the pomp and circumstance of the St Paul's ceremony. The 1797 fleet mutinies fulfil many of the criteria for consideration as a *lieu de mémoire*. Their obscure status owes much to their being quickly and enduringly overshadowed by a contrary and more powerful British *lieu*: a feeling of naval exceptionalism based on cherished memories of Nelson and Trafalgar.

CONCLUSION

One can learn at least as much about an organisation like the Royal Navy (and the society of which it was so crucial a part) from its moments of greatest peril as from its moments of greatest triumph. Plato's metaphor of the 'ship of state',¹ comparing the social hierarchy of a country to that required for the safe navigation of a ship, was particularly applicable to the case of Britain and the Royal Navy. The 1797 fleet mutinies showed that, though a seaworthy vessel, the British ship of state was not without the occasional leak. This dissertation has argued that, in order better to understand the complexities of the Spithead and Nore mutinies, it is necessary to look beyond a narrow causation of either seditious intentions or absolute naval conditions. Accepting the central explanatory significance of sailors' concepts of fair or 'good usage' reconciles the resolutely loyal sentiments of the vast majority of mutineers and the determined tenacity with which they pressed their cause.

The sailors were resolved to the fact that their lot in life was a tough one and they patiently bore countless hardships, but perceived insults or slights were harder to swallow. The particular circumstances of British naval sailors were conducive to breeding a strong sense of pride and identity. Physically and culturally, sailors were often a race apart. They spent long periods away from home, family, and even country. They had their own distinctive manners of dress, speech, and even their own recognisable gait.² Their professional skill and the claustrophobic nature of their existence created strong solidarities. Furthermore, naval sailors were well aware of their importance to Britain. In a Spithead petition to the Admiralty the sailors flattered 'ourselves that your lordships, together with the nation in general, will acknowledge our worth and good services'. The petitioners unanimously felt that these 'deserve some better encouragement than that we meet with at present'.³ By 1797 their martial prowess merited much greater laurels than that of their soldier cousins and they were frequently celebrated as their country's pride.⁴ Recent studies have emphasised the

¹ Plato, *The Republic* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 210-11.

² Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea, Merchant Seamen, Pirates, and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 83, 89, 93.

³ *Queen Charlotte* petition of the Spithead Mutiny, 18 April 1797, quoted in G.E. Manwaring and Bonamy Dobrée, *The Floating Republic* (London: Frank Cass and Co. LTD., 1966), pp. 265-66.

⁴ James Stanier Clarke, *Naval Sermons Preached on Board His Majesty's Ship The Impetueux* (London: T. Paine, 1798), pp. 71-81, 212-19.

international character of Royal Navy personnel in this period.⁵ Nevertheless, even those sailors who did not possess the inherent rights of ‘freeborn Englishmen’ could take pride in being the most determined, trusted, and successful protectors of those rights, as well as of Britain’s seaborne wealth. This dissertation has argued that the conditions of 1797 were especially inimical to the naval sailors’ sense of pride and that this fact, once recognised, allows a fruitful reinterpretation not just of the causes of the 1797 fleet mutinies, but of their course and aftermath as well.

The evidence presented by E.P. Thompson, Marianne Elliott, and Roger Wells⁶ to support an interpretation of the mutinies as seditious and of revolutionary aspiration has been shown to be insufficient to their purpose. This is not to say that such proof does not, or never has, existed. Nevertheless, I have not come across any convincing substantiation, either in primary or secondary works, to support that interpretation of the fleet mutinies; indeed I have encountered much that appears incompatible with it. Certainly, several individuals made use of seditious expressions, though usually in moments of particular stress and lost temper. Among the tens of thousands of sailors caught up in the 1797 fleet mutinies it would be surprising if there were not a small number of individuals who sympathised with the views of the LCS, the UI, or even with the cause of Revolutionary France itself. No doubt there were many more who longed for a speedy end to the war and return to their families, and were not particularly concerned by the precise terms of such a peace. Nevertheless, such individuals or groups appear to have had no measurable impact on the timing, causation, course, or conclusion of the fleet mutinies. They were a drop in the ocean.

Crucially, if such groups had ever held significant sway among the mutineers, there was little to stop them from putting their intentions into operation. If enough of the Spithead mutineers, or even one ship of their number, had wished to defect to the French, or sail to a new life in the New World, there was nothing and no-one at all in place to stop them. Until the removal of the buoys and lights from the Thames estuary late in the Nore mutiny, the same was true there. Though the construction of a boom to block the river Thames was ordered, it was not nearing completion by the time the Nore mutiny ended. Therefore, if enough mutineers had wished to sail up the river, and perhaps bombard, attack or otherwise threaten London until their demands for peace or a new government were agreed to, there

⁵ Sara Caputo, ‘Alien Seamen in the British Navy, British Law, and the British State, c.1793-c.1815’, *The Historical Journal* vol. 62 (2019), pp. 685-707.

⁶ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 2013); Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution, The United Irishmen and France* (London: Yale University Press, 1982); Roger Wells, *Insurrection, The British Experience, 1795-1803* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1986).

was no credible force to stop them causing enormous damage. In short, if a sizeable faction among the mutineers at Spithead or the Nore had sincerely held the intentions ascribed to them by Thompson, Elliott, and Wells, they could have done much more to try to achieve those goals than, in reality, was ever attempted. Consequently, it seems safest to conclude that any ardent revolutionaries among the mutineers remained powerless in the face of the overwhelming loyal majority, and that their presence had no detectable influence on the course of the mutinies.

Naval sailors certainly saw a notable decline in their purchasing power in the years leading up to the fleet mutinies. In their petitions the sailors referred to the fact of their wages remaining stagnant since 1653. This was a powerful moral argument, though of course none of them would have had a precise quantitative idea of what this meant in terms of purchasing power. More important, perhaps, was the fall in purchasing power they observed over a shorter timeframe of perhaps three to five years, and which finds anxious expression in sailors' letters to their families.⁷ It must be recognised, however, that the sailors' petitioning occurred a full ten months after the worst price conditions had abated, with the Spithead mutiny breaking out a further three months later. In other regards, such as food and naval discipline, there appears to have been little sign of worsening naval conditions, though the reduced frequency of leave or shore time might have had some impact. On the whole, however, a more compelling explanation would appear to be the sailors' sense of hurt pride, frequently present in their petitions, that soldiers had received a pay rise in 1795 while, right up to the mutinies, there was no sign of a move to grant the same to sailors. The soldiers had received the thanks of a grateful nation while the, rather more successful, deeds of the sailors, it seemed, had been forgotten or taken for granted.⁸ At the same time, landsmen were joining the navy and receiving bounty payments far in excess of those granted to skilled seamen at the start of the war. Here feelings of hurt pride and ill-usage come to the fore.

An emphasis on ideas of fairness and good usage, therefore, provides a better explanation for the timing and causation of the 1797 mutinies than either seditious intentions or absolute naval conditions. Furthermore, this interpretation helps to resolve factors that had previously appeared to be at odds with the sailors' motivations, such as the continued use of flogging by the mutineers, and the continuity represented by social inversions utilised by the mutinous sailors. Such actions make much more sense when the centrality of good usage is

⁷ Helen Watt and Anne Hawkins (eds.), *Letters of Seamen in the Wars with France, 1793-1815* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), pp. 72, 154, 175, 225, 508.

⁸ Spithead petition quoted in Conrad Gill, *The Naval Mutinies of 1797* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1913), p. 359.

recognised; the mutineers did not seek to overturn the system within which they served, but to secure adjustments in their favour to right what they saw as historic wrongs that they had borne patiently for too long. In this context, significant continuities in the ways in which authority was exercised and in many aspects of the daily life of sailors during the mutinies tallies with the pride and respect that most sailors felt towards the navy, their loyalty, and the moderation of their goals. Within this framework, measured and conciliatory behaviour was in everyone's best interests. Coercion was present, but was subordinate to persuasion. The usurpation of symbols of authority was wedded to pre-existing traditions of maritime protest. Taken together, and combined with the inaccessibility of the ships, these factors helped to make the fleet mutinies one of the largest and longest-sustained coherent popular protests in eighteenth-century Britain.

Within this framework, moderation generally prevailed. Short of a *coup d'état* or defection (which they did not intend), the mutineers knew that the naval authorities would eventually regain control, and life would continue much as before. They were also aware that their rhetoric and use of symbols would significantly affect the public perceptions of their cause. This likely encouraged restraint in their demands and behaviour. Correspondingly, the Admiralty appreciated the value of the mutinous men and ships, and so their own actions were shaped by the desire to return to normality with as little delay and ill feeling as possible.

By the same token, the official response to the mutinies also appears to have been conducted with careful regard to sailors' sensibilities of pride and fair treatment. The lengthy courts martial spared no effort or formality, and were dotted with frequent references to the skill of the sailors. The composition of the court with a full board of thirteen senior officers headed by a vice admiral and renowned war hero might itself be seen as a begrudging compliment to the sailors as well as a suitable reflection of the seriousness of their offence.

A key part of this 'good usage' interpretation is that a feeling that the sailors' situation had fallen out of notice from the powers of the state had contributed to the mutinies. The courts martial showed that they had successfully caught their attention. Furthermore, the care with which the judging panel of officers considered each mutineer case and weighed up recommendations of mercy likely had a soothing effect by emphasising the merits and value of every individual sailor.

Finally, in the realm of memory, the sensitivity with which the naval authorities approached the mutinies reveals an acute awareness of the need to avoid harming sailors' pride. In particular, the 'oblivion orders' issued after both Spithead and the Nore, 'not to disquiet the minds of the seamen by ever mentioning what had passed during the

Disturbances, but to let the whole be buried in oblivion', speak volumes about the appreciated need for conciliation.⁹ This pragmatic response avoided tarring the sailors' pride by blotting their character with mutiny, though as we have seen some, like Captain James Walker of the *Monmouth*, harnessed this to galvanise his men for battle so that they might wash 'the stain off your characters in the blood of your foes'.¹⁰ As such, the interpretation advanced in this dissertation, that sailors' perceptions of 'good usage' were central to the 1797 fleet mutinies, not only provides a better causal explanation of those events, but also of the behaviour of the mutineers, the form of naval justice employed, and the conciliatory policies of the Admiralty in their immediate aftermath.

The mutinies do not occupy the general 'national memory' — overwhelmed by the stronger countervailing forces of Nelson, Trafalgar, and 'Rule Britannia'. With the carefully-managed judicial process and order of oblivion, this obscurity is just as the 1797 lords of the Admiralty might have wished. Nevertheless, thanks largely to the post-mortem antics of Richard Parker's body, the process of historicising the mutinies in their immediate aftermath was more contested than the Admiralty had hoped. The British state was blindsided by the uproar attached to the cadaver's arrival in London, which reignited discussion of the mutinies on terms far removed from their wishes. It was the victory at Camperdown — all the more powerful because it was won by so many of the same ships and men who had taken part in the Nore mutiny — that cauterised the open wound left by the mutinies. The state took full advantage of this opportunity and, through precedented and unprecedented methods, maximised its power to rehabilitate the navy. The countrywide day of naval thanksgiving, with its centrepiece ceremony at the national pantheon of St Paul's, united the king, government, admirals, sailors, and population of London in one jubilant act of rejoicing. From that day forth, the mutinies appeared as a moot point between the victories of St Vincent and Camperdown. As the examination of the Invergordon mutiny has shown, however, within the Royal Navy, the institutional memory of the mutinies lived on and served a practical purpose.

A strong argument can be made that the Spithead and Nore mutinies represented the most dangerous moment of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars for Britain. Contemporaries had good reasons to believe so. Nevertheless, the levels of conciliation and continuity displayed both by the mutinous sailors and the naval and civil authorities did much

⁹ Rough Admiralty Minutes, TNA, ADM3/137, Letter from the Admiralty to Admiral Buckner, 29 May 1797; BL Add. Ms. 35197, fol. 197.

¹⁰ Sam Willis, *In the Hour of Victory: The Royal Navy at War in the Age of Nelson* (London: Atlantic Books, 2013), pp. 151-52.

to avoid escalation or lasting harm. They are also suggestive that those on both sides of the divide shared a broad common understanding of what constituted ‘good usage’ to which sailors could lay ancient claim.

This dissertation is not without its limitations. For reasons of space or time, many promising avenues of historical research have had to remain unexplored. One major example of this is that focus has been entirely on the fleet mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, while the mutinies by Royal Navy fleets at Plymouth and the Cape of Good Hope have not been analysed. Part of the justification for this decision has been the fact that previous works have overwhelmingly concentrated on Spithead and the Nore. The Plymouth mutiny has received less attention because it is believed to have been a direct response to the Spithead mutiny that followed a similar trajectory. In particular, the Plymouth sailors declared themselves satisfied with the Spithead settlement and returned to their duty. As such, with the start and end of the Plymouth mutinies largely determined at Spithead, it makes sense to view the Plymouth outbreak as a mere extension of the Spithead mutiny, thereby diminishing its importance. Here the Plymouth mutiny stands in stark contrast to the drama of the Nore mutiny, which tends to draw most attention. This assumption that the Plymouth mutiny can be understood on the same terms as Spithead is not satisfactory as there were likely to be many peculiarities of the Plymouth case study that could reveal much about the wider sailors’ disputes. The seeming moderation of the Plymouth mutiny might also reinforce that of Spithead to emphasise the overall loyalty of sailors — a point sometimes brought into question at the Nore. Furthermore, the Plymouth outbreak would provide a further rare and valuable example of the responses of officers, local officials, and statesmen to a large-scale military protest and so represent a contextualising example to triangulate the diametrically different cases of Spithead and the Nore.

The mutiny in the fleet at the Cape has been omitted from this dissertation because, though it too stemmed directly from Spithead, it took place within a very different context which inevitably shaped its course. The problem of geographical distance was especially magnified in this case, thereby expanding the role of the local commander in chief and lessening that of the Admiralty and the state. An analysis of both the Cape and Plymouth mutinies would be a highly worthwhile enterprise, particularly if these were carefully situated in relation to Spithead and the Nore. Regrettably, this task fell beyond the scope of this dissertation, though I would be eager to return to these issues in future work.

Less attention has been paid to the marines than they perhaps deserve. Where individual marines took a leading role they have been discussed in this dissertation, as was their wage situation. However, the marines merit an entire chapter or article to themselves, which this dissertation could not accommodate. What makes the marines so fascinating is their position in the shipboard hierarchy. On the one hand they were the very lowest of the low; they had no sailing skills and were trusted only with tasks requiring brute strength, like manning the capstan to raise the anchor. At the same time, marines served a policing function to uphold the rule of officers. One indication of this was the fact that the marines' quarters were located between those of the sailors and the officers: presenting a physical barrier to mutiny or disorder. Marines stood sentry outside the ship's magazine, the captain's cabin, and the storerooms. When the crisis of the fleet mutinies arose the marines should have rallied to the officers and ended the disturbances almost before they could begin. The fact that, almost to a man, they did not do so is fascinating and worthy of detailed study. As far as possible, it would be desirable to investigate the motives of the marines who were most determinedly involved in the mutineer cause, those who kept their heads down, and those few who refused any involvement in mutiny. The actions of marine officers and NCOs would also be revealing as, if, as Admiral Collingwood famously argued, every officer had cause to see mutiny as a personal failure,¹¹ this was doubly true of senior marines responsible for maintenance of order. The systematic investigation of marines' responses to fleet mutiny promises to be a fruitful avenue for future research.

The voluminous nature of Admiralty records has necessitated an element of careful selectivity. For example, I decided to prioritise studying captains' letters to the Admiralty over lieutenants' letters for several reasons. First of all, these letters are catalogued by sender surname. It is easy to find the name of each ship's captain, and each ship had only one. It is significantly more difficult to discover the names of a ship's lieutenants (with the largest ships sometimes carrying six or seven) and then track them down through the different surname letter series. Furthermore, captains were much more used to corresponding with the Admiralty and were required to do so, with the result that the correspondence files from captains are much more substantial than from lieutenants. Finally, even in cases where captains were ejected from their ship leaving a lieutenant as the senior officer on board, letters, observations, and accounts from these men were often sent up the chain of command

¹¹ Ann Veronica Coats and Philip MacDougall (eds.), *The Naval Mutinies of 1797, Unity and Perseverance* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2011), pp. 27-28. Collingwood's words were 'Mutiny, Sir! Mutiny on my ship! If it can have arrived at that, it must be my fault and the fault of every one of the officers'.

via their captain, commander in chief or port admiral, rather than directly to the Admiralty. Lieutenant's accounts of events are also often near identical to those of their captain, suggesting coordination. A full examination of the lieutenants' letters might furnish new ideas and examples, but within the confines of this project the time to reward ratio did not justify doing so.

The majority of this dissertation covers only a short time period, but this is in line with its microhistorical approach. The span of the mutinies was mid-April to mid-June 1797. Including the period of petition writing and the judicial response to the mutinies extends this from January to August, with the service of thanksgiving bringing us to December. One rejects, however, any suggestion that this dissertation is, consequently, parochial or blind to significance beyond its narrow purview. For instance, the temporal scope of this project has had to be constrained in order to allow widespread comparisons to be drawn to wider British society. Where necessary, longer time periods have been considered, such as in the case of long-term purchasing power or enduring memory. Nevertheless, the particularities and peculiarities of my case studies must be acknowledged. These mutinies were, in most senses, exceptions, and studying them in isolated detail can sometimes normalise them so that their exceptional nature is lost. Here the study of the Plymouth and Cape mutinies could perhaps provide a comparative corrective.

The Spithead and Nore mutinies need no longer be seen according to the narrow dichotomy between naval conditions and revolutionary intentions. 'Good usage', a term manifest in the words and deeds of eighteenth-century people offers a viable and preferable alternative. The result is not only a stronger grasp of the causation of the fleet mutinies, but an emotive and practical prism through which sense can be made of the whole course of the mutinies. Though its precise definition was contingent to time and place, the desire for 'good usage' as a historical force extends far beyond the 1797 mutinies.

The final word belongs to Horatio Nelson, who did so much to smother memory of the mutinies in naval glory. Sailing off Cadiz, Nelson wrote to the Duke of Clarence of Spithead that 'for a Mutiny which I fear I must call it having no other name, that it has been the most Manly thing I ever heard of, and does the British Sailor infinite honour'.¹² Though the Nore mutiny 'depressed [his] spirits',¹³ Nelson acknowledged the justice of the concessions made at Spithead. He opined that it was 'extraordinary that there never was a

¹² Horatio Nelson to the Duke of Clarence, 26 May 1797, NMM, AGC/27/24.

¹³ Horatio Nelson to the Duke of Clarence, 15 June 1797, NMM, AGC/27/25.

regulation by authority for short Weights and Measures and it reflects on all of us, to have suffer'd it so long'. He ended his reflection on the Spithead mutiny with the hope that 'our Seamen, as they say, will hate the French as much as ever'.¹⁴ In that respect, they surely did not disappoint him.

¹⁴ Horatio Nelson to the Duke of Clarence, 26 May 1797, NMM, AGC/27/24.

8. APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Timing of mutiny on board selected ships at Spithead and the Nore

Table 8.1 Timing of mutiny on board selected ships at Spithead and the Nore

Source: Captain's and Master's Logs, TNA series ADM51 and ADM52.

Ship	Rate	Dates in Mutiny (1797)
Spithead*		
<i>Queen Charlotte</i>	1 st	16 April - 15 May
<i>Royal Sovereign</i>	1 st	16 April - 15 May
<i>Duke</i>	2 nd	16 April - 14 May
<i>London</i>	2 nd	16 April - 15 May
<i>Pompee</i>	3 rd	16 April - 15 May
<i>Marlborough</i>	3 rd	17 April - 15 May
<i>Nymphe</i>	5 th	9 May - 15 May
<i>St Fiorenzo**</i>	5 th	16 April - 24 April
<i>Galatea</i>	5 th	18 May - 24 May
<i>Greyhound</i>	5 th	18 May - 28 May
Nore		
<i>Sandwich</i>	2 nd	12 May - 14 June
<i>Monmouth</i>	3 rd	30 May - 14 June
<i>Standard</i>	3 rd	29 May - 13 June
<i>Repulse</i>	3 rd	30 May - 10 June
<i>Ardent</i>	3 rd	31 May - 10 June
<i>Agamemnon</i>	3 rd	31 May - 13 June
<i>Belliqueux</i>	3 rd	29 May - 16 June
<i>Montagu</i>	3 rd	29 May - 14 June
<i>Lion</i>	3 rd	30 May - 12 June
<i>Grampus</i>	4 th	12 May - 13 June
<i>Leopard</i>	4 th	31 May - 10 June
<i>Isis</i>	4 th	31 May - 14 June
<i>Inspector</i>	Unrated (sloop)	1 June - 14 June
<i>Swan</i>	Unrated (sloop)	13 May - 15 June
<i>Pylades</i>	Unrated (sloop)	14 May - 14 June
<i>Tisiphone</i>	Unrated (fireship)	24 May - 14 June
<i>Comet</i>	Unrated (fireship)	30 May - 14 June

* On almost all Spithead ships there was a lull in the mutiny 24 April-7 May

**Held hostage at the Nore 14 – 31 May.

Appendix 2. Dataset Recording Sailors' and Soldiers' Purchasing Power of Bread and Beer

The columns for each rank of soldier and sailor record the number of barrels of beer and the number of pounds of bread that could be bought with an entire lunar month's salary.

Soldiers received pay rises in 1792, 1795, and 1797.

Sailors received pay rises in 1797 and 1801.

The rows '1797 (2)' and '1801 (2)' record lunar monthly purchasing power for the higher pay rate after the pay rises of those years.

Landsman was not a rank until 1757.

Table 8.2 Dataset recording sailors' and soldiers' purchasing power

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1653	76.80	3.52	2.73	N/A	3.28	2.37	1.64	97.5	276.92	215.38	N/A	258.46	186.67	129.23
1654	67.20	4.02	3.13	N/A	3.75	2.71	1.88	97.5	276.92	215.38	N/A	258.46	186.67	129.23
1655	76.80	3.52	2.73	N/A	3.28	2.37	1.64	140	192.86	150	N/A	180	130	90
1656	96.00	2.81	2.19	N/A	2.63	1.90	1.31	142.5	189.47	147.37	N/A	176.84	127.72	88.42
1657	100.80	2.68	2.08	N/A	2.50	1.81	1.25	187.5	144	112	N/A	134.4	97.07	67.2
1658	115.20	2.34	1.82	N/A	2.19	1.58	1.09	182.5	147.95	115.07	N/A	138.08	99.73	69.04
1659	98.40	2.74	2.13	N/A	2.56	1.85	1.28	185	145.95	113.51	N/A	136.22	98.38	68.11
1660	100.80	2.68	2.08	N/A	2.50	1.81	1.25	187.5	144	112	N/A	134.4	97.07	67.2
1661	120.00	2.25	1.75	N/A	2.10	1.52	1.05	242.5	111.34	86.6	N/A	103.92	75.05	51.96

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1662	110.40	2.45	1.9	N/A	2.28	1.65	1.14	152.5	177.05	137.7	N/A	165.25	119.34	82.62
1663	110.40	2.45	1.9	N/A	2.28	1.65	1.14	150	180	140	N/A	168	121.33	84
1664	96.00	2.81	2.19	N/A	2.63	1.90	1.31	142.5	189.47	147.37	N/A	176.84	127.72	88.42
1665	96.00	2.81	2.19	N/A	2.63	1.90	1.31	125	216	168	N/A	201.6	145.6	100.8
1666	96.00	2.81	2.19	N/A	2.63	1.90	1.31	105	257.14	200	N/A	240	173.33	120
1667	88.80	3.04	2.36	N/A	2.84	2.05	1.42	115	234.78	182.61	N/A	219.13	158.26	109.57
1668	93.60	2.88	2.24	N/A	2.69	1.94	1.35	147.5	183.05	142.37	N/A	170.85	123.39	85.42
1669	93.60	2.88	2.24	N/A	2.69	1.94	1.35	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1670	93.60	2.88	2.24	N/A	2.69	1.94	1.35	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1671	96.00	2.81	2.19	N/A	2.63	1.90	1.31	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1672	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	140	192.86	150	N/A	180	130	90
1673	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	190	142.11	110.53	N/A	132.63	95.79	66.32
1674	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	185	145.95	113.51	N/A	136.22	98.38	68.11
1675	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1676	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	127.5	211.76	164.71	N/A	197.65	142.75	98.82
1677	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	172.5	156.52	121.74	N/A	146.09	105.51	73.04
1678	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	187.5	144	112	N/A	134.4	97.07	67.2
1679	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	147.5	183.05	142.37	N/A	170.85	123.39	85.42
1680	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	155	174.19	135.48	N/A	162.58	117.42	81.29
1681	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	140	192.86	150	N/A	180	130	90
1682	105.60	2.56	1.99	N/A	2.39	1.72	1.19	145	186.21	144.83	N/A	173.79	125.52	86.9
1683	108.00	2.5	1.94	N/A	2.33	1.69	1.17	140	192.86	144.83	N/A	180	130	90
1684	108.00	2.5	1.94	N/A	2.33	1.69	1.17	165	163.64	127.27	N/A	152.73	110.3	76.36
1685	108.00	2.5	1.94	N/A	2.33	1.69	1.17	120	225	175	N/A	210	151.67	105
1686	108.00	2.5	1.94	N/A	2.33	1.69	1.17	130	207.69	161.54	N/A	193.85	140	96.92
1687	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	112.5	240	186.66	N/A	224	161.78	112

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1688	108.00	2.5	1.94	N/A	2.33	1.69	1.17	110	245.45	190.91	N/A	229.09	165.45	114.55
1689	103.20	2.62	2.03	N/A	2.44	1.76	1.22	132.5	203.77	158.49	N/A	190.19	137.36	95.09
1690	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	125	216	168	N/A	201.6	145.6	100.8
1691	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	160	168.75	131.25	N/A	157.5	113.75	78.75
1692	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	195	138.46	107.69	N/A	129.23	93.33	64.62
1693	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	212.5	127.06	98.82	N/A	118.59	85.65	59.29
1694	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	140	192.86	150	N/A	180	130	90
1695	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	177.5	152.11	118.31	N/A	141.97	102.54	70.99
1696	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	177.5	152.11	118.31	N/A	141.97	102.54	70.99
1697	115.20	2.34	1.82	N/A	2.19	1.58	1.09	200	135	105	N/A	126	91	63
1698	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	182.5	147.95	115.07	N/A	138.08	99.73	69.04
1699	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	142.5	189.47	147.37	N/A	176.84	127.72	88.42
1700	110.40	2.45	1.9	N/A	2.28	1.65	1.14	120	225	175	N/A	210	151.67	105
1701	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	107.5	251.16	195.35	N/A	234.42	169.3	117.21
1702	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	110	245.45	190.91	N/A	229.09	165.45	114.55
1703	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	142.5	189.47	147.37	N/A	176.84	127.72	88.42
1704	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	117.5	229.79	178.72	N/A	214.47	154.89	107.23
1705	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	102.5	263.41	204.88	N/A	245.85	177.56	122.93
1706	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	102.5	263.41	204.88	N/A	245.85	177.56	122.93
1707	117.60	2.3	1.79	N/A	2.14	1.55	1.07	117.5	229.79	178.72	N/A	214.47	154.89	107.23
1708	124.80	2.16	1.68	N/A	2.02	1.46	1.01	175	152.29	120	N/A	144	104	72
1709	124.80	2.16	1.68	N/A	2.02	1.46	1.01	217.5	124.14	96.55	N/A	115.86	83.68	57.93
1710	129.60	2.08	1.62	N/A	1.94	1.40	0.97	155	174.19	135.48	N/A	162.58	117.42	81.29
1711	129.60	2.08	1.62	N/A	1.94	1.40	0.97	147.5	183.05	142.37	N/A	170.85	123.39	85.42
1712	129.60	2.08	1.62	N/A	1.94	1.40	0.97	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1713	112.80	2.39	1.86	N/A	2.23	1.61	1.12	157.5	171.43	133.33	N/A	160	115.56	80

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1714	124.80	2.16	1.68	N/A	2.02	1.46	1.01	122.5	220.41	171.43	N/A	205.71	148.57	102.86
1715	124.80	2.16	1.68	N/A	2.02	1.46	1.01	137.5	196.36	152.73	N/A	183.27	132.36	91.64
1716	124.80	2.16	1.68	N/A	2.02	1.46	1.01	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1717	124.80	2.16	1.68	N/A	2.02	1.46	1.01	117.5	229.79	178.72	N/A	214.47	154.89	107.23
1718	124.80	2.16	1.68	N/A	2.02	1.46	1.01	102.5	263.41	204.88	N/A	245.85	177.56	122.93
1719	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	115	234.78	182.61	N/A	219.13	158.26	109.57
1720	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	120	225	175	N/A	210	151.67	105
1721	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	112.5	240	186.66	N/A	224	161.78	112
1722	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	117.5	229.79	178.72	N/A	214.47	154.89	107.23
1723	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	120	225	175	N/A	210	151.67	105
1724	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1725	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	150	180	140	N/A	168	121.33	84
1726	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	127.5	211.76	164.71	N/A	197.65	142.75	98.82
1727	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	162.5	166.15	129.23	N/A	155.08	112	77.54
1728	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	155	174.19	135.48	N/A	162.58	117.42	81.29
1729	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	115	234.78	182.61	N/A	219.13	158.26	109.57
1730	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	112.5	240	186.66	N/A	224	161.78	112
1731	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	100	270	210	N/A	252	182	126
1732	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	102.5	263.41	204.88	N/A	245.85	177.56	122.93
1733	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	117.5	229.79	178.72	N/A	214.47	154.89	107.23
1734	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	127.5	211.76	164.71	N/A	197.65	142.75	98.82
1735	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	130	207.69	161.54	N/A	193.85	140	96.92
1736	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	132.5	203.77	158.49	N/A	190.19	137.36	95.09
1737	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	120	225	175	N/A	210	151.67	105
1738	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	125	216	168	N/A	201.6	145.6	100.8
1739	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	155	174.19	135.48	N/A	162.58	117.42	81.29

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1740	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	160	168.75	131.25	N/A	157.5	113.75	78.75
1741	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	117.5	229.79	178.72	N/A	214.47	154.89	107.23
1742	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	102.5	263.41	204.88	N/A	245.85	177.56	122.93
1743	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	97.5	276.92	215.38	N/A	258.46	186.67	129.23
1744	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	100	270	210	N/A	252	182	126
1745	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	122.5	220.41	171.43	N/A	205.71	148.57	102.86
1746	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	122.5	220.41	171.43	N/A	205.71	148.57	102.86
1747	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	120	225	175	N/A	210	151.67	105
1748	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	125	216	168	N/A	201.6	145.6	100.8
1749	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	122.5	220.41	171.43	N/A	205.71	148.57	102.86
1750	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	122.5	220.41	171.43	N/A	205.71	148.57	102.86
1751	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	135	200	155.55	N/A	186.67	134.81	93.33
1752	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	140	192.86	110.53	N/A	180	130	90
1753	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	125	216	168	N/A	201.6	145.6	100.8
1754	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	112.5	240	186.66	N/A	224	161.78	112
1755	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	125	216	168	N/A	201.6	145.6	100.8
1756	136.80	1.97	1.54	N/A	1.84	1.33	0.92	180	150	116.66	N/A	140	101.11	70
1757	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	152.5	177.05	137.7	129.84	165.25	119.34	82.62
1758	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	130	207.69	161.54	152.31	193.85	140	96.92
1759	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	117.5	229.79	178.72	168.51	214.47	154.89	107.23
1760	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	117.5	229.79	178.72	168.51	214.47	154.89	107.23
1761	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	102.5	263.41	204.88	193.17	245.85	177.56	122.93
1762	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	122.5	220.41	171.43	161.63	205.71	148.57	102.86
1763	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	127.5	211.76	164.71	155.29	197.65	142.75	98.82
1764	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	145	186.21	144.83	136.55	173.79	125.52	86.9
1765	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	167.5	161.19	125.37	118.21	150.45	108.66	75.22

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1766	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	150	180	140	132	168	121.33	84
1767	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	182.5	147.95	115.07	108.49	138.08	99.73	69.04
1768	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	177.5	152.11	118.31	111.55	141.97	102.54	70.99
1769	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	142.5	189.47	147.37	138.95	176.84	127.72	88.42
1770	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	145	186.21	144.83	136.55	173.79	125.52	86.9
1771	136.80	1.97	1.54	1.45	1.84	1.33	0.92	162.5	166.15	129.23	121.85	155.08	112	77.54
1772	153.60	1.76	1.37	1.29	1.64	1.18	0.82	182.5	147.95	115.07	108.49	138.08	99.73	69.04
1773	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.48	1.07	0.74	182.5	147.95	115.07	108.49	138.08	99.73	69.04
1774	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.48	1.07	0.74	175	152.29	120	113.14	144	104	72
1775	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.48	1.07	0.74	172.5	156.52	121.74	114.78	146.09	105.51	73.04
1776	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.48	1.07	0.74	145	186.21	144.83	136.55	173.79	125.52	86.9
1777	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.48	1.07	0.74	165	163.64	127.27	120	152.73	110.3	76.36
1778	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.48	1.07	0.74	162.5	166.15	129.23	121.85	155.08	112	77.54
1779	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.48	1.07	0.74	137.5	196.36	152.73	144	183.27	132.36	91.64
1780	160.80	1.68	1.31	1.23	1.57	1.13	0.78	142.5	189.47	147.37	138.95	176.84	127.72	88.42
1781	144.00	1.88	1.46	1.38	1.75	1.26	0.88	175	152.29	120	113.14	144	104	72
1782	146.40	1.84	1.43	1.35	1.72	1.24	0.86	175	152.29	120	113.14	144	104	72
1783	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	175	152.29	120	113.14	144	104	72
1784	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	172.5	156.52	121.74	114.78	146.09	105.51	73.04
1785	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	152.5	177.05	137.7	129.84	165.25	119.34	82.62
1786	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	137.5	196.36	152.73	144	183.27	132.36	91.64
1787	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	142.5	189.47	147.37	138.95	176.84	127.72	88.42
1788	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	160	168.75	131.25	123.75	157.5	113.75	78.75
1789	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	175	152.29	120	113.14	144	104	72
1790	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	175	152.29	120	113.14	144	104	72
1791	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	157.5	171.43	133.33	125.71	160	115.56	80

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1792	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.59	1.15	0.80	147.5	183.05	142.37	134.24	170.85	123.39	85.42
1793	158.40	1.7	1.33	1.25	1.77	1.33	0.97	170	158.82	123.53	116.47	164.71	123.53	90.59
1794	163.20	1.65	1.29	1.21	1.72	1.29	0.94	175	152.29	120	113.14	160	120	88
1795	163.20	1.65	1.29	1.21	1.72	1.29	0.94	240	112.5	87.5	82.5	116.67	87.5	64.17
1796	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.73	1.31	0.99	242.5	111.34	86.6	81.65	121.24	92.37	69.28
1797	170.40	1.58	1.23	1.16	1.73	1.31	0.99	190	142.11	110.53	104.21	154.74	117.89	88.42
1797 (2)	170.40	1.97	1.55	1.41	1.89	1.48	1.15	190	176.84	138.95	126.32	169.47	132.63	103.16
1798	170.40	1.97	1.55	1.41	1.89	1.48	1.15	192.5	174.55	137.14	124.68	167.27	130.91	101.82
1799	196.80	1.71	1.34	1.22	1.64	1.28	1.00	240	140	110	100	134.17	105	81.67
1800	237.60	1.41	1.11	1.01	1.36	1.06	0.82	382.5	87.84	69.02	62.75	84.18	65.88	51.24
1801	225.60	1.49	1.17	1.06	1.43	1.12	0.87	387.5	86.71	68.13	61.94	83.1	65.03	50.58
1801 (2)	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	387.5	99.1	74.32	65.03	83.1	65.03	50.58
1802	216.00	1.78	1.33	1.17	1.49	1.17	0.91	237.5	161.68	121.26	106.11	135.58	106.11	82.53
1803	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	217.5	176.55	132.41	115.86	148.05	115.86	90.11
1804	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	242.5	158.35	118.76	103.92	132.78	103.92	80.82
1805	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	327.5	117.25	87.94	76.95	98.32	76.95	59.85
1806	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	292.5	131.28	98.46	86.15	110.09	86.15	67.01
1807	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	270	142.22	106.67	93.33	119.26	93.33	72.59
1808	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	290	132.41	99.31	86.9	111.03	86.9	67.59
1809	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	342.5	112.12	84.09	73.58	94.01	73.58	57.23
1810	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	367.5	104.49	78.37	68.57	87.62	68.57	53.33
1811	225.60	1.7	1.28	1.12	1.43	1.12	0.87	350	109.71	82.29	72	92	72	56
1812	249.60	1.54	1.15	1.01	1.29	1.01	0.79	425	90.35	67.76	59.29	75.76	59.29	46.12
1813	271.20	1.42	1.06	0.93	1.19	0.93	0.72	392.5	97.83	73.38	64.2	82.04	64.2	49.94

Year	Beer							Bread						
	d. per barrel	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private	d. 100lb	Able Seaman	Ordinary Seaman	Landsmen	Sergeant	Corporal	Private
1814	259.20	1.48	1.11	0.97	1.24	0.97	0.76	285	134.74	101.05	88.42	112.98	88.42	68.77
1815	237.60	1.62	1.21	1.06	1.36	1.06	0.82	260	147.69	110.77	96.92	123.85	96.92	75.38

Appendix 3. Figures Displaying Purchasing Power Dataset

Figure 8.1 Sailor's lunar monthly salary purchasing power of bread, 1653-1797

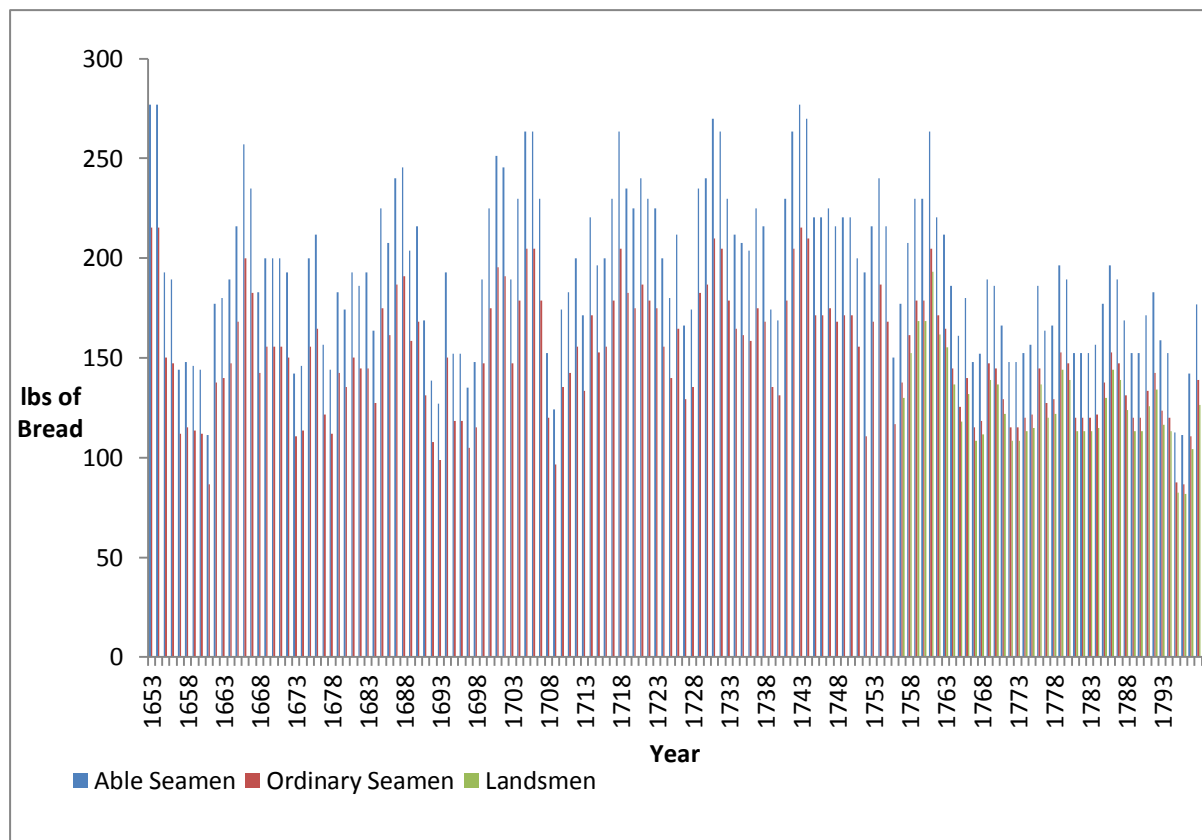


Figure 8.2 Sailor's lunar monthly salary purchasing power of beer, 1653-1797

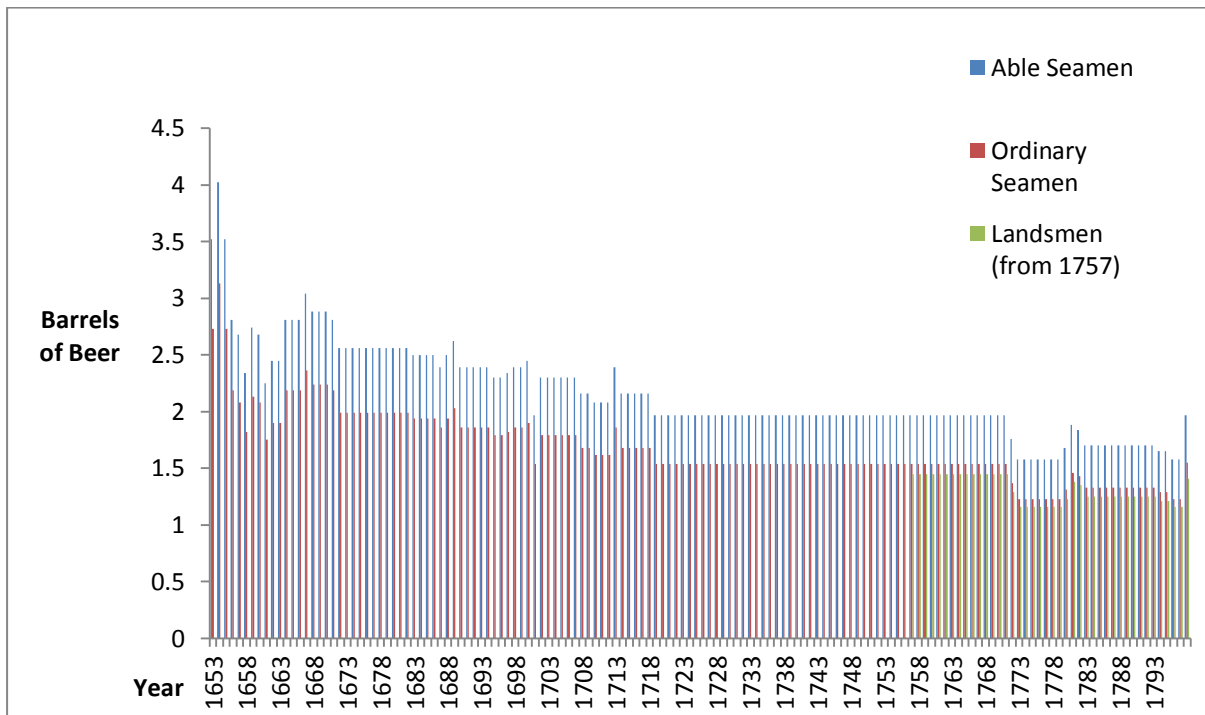


Figure 8.3 Soldier's monthly salary purchasing power of bread, 1653-1797

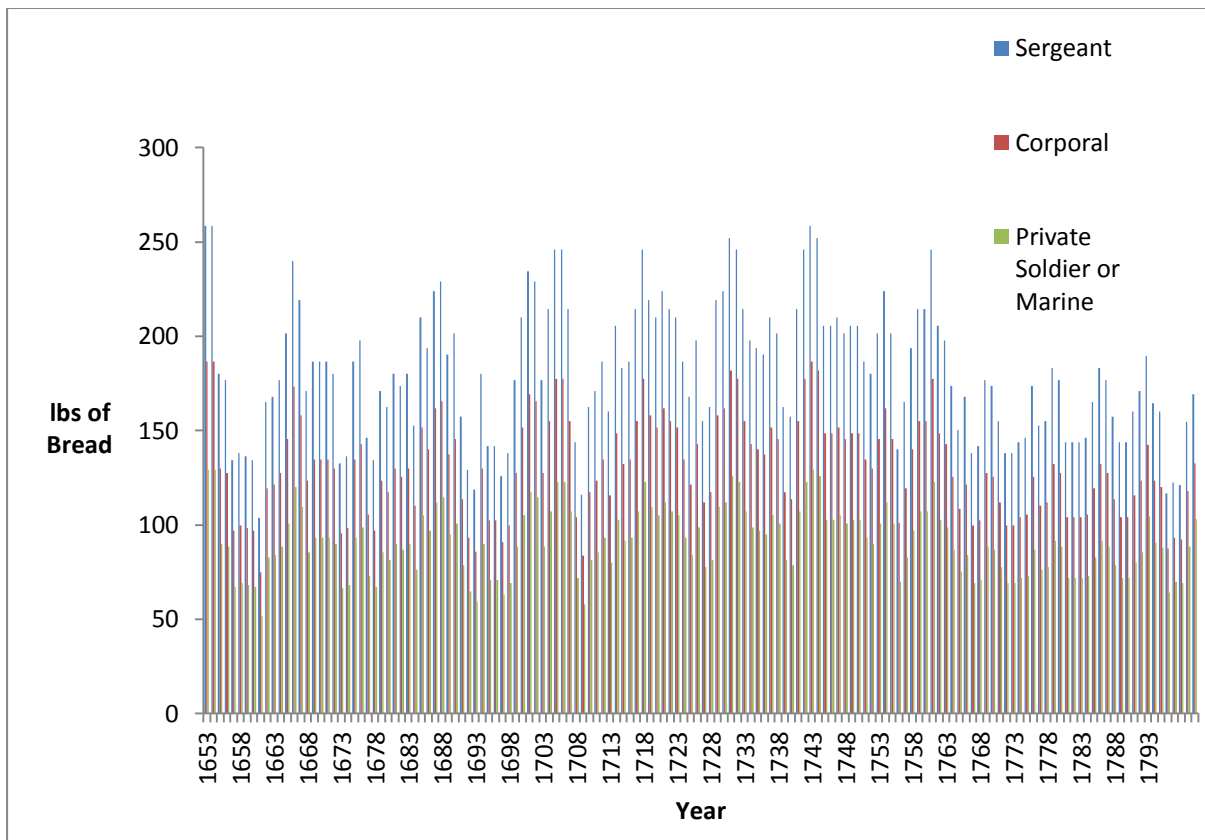


Figure 8.4 British soldier monthly salary purchasing power of beer, 1653-1797

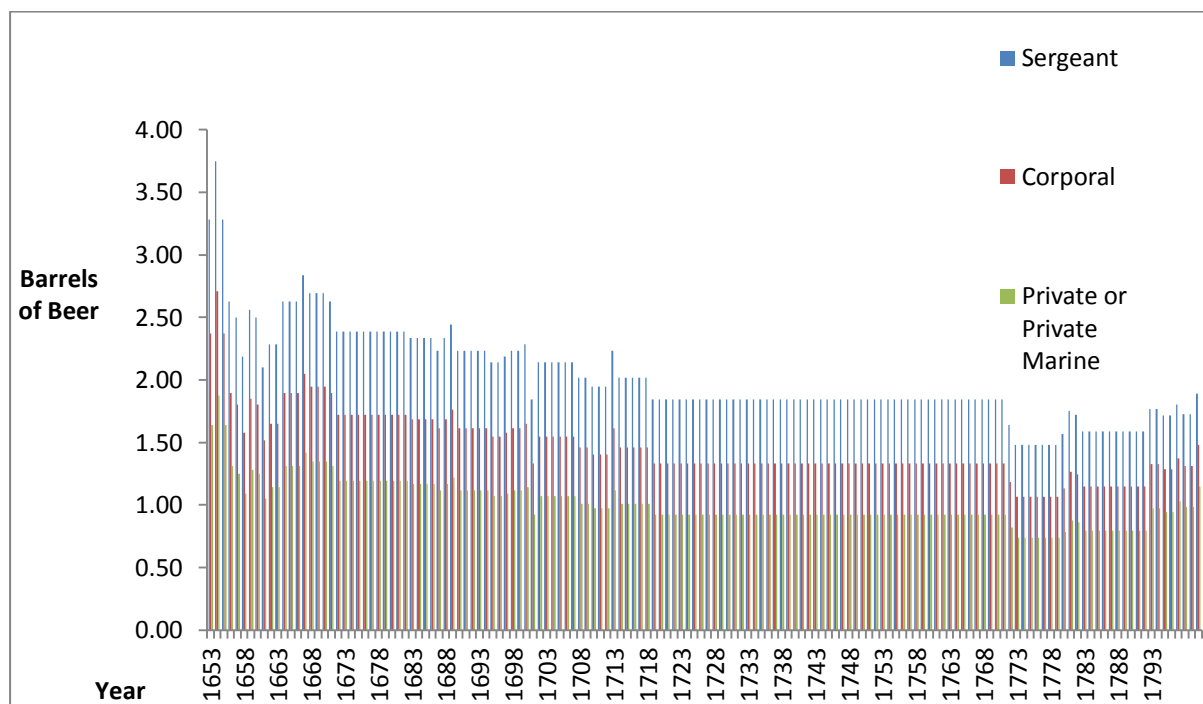


Figure 8.5 Generational index of monthly purchasing power of bread by rank (1769 = 100)

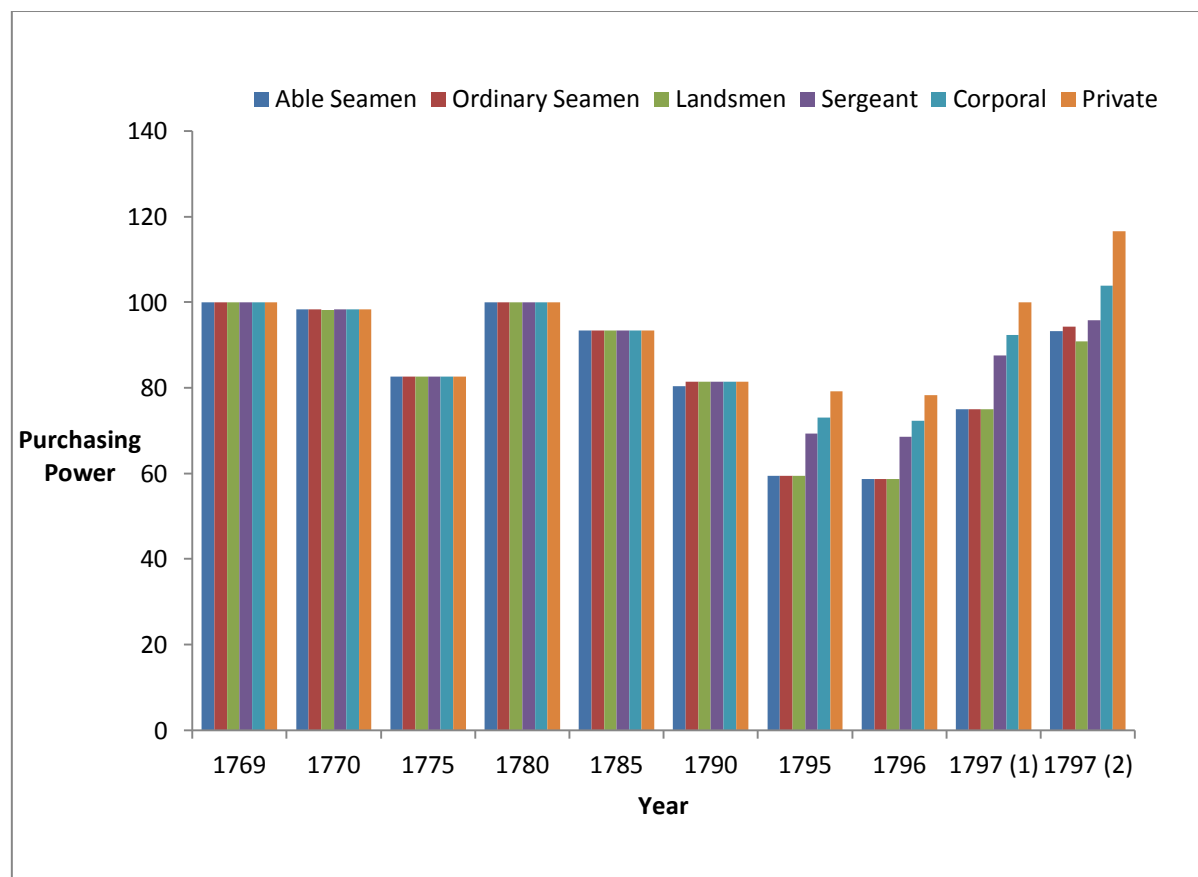


Figure 8.6 Generational index of monthly purchasing power of beer by rank (1769 = 100)

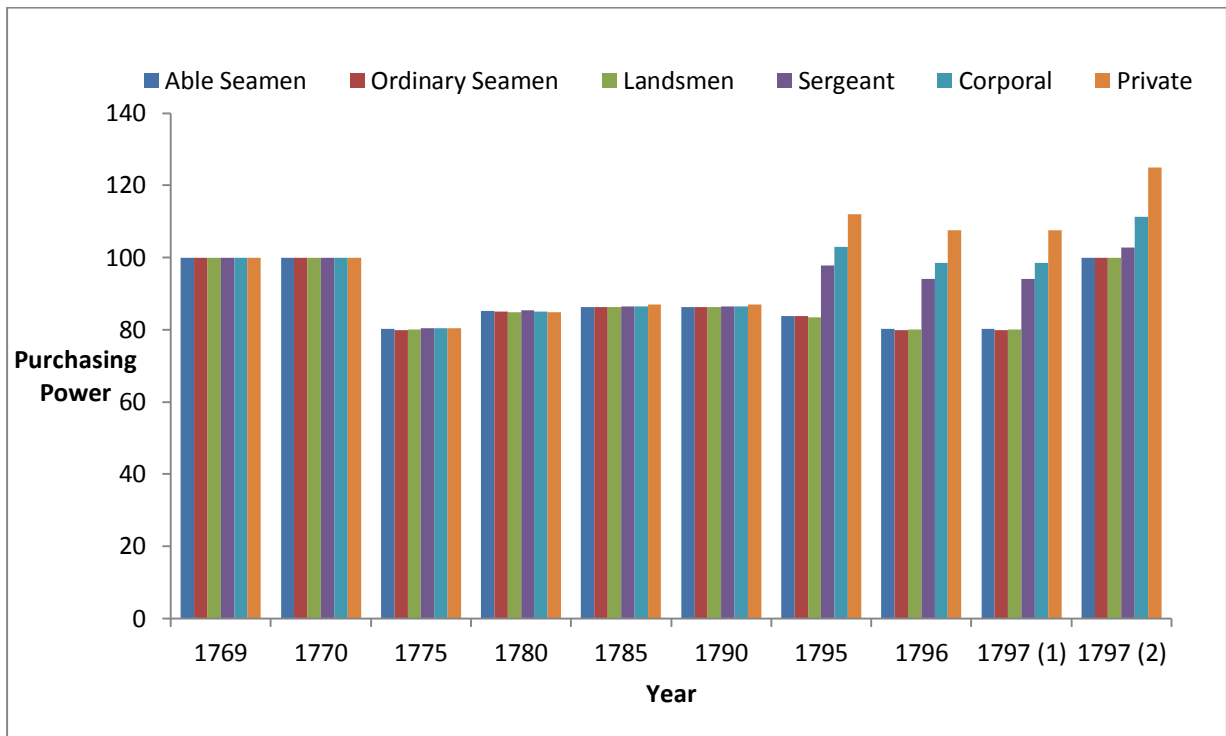


Figure 8.7 Decadal index of monthly purchasing power of bread by rank (1788 = 100)

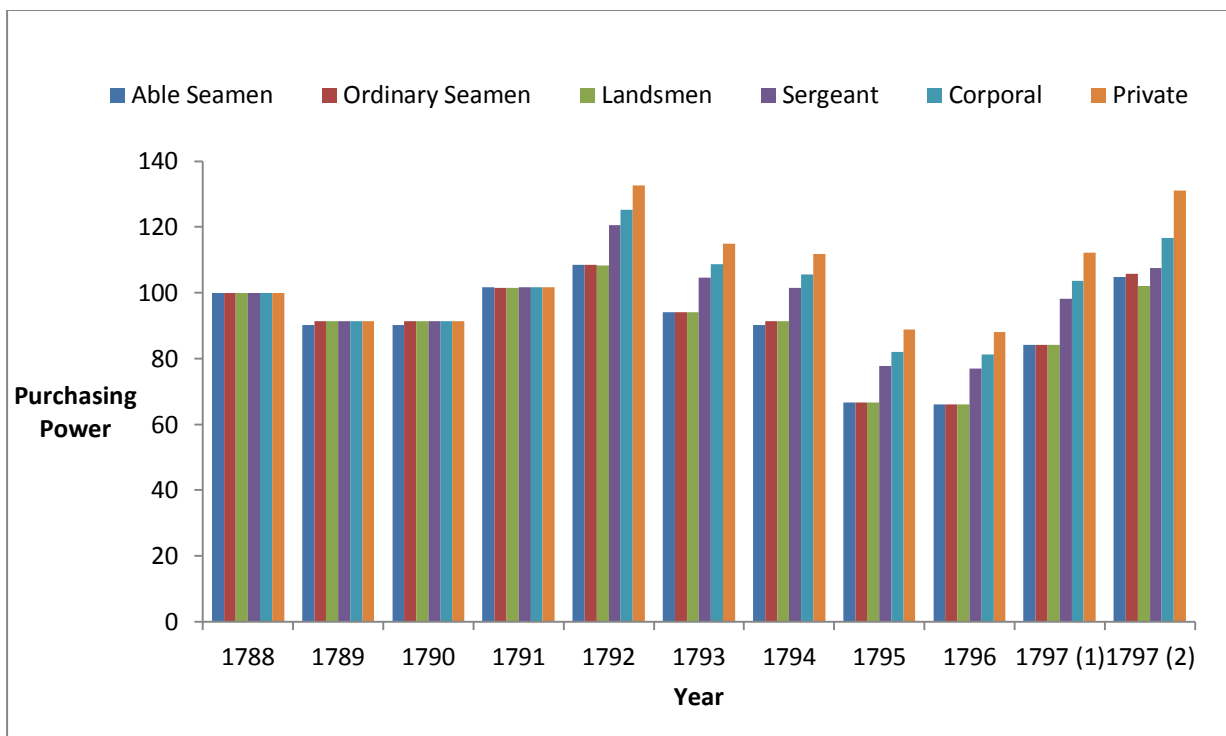


Figure 8.8 Decadal index of monthly purchasing power of beer by rank (1788 = 100)

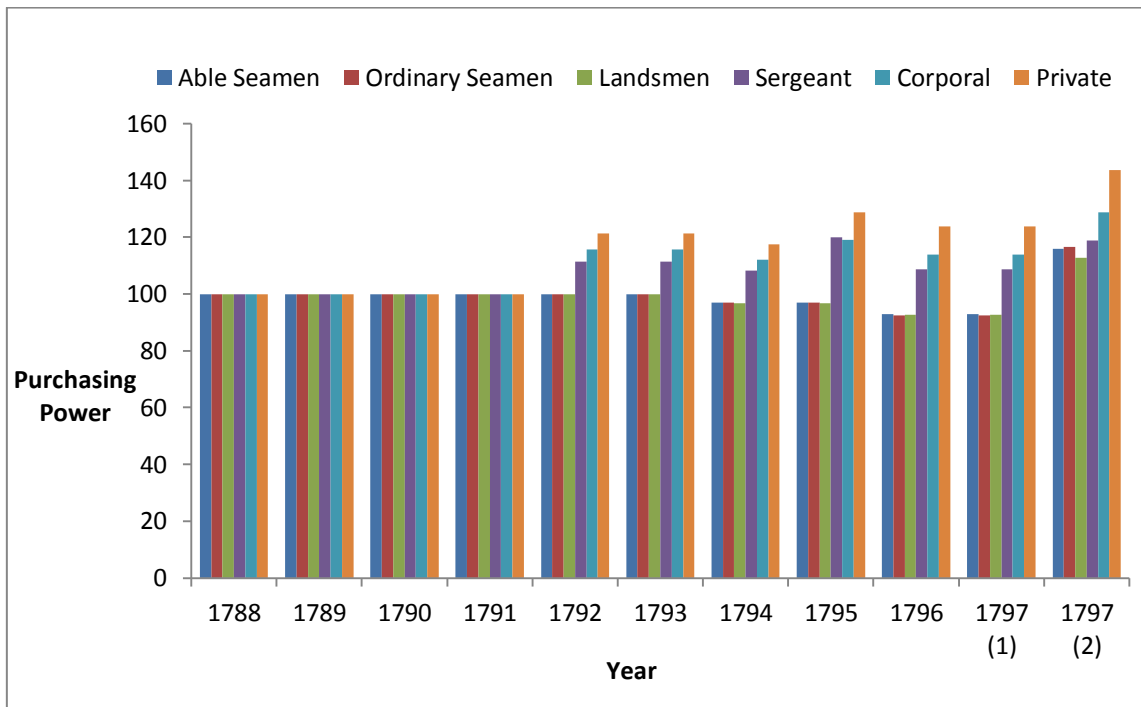


Figure 8.9 Wartime index of monthly purchasing power of bread by rank (1793 = 100)

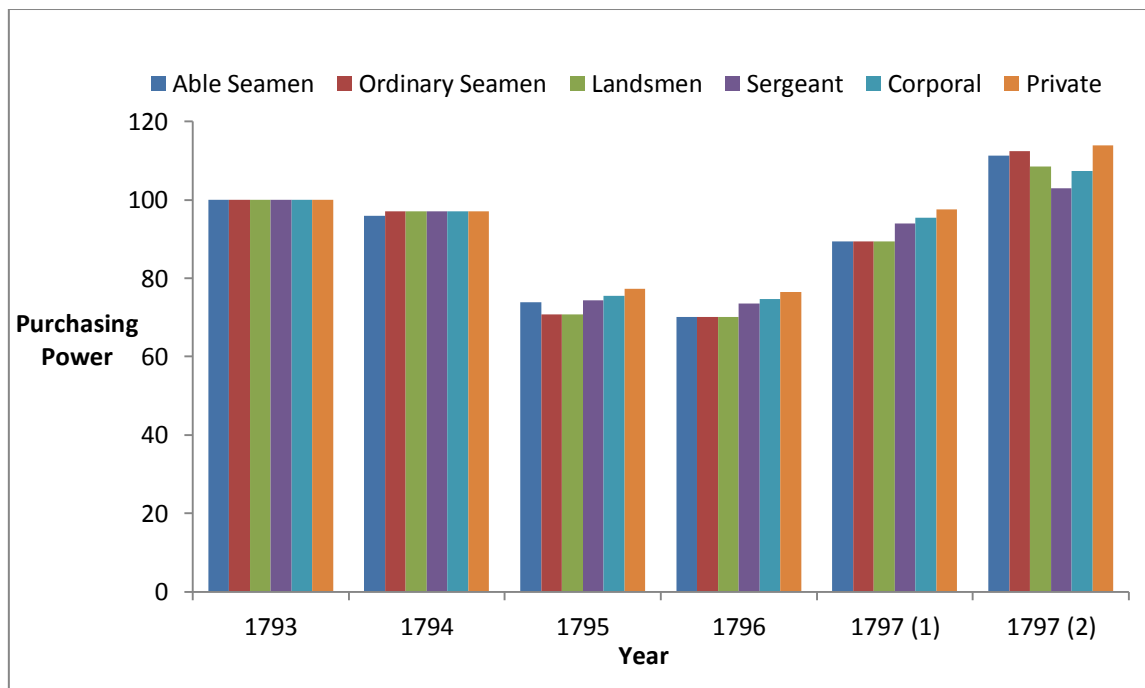


Figure 8.10 Wartime index of monthly purchasing power of beer by rank (1793 = 100)

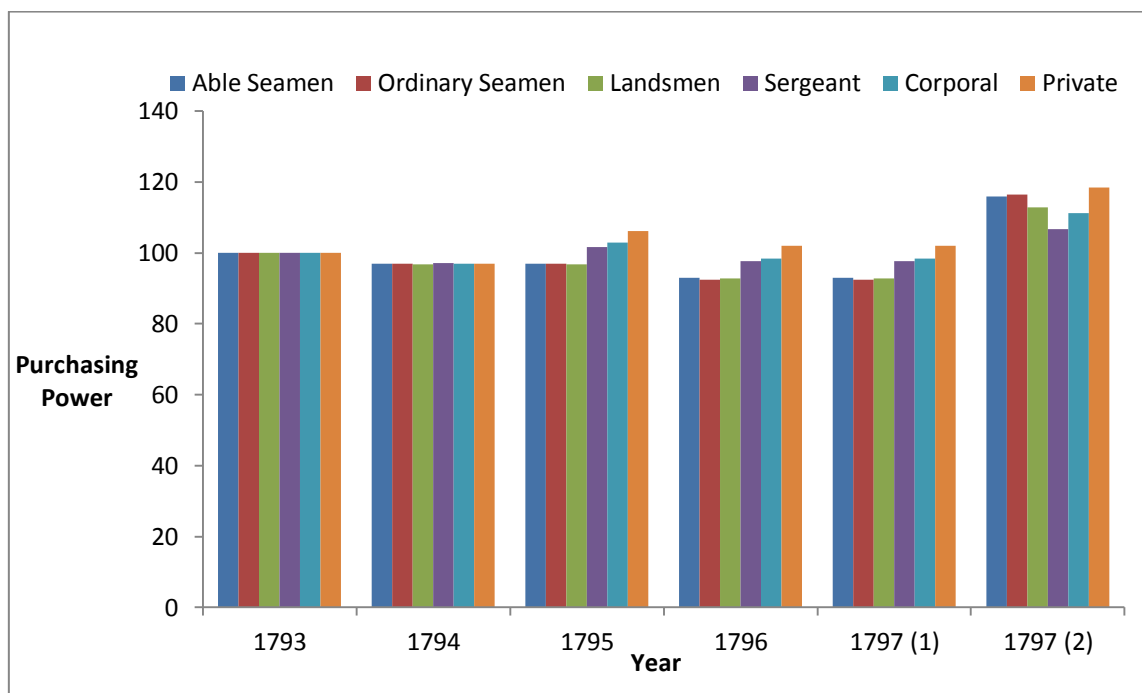


Figure 8.11 Wartime index of purchasing power of bread by rank (1793 Able Seaman = 100)

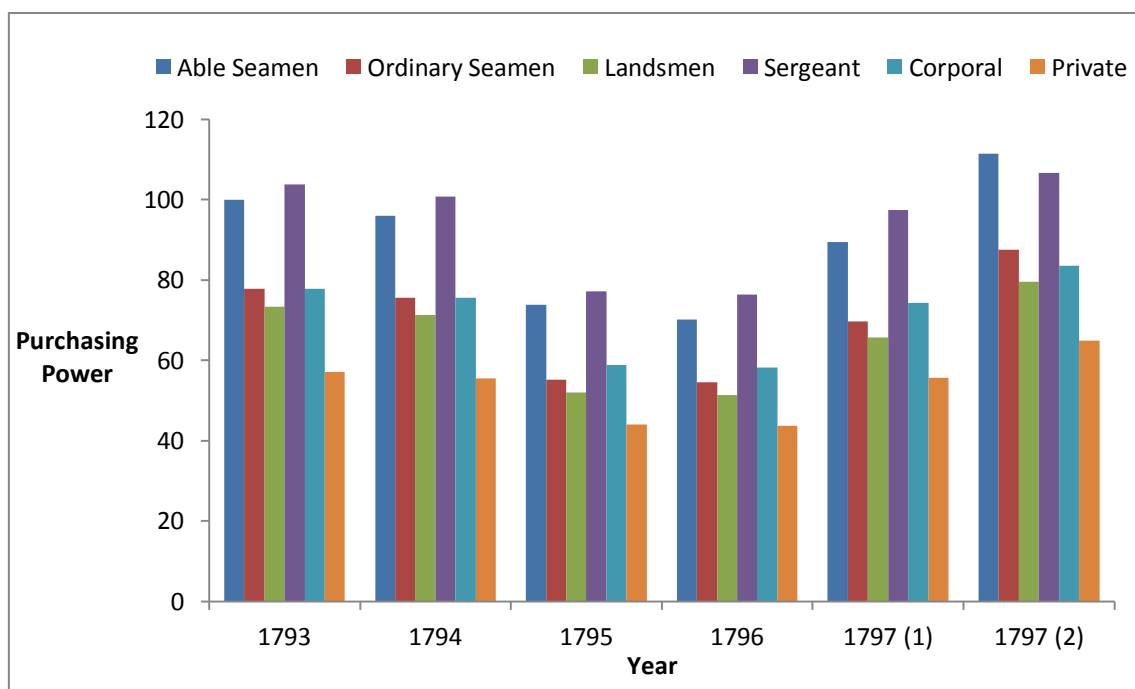
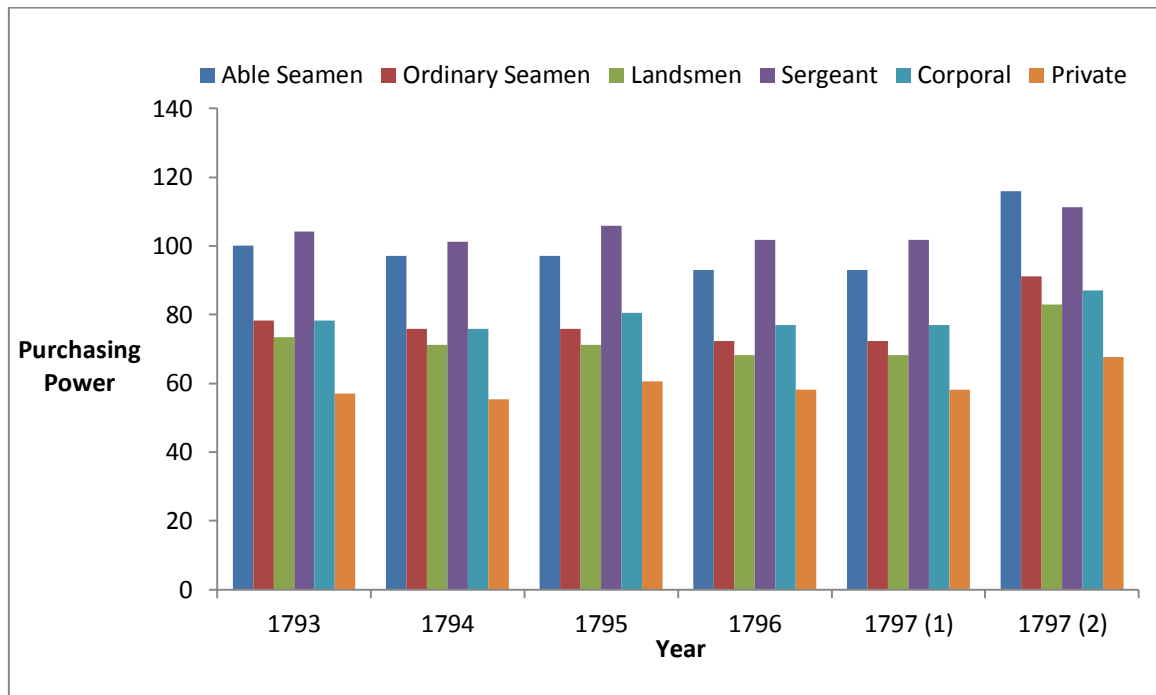


Figure 8.12 Wartime index of purchasing power of beer by rank (1793 Able Seaman = 100)



Appendix 4. Dataset Recording Short-Term Fluctuations in Middlesex Grain Prices

Source: *The London Gazette* figures for Middlesex weekly average prices of a quarter of different kinds of grains, January 1796 - June 1797.

Data for Rye is missing for 13 weeks.

Table 8.3 Dataset recording short-term fluctuations in Middlesex grain prices

For the Week ending on:	Price (d. per quarter)		
	Wheat	Rye	Barley
02.01.1796	1,264	665	444
09.01.1796	1,265	694	456
16.01.1796	1,260	756	448
23.01.1796	1,229	729	434
30.01.1796	1,223	624	420
06.02.1796	1,217	712	403
13.02.1796	1,234	Not Recorded	401
20.02.1796	1,275	Not Recorded	410
27.02.1796	1,343	668	429
05.03.1796	1,407	676	426
12.03.1796	1,415	716	437
19.03.1796	1,376	818	437
26.03.1796	1,308	648	422
02.04.1796	1,231	750	403
09.04.1796	1,065	618	379
16.04.1796	877	576	373
23.04.1796	861	499	359
30.04.1796	859	Not Recorded	354
07.05.1796	858	Not Recorded	344
14.05.1796	864	444	348
21.05.1796	902	420	347
28.05.1796	977	384	347
04.06.1796	1,015	408	352
11.06.1796	1,003	402	350
18.06.1796	999	402	350
25.06.1796	1,004	378	358
02.07.1796	1,007	382	357
09.07.1796	1,000	388	355
16.07.1796	969	382	351
23.07.1796	952	Not Recorded	340

For the Week ending on:	Price (d. per quarter)		
	Wheat	Rye	Barley
30.07.1796	939	352	349
06.08.1796	953	358	355
13.08.1796	909	343	365
20.08.1796	842	346	358
27.08.1796	774	Not Recorded	370
03.09.1796	743	Not Recorded	365
10.09.1796	667	416	363
17.09.1796	677	425	365
24.09.1796	725	528	362
01.10.1796	686	438	361
08.10.1796	678	448	374
15.10.1796	691	441	373
22.10.1796	712	418	397
29.10.1796	704	422	397
05.11.1796	692	354	430
12.11.1796	642	312	460
19.11.1796	656	340	450
26.11.1796	667	342	416
03.12.1796	682	336	406
10.12.1796	670	Not Recorded	389
17.12.1796	652	336	375
24.12.1796	645	334	362
31.12.1796	640	336	358
07.01.1797	647	324	351
14.01.1797	649	312	343
21.01.1797	645	300	342
28.01.1797	640	297	329
04.02.1797	639	312	331
11.02.1797	627	300	325
18.02.1797	625	300	313
25.02.1797	601	300	298
04.03.1797	582	302	284
11.03.1797	575	Not Recorded	286
18.03.1797	568	300	281
25.03.1797	572	240	284
01.04.1797	589	264	290
08.04.1797	608	263	302
15.04.1797	606	Not Recorded	302
22.04.1797	595	252	290
29.04.1797	599	Not Recorded	288
06.05.1797	597	Not Recorded	281
13.05.1797	598	255	271

For the Week ending on:	Price (d. per quarter)		
	Wheat	Rye	Barley
20.05.1797	602	264	273
27.05.1797	613	252	285
03.06.1797	620	249	286
10.06.1797	633	240	285
17.06.1797	628	Not Recorded	285
24.06.1797	621	232	273

Appendix 5. Fate of those Sentenced to Death at the Nore Courts Martial

Table 8.4 Fate of those sentenced to death at the Nore courts martial

Name	Ship	Fate
Richard Parker	<i>Sandwich</i>	Executed 30 June 1797
William Gregory	<i>Sandwich</i>	Executed 1 August 1797
James Hockless	<i>Sandwich</i>	Executed 1 August 1797
Thomas Appleyard	<i>Sandwich</i>	Executed 1 August 1797
George Scott	<i>Sandwich</i>	300 lashes
George Taylor	<i>Sandwich</i>	One year hard labour
Joseph Hughes	<i>Sandwich</i>	Solitary confinement and hard labour
Thomas Brady	<i>Sandwich</i>	One year hard labour
Charles Chant	<i>Sandwich</i>	Seven years hard labour
George Gainer	<i>Sandwich</i>	Seven years hard labour
John Davis	<i>Sandwich</i>	Seven years hard labour
Peter Holding	<i>Sandwich</i>	Executed 1 August 1797
Charles McCarty	<i>Sandwich</i>	Executed 1 August 1797
James Leurer	<i>Sandwich</i>	Three years hard labour
Henry Wolf	<i>Sandwich</i>	Three years hard labour
James Jones	<i>Sandwich</i>	Seven years hard labour
Thomas McCann	<i>Sandwich</i>	Transportation
William Porter	<i>Sandwich</i>	One year hard labour
John Durack	<i>Montagu</i>	Executed 4 August 1797
James Hamilton	<i>Montagu</i>	Executed 4 August 1797
James Newman	<i>Montagu</i>	Executed 4 August 1797
John Griffiths	<i>Montagu</i>	Seven years hard labour (1 in solitary confinement)
William Robinson	<i>Montagu</i>	Five years hard labour (4 months solitary confinement)
Robert Hembrough	<i>Montagu</i>	Five years hard labour (4 months solitary confinement)
Thomas Leonard	<i>Montagu</i>	Seven years hard labour (1 in solitary confinement)
Robert Tweed	<i>Montagu</i>	Seven years hard labour (1 in solitary confinement)
John Parkinson	<i>Montagu</i>	Executed 4 August 1797
Richard Brown	<i>Monmouth</i>	Executed 14 August 1797
John Doughty	<i>Monmouth</i>	Three years hard labour
William Frith	<i>Monmouth</i>	Executed 14 August 1797
Andrew Earls	<i>Monmouth</i>	Executed 14 August 1797

John Callaghan	<i>Monmouth</i>	Seven years hard labour
Matthew Williams	<i>Monmouth</i>	Five years hard labour
William Vance	<i>Monmouth</i>	Executed 14 August 1797
Nicholas Williamson	<i>Monmouth</i>	Five years hard labour
Robert Holmes	<i>Monmouth</i>	Seven years hard labour
Alexander Thompson	<i>Monmouth</i>	Pardoned on opinion of Law Officers
John Dunn	<i>Monmouth</i>	Executed 14 August 1797
Henry Freeman	<i>Standard</i>	Executed 7 September 1797
William Holdsworth	<i>Standard</i>	Executed 7 September 1797
John Burrows	<i>Standard</i>	Executed 7 September 1797
William Jones	<i>Standard</i>	8 years imprisonment (1 solitary confinement)
Thomas Saul	<i>Standard</i>	5 years imprisonment (6 months confinement)
John Davis	<i>Standard</i>	7 years imprisonment (6 months confinement)
Bartholemew Connery	<i>Standard</i>	7 years imprisonment (6 months confinement)
William Redfern	<i>Standard</i>	One year solitary confinement then transported
Joseph Hudson	<i>Standard</i>	5 years imprisonment (6 months confinement)
Thomas Linnes	<i>Standard</i>	5 years imprisonment (6 months confinement)
James Smart	<i>Grampus</i>	Ordered for Execution 18 July
John Taylor	<i>Grampus</i>	Five years hard labour (6 months solitary confinement)
John Preston	<i>Grampus</i>	Executed 18 July
Joseph Croshell	<i>Grampus</i>	Executed 18 July
Dennis Sullivan	<i>Leopard</i>	Executed 10 July
Alexander Lawson	<i>Leopard</i>	Executed 10 July
William Welch	<i>Leopard</i>	Executed 10 July
James Robertson	<i>Leopard</i>	Three years hard labour (6 months solitary confinement)
Joseph Fearon	<i>Leopard</i>	Executed 10 July
William Ross	<i>Leopard</i>	Executed 10 July
John Habbigan	<i>Leopard</i>	Three years hard labour (6 months solitary confinement)
George Shave	<i>Leopard</i>	Executed 10 July
Thomas Starling	<i>Leopard</i>	Executed 10 July

The source of this data is Admiralty Rough Minutes, TNA, ADM3/137, fols. 306-22. It includes tables recording the sentences of the Nore courts martial. The eventual fate of the men has then been added in pencil beneath the sentence. This source suggests that a total of 28 men were executed for their part in the Nore mutiny.

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