

A Social History of Midshipmen and Quarterdeck Boys
in the Royal Navy, 1761-1831.

In 2 Volumes
(Volume 1 of 2)

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To the University Of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
February, 2010

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Signed: S. A. Cavell

ABSTRACT

Many senior officers in the Royal Navy of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries saw the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars as a time of dramatic social change. Naval and civilian commentators alike expressed concern that the virtue of birth had replaced the virtue of merit when it came to the selection of officer recruits, and that the change adversely affected discipline and subordination. This thesis seeks to test the accuracy of these observations, and modern interpretations of them, by determining when and why changes in the social make-up of the corps of “young gentlemen” took place, and the effects of those changes on naval professionalism.

This study asserts that social developments in the navy’s officer corps are most transparent at the entry level. Data on the social backgrounds of more than 4500 midshipmen and quarterdeck boys, from 1761 to 1831, shows that the presence of the social elites among officer aspirants was directly affected by states of war and peace and the popularity of a naval career for well-born sons. While contemporaries saw a growing elitism among officer recruits between 1793 and 1815, the data suggests that the scions of peers and the landed gentry were more prevalent in the peacetime service of 1771 and again after 1815, when the weight of social and political connections again became determining factors in the selection of officer trainees. The cultural changes that influenced the popularity of a naval career for young “honorable”s between the Seven Years’ War and Parliamentary Reform highlight the social and political pressures that were exerted on recruiting captains and the Admiralty. Together they help to explain developments in the social make-up of the navy’s future-officer corps and the relationship between the naval microcosm and British society at large.

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LIST OF ACCOMPANYING MATERIAL

CD-ROM attached at the end of Volume 2 with Primary Databases and Appendices F-N.

CONVENTIONS

Dates

Dates before the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in 1752 are given in old style, but the New Year is taken as beginning on January 1 throughout.

Numbers

As this study presents a vast amount of numerical data the following format has been followed for greater legibility.

- Numbers up to seventy-five are written out, long form, except when they appear as percentages or as a comparative expression such as “43 of 128.”
- All numbers greater than seventy-five are expressed numerically.
- All percentages are shown as a number followed by the long form, “percent” e.g. 16 percent. Footnotes use the symbol “%” for brevity.

PART I Young Gentlemen: a Measure of Change in Admiralty Policy

Introduction

In 1800 Midshipman Lord William Fitzroy, third son of the third Duke of Grafton,¹ passed his examination for lieutenant and entered the ranks of the Royal Navy's commissioned officers. Though only eighteen, a full two years shy of the minimum age required to sit the examination, Fitzroy's political and social interest took precedence over Admiralty regulations and propelled his career forward. Rapid promotion continued and Fitzroy received his step to post captain in 1804.² A series of uneventful commands and accusations of cowardice³ did not prevent Fitzroy's appointment to the new thirty-eight gun frigate, HMS *Macedonian*, in 1810. As "plum" a command as the Royal Navy could offer at the time, *Macedonian* represented the opportunity for independent cruising in the increasingly hostile American shipping lanes. She also presented Fitzroy his best chance of making prizes from the fleet of French and American merchantmen still plying the Atlantic trade in the wake of Trafalgar.⁴ *Macedonian*'s newly completed crew of more than three hundred mariners and Royal Marines experienced a taste of Fitzroy's temperament with the enforcement of his first standing order that required the men to recognize his social status over and above his naval rank by addressing him as "my Lord."⁵ Fitzroy's next order condemned a seaman to forty-eight lashes for "the very sailor like offense of getting

¹ By Grafton's second wife, Elizabeth Wrottesley, great-niece to the Duchess of Bedford. See Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary of the Peerage and Baronetage, etc.*, 50th edition (London, 1888), p. 615.

² David Steel, *Steel's Original and Correct List of the Royal Navy*, June (London, 1804), p. 21.

³ N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (New York, 2005), p. 514.

⁴ The Essex Decision of 1805 added a large number of American merchantmen to the pool of legal prizes. Overall, the number of prizes taken by the Royal Navy and British privateers "grew throughout most of the war" although the average value of individual prizes diminished. See Daniel Benjamin, "Golden Harvest: The British Naval Prize System, 1793-1815," unpublished article (Clemson, SC, 2009), pp. 10-11.

⁵ James Tertius deKay, *Chronicles of the Frigate Macedonian, 1809-1922* (New York, 1995), p. 26.

drunk,”⁶ a sentence well beyond the standard punishment traditionally allowed a captain outside a court martial.⁷ By March 1811 Fitzroy stood before his own court martial facing charges brought by *Macedonian*’s master who accused him of falsifying expense reports on ship’s stores and profiting from the difference. The findings of the Admiralty court, however, focused on Fitzroy’s brutality towards the men as much as the charges of fraud, citing “False Expense of Stores – Tyranny and Oppression” as the basis for his dismissal from the service.⁸ Five months later, Fitzroy reappeared in the navy list, fully reinstated without loss of seniority. The support of the Prince Regent⁹ added to the political and social weight Fitzroy brought to his defense proving that influence, or “interest,” could trump Admiralty law, even when that law supported the best interests of the service. Despite Fitzroy’s public flouting of naval authority, he continued to profit from the Royal Navy’s rigid system of promotion. Beyond the rank of post captain, seniority alone controlled advancement and elevation to flag rank. Although discreetly denied active command after 1811, Fitzroy progressed inevitably up the naval ladder, becoming an admiral and drawing an admiral’s pay until his death in 1857.

⁶ Samuel Leech, *Thirty Years from Home; or, a Voice from the Main Deck* (London: H. G. Collins, 1851), p. 27. Note: Samuel Leech’s memoir, written more than thirty years after the events described, overstates the depravity and cruelty of naval life as a means of emphasizing his Evangelical redemption and is, therefore, a generally dubious source. His observations on this particular issue are, however, more reliable as the outcome of Fitzroy’s court martial would seem to support Leech’s view of his captain as a tyrant, prone to violent over-reaction.

⁷ In 1806 the “Regulations and Instructions for His Majesty’s Service at Sea” removed the restrictions that limited a captain to twelve lashes in his punishment of seamen without a court martial. Fitzroy’s sentence of forty-eight lashes was, however, well beyond standard practice for the time. A sentence of 48 lashes was passed on a seaman aboard the HMS *Blake* one year later, but for “attempting an unnatural crime with a boy,” an offense punishable by death. See NMM, COD/3/7-8, “HMS Blake’s Black List,” 1811 to 1813; also see Brian Lavery, ed., *Shipboard Life and Organization, 1731-1815*, Navy Records Society, vol. 138 (London, 1998), p. 413.

⁸ The National Archive (TNA): Public Records Office (PRO), ADM 12/27D, “Black Book,” Vol. III, 1807-1815, ff. 397, 43.

⁹ Nicholas Tracy, *The Naval Chronicle: The Contemporary Record of the Royal Navy at War, 1811-1815*, 5 vols., vol. 5 (London, 1998), p. 47.

Fitzroy's story is just one example of a trend, noticed by the most eminent naval figures, in which the importance of high-birth and political connections appeared to increase during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, dramatically affecting the selection of recruits who aspired to commissioned rank. Opinions that the appointment and advancement of entry-level officers increasingly depended on the virtues of birth, connections, and wealth rather than deservedness and ability appeared in letters both private and professional. Fears for the professionalism of the officer corps and the operational effectiveness of the service led the Earl St. Vincent to caution George III in 1806: ". . . this vast overflow of young nobility in the Service makes rapid strides to the decay of Seamanship, as well as Subordination . . ."¹⁰ On the issue of discipline, Lord Nelson too, observed that young "Honourables . . . will always do as they please. Orders are not for them – at least I never knew yet one who obeyed."¹¹ When it came to the erosion of professionalism, Captain Cuthbert Collingwood addressed the shortcomings of one young gentleman whose social accomplishments far outweighed his nautical talents:

He is as well-bred, gentlemanly a young man as can be, and I dare say an excellent fox hunter, for he seems skilful in horses, dogs, foxes and such animals. But unluckily . . . these are branches of knowledge not very useful at sea, we do not profit by them off Ushant.¹²

By 1807 Collingwood's frustration over the influx of well-born but unsuitable young gentlemen into the service was clear. Of one youth who lobbied his connections tirelessly

¹⁰ The Earl St. Vincent to Benjamin Tucker, Esq., March 17, 1806 in Jedediah S. Tucker, ed., *Memoirs of the Right Honourable the Earl St. Vincent G.C.B. etc.*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London, 1844), p. 270.

¹¹ Rear Admiral Horatio Nelson to the Earl St. Vincent, June 21, 1797 in N. H. Nicolas, ed., *The Dispatches and Letters of Lord Nelson*, 7 vols., vol. 2 (London, 1997), p. 398.

¹² Collingwood to Mrs. Moutray, February 10, 1801 in G. L. Newnham Collingwood, ed., *A Selection from the Public and Private Correspondence of Vice-Admiral Lord Collingwood: Interspersed with Memoirs of his Life*, 2nd edition, vol. 1 (London, 1828), p. 113.

for a lieutenant's commission, the Admiral complained: ". . . he is of no more use here as an officer than Bounce is, and not near so entertaining."¹³ Bounce was Collingwood's dog.

In 1809 the admiral addressed another aspect of the social problem surrounding the recruitment and appointments of young officers – political influence. In response to a request for help from one of his more talented protégés who could not find employment, Collingwood apologized for the state of the appointment process: "Lord Mulgrave . . . is so pressed by persons having parliamentary influence, that he cannot find himself at liberty to select those whose nautical skill and gallantry would otherwise present them as proper men for the service."¹⁴ Admiral Lord Thomas Cochrane went further, lamenting the professional shortcomings of such politically-connected quarterdeck recruits: "of the many [young] officers furnished to me through parliamentary influence, it can be only said that they were seldom trusted . . . I considered it preferable, on pressing occasions, to do their duty myself . . ."¹⁵

In the later years of the war Admiral Philip Patton suggested an explanation for the perceived lack of professionalism and discipline – the foundations of which lay in the rising social quality of the officer corps and the questions it raised over which took precedence, social rank or service rank. According to Patton,

That high degree of familiarity between the officers of different ranks under the pretence of the equality of gentlemen, which may be compatible with the situation of men composing an army, but which must undermine obedience . . . is utterly destructive of discipline in a situation so confined as that of a ship . . . that

¹³ Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood to Lady Collingwood, HMS *Ocean* off Cadiz, July 28, 1808, in G. L. Newnham Collingwood, ed., *A Selection from the Public and Private Correspondence of Vice-Admiral Lord Collingwood: Interspersed with Memoirs of his Life*, 2nd edition, vol. 2 (London, 1828), pp. 198-99.

¹⁴ Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood to Captain Clavell, October 20, 1809 in G. L. Newnham Collingwood, ed., *A Selection from the Public and Private Correspondence of Vice-Admiral Lord Collingwood: Interspersed with Memoirs of his Life*., 1st American edition (New York, 1829), p. 405.

¹⁵ Admiral Lord Cochrane, *The Autobiography of a Seaman*, introduction by Richard Woodman (New York, 2000), p. 22. The irony of this comment is palpable considering Cochrane's own political connections and his unabashed use of them in securing a foothold on a naval career.

familiarity among the different ranks of officers must prove the destruction of subordination.¹⁶

Collectively, these observations revealed an awareness of several important changes taking place within the navy of the French Wars. First, they spoke to a growing attentiveness to social class within the officer corps and an awareness of its potentially-corrosive effects on subordination, discipline, and professionalism. Second, they identified a trend that placed more sons from the privileged social orders in line for commissioned rank. Third, they addressed the influence of politics in the creation of a well-born, well-connected, well-moneyed officer corps. And finally they identified the growing confusion within the officer corps over the superiority of social rank or the service hierarchy. Despite the likelihood that at least some of these observations may reflect exaggeration and the characteristic enthusiasm of the commentators,¹⁷ they nonetheless represent a significant body of commentary which speaks to a common theme – the narrowing of quarterdeck opportunities for all but the social and political elites during the course of the French Wars.

Such contemporary perceptions have, however, been challenged by at least one modern historian. Michael Lewis's seminal work on the social make-up of sea officers during the French Wars offers an alternative view in which he suggests that:

as the war grew older there appeared upon the quarterdecks of His Majesty's ships an appreciable group of men whose social qualifications were some way below those required in earlier days, and far below those desired by the older sort of officer Once men who were 'not quite' began to command ships, they naturally began to surround themselves with other 'not quites' who, in due course, became qualified to admit more.¹⁸

¹⁶ Admiral Philip Patton, "Strictures on Naval Discipline and the Conduct of a Ship of War, intended to produce a uniformity of opinion among sea officers," c. 1807, extract in Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 622-23.

¹⁷ St. Vincent was notoriously reactive to all issues regarding subordination and discipline and these comments may well reflect his penchant for the dramatic. For commentary on St. Vincent's character see Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1750-1850: public trust and government ideology* (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 22, 181; and Patricia K. Crimmin, "John Jervis, Earl St. Vincent, 1735-1823," in *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Peter le Fevre and Richard Harding (London, 2000), pp. 336-37.

¹⁸ Michael Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy, 1793-1815* (London, 1960), p. 42.

While Lewis's credentials as the godfather of naval social history are undisputed, the observations of such powerful and respected contemporaries present a compelling case for revisiting the issue of just how much the social make-up of the officer corps changed before, during, and after the French Wars.

There is, however, a point of convergence between the theories of Lewis and the observations of the admirals. Common to each was the understanding that changes in the social "quality" of those who walked the quarterdeck were the product of changes in the way appointments and promotions were awarded at the very lowest levels of the command structure. "Young gentlemen," as officers-in-training, were therefore, the locus of social change in the navy's officer corps. Young gentlemen represented the future of naval command and as such were chosen, trained, and educated for a specific professional role. Young aspirants were, therefore, of critical importance in determining the social and professional quality of the next generation of sea officers. Despite their research value, the lens of social history has yet to focus on the entry-level recruit.

This thesis aims to test the accuracy of the observations made by contemporary naval commentators through a statistical assessment of the social backgrounds of young gentlemen from 1761 to 1831, a period that allows several decades on either side of the French Wars, in order to identify patterns of change. In doing so, it attempts to revisit the theories of Lewis and other historians, including Nicholas Rodger, by observing the young men who became the unwitting subjects in a series of struggles, first between the Admiralty and its captains, and second between the service and the political state, for control of recruitment and subsequently, the social make-up of the navy's officer corps.

Chapter One: Overview of the Approach

1. Why young gentlemen?

The reason for focusing a study on young gentlemen can be summed up in a word – transparency. No other rank or rating allows a clearer view of the social and cultural factors affecting naval patronage, or the importance of various social networks when it came to a starting a career at sea. This is not to say that the view of young gentlemen is a direct one or that the means of assessing them is simple. Until 1815 the system of selection and appointment was fully decentralized with individual captains and admirals deciding who would be given the opportunity to become a commissioned officer. A lack of regulation, coupled with the fluidity of the ratings applied to young gentlemen,¹ make it difficult to obtain a “big picture” perspective on officer aspirants. Such obscurity is, however, both a hindrance and help to a study of social change within the officer corps.

In terms of the difficulties, the nature of the appointment process meant that no centralized system of documentation kept track of the entry of young gentlemen. While the Navy Board and Admiralty retained exacting records of their warrant and commissioned officers respectively, no agency assumed responsibility for recording the personal details of young gentlemen who entered the service and advanced to the pre-commissioned ratings. Without formal records, the task of tracing the personal and professional histories of officer aspirants becomes challenging. Information is scattered, with biographical details appearing piecemeal in ships’ musters, pay books, and courts martial records. Lieutenants’ passing certificates and commissioned officer surveys conducted by the Admiralty in the years after 1814, allow only an indirect view via a young officer’s career progress. The

¹ A full explanation of these ratings follows in Section 3.

problem of data collection, which restricts the ability to see young gentlemen as a distinct group, is further explained in the section on methodology.

Despite the obvious difficulties associated with a lack of centralized record-keeping, advantages arise by virtue of the same factors that limit direct observation. With captains and admirals fully in control of the recruitment process, young gentlemen existed as an entirely subjective subset within the otherwise rigid naval hierarchy. They functioned outside the formal system of advancement based on seniority that loosely determined appointments for lieutenants and commanders and strictly governed the advancement of post captains and admirals. As a result, their selection and professional development up to commissioned rank was dependent on senior officers who were subject to pressures both internal, from the Lords Commissioners and external, from political and social heavyweights. Changes in the relative importance of these influences were immediately visible in the choices made by recruiting captains.

Young gentlemen therefore, provide an unusually high degree of transparency in naval decision making and the civil pressures that acted upon it. These pressures altered the social make-up of officer entry favoring the sons of the nobility, gentry, or professional classes for certain periods and not for others. The subjectivity of a young gentleman's appointment to a ship and the arbitrary nature of his advancement rendered him unique in naval culture. As an immediate tell-tale of social change, free of the formal structures that governed the naval hierarchy, the young gentleman presents the clearest view of the social, political, and cultural influences that shaped quarterdeck society.

2. Intent of thesis

This study uses biographical databases of young gentlemen sampled between 1761 and 1831 in order to test the contemporary observations, noted in the previous section, that the French Wars saw:

- a. a narrowing of opportunities for entry-level officers between 1793 and 1815, whereby social and political influence became essential to gaining a start on a naval career;
- b. that by 1815 these developments had produced a more socially-homogenous, socially-elite corps of aspiring officers;
- c. and that this development adversely affected standards of naval professionalism, subordination, and discipline.

Using both statistical and qualitative techniques to evaluate social change in the entry-level officer corps, this study also aims to revisit contemporary theories and modern interpretations of issues dealing with:

- a. the social and professional pressures that influenced the patronage system as it related to officer entry;
- b. challenges posed to the captains' monopoly of the recruitment process by Admiralty policies designed to centralize control of appointments;
- c. the nature and effectiveness of Admiralty policies and the extent to which the Admiralty sought to engineer a more socially-elite quarterdeck;
- d. and the impact of civil pressures on Admiralty decision making regarding the development of the nineteenth-century officer corps.

The cycles of war and peace that characterized the seventy year period under consideration frame a view of the ever-changing social character of the Royal Navy's aspiring officer corps. The dynamics of the relationships that influenced these changes form the basis of a loose social network analysis in which the links, social and professional, that enabled young men to enter the service and take the first step on the road

to commissioned rank are quantified and compared.² The degree to which this favored “democratic” or “elitist” principles shows the impact of external influences on naval recruitment.

In addition to the statistical analysis, a qualitative approach to the data uses memoirs, letters, newspapers, contemporary literature, and drama, as well as political histories and social theories to help explain changes in the relative importance of various social and professional influences over time.

3. Young gentlemen defined

The unofficial, yet commonly-used term “young gentleman,” designated a commissioned officer-in-training. The appellation encompassed a variety of ratings including the entry-level positions of captain’s servant (before 1794) and 1st class volunteer (after 1794), as well as the ratings of midshipman and master’s mate which often, but not always, denoted more experienced trainees. It was also typical for young gentlemen to appear on a ship’s books as “able seaman,” “ordinary seaman,” or any petty officer designation. Under the mantle of officers-in-training, the system of rating was fluid and, to a large extent, meaningless. Ships’ muster books³ recorded changes in a young gentleman’s rating which could transition from midshipman, to master’s mate, to able seaman, all within the space of a year. A lieutenant’s passing certificate from 1740

² In social network analysis terms the attribute data of the “actors”, in this case, the young gentlemen, comes from investigating their social backgrounds, while the relational data comes from understanding how those social backgrounds related to the Royal Navy. Both sets of data are used to calculate the relative importance of various social and professional influences on officer recruits in order to assess changes over time. For descriptions of basic social network methodology see John Scott, *Social Network Analysis: A Handbook*, 2nd edition (London, 2000), pp. 3-4; Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust, *Social Network Analysis: Methods and Applications* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 17-19.

³ A muster book listed the name of every man and boy aboard a given ship usually for a two-month period. Musters were used as employment rosters and provided proof of service. They also recorded the “consumption of both victuals and articles chargeable to his wages.” N. A. M. Rodger, *Naval Records for Genealogists* (London, 1988), p. 45.

recorded that John Clarke served aboard HMS *Dreadnought* under the ratings of midshipman, able seaman, and again as midshipman before transferring to HMS *Romney* where he served as a master's mate, a midshipman, and returned again to the rating master's mate.⁴ As long as a recruit could prove six years in the service, two of which had been spent in the rating of midshipman or mate, he would be eligible to sit the all-important examination for lieutenant which opened opportunities for advancement to commissioned rank.⁵

Entry-level ratings were also rather arbitrary for much of the eighteenth century. A twelve-year old Horatio Nelson entered the service as an able seaman⁶ despite his lack of experience afloat and his ambitions for command. “Able” was also the entry designation given to a fourteen-year old John Jervis.⁷ Michael Lewis notes that what differentiated a young gentleman from other boys and seamen of the same rating was their “legitimate hopes and prospects of ‘walking the Quarter-deck’ . . .”⁸ A boy or young man intended for commissioned rank was, therefore, granted the privilege of quarterdeck status and the social distinction of a “gentleman” which accompanied it. Regardless of his social origins, or his rating aboard ship, an officer trainee was automatically considered a “young gentleman.”

If young gentlemen did not have to be gentlemen by birth, neither did they have to be young. The ages of the candidates surveyed in this study ranged from seven to fifty-eight years old, although the majority of candidates fell between the ages of thirteen and

⁴ TNA: PRO, ADM107/3, f. 372, “Lieutenant’s Passing Certificate for John Clarke, April 14, 1740.”

⁵ Passing the examination for lieutenant did not guarantee a commission. The waiting period for “passed” midshipmen is discussed in Chapter Seven.

⁶ Roger Knight, *The Pursuit of Victory: The Life and Achievement of Horatio Nelson* (New York, 2005), p. 15.

⁷ S.v. “John Jervis” in Patrick Marioné, *The Complete Navy List of the Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815*, CD-ROM (Brussels, 2003); also see Crimmin, “John Jervis,” in *Precursors*, p. 325.

⁸ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 44.

twenty-two.⁹ According to regulations young gentlemen were not to enter the service before the age of thirteen or, if a naval officer's son, not before the age of eleven.¹⁰ The rules, however, were often ignored. Commander James Anthony Gardner, for example, began his naval career aboard HMS *Conqueror* at the tender age of five.¹¹ Admiral Sir William Henry Dillon was approximately ten, when he entered the *Saturn* in 1790,¹² and John William Bannister, who became a magistrate of Sierra Leone, was "brought up to the navy," beginning his career at age seven, and becoming a midshipman by age nine.¹³

As the data will show, a separation was visible between the ages of entry-level servants and volunteers, who tended to be younger (between seven and fifteen years old), and the midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants, whose ages typically ranged from the mid-teens to mid-twenties.¹⁴ The rating of midshipman presented an exception to these age guidelines, as prior to 1815 it was often used as an entry-level designation.¹⁵ The use of the various ratings and the separation of the two groups are further discussed in Chapter Two.

The obscurity of the ratings applied to young gentlemen only compounded their somewhat ambiguous status in the shipboard hierarchy. As officers-in-training they were granted the right to walk the quarterdeck and were expected to show the leadership qualities of an officer, even if they were too young and too inexperienced to perform the duties of one. Youth and inexperience rendered young gentlemen subordinate to warrant

⁹ See Appendix D6 and D7, "Ages and Passing Times of Junior Officers and Quarterdeck Boys, 1761 – 1831." This assessment does not include obvious cases of "book entry" in which boys as young as one and two years old were mustered. See Chapter Five, Section 2 for an explanation of this procedure.

¹⁰ House of Commons Sessional Papers (HC) 1794 XXXII, p. 536; also see Lewis, *Social History*, p. 161.

¹¹ James Anthony Gardner, *Recollections of James Anthony Gardner, Commander R.N., 1775-1814*, ed. R. Vesey and John Knox Laughton Hamilton, Navy Records Society, vol. 31 (London, 1906), p. 11.

¹² Sir William Henry Dillon, *A Narrative of My Personal Adventures, 1790-1839*, ed. Michael Lewis, 2 vols., vol. 1, Navy Records Society, vol. 93 (London, 1953), p. 8.

¹³ See Obituaries in John Nichols, *Gentleman's Magazine*, July to December 1829, p. 565.

¹⁴ Appendix D.

¹⁵ See Chapter Nine, Section 1 for a full explanation of the change in entry-level ratings.

officers, particularly those of wardroom rank,¹⁶ including the master, purser, and the surgeon.¹⁷ Warrant officers not of wardroom rank including the gunner, boatswain, and carpenter, were highly experienced and capable men, the vast majority of whom had risen from the lower deck or, in the case of the carpenter, had often come from a trade apprenticeship ashore. Young gentlemen were, in theory, superior in rank to these standing officers although in practice, any sensible boy would subordinate himself to their skill and expertise. Midshipmen and masters' mates were also considered petty officers, alongside senior lower-deck men such as the warrant officers' mates, quarter masters, captains of the tops, the master at arms, sailmaker, captains' coxswain, and armorer, although their aspirations to commissioned rank rendered them superior in the shipboard community. The ambiguity of a young gentleman's situation aboard ship, where he hovered between the ranks and ratings, and between quarterdeck and lower deck, manifested in various conflicts over issues of authority. The nature of these conflicts and the extent of their impact on naval discipline are addressed in Chapters Seven and Eleven, which deal with young gentlemen who overstepped the bounds of law and found themselves facing courts martial for various transgressions.

a. *The young gentleman's lot: life aboard ship*

A young gentleman's quality of life varied from ship to ship and captain to captain. In most cases though, an aspiring officer's standard of living was little different from that of the common sailor. Peter Cullen, a self-proclaimed "gentleman" who served as surgeon's mate aboard the frigate *Squirrel* in 1789, described the berth for himself, eight

¹⁶ The wardroom, aboard larger vessels, was home to the commissioned officers. Warrant officers of wardroom rank were considered on par with commissioned status. For a discussion of the shipboard hierarchy see Lewis, *Social History*, p. 256.

¹⁷ Surgeons did not achieve "wardroom rank" until 1808. See M. John Cardwell, "Royal Navy Surgeons, 1793-1815: A Collective Biography," in *Health and Medicine at Sea*, ed. David Boyd Haycock and Sally Archer (Woodbridge, UK, 2009), p. 54

midshipmen, and two masters' mates which consisted of two small spaces forward of the officers' quarters on the lower deck, where they slung their hammocks and ate their meals adjacent to the bulk of the ship's company.¹⁸ Boys from comfortable middle and upper-class backgrounds often expressed horror at the conditions aboard a man-of-war. Young Frederick Chamier wrote of his coming aboard the frigate *Salsette* in 1809:

I had anticipated a kind of elegant house with guns in the windows . . . a species of Grosvenor Place floating about like Noah's ark . . . [but found] the tars of England rolling about casks, without jackets, shoes or stockings . . . the deck was dirty, slippery, and wet; the smells abominable; the whole sight disgusting . . .¹⁹

Chamier admitted that the impression was enough to make him forget "all the glory of Nelson" and reduce him to "tears of mortification and disappointment, fresh from a youngster's heart."²⁰

Conditions were hardly better in larger ships. First through third rates (vessels of over one hundred guns down to vessels of sixty-four guns) allowed young gentlemen separate quarters. Midshipmen, mates, and quarterdeck boys aged fourteen and older berthed on the orlop, the lowest deck above the hold, in a dank space forward of the mizzen mast called the "cockpit." At approximately five hundred to eleven hundred square feet, a ship of the line's cockpit accommodated anywhere from twenty to thirty-plus midshipmen, masters' mates, surgeons' mates, and other petty officers,²¹ providing a place for them to eat, sleep, and pass their free time. Situated well below the water line, the cockpit's only light came from tallow dips, whose stench mingled with the miasma of bilge

¹⁸ Peter Cullen, "The Memoirs of Peter Cullen Esq.," in H. G. Thursfield, ed., *Five Naval Journals, 1789-1817*, Navy Records Society, vol. 91 (London, 1951), p. 53.

¹⁹ Frederick Chamier, *The Life of a Sailor*, new edition (London, 1850), p. 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Peter Goodwin, *The Ships of Trafalgar: The British, French and Spanish Fleets, 21 October, 1805* (London, 2005), p. 26; and Brian Lavery, *Nelson's Navy: the Ships, Men and Organization, 1793-1815* (Annapolis, 2000), p. 93.

water, rotting timber, and the ooze from casks of food. In 1801 an anonymous midshipman offered up a poetic lament for his circumstances:

*Deep in the Orlop's darksome shade,
Unknown to Sol's bright ray,
Where no kind chink's assistant aid
Admits the cheerful day. . . .*²²

Whenever possible “youngsters,” or boys under the age of thirteen, berthed with the gunner in the Gun Room. Not quite as “stygian” and a somewhat healthier place for an “officers’ nursery,” the Gun Room also provided adult supervision under a “steady sort of man” like the master gunner.²³ Boys lucky enough to find paternal care aboard a man-of-war still faced a life of shocking rawness, even by eighteenth-century standards. Edward Thompson, who later became a captain, condemned the conditions endured by young gentlemen who were “bedded worse than hogs, and eat less delicacies”²⁴ Midshipmen and boys, regardless of their social rank, generally dined on the same fare as the seamen and warrant officers. Basil Hall, the son of a baronet, remarked of the meals aboard the 4th rate *Leander*: “At breakfast we get tea and sea-cake: at dinner we have either [salt] beef, pork, or pudding.”²⁵ It was a harsh transition for more fortunate boys accustomed to fine food and wine. Aboard larger ships, affluent young gentlemen kept a mess of their own provisions which usually included more palatable fare and possibly even fresh meat and vegetables. The sixteen-year old John Jervis, later the Earl St. Vincent, suffered “deep

²² “Lines Written by a Midshipman,” in *The Naval Chronicle: Containing a General and Biographical History of the Royal Navy etc*, vol. 5 (1801), p. 242.

²³ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 262.

²⁴ Edward Thompson to J. T. Esq., November, 1755, in Edward Thompson, *Sailor's Letters, Written to His Select Friends in England During his Voyages and Travels in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas From the Year 1754 to 1759*, 2nd edition, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London, 1767), p. 141.

²⁵ From a letter to his father, June 18, 1802 in Basil Hall, *Fragments of Voyages and Travels: including anecdotes of a naval life*, 2nd edition, 3 vols., vol. 1 (London, 1832), p. 51. Note: No description of “sea cake” could be found, although it was likely made from flour or the crumblings of ship’s biscuit and possibly included raisins or currants. “Pudding” likely referred to the option served on banyan, or meatless days. See Anne and Lisa Thomas Grossman, *Lobscurse and Spotted Dog: Which it's a Gastronomic Companion to the Aubrey/Maturin Novels* (New York, 1997), pp. 51-52, 273.

mortification of feeling” owing to a lack of funds which prevented him from messing with the other midshipmen. Jervis’s “pecuniary distress . . . never afforded himself any fresh meat, nor, even in the West Indies, where they are so necessary for health, and so cheap too, fruit or vegetables . . .”²⁶ Invitations to dine at the captain’s table or in the wardroom with the senior officers often brought the only respite from a menu that was at best tasteless and at worst putrid. According to one biographer, Admiral George Rodney occasionally took pity on the young gentlemen in his care. As he “had always young men of family” aboard his ships Rodney felt the need to ease their pain when it came to mealtimes:

When his dinner was going aft, he [Rodney] has often, he says, seen the hungry *mids* cast over the dishes a wistful eye with a *watery* mouth; upon seeing which, he has instantly arrested their supporters, and ordered the whole of his dinner, save one dish, to be carried to the midshipmen’s mess.²⁷

Aboard His Majesty’s ships young gentlemen, regardless of their background or social status, worked, slept, and ate in conditions that offered little comfort or distinction from the men they were learning to command.

b. *Duties, responsibilities, and pay*

Disparities in the age, maturity, and competency of individual boys produced a wide range of professional experiences in terms of the duties young gentlemen were expected to perform. On the one hand, there was Midshipman Hamilton Davies who was employed as yeoman of the powder room at age ten.²⁸ Billy “Hell Flames” Lucas was considered too young to join fifteen-year old, John Boteler’s party which was sent to

²⁶ Discussion of Jervis’s privations in 1751 in Jedediah S. Tucker, ed., *Memoirs of Admiral the Right Hon. the Earl St. Vincent G.C.B. etc.*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London, 1844), p. 11.

²⁷ Godfrey Basil Mundy, *The Life and Correspondence of the late Admiral Lord Rodney*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London, 1830), pp. 374-75. (Author’s italics). Note: Mundy was Rodney’s son-in-law and was therefore, unlikely to question this certainly apocryphal anecdote. The story does, however, address the paucity of good food in the midshipmen’s berth, which appeared to be a widespread problem.

²⁸ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 173.

destroy a flotilla of gunboats, but stowed away with the party anyway so as not to miss the action.²⁹ On the other hand, Boteler also described his mates indulging in games of leap-frog, childish practical jokes, and other frivolous pursuits which, in the case of a young midshipman who fell and drowned while trying to catch a bird, could prove deadly.³⁰ William Dillon too, described the strange dichotomy of boys growing up aboard active men-of-war. At age ten, Dillon was carried around in the arms of the seamen who served as “sea daddies” and taught him the ropes.³¹ By thirteen, however, the stunted and scrawny Midshipman Dillon was required to use deadly force to defend his ship’s watering boat from the predations of a group of Indiamen bent on ransacking his stores. Dillon followed the account of this adventure with a description of his messmates, including a slightly older colleague who still sucked his thumb.³²

A young gentleman’s professional experiences also depended on other factors outside his control. The policies and preferences of individual captains, the size of the ship, and the sailing orders assigned to that vessel all affected the expectations placed on aspiring officers. Midshipmen and quarterdeck boys of all ages generally came under the immediate supervision of a ship’s lieutenants who served as both professional and personal mentors. While “youngsters” were kept busy with instruction in basic seamanship and, if they were lucky, scholarly pursuits,³³ the older mates and midshipmen were charged with official duties and responsibilities. The introduction of the divisional system in 1755 required that lieutenants separate the divisions of seamen assigned to them into sub-divisions and place a midshipman in charge of each, as a means of acquainting him with

²⁹ John Harvey Boteler, *Recollections of my Life at Sea from 1808 to 1830*, ed. David Bonner-Smith, Navy Records Society, vol. 82 (London, 1942), pp. 18-19.

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 18, 9, 28.

³¹ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 15.

³² Ibid., pp. 82, 84.

³³ A discussion of the education and training of young gentlemen follows in Chapter Four.

the men and the duties of command.³⁴ Standard responsibilities included such tasks as running aloft to supervise seamen in setting, reefing, or furling sail; supervising subdivisions at small-arms training and gun drills; attending to the swift transition of the watch; maintaining the ship's safety by constantly checking for naked lights and lanterns below decks; witnessing visits to the purser's, steward's, or boatswain's store rooms as a means of preventing theft; ensuring that the men of their division were clean and properly clothed; and casting the log and lead lines in order to determine the speed and position of the ship respectively.³⁵ Beyond these basics, practical duties varied greatly, often depending on the type of ship in which a young gentleman served. Nicholas Rodger notes the disparities:

It was commonly remarked that there were different types of midshipmen in different ships: sophisticated and hard-s swearing in ships of the line, slovenly and ill-bred in little sloops and brigs, but an elite in the frigates, smart and proud of facing early danger and responsibility.³⁶

Much of this stereotyping stemmed from the nature of the sailing orders assigned to various ships. As reconnaissance vessels, frigates generally received independent cruises detached from the fleet. Self-sufficient, intelligent, highly-motivated captains received these prized commands and typically wasted no time in seeking out engagement and potential prizes. Boys of similar mettle also aspired to frigate service. By seventeen John Boteler, who later became a commander, expressed such a desire: "my brother Thomas and I, having served so far in ships of the line, both wished for a more active time in

³⁴ Admiral Thomas Smith is credited with devising the "system of 'divisions', by which each of the lieutenants had a party of men under him for welfare and administrative purposes, in order to increase contact between officers and men," Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 63, 72.

³⁵ Taken from "Captain's Orders, HMS *Pegasus*, 1786-88" in ibid., p. 98; Basil Hall and Robert Wilson's observations quoted in Lavery, *Nelson's Navy*, p. 90; NMM, PAR/102, Captain William Parker, "Order Book, HMS *Amazon*," (1802).

³⁶ Rodger, *Command*, p. 508.

frigates”³⁷ A boy’s participation in boarding actions, cutting-out expeditions, and shore raids, all of which required hand-to-hand combat with pistols and cold steel, were virtually assured in frigate service.³⁸ For others, the comforts of a ship of the line presented a more alluring lifestyle. George Perceval, the fourteen-year old son of Lord Arden, “fared as well as could be expected” in the little sloop of war, *Sabrina*, but remarked that “my choice would be a line of battle ship.”³⁹ Perceval’s concerns may well have revolved around the issues noted by one contemporary who observed that “in twenty gun Ships or Sloops, where the duty is considerably harder . . . [there are] much worse accommodations and fewer to assist in performing the duty.”⁴⁰

Work-load and comfort were not the only differences separating service in the various rates. A midshipman’s pay was also dependent on the size of the ship in which he served. Unfortunately for the young gentlemen involved the distribution of wages was inversely proportional to the level of activity required. While midshipmen assigned to 1st rates earned £2 5s per lunar month, those in 3rd rates earned £1 17s 6d, and those assigned to frigates earned only £1 10s.⁴¹ This pay scale, set forth in 1653, remained unchanged until the reforms of 1797. According to one observer

. . . the original reason of this might be, that Preferments of all kinds were made from larger Ships; besides, in the Dutch Wars and those with France . . . the fatigue and danger lay chiefly upon the large Ships . . . but since that mode of fighting is pretty much laid aside, and double the duty and hazard is now with the small cruising Ships, it is a pity an alteration is not made, by making the Pay at least equal.⁴²

³⁷ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 42.

³⁸ Robert Wilson, “Robert Wilson’s Journal,” in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, pp. 154-58.

³⁹ NMM, PER/1/23, George Perceval to his mother, Lady Arden, May 2, 1807.

⁴⁰ “Brief Account of the Civil Naval History of Great Britain,” in *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 5 (1801), p. 508.

⁴¹ Rodger, *Command*, pp. 619-24.

⁴² “Brief Account,” *Naval Chronicle*, pp. 508-09. This same article also notes the poverty of midshipmen who, after 1797 were lucky to earn £28 per year while young gentlemen in the Army could expect “the lowest Pay of sixty-three pounds a year.”

One explanation for the difference hinged on the possibility of prize money. Frigates and sloops on independent cruises were in a substantially better position to capture prizes, the value of which would be divided among the crew such that midshipmen, mates, and other petty officers shared one-eighth of the total value of the prize between them.⁴³ Prize money aside, midshipmen and mates fared substantially better than entry-level servants who, before 1794, received no pay at all with the total amount of their “wages,” nearly £12 per annum, going directly to the captain. The ways in which conditions of pay and the responsibilities assigned to young gentlemen changed over time is examined in the year-by-year assessments.

4. Chapter summary and outline

This study is presented in four parts. Part I gives an overview of the issues as they relate to the relevant literature. The views expressed by naval historians are summarized alongside important social theories relating to Britain during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. A detailed discussion of the methodology used to gather the data that provides the foundations for this study is presented along with a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of a statistical approach.

Part II begins with an historical summary of young gentlemen, from the institution of the volunteer per order in 1661, up until the late-eighteenth century. The specifics of officer entry from 1761 to 1793, relative to the biographical data, are the focus of Chapters Two, Three, and Four. Patterns of change in the social make-up of the samples of captains’ servants and midshipmen for 1761, 1771, 1781 and 1791 are analyzed in terms of

⁴³ These petty officers included the “quartermaster and sailmaker; the mates serving under the gunner, boatswain, surgeon, carpenter, and quartermaster; the sergeant of marines; and a variety of junior petty officers.” Obviously there were fewer petty officers in smaller ships, so individual shares were larger. Benjamin, “Golden Harvest,” Appendix 3, p. 34.

contemporary events occurring within both naval and civil societies. The impact of war and peace, the influence of various First Lords, and the repercussions of George III sending his son, William Henry, to sea as a midshipman are assessed in terms of the data. Finally, an examination of courts martial records relating to midshipmen, masters' mates, and acting lieutenants provides insight into the changing perceptions of social and naval rank within the corps of young gentlemen.

Part III addresses the specifics of officer entry from 1794 to 1831 relative to the data. The institution of an Admiralty plan to socially engineer a more elite officer corps through the Order in Council of 1794 and the regulations of 1815 provide the context for a discussion of young gentlemen in 1801, 1811, 1821, and 1831. After 1815 the effects of peace on opportunities for aspiring officers, and on the Admiralty's efforts to gain control of recruitment, are discussed. The crimes of young gentlemen, as recorded in courts martial records, are compared to the results from the eighteenth-century sample.

Part IV briefly examines the aftermath of Parliamentary Reform on officer recruitment and development. Chapter Twelve summarizes the most important findings of this study and addresses the implications of these new findings for the navy and its officers-in-training.

Chapter Two: Methodology

1. Sampling and timeframe

Any assessment of change benefits from observations that encompass an extended period of time. This study, which begins in 1761 and concludes in 1831, provides a wider temporal context in which to view of the nature and degree of change in recruitment during the French Wars. Within this framework, samples were taken at ten year intervals: 1761, 1771, 1781, 1791, 1801, 1811, 1821, and 1831, producing eight “sample years” and providing eight sets of data. Collectively these sample years represent an equal number of wartime years (1761, 1781, 1801, 1811) and peacetime years (1771, 1791, 1821, 1831). Variations in the Royal Navy’s manning policies as they affected quarterdeck recruitment are therefore equally represented. The less socially-selective approaches to recruitment which could be expected during periods of war are offset by the more discriminating policies which governed non-war periods or periods of demobilization.

In each of the wartime sample years, the Royal Navy operated at peak levels of manning and ship mobilization. Although the scale of operations in 1801 and 1811 represented far greater reserves of men and ships than mobilizations during the Seven Years’ War and the American War of Independence,¹ the pressures acting upon individual captains and the Admiralty Board can be considered in a similar light. In terms of the peacetime years, both 1771 and 1791 represent years of demobilization in the wake of the Falkland Islands dispute of 1770 and the Nootka Sound and Ochakov crises of 1790-91,

¹ The comparative size of the Royal Navy 1760-1810. The years nearest to those sampled are used.

	1760	1780	1800	1810
Total Displacement of fleet in 1000 tons*	375	365	550	675
# Ships 50-100 guns/Frigates & Sloops*	135/172	117/187	127/200	152/245
Manning**	85,600	91,500	126,200	142,100

Sources: *Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies, and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860* (Stockholm, 1993), pp. 285,379; 278, 396. **From Lloyd, *British Seaman* quoted in Rodger, *Command*, pp. 638-39.

while 1821 and 1831 reflect years of massive retrenchment in the wake of Waterloo.

Again, scale is the primary variant between eighteenth and nineteenth-century examples.

With both sets of wartime and peacetime data, this problem is evenly replicated, reducing the potential for sample bias on either side of the mobilization issue.

2. Sample type and method

An analysis of social change within the corps of entry-level officers begins with a compilation of demographic portraits. As the goal of this study is to show developments in the social characteristics of young gentlemen entering the service, the “snap shot” method of sampling has been used. In a few cases, the development of a young gentleman’s career is followed, but only as a means of illustrating specific arguments. Otherwise, the focus is on the social character of a given group of young gentlemen for a given year and the relationships within and between these groups over time.

a. *Nomenclature and the sample*

The myriad appellations and ratings encompassed by the term “young gentlemen,” complicate attempts to survey the group as a whole. In order to clarify the most important distinctions, the group will be broken down into two sub-groups, “quarterdeck boys” and “junior officers.” This artificial differentiation allows some degree of qualification in terms of age, experience, professional responsibility, and authority. Collectively, quarterdeck boys and junior officers will be termed “young gentlemen.”

“Quarterdeck boys,”² represent those young gentlemen mustered as captains’ servants, lieutenants’ servants and, after 1794, 1st class volunteers, and 2nd class boys. This

²Lewis, *Social History*, pp. 24-25. The terminology “quarterdeck boy” is borrowed from Lewis’s classification of shipboard youngsters as a means of differentiating between those who aspired to

group comprises those youngsters who appeared aboard ship in the lowest of the quarterdeck ratings, in what became the only *official* entry-level rating after 1794. Under the new system of 1794 which stipulated that only 1st class volunteers were destined for commissioned rank,³ 2nd class boys were not intended to be part of the group of “young gentlemen.” In practice, however, it will be shown that the rating of 2nd class boy (and, on occasion, 3rd class boy), were used as stepping stones to that of volunteer or even midshipman. For this reason, 2nd class boys were included in the survey. The degree to which this official rule of classification was ignored is discussed in Chapter Nine. In general, however, the term “quarterdeck boy” includes those who were younger and less skilled in the maritime arts, but who were destined to become commissioned officers.

The second sample, “junior officers,” consists of petty officers rated midshipman, master’s mate, or acting lieutenant. Generally, junior officers were adolescents and young men from whom more was expected in terms of their professional abilities.⁴ Junior officers who appeared in musters under the ratings of able, ordinary, landsman, clerk, or any number of other ratings, are likely to have been missed by this sampling process. As there is often no way of distinguishing between lower deck and quarterdeck status within these ratings, there was no way of including these individuals in the sample.

Based on these divisions, two data matrices developed: one for quarterdeck boys, which consists of 2308 names, and one for junior officers, which contains 2211 names. Together the two data matrices, totaling 4519 young gentlemen, form the “Primary Databases” for this study.

commissioned rank from those “lower deck boys” who did not. It is used here to specify entry-level recruits who were officers-in-training.

³ A full discussion of the 1794 rating system is presented in Part III.

⁴ It should be noted that these generalizations are more applicable to the rating system after 1794.

3. Primary databases and the rules of sampling

The principle source of personal information for young gentlemen in each of the sample years is the ship's monthly muster.⁵ Muster books provide details of a young man's name, rating, the date of his entry into a ship, and the date and circumstances of his discharge from it. After 1764, musters were also supposed to record a young gentleman's age of entry into the ship, his place of birth, and recent changes to his rating.⁶ Beyond a young gentleman's name the quality of the information provided in a monthly muster is marginal and varies dramatically from ship to ship, particularly within the first four decades of this study. Wherever possible the data gathered from one monthly muster was cross-referenced against data from a second monthly muster in an effort to check the accuracy of entries. The musters from which samples were taken reflect the state of manning during the first half of each sample year. In all but the few noted instances,⁷ names were drawn from musters taken between January 1 and July 31. This period incorporated the spring and summer months when naval manning levels typically peaked,⁸ allowing the largest possible base from which to draw the sample. The consistent observation of this timing represents the first rule of sampling used in compiling the primary databases.

The second rule of sampling dealt with the selection of musters. In each of the sample years, data collection was driven by two factors. First, only ships in commission, either cruising or in harbor service, and carrying at least half their rated complement, were

⁵ In most cases, each "monthly" register actually covers two months e.g. March 1 to April 30.

⁶ Rodger, *Genealogists*, p. 50. It appears from the samples that the new directives were often ignored, at least until those taken in 1791.

⁷ See Appendix A, "Lists of Ships sampled from the National Archives, 1761 – 1831," (Samples taken outside January 1- July 31).

⁸ This is not to say that recruitment necessarily peaked at the same time.

considered on “active duty” and therefore eligible to be sampled. Second, ships were grouped according to rate to produce five rating categories separated as follows:

Table 1.1 The Grouping of Ship’s Rates

<u>Rate</u>	<u>Guns</u>	<u>Complement</u>
1 st & 2 nd Rates	80-120	600-850
3 rd Rates	64-80	500-650
4 th Rates	40-62	300-450
5 th & 6 th Rates	20-44	125-275
Sloops	10-20	50-125

Sources: Lyon, David and Rif Winfield, *The Sail and Steam Navy List: All the Ships of the Royal Navy, 1815-1889* (London, 2004), p. 87; Rodger, *Command*, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

By combining 1st and 2nd rates, and 5th and 6th rate vessels, criteria can be established that accommodate the various (and varying) rating standards used between 1761 and 1831.⁹ The five classifications detailed above make allowances for these adjustments and provide a standardized nomenclature for a comparative analysis of young gentlemen borne on various rates of ship over the period of this study. Although this standardization reduces the specificity of the rating system for any given period, it enables useful comparisons to be drawn on multiple levels. The social character of young gentlemen can be assessed vertically, between ratings within a sample year; horizontally, by rate from sample year to sample year; and diagonally, in order to identify relationships between the characteristics displayed in different ships from different sample years.

The third rule of sampling involved the selection of ships of various rates that represented the spectrum of Royal Navy operations for each sample year. Theatres in the

⁹ The most significant adjustment to rating standards took place in 1817 when men-of-war underwent a reclassification of armament that considered quarterdeck and forecastle carronades in the firepower calculation on which a ship’s rate was based. See Rif Winfield, *British Warships in the Age of Sail, 1793-1817: Design, Construction, Careers and Fates* (London, 2005), p. vi.

Mediterranean, East Indies, West Indies, the Baltic, the North Sea, the Africa Stations, the North American Station, and the English Channel were, wherever possible, represented evenly in the selection of ships within each rating classification.¹⁰

The forth rule of sampling addressed repeat entries and the reoccurrence of names in different ships. Between January 1 and July 31 of any given year it is possible to find the same young gentleman on the books of more than one ship. Promotion or discharge to another ship was particularly common in peacetime sample years. As this survey aims to capture a “snap shot” demographic picture of young gentlemen, rather than trace individuals over time, only the first chronological instance of a young gentleman’s appearance in a muster for any given sample year is recorded. If, for example, in 1781 Midshipman John Brown appeared in the 3rd rate HMS *Berwick* in January and again in 3rd rate *Suffolk* in April, only his entry in *Berwick* is counted. In each case, precedence is given to a young gentleman’s date of appearance, beginning January 1 of the sample year. If however, a servant or volunteer was “promoted” to the rating of midshipman he may be counted twice, once in the Quarterdeck Boys’ sample and once in Junior Officers’ sample.¹¹

The fifth rule of sampling involved the selection of names from each muster. Until the 1801 sample, the recording of names in a ship’s muster was a matter of transposing those names from the previous monthly muster in the order they appeared, with the names of any new arrivals added at the end of the list. There was no separation of rating or rank and the captain’s name was often no more prominent in the muster than an ordinary

¹⁰ For example, if ten sloops were sampled in 1781, a year when say five primary theatres of operation were active, then two sloops would be taken from each theatre. If the number of active theatres of operation did not divide evenly among the sample number of ships, then the size of the fleet on a particular station determined the weight it was given in the sample. This information was obtained from ADM8, “List Books” for the various sample years, see bibliography for details.

¹¹ For example, captain’s servant William Donovan appeared in the frigate *Hyaena* on February 5, 1761 and again in the 1st rate *Britannia* as midshipman on February 25, 1771, his entry in both ships is recorded in each of the primary databases.

seaman's. Thus the muster generally reflected the seniority of a ship's crew by recording the name of the longest serving men and boys first. Often the names of captains' servants appeared directly below the name of the captain although, beyond that, there was little or no organization in the record-keeping system. In the 1801 and 1811 musters, the names of 1st class volunteers and 2nd and 3rd class boys appeared in separate lists at the end of the muster. By 1821 the names of all officers, petty and commissioned, volunteers, and boys, appeared in separate lists usually divided as follows:

- 2nd List: Commissioned Officers, including the captain and the lieutenants
- 3rd List: Warrant Officers, including the master, purser, surgeon, chaplain, boatswain, gunner, and their assistants.
- 4th List: Petty Officers, including midshipmen, masters' mates, and clerks
- Volunteers of the 1st Class
- Boys of the 2nd Class
- Boys of the 3rd Class

Organization of the lesser ratings had altered again by 1831, with 1st and 2nd class volunteers being entered in the 4th List along with junior officers, while separate lists were created for 1st and 2nd class boys, and 3rd class boys disappeared altogether.¹²

In all cases, names for the samples were taken in order of appearance. If however, a name was illegible, and could not be clarified by cross-referencing a second monthly muster, the entry was ignored. In some cases, the fault of illegibility lay with the manuscript itself. Poor handwriting or the deterioration of the document accounted for the omission of some names and in rare instances, entire pages of names. In other cases, the fault lies with this researcher and the technical difficulties associated with digitally photographing more than 9000 pages of musters rolls. Blurred photographs, although rare, forced the elimination of certain pages from the sample.

¹² For a full explanation of the new rating system see Chapter Nine.

a. *Creating the primary databases*

The matrix for each of the Primary Databases (quarterdeck boys and junior officers), was built around the sample year and the rate of ships examined in each of those years. (See Table 1.2) For each cell in each matrix the goal was to collect sixty names.¹³ This number represents twice the amount shown to be effective in sampling procedure according to statistical “T” tables.¹⁴ It also represents the limits of the sampling capacity for this study, both in terms of time and data management.

Table 1.2 Hypothetical Sample Matrix for Junior Officers (Based on ideal sampling conditions)

Rate	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
1 st & 2 nd	60 mids							
3 rd	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “
4 th	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “
5 th & 6 th	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “
Sloops	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “	60 “
Total	300 mids							

In ideal sampling conditions 300 names per year/per rate would produce a sample of 2400 names for each matrix; giving a total 4800 names when the two matrices are combined.

For various reasons, however, it was not always possible to locate sixty names for each cell of the matrix. Inequalities in the availability of data produced situations like the 1821 example when only one 1st rate ship was in active service and therefore allowed only eighteen volunteers and nineteen midshipmen to be sampled. In the same year, insufficient

¹³ The collection of sixty names was not possible in 4th rates in 1811, 1st & 2nd rates in 1821, and 4th rates in 1831. In each of these cases, an insufficient number of ships appeared on “active duty.” Here the maximum number of junior officers and quarterdeck boys available were sampled instead. It is acknowledged that conclusions relating to analyses of this data reflect a lower certainty factor than conclusions drawn from numerically equal data comparisons. TNA: PRO, ADM 8/99, 101, 111.

¹⁴ Pat Hudson, *History by Numbers: an Introduction to Quantitative Approaches* (London, 2000).

numbers of midshipmen in the sampled sloops also prevented the collection of sixty names. In order to compensate for lower numbers in certain vectors the sample for other rates within a given year was increased wherever possible. In an effort to preserve balance, however, no more than eighty names were recorded for a given rate. The overall goal was to keep all sample totals for any given year between 225 and 325 young gentlemen. The result was a database of quarterdeck boys which yielded a sample of 2308 names, and one of junior officers which yielded a sample of 2211 names. The sampling breakdown for the two matrices is as follows:

Table 1.3 Final Primary Database 1: Quarterdeck Boys

<u>Rate</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>	<u>Total</u>
1 st & 2 nd	64	67	62	60	62	19	18	61	
3 rd	57	64	62	61	67	64	40	63	
4 th	64	61	57	60	50	30	47	60	
5 th &6 th	69	66	64	62	59	74	64	60	
Sloops	60	64	57	62	50	58	58	61	
Total	314	322	302	305	288	245	227	305	2308

Note: Italics indicate cells with less than 60 names.

Sources: Appendices F1-F8, “Quarterdeck Boys 1761 – 1831.”

Table 1.4 Final Primary Database 2: Junior Officers

<u>Rate</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>	<u>Total</u>
1 st & 2 nd	56	68	70	75	70	79	19	49	
3 rd	77	72	75	75	64	75	51	63	
4 th	49	72	65	68	63	35	60	32	
5 th &6 th	52	61	75	61	54	65	68	62	
Sloops	24	30	33	22	32	32	39	19	
Total	258	303	318	301	283	286	237	225	2211

Note: Italics indicate cells with less than 60 names.

Sources: Appendices G1-G8, “Junior Officers 1761 – 1831.”

This total sample of 4519 quarterdeck boys and junior officers completed the primary databases, against which nominal data from a number of secondary databases was run in an effort to establish social backgrounds for as many young gentlemen as possible.

4. Secondary databases

In order to determine the social origins of the young gentlemen named in the primary databases, a search for family backgrounds, and particularly the occupations or rank of fathers, grandfathers, uncles, or patrons utilized a variety of sources. The search began with the application of comparative software¹⁵ capable of matching two or more lists of names, in order to locate possible connections between the young gentlemen sampled and the names of potential relatives appearing in the secondary databases. Two types of secondary database were created: one social/political, the other naval. In each case, database searches identified surname matches that could potentially link young gentlemen from the primary databases to a relative or friend in the civilian and/or naval world.

The social/political databases were created from lists of names drawn from various genealogical and biographical sources. Separate databases were created from each of the following sources: *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage & Knightage* (1888), *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry* (1838,¹⁶ 1847, 1863, 1871, and 1875), and *The History of Parliament, 1754-1790* (1985) and *The History of Parliament, 1790-1820* (1986). When run against the primary databases of young gentlemen's names,

¹⁵ Microsoft Excel 2007 and Access 2007 were used in the data production.

¹⁶ In 1838 the publication was still entitled *Burke's Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland etc.* The title changed in the 1843 edition to include the words "landed gentry," adding prestige to both the publication and those it chronicled. Circulation increased substantially as a result. S.v., "Sir John Bernard Burke" in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)*, (Oxford, 2004).

matches identified entry-level officers who potentially descended from the aristocracy, the landed gentry, and/or politically-connected families.

Detailed manual searches were then conducted on these potentials and involved going back to the original sources listed above in order to confirm the identity of an individual young gentleman using his first name, age, place of birth, or the presence of any naval connections within the family. A variety of other sources including the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *The Annual Register*, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *The United Service Magazine*, all for various years, *The Plantagenet Roll* (1906), Balfour Paul's *Scots Peerage* (1904-1914) and Burke's numerous genealogical compendia including, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Colonial Gentry* (1891), *Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies* (1844), and *The Landed Gentry of Ireland* (1899), among others, were also consulted.¹⁷

The naval set of secondary databases drew surnames from Collinge's *Navy Board Officials, 1660-1832* (1978), Sainty's *Admiralty Officials, 1660-1870* (1975), and the births, marriages, and deaths index for *The Naval Chronicle*, published from 1799 through 1818, in an effort to identify family connections within the service. Once a match was identified using the computer search, the same process of manual confirmation described above was necessary to confirm the identification of an individual young gentleman. William O'Byrne's *A Naval Biographical Dictionary* (1849), John Marshall's *Royal Naval Biography* (1823), Charnock's, *Biographia Navalis* (1798), Bruno Pappalardo's *Lieutenants' Passing Certificates* (2001), and Patrick Marioné's *The Complete Navy List of the Napoleonic Wars, 1793-1815* (CD-ROM, 2003) aided the naval searches.

¹⁷ For a details on the sources used see individual entries in the primary databases, Appendices F1-F8 and G1-G8.

5. The results

Of the 4519 young gentlemen that made up the primary databases a total of 1049, or 23 percent of entries, were traceable in terms of their social backgrounds providing a substantial base from which to view long-term trends in the Royal Navy's recruitment policies.

Conversely, the remaining portion of the original sample, approximately 3400 names, is no useless, voiceless mass. In addition to the 1049 young gentlemen whose social backgrounds were traceable, another 179 quarterdeck boys and 463 junior officers were identified in terms of their career histories, although no information could be found relating to the professional or social status of their immediate relatives. These additional 642 young gentlemen, who represent an additional 14 percent of the total sample, are significant in that information on their family backgrounds is obscure while their professional achievements are easily traced. For example, it was possible to discover that James Lawrence, born in Portsmouth entered the Royal Navy on July 22, 1806 as a first class volunteer aboard HMS *Colossus*. He passed his examination for lieutenant on October 7, 1812 and received his commission on March 18, 1815 after which he was reduced to half pay, probably in consequence of the peace. Lieutenant Lawrence married in 1816 and was active in the Coast Guard between 1828 and 1838. He died on October 30, 1847.¹⁸ Despite the detailed nature of this information, nothing presented itself in the available sources that might give a clue as to the profession of James Lawrence's father or other members of his immediate family, or to his family's social standing within the

¹⁸ William O'Byrne, *A Naval Biographical Dictionary: Comprising the Life and Services of Every Living Officer in Her Majesty's Navy, from the Rank of Admiral of the Fleet to that of Lieutenant, inclusive.*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Uckfield, UK, 1849), p. 638; and Marioné, *The Complete Navy List*, s.v. "James Lawrence (2)." See Appendix G6, "Junior Officers 1811," J11-3-04 taken from TNA: PRO, ADM37/2741, "Muster Book HMS *Colossus*, February-October, 1811."

Portsmouth community.¹⁹ Based on the assumption that it is easier to trace names of social consequence and/or professional success than those of tradesmen, clerks, and farmyard laborers, the absence of information provides an “argument from silence” for the lack of any direct social, political, or professional connections. The 642 traceable young men without social backgrounds suggest the presence of officer recruits from middle or working-class origins, while the remaining 2828 young men about whom nothing is known, raises the possibility that many of these possessed no tenable ambitions for the quarterdeck and were instead, aspiring seamen or warrant officers – in which case they were not “young gentlemen.”²⁰ The presence of this “unaccountable” group within the total sample is, however, essential to balancing the substantial amounts of data relating to the more privileged naval recruits and reducing the bias inherent in any type of genealogical survey from this period. As such, the whole sample is of use in formulating conclusions.

The final results are as follows:

¹⁹ The constraints of time did not allow a detailed examination of the *Victoria County Histories* for all candidates. Had this been possible it is likely that many more of the partially-traceable sample could be fully identified in terms of their social backgrounds.

²⁰ This possibility is supported by the fact that the sample includes all captains’ servants, some of whom were not young gentlemen, as well as 2nd and 3rd class boys. A more detailed explanation of this argument is offered in Chapter Five, Section 2.

Table 1.5 Overall Results of Sampling, 1761 to 1831

Key: QDB = Quarterdeck Boys
JO = Junior Officers
Bkgds = backgrounds

6. Compiling the Sample

Each of the 1049 young gentlemen with traceable backgrounds were given a letter code or series of letter codes referencing their connection to one or more of the following social/professional categories:

Peerage and Baronetage (B): The peerage classification refers to the sons and relatives of dukes, marquesses, earls, viscounts, barons, and spiritual lords of England,

Scotland, and Ireland (before and after 1801). Peers, along with hereditary baronets, are referred to here as the “aristocracy” or the “nobility.” The separation of these two terms as a sociological abstract of “rule by the best” and as a socio/economic order “being noble in rank or title, or noble by birth,” is largely ignored here,²¹ although both terms are used only in association with the highest-ranking members of society. A contemporary definition suggests that, “the distinguishing characteristic of an aristocracy is the enjoyment of privileges which are not communicable to other citizens by anything they themselves can do to obtain them.”²² While such a definition precludes the possibility of social mobility through wealth or service, it is useful in that it emphasizes the importance of hereditary claims which are the primary means of classification used here. John Cannon’s definition of the peerage “through membership of the House of Lords”²³ emphasizes the political rights of this exclusive group. It is, however, limiting with respect to this study, which considers the sons and relatives of non-representative Scottish and Irish peers, and spiritual lords as part of the “peerage” classification.

Landed Gentry (G):²⁴ The gentry presents a more nebulous group which Lawrence Stone and Jeanne Fawtier Stone have identified as two entities: the “parish gentry” and the grander, “country gentry” which were separated by degrees of “wealth, power, and sophistication.”²⁵ Both groups, however, were land owners, high-ranking members of their communities, and often wielded some form of political power, be it as a justice of the

²¹ The eighteenth-century definitions listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* show little differentiation between the terms “nobility” and “aristocracy,” see John Simpson, ed., *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, (Oxford, 2008). The terminology is also used interchangeably by various modern historians. Dewald uses “nobility” to “refer to the entire order, aristocracy to refer to its most powerful members,” Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, 1996), p. xiii. Bush employs the reverse: “‘aristocracy’ is used to label the nobility as a class or order while ‘nobility’ is reserved for the peerage,” M. L. Bush, *Noble Privilege: The European Nobility* (Manchester, 1983), p. viii.

²² Henry Hallam, 1838 quoted in the *OED* (2008).

²³ John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 9-10.

²⁴ This group includes two cases of foreign gentry.

²⁵ Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1984), p. 6.

peace or a member of parliament.²⁶ As “the class immediately below the nobility,”²⁷ Burke’s dictionary of the landed gentry for 1847 assured its subjects that they were “not one degree below the [titled nobility] in antiquity of descent, personal accomplishment, and national usefulness.”²⁸ The principle requirement for inclusion in Burke’s social register was the possession of land and the first edition catalogued roughly two thousand landed families. Another criterion for determining gentry rank, which Burke adopted in later editions, was the possession of a coat of arms.²⁹ In 1830 approximately seven thousand licenses had been issued by the College of Arms, thereby granting official gentry status.³⁰ As Burke’s registers provide the primary source of classification for young gentlemen with ties to the gentry, these stipulations are also applicable to the subjects identified here as “G.”

Royal Navy (N): This category includes the sons and relatives of all commissioned and warrant officers, lower-deck men, dockyard officials and workers, administrative officials and their subordinates. It is a broadly defined category – the product of complex social networks operating within the naval “family” – which often crossed socio-economic boundaries and were based on intricate personal and professional relationships. The

²⁶ Jeremy Black notes that mid-eighteenth century legislation required JPs to own land (free or copy hold) valued at £100. Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth Century Britain, 1688 - 1783*, 2nd edition (London, 2008), p. 95.

²⁷ S.v. “landed gentry,” in *OED* (2008).

²⁸ Forward to Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London, 1847). Sir John Bernard Burke received much criticism for his “easy credulity” when it came to vetting his “gentry” candidates and for having “been led blindfold by these obscure persons, whose most palpable fictions he seldom shows the least hesitation in adopting,” John Horace Round, *Studies in Peerage and Family History* (London, 1901), p. 112. The classification used here paraphrased Sir Henry Spelman’s definition of 1626: “Gentleman is the lowest class of the lesser nobility of England . . . ,” quoted in Edward Larkin, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of the Revolution* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 28.

²⁹ All coats of arms were to be registered with the College of Arms in London, see Burke, *Landed Gentry*, Vol. 1, forward (no page ref.)

³⁰ Moore notes that by 1855 the number of licenses issued had exploded to 25,000. See D. C. Moore, “The Gentry,” in *The Victorian Countryside*, ed. G. E. Mingay (London, 2000), p. 385.

systems of patronage operating within the “navy” classification are explained in greater detail in the year-by-year analyses.³¹

Army (A): Like naval connections the networks of army patronage could be complex. This classification takes into account young gentlemen with ties to military officers, soldiers, and all military administrators.

Parliament or Local Politics (P): The classification of “political” connections is one of the most problematic. Both members of the peerage and the landed gentry could be defined by their political status and their possession of some form of political power on either the metropolitan (Whitehall and Westminster) or the local (parish and county) level.³² Not every member of these social elites was, however, directly involved in politics. After 1707, only sixteen Scottish representative peers were eligible to sit in the House of Lords while Irish peers were allowed twenty-eight representatives after 1801.³³

Throughout much of the eighteenth century the House of Commons contained only 558 members of Parliament (MPs). Of the 200 boroughs and roughly 9,000 parishes³⁴ in existence during the last half of the eighteenth century, appointments were available for a limited number of lords lieutenants, justices of the peace (JPs), and sheriffs,³⁵ which

³¹ See Chapter Five, Section 2

³² Black, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 209.

³³ Prior to the Act of Union in 1801 Ireland retained a parliament which controlled only the legislative aspects of government while executive power rested with the Lord Lieutenant or Chief Secretary of Ireland who answered directly to the British government, *ibid.*, pp. 231-32. The total number of English peers with access to the House of Lords in 1800 is estimated at 267 peers. Combined with the representative peers after 1801, this still only allows a direct political role for just over 300 peers out of a total of 1363, see Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 32.

³⁴ For figures see Kirstin Olsen, *Daily Life in Eighteenth Century England* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1999), p. 6; Richard Brown, *Society and Economy in Modern Britain, 1700-1850* (London, 1991), p. 15.

³⁵ J. C. Sainty, *List of Lieutenants of Counties of England and Wales, 1660-1974*, List and Index Society (London, 1979). Porter estimates the size of the landed gentry in the late-eighteenth century at about 15,000 families; from wealthy baronets to land owners earning £300 per annum. This does not, however, account for individuals, including heirs and younger sons, whose presence could at least triple this number, making the shortage of political appointments for the gentry even more pronounced. See Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, revised edition (London, 1991), p. 66.

accommodated only a fraction of the landed gentry.³⁶ It has also been noted that the eighteenth century saw a decline in “elite gentry” participation in the local offices (JPs and sheriffs) which required a great deal of work that “could be adequately conducted by their [lesser gentry] inferiors.”³⁷

While social status was a prerequisite for political status, the opposite did not apply. As a means of distinguishing between the two, only young gentlemen connected to men with specific political involvement have been classified as “P.” Just as patronage networks within the spheres of local and national government crossed geographical, social, and economic divides, the classification of “political” ties is applied to anyone with an explicit political affiliation - from an MP to a JP. While this may not provide the most accurate view of the scope of political influence being leveraged by aspiring sea officers it is the only means of uniformly observing the sample as a whole. Accordingly, care must be taken in assessing the changes that occur within the framework of “political” influence.

Educated Professionals (E): This group consists of two subsets, the “higher professions” including lawyers, physicians, bankers, architects, civil engineers, and academics; and the “lower professions” consisting of fine artists, musicians, and writers whose notoriety provided an income that allowed them to live as gentlemen.³⁸ It has been noted that professionals of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries understood themselves to be essentially “middle class,”³⁹ although most claimed the status of

³⁶ Black, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 205.

³⁷ Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Palo Alto, CA, 1994), p. 189.

³⁸ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, 2nd edition (London, 2002), p. 252-55. Reader also notes that “a competence” – that is, enough money to live like a gentleman, was the goal of all educated, men without “private fortune,” see W. J. Reader, *Professional Men, The Rise of the Professional Classes in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York, 1966), pp. 3, 5.

³⁹ Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 1; also see Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class: Business, Society, and Family Life in London, 1660-1730* (Berkeley, 1989), p. 5.

“gentlemen” through their specialist education in a “skilled service occupation.”⁴⁰

Professionals were “conscious of the distinctions within that [middle] class” and perceived their independence, intelligence, and morality as hallmarks of their standing in the upper echelons of the middling orders.⁴¹ Such qualifications are useful in separating the professions from the trades and in identifying the connection between the need for both theoretical and practical knowledge imparted with a specialist-service ethos.⁴² In 1773 Dr. Johnson noted: “The term *profession* is particularly used of divinity, physick and law,”⁴³ emphasizing the distinction between occupation and vocation, although Penelope Corfield suggests that such a narrow definition was already outdated before the publication of Johnson’s dictionary. According to Corfield, army and navy officers had long been considered professionals due to their specialist knowledge, their provision of a service, and the formal structure of the organizations to which they belonged.⁴⁴ This study separates these military and naval specialists from the “professional” category only as a means of further clarifying the socio-professional breakdown, although it is understood that they both may be considered “professionals” by the definition used here.

Clergy (C): For reasons of clarity, those with connections to the clergy have also been separated from the “professional” category, although it is acknowledged that clerical service remained a profession nonetheless. This category includes all ranks of clergymen from local pastors to bishops and church authorities.

⁴⁰ P. J. Corfield, *Power and the Professions in England 1700-1850* (New York, 2000), p. 19.

⁴¹ Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 1; also see P. J. Cain and A. G. Hopkins, “Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Expansion Overseas I: The Old Colonial System, 1688-1850,” in *The Economic History Review* 39, no. 4 (1986): p. 505.

⁴² Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, pp. 25-26.

⁴³ Quoted in *ibid*, p. 20.

⁴⁴ Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, pp. 24-25.

Trade/Merchant (T): This category includes merchants, skilled tradesmen, and artisans from carpenters, tailors, and blacksmiths to retail shopkeepers, and therefore is representative of both the commercial and working classes. What separated these occupations from the professions was not a matter of specialist training but the way in which the training was accomplished. Tradesmen generally learned their craft through an apprenticeship rather than through an education that combined liberal arts courses (often with instruction in the classics) and specialty training.⁴⁵ The living that could be earned from trade was, for the most part, less than the “competence” of a profession and as such typically denied its practitioners the means to live as “gentlemen.” There were, of course, exceptions, particularly among merchants who could, through a combination of skill and luck, become wealthy enough to enter the realm of the economic elite and thereby transcend their social rank. Social mobility through trade was, however, frowned upon by the elites “because commercial morality was not high,”⁴⁶ and association to new money gained from trade often tainted the first generations as *parvenus*. The category of “trade/merchant” used in this study refers to those with connections to mechanical or retail trades regardless of their financial situation. If it became clear in the background searches that success in a trade had elevated the family to gentry status through the purchase of land, then the young gentleman’s connection will show both “T” and “G” classifications. Naval “trades” such as shipwrights, dockyard carpenters, coopers, and blacksmiths are classified in terms of their naval connections rather than a trade.

Farming (F): This group includes those with a work association to the land whether they were more affluent yeomen or farm laborers. Like those associated with a trade, farmers, for the purposes of this study, may also be considered “working class” unless it

⁴⁵ Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 194-95.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

became clear that financial success had allowed them to rise to the ranks of “gentlemen” farmers.

Unaccounted (U): The remaining entries whose social origins were untraceable were designated as “unaccounted.”

It should be noted that these categories are not intended to represent static and homogenous sub-groups within British society. Their constituent members varied greatly in terms of wealth and social status. During the seventy years covered by this study the organization of society itself underwent significant reordering as evidenced in the changing modes of self-description from “ranks and degrees,” to “sorts,” to the early-nineteenth century emergence of economic “class.”⁴⁷ The categories used here are an attempt to group members of society in terms of their professional, or in the case of the non-working elites, hereditary affiliations. The categories are also loosely borrowed from Michael Lewis whose studies represent the principle sources of social and demographic data on commissioned naval officers to date.⁴⁸ Beyond the similarities of nomenclature, however, the methodology used to classify and interpret the data differs from Lewis substantially.

The nine categories identified above were used to classify individuals in the primary databases, allowing the sample to be sorted by social background, by sample year, and by rate. Michael Lewis’s method of classifying one officer into one socio-professional category (according to his father’s profession or rank), produced a tidy summary and one that tallied to match his total sample of 1800 officers.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Lewis, *Social History*, pp. 31, 36, 45; Michael Lewis, *The Navy in Transition: A Social History, 1814-1864* (London, 1965), pp. 22, 26.

⁴⁹ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 31.

Table 1.6 Michael Lewis's Summary of Officers' Social Backgrounds

Social Classification	No. out of 1800 total
Peers	131
Baronets	85
Landed Gentry	494
Professional Men (inc. RN)	899
Business and Commercial men	71
Working Class*	120
Total	1800

Reproduced from Lewis, *Social History*, p. 31.

*In the research presented here, the category of “working class” is divided into the more specific classifications of “trade/merchant” and “farming.” Lewis also uses “working class” to identify connections to the “lower deck,” *ibid.*, pp. 44-45. As stated in Chapter Two, Section 6, no differentiation has been made between connections to lower deck and quarterdeck within the “naval” (N) classification. See p. 48 for a full explanation of the classifications.

The data encountered during social background searches for the young gentlemen sampled here proved to be far more complex, and impossible to categorize so neatly. Many young gentlemen did not reveal their father’s rank or occupation but turned up information on other family members instead. Other candidates showed multiple connections. For example, Alfred Robert Slade, a volunteer aboard HMS *Falmouth* in 1821, was the 7th son of General Sir John Slade GCH, 1st Baronet of Maunsel Grange, Somerset, the grandson of John Slade of Maunsel House, Commissioner of the Victualling Board, and the brother of Vice-Admiral Sir Adolphus Slade. Such a pedigree allows that young Alfred Robert would be classified as “A” for his father’s military profession, “B” for his father’s status as a baronet, “N” for his grandfather’s connection to the navy through the Victualling Board, which in itself endowed the office holder with a certain amount of political influence, “P.”⁵⁰ Without knowing which of these associations carried the greatest weight in securing Alfred Robert a position aboard the *Falmouth*, a *post hoc* assumption would have to be made in order to classify him discretely as “B,” for his immediate relationship to a baronet. Such a classification would assume that social rank took precedence in the decision to

⁵⁰ See Appendix F7, “Quarterdeck Boys 1821,” Q21-SL-11, taken from TNA: PRO, ADM37/6675 “Muster Book, HMS *Falmouth*, March 1820-April 1821.”

recruit entry-level officers. While this may have been the case, the importance of naval connections was widely acknowledged by contemporaries, just as the rising importance of political influence was foremost in the minds of some of the naval luminaries discussed in the introduction to Chapter One.

The problem of how to present the data in a way that reflects the true, if complicated nature, of a young gentleman's social and professional connections while making the data manageable and meaningful, requires a two-part solution. First, the data is presented in its most raw and complex form, meaning that dozens of coded categories are possible through the various combinations of social and professional connections. In the case of quarterdeck boys, forty-four permutations of the codes appeared:

Table 1.7 Coding Results for Quarterdeck Boys, 1761 -1831. (Isolated Totals)

QDB: Isolated # Totals	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
Peers		3	2		2	1	3	4
Gentry	4	6	2	5	8	9	13	7
Navy	16	19	40	33	14	15	16	31
Politics	1							
Army	1					1		4
Clergy							1	3
Trade	1			1	2		2	2
Farm								
Prof.		1					1	
NB		1	1	4	1		7	9
NG	1	1	2	3	2	5	2	2
NT			1					
NP			2				1	
NA								2
GP	1		3					
GC			2	1	2			1
GA		1	2		1	4		4
GT					1			
GB			1					
GE								1
BA								2
BP			2					
BC							1	
EP				1				
AE			1					
TE		1	2					
NBP	1	1	5			1	1	2
NBC								1
NGP	1		1	1		1		
NGA				1		1		1
NGE								1
NGC							1	2
BAP			1					
BGE						1		
GAP					1			
GEP							1	
GBP						1	1	
GTA								1
GCA								1
GEPB						1		
GABP							1	
NBAP							1	3
NBGC				1				
NGAP					1			

Note: The order of the letters in each set of coding is arbitrary and does not reflect an order of precedence.
 Key: B = peerage, G = landed gentry, N = navy, P = politics, A = army, C = clergy, T = trade/merchant, F = farming, E = professional.

In the case of midshipmen, masters' mates, and acting lieutenants a total of sixty-one combinations appeared.

Table 1.8 Coding Results for Junior Officers, 1761-1831. (Isolated Totals)

<u>JO: Isolated # Totals</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Peers	2	9	9		2	1	4	4
Gentry	8	13	12	17	14	11	17	6
Navy	7	13	21	38	20	25	29	40
Politics		1		1				
Army			1			1	2	
Clergy		2		2	3	7	1	
Trade	2	1	2	1	6	3		1
Farm				1		1		1
Prof.		1	1	4	1	3	2	
NB	1	7	2	5	4	2	8	14
NG		2	5	9	4	7	3	7
NT	1	1		1	1			
NE		1				1		
NP		1		3	1		2	
NC		1					1	
NA				1				
GP	1	5	3	1	6	4	6	6
GC		1		2	3	2	5	3
GA		1	3	1	2	2	3	6
GT					2			
GB		1		1		2	1	
GE		1		1		1		1
GF					1			
BA		1	1		1			3
BP	1	2		2	3	2	2	3
BE								1
EP		1						
EF			1					
AE					1			
AP						1	1	
TE			2	1	1			
TP	2		1	1				
TF				1				
NBP		2	2	2			1	1
NBG		1						
NBA					1		2	2
NGP		1	1		2	1	4	2
NGA				1	1		2	
NGC				1			1	1
NGE				1				
NGT			1					
NPA							1	

NPC								1
BAP				1	1	1		2
BPE					1			
GAP						2		3
GEA		1						
GBP			1	1			1	
GBA								1
GPT				1				
GPC					1			
GTE					1			
GEPC						1	1	
NBAP					2	1	1	
NGAP			1					
NGBP						1		
NBGA					1	1	1	
GENA		2						
BACP							1	
GEPCN					1			

Note: The order of the letters in each set of coding is arbitrary and does not reflect an order of importance.

Key: B = peerage, G = landed gentry, N = navy, P = politics, A = army, C = clergy, T = trade/merchant, F = farming, E = professional.

While the spread of data makes it difficult to interpret at a glance, the findings in their unaltered, or “isolated” form, will be necessary for many of the calculations used in later interpretations of the data.

The second, simpler way to view the results is in their grouped or “combined” form. Here, each letter code assigned to a young gentleman is counted in the relevant categories. If, in the case of Alfred Robert Slade, a subject turned up connections in four categories, he is counted four times in the combined tally. This method does not allow a clean, arithmetic sum of the totals of the individual categories, the results of which would produce more young gentlemen than were actually sampled. As such the combined data is best viewed as a proportion of the total traceable sample for each year. The combined data method is valuable in that it allows the relative importance of the various socio-professional categories to be seen in a concise way and presents a clear picture of how the various social networks impacted naval recruitment over time.

Table 1.9 Coding Results for Quarterdeck Boys, 1761 -1831. (Combined Totals)

QDB: Combined Totals	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
Peerage	1	5	12	5	3	5	15	21
Gentry	7	8	13	12	16	23	19	21
Navy	19	22	52	43	18	23	30	54
Political	4	1	14	2	2	4	6	5
Army	1	1	4	1	3	6	2	18
Clergy			2	2	2		3	8
Trade/Merchant	1	1	3	1	3		2	3
Farming								
Professional		2	3	1		2	1	2

Source: Appendix H, "Collated Data and Charts, 1761 – 1831."

And in the case of midshipmen, master's mates and acting lieutenants:

Table 1.10 Coding Results for Junior Officers 1761 -1831. (Combined Totals)

JO: Combined # Totals	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
Peerage	4	23	16	13	16	10	22	31
Gentry	9	29	27	40	35	35	45	36
Navy	9	33	33	63	36	40	56	68
Political	4	13	10	16	14	12	20	15
Army		4	7	4	10	8	14	14
Clergy		4		7	6	9	9	5
Trade/Merchant	5	2	6	7	10	3		1
Farming			1	2	1	1		1
Professional	6	4	10	3	5	2		1

Source: Appendix H, "Collated Data and Charts, 1761 – 1831."

Both the isolated and combined data will be used to explain changes in the social make-up of the corps of young gentlemen on a year-by-year basis.

7. Rules of interpretation

Classifying young gentlemen into one or more of the nine socio-professional categories demanded a high degree of certainty in identifying the quarterdeck boy or junior officer in question. The first rule of interpretation demanded that a minimum of one solid source was required to identify individuals, although in many cases, more than one source was available. The source (or sources) of identification were recorded in the primary databases alongside the letter-code classification. The exception to this first rule related to

young gentlemen who could not be traced directly using the secondary database sources mentioned earlier, but for whom it would be unreasonable *not* to connect them to one of the classifications. In these cases the source code “RG,” meaning “reasonable guess,” preempts the citation such as *Burke’s Peerage*, or *The Gentleman’s Magazine* which justified the assumption.⁵¹

The second rule of interpretation gives the benefit of the doubt to young gentlemen appearing in a ship in which the captain or one of the lieutenants of that ship possessed the same surname. The source code “SS,” meaning “same ship,” allows that if a young gentleman of the same last name could not be traced in any of the available sources he is deemed to have had a naval connection and therefore is classified as “N.”

The vast numbers of quarterdeck boys and junior officers who turned up *possible* connections to one or more of the classifications, but who could not be confirmed with any degree of certainty, were not given a social or professional classification and were placed in the “unaccounted” list. If, in the future, time allows more in-depth searches to be conducted on these “possibles,” a clearer view of officer recruitment may become visible.

⁵¹ For example, Henry Bover, a captain’s servant aboard HMS *Sandwich* in 1781 could not be found in the referenced sources, however the unusual quality of his name and his approximate age make it likely that he was a son of Captain John Bover RN of Warrington, Lancashire, who married in 1776, produced eight children, and died on May 20, 1782. If so, Henry was also the brother of Peter Turner Bover, RN who was baptized on November 9, 1772 and who, as a lieutenant during the Spithead mutiny, acted with such aplomb that Lord St. Vincent championed the push for his promotion. A reasonable assumption would, therefore, allow Henry Bover a naval connection in the immediate family and therefore justify his categorization as “N.” Similarly, Charles F. Dealtry, a midshipman in HMS *Donegal* in 1831 did not appear in the sources consulted, although his age and the location of his birth, recorded in the muster book as “Gainsboro, Lincoln,” suggested a connection to James Dealtry Esq. of Gainsborough and Justice of the Peace in Lincoln, who died in 1817. Such information was sufficient to justify coding Charles F. Dealtry as “G” for his likely connections to a member of the landed gentry and “P” for the local political association. For Bover see Appendix F3, “Quarterdeck Boys 1781,” Q81-1-47. For Dealtry see Appendix G8, “Junior Officers 1831,” J31-3-09; and John Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Commoners of Great Britain and Ireland, etc.* (London, 1838), p. 308; and Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, 5th edition, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London, 1875), p. 319.

8. A statistical approach: the strengths and weaknesses

a. *Selection*

Sampling in any form attempts to minimize bias by maximizing randomness. In the case of this sample the way in which the subjects were to be found, scattered throughout the pages of muster books of ships of varying sizes, functions, and duties, a random-number generator or other tools of the statistical trade proved unworkable. The need to structure a matrix based on observations of specific years, during specific dates, of ships of various rates and cruising duties was necessary in order to create a framework to support an equitable and, therefore, meaningful sample. The randomness of the sample developed from the randomness of the record keeping process in the muster books themselves, a practice that lent an arbitrary element to the structure of the sample matrices. The product of this randomness within a deliberate superstructure of dates and rates of ship is a useful and statistically sound foundation on which to build an understanding of the entry-level officer corps.

b. *Searches*

The constraints of time and resources denied further investigation into the social histories of the “unaccounted” and necessarily limited the scope of this study. It should also be noted that of the 1049 traceable young gentlemen, their classification in one or more of the nine social-professional groups is based solely on what information was available about that individual and his family in the sources consulted.⁵² It is highly likely that many of the “traceables” are incompletely identified. Political connections, which are often of a more subtle nature and are based on friendships, business interactions, and

⁵² More than 100 different sources (contemporary and modern) were used to identify individuals. For full details see the Primary Databases, Appendices F1-F8, “Quarterdeck Boys 1761-1831;” and G1-G8, “Junior Officers 1761-1831.”

complex inter-personal relationships, would be easily missed. Likewise, a young man's connections through a distant relative to a high-ranking naval official would not reflect in his coded classification unless such connections were explicitly mentioned in the sources or unless the young man was of sufficient public importance that the details of his life were well documented. The limitations imposed on classifying young gentlemen's backgrounds reflect the need to limit the scope of this study to immediate relations including first, and occasionally second cousins, and the most obvious extra-familial connections. There are some cases in which distant or non-familial relationships are detailed,⁵³ although such biographical transparency is typically reserved for the best known young gentlemen in the sample.

If criticism is to be leveled at this aspect of the classification process, consistency is the principal defense. A high degree of certainty was necessary in order to classify any and all young gentlemen and the decision was made to err on the side of caution when it came to identifying the sample. Marginal candidates were left unaccounted, as were suspected connections which could not be justified by the evidence as "reasonable guesses."

Another weakness that affects portions of the data, particularly for the first four sample years, is the problem of small numbers. Data for 1761 is especially affected and results must be skewed by the fact that when five candidates, out of a total of twenty-five "traceables," claim trade/merchant backgrounds⁵⁴ their proportional representation will appear unusually high and distort the overall appearance of the data. It is a problem that can only be overcome with full disclosure of the real numbers behind the percentages and a cautious use of the figures in forming conclusions.

⁵³ For example, John Eveleigh son of a tradesman "so fortunate as to interest Mr. Addington, Lord Sidmouth . . .," see Appendix G4, "Junior Officers 1791," J91-SL-12.

⁵⁴ As in the junior officers' sample.

Chapter Three: Literature Review: Historians Approach the Issues

The historical subject matter relevant to a study of young gentlemen in the Royal Navy is diverse. The issues divide crudely into “internal,” or naval matters and “external,” or civilian concerns and deal with issues regarding the social condition of young officer aspirants both within the naval hierarchy and as part of society at large.

1. Internal Issues

a. *Naval concerns*

The most significant work that has been done in the field of social history and the navy comes from Michael Lewis and Nicholas Rodger. Lewis’s *A Social History of the Navy, 1793-1815* and his follow up, *The Navy in Transition, A Social History, 1814-1864*, deal with the issues facing young gentlemen; from the system of nomination and selection, to education and training, to the process of advancement to commissioned rank. Aspirants, however, are only treated as part of a larger history which focuses primarily on commissioned officers. Lewis’s statistical work, which is based on the data collected in the early-nineteenth century by William O’Byrne and John Marshall, offers a detailed analysis of the social backgrounds and career histories of the sampled officers. Lewis’s sampling method is, however, inherently biased¹ and takes no account of the “untraceable” portion of the group. Despite the author’s focus on commissioned officers, he does draw two important conclusions relevant to officers-in-training. First, Lewis asserts that the French Wars saw a growing social diversity on naval quarterdecks – a position that challenges the observations of the admirals (noted in Chapter One) who saw an increase in the presence of socially elite officer aspirants during this time. Instead he concludes that the

¹ Lewis acknowledges that O’Byrne’s survey subjects wrote their own biographies, often recalling events many years in the past. The hyperbole of reminiscences, honest distortions over time, and less-than-honest attempts to hide inglorious connections with the past were recognized by Lewis as “circumstances, admittedly, not altogether favourable to an unbiased history.” See Lewis, *Social History*, p. 28.

midshipmen's berth became the preserve of the social and political elites only *after* 1815. This peacetime phenomenon, in which “the Navy . . . became more stodgily class-bound than, perhaps, it had ever been before,”² resulted in fewer opportunities for boys from the middling orders, including the professions.³ Second, Lewis notes that the Admiralty’s progress towards centralized control of the selection of young gentlemen, which ended the captain’s monopoly on appointments for midshipmen in 1815, was the decisive factor that “ultimately . . . gave the Admiralty control of its own house.”⁴ This study seeks to test both these theories in light of the new statistical evidence drawn from primary sources.

Nicholas Rodger’s studies of officers and aspirants during the last half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries provide critical references for this study. In *The Wooden World, Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*, Rodger sees the Seven Years’ War as a period defined by a “belief in the stability of society, ashore or afloat.”⁵ The idea that this was “the last generation [of officers] to be unconscious of the class structure in which they moved,”⁶ suggests a starting point for both the temporal and thematic structure used here. Rodger’s contention that “in the middle years of the century the Navy, considered as a society in miniature, was very much a microcosm of British society in general,”⁷ also raises the issue of how to place the navy in a wider social context. *The Command of the Ocean* does just this and relates the social history of the navy from 1660 to 1815 to larger political, economic, and cultural issues. Patronage is identified as one of the most important links between naval and civil worlds⁸ and is examined here in

² Lewis, *Transition*, p. 25.

³ Lewis notes that the post-war navy “was, if anything, even more the preserve of the ‘upper’ and ‘upper middle’ classes than it was before the wars began,” *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 159.

⁵ N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (New York, 1996), p. 206.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 206

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

⁸ Rodger, *Command*, pp. 514-15; Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 273-75.

terms of the social networks that drove recruitment and advancement in the junior officer ratings.⁹ Rodger's body of work on the training and education of young gentlemen also examines the role of official policy in shaping the social character of young gentlemen.¹⁰ The effects of Admiralty efforts to centralize the recruitment process and their impact on patronage networks have also been addressed by Lewis and Rodger, while Christopher Dandeker suggests that the power exerted by recruiting captains limited the Admiralty's attempts to gain control of officer entry.¹¹ Together these studies provide the foundations for an examination of centralization in Chapter Ten.

b. *Social context*

The issue of young "gentlemen" in a social context has also been examined from diverse points of view. From the naval perspective, Tom Wareham addresses social status as an enabler of success, and concludes that without talent, social rank was largely meaningless to a naval career.¹² From the sociological point of view, Norbert Elias's essays in "Studies in the Genesis of the Naval Profession" identify a fundamental conflict within the navy: that sea officers, as skilled professionals, could not, by definition, be

⁹ Moira Bracknall's recent doctoral thesis defines eighteenth-century patronage as "a system of exchanging or trading interest and influence, rather than an entirely corrupt method of distributing favours." Her assessment of patronage under Lord Spencer challenges the supremacy of politics, and the First Lord's own interests, in the workings of patronage and suggests that kinship and naval connections were more powerful influences on a budding naval career. Moira Bracknall, *Lord Spencer, patronage and commissioned officers' careers, 1794-1801*, unpublished PhD thesis (University of Exeter, 2008), pp. 274-75. Harold Perkin notes that patronage "contained an element of selection by merit, measured by the judgment and importance of the patron," Perkin, *Origins*, p. 224; while Roy Porter notes "The very pervasiveness of patronage and dependence set up expectations that gave the system its strength and durability," Porter, *Society*, p. 121.

¹⁰ See N. A. M. Rodger, "Officers, Gentlemen and their Education, 1793-1860," in *Les Empires en Guerre et Paix, Journées Franco-Anglais d'Histoire de la Marine*, ed. Edward Freeman (Vincennes, 1990), pp. 139-50; "Training or Education: A Naval Dilemma over Three Centuries," in *Hudson Papers*, ed. Peter Hore (London, 2001), pp. 1-34; "Commissioned Officers' Careers in the Royal Navy, 1690-1815," in *Journal of Maritime Research*, online journal (July, 2001).

¹¹ Christopher Dandeker, "Patronage and Bureaucratic Control - the Case of the Naval Officer in English Society, 1780-1850," in *The British Journal of Sociology* 29 (September, 1978): p. 313.

¹² Tom Wareham, *The Star Captains: Frigate Command in the Napoleonic Wars* (Annapolis, 2001), pp. 16-17.

gentlemen,¹³ as gentlemen had no profession, and performed no manual labor.¹⁴ W. J.

Reader notes of eighteenth-century Britain that, “amateurism was apt to be regarded as gentlemanly and high technical skill as rather degrading,”¹⁵ while Nicholas Rodger confirms the “socially unique” nature of the naval profession in which the professional “gentleman” was the norm in an “unnatural world, where the order of civil society was subverted . . .”¹⁶

Rodger’s “Honour and Duty at Sea, 1660-1815,” explains the social dynamics that led to the “rise of the middle-class virtues of duty” in both the minds of sea officers and the general public by the end of the eighteenth century. Aristocratic concepts of personal honor, which often resulted in self-interested behavior, were morphed by the social upheavals and class consciousness brought about by the French Revolution. The result was a new definition of the “gentleman” in which “the hitherto middle-class and professional values of duty, self-discipline and piety” gained precedence over the “old libertine values” associated with the nobility.¹⁷ The precise nature of the “subversion,” which challenged the

¹³ Elias focuses primarily on the gentleman/tarpaulin officer conflict that raged during the seventeenth century. The “precarious equilibrium” between professional and gentleman officers that lasted well into the eighteenth century is presented as evidence of a proto-Marxist class conflict within the naval profession. Elias’s interpretations are, however, reliant on Samuel Pepys’s professionally-biased and politically-colored descriptions of the gentleman/tarpaulin controversy. For a full discussion of this controversy see Chapter Four. Norbert Elias, “Studies in the Genesis of the Naval Profession,” in *The British Journal of Sociology*, 1 (December, 1950): pp. 291-309; for full publication see Elias, *The Genesis of the Naval Profession*, ed. René Moelker and Stephen Mennell (Dublin, 2007).

¹⁴ For the qualities of gentility see Henry French, *The Middle Sort of People in Provincial England, 1600-1750* (Oxford, 2007), p. 20; and P. J. Corfield, “The Rivals: Landed and Other Gentlemen,” in *Land and Society in Britain, 1700-1914: Essays in Honour of F.M.L. Thompson*, ed. N. B. Harte and Roland Quinault (Manchester, 1996), pp. 12, 20-23. Also see Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 171. According to Harold Perkin, the leisure of a gentleman meant “the freedom to pursue any interest, taste of pleasure consonant with the honour of a gentleman, without the further need to demean oneself by earning a living,” Perkin, *Origins*, p. 55.

¹⁵ Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 74.

¹⁶ Rodger, *Command*, p. 392.

¹⁷ N. A. M. Rodger, “Honour and Duty at Sea, 1660-1815,” in *Historical Research* LXXV (2002): pp. 425-447. Also see Dewald, *European Nobility*, p. 51; Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People, England 1727-1783* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 464-65; Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley, 1996), p. 51; N. A. M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, 1718-1792* (London, 1993), p. 31; Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 167.

social order and the way in which sea officers recast themselves as dutiful paragons of nineteenth-century morality, is addressed in Chapter Six relative to the recruitment of future officers.

The research conducted on recruits in the French, Spanish, Danish, and American navies highlights the procedural similarities and social differences between the British example and foreign services. Norman Hampson and William Cormack explore the social composition of the corps of French *aspirants* in the *gardes de la marine*, and the reformed *élèves de la marine* of 1786, and find a social inertia that continued to favor the sons of the elite despite the flood of democratic principles sweeping the nation in 1789.¹⁸ The degree to which the French navy became more socially diverse in the post-revolutionary years is addressed by Michel Vergé-Franceschi, Roger Hahn, William Cormack, and Guy Boistel.¹⁹ Richard Arroyo notes the social exclusivity of officer recruitment in the Spanish navy which, throughout the eighteenth century, aimed at gathering the sons of aristocrats into the *Real Compañía de Caballeros Guardiamarinas*. Arroyo concludes that Spain's recruitment policies consistently reflected old-order attitudes towards the dominance of "natural authority" which accompanied high birth.²⁰ Jacob Seerup's assessment of the

For an analysis of similar transformations in French gentility see Robert A. Nye, *Masculinity and Male Codes of Honor in Modern France* (Berkeley, 1998), p. 32; and Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility in the Eighteenth Century: from Feudalism to Enlightenment*, William Doyle trans. (Cambridge, 1985), p. 34. Assessments of social change in Britain and on the continent are also offered by George Rudé, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century: Aristocracy and the Bourgeoisie Challenge* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), pp. 150-52.

¹⁸ Norman Hampson, "The 'Comité de Marine' of the Constituent Assembly," in *The Historical Journal*, 2 (1959): pp. 130-148; William Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict in the French Navy, 1789-1794* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 43-44, 36. Cormack notes that the *gardes* were of "exclusively noble birth," *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹⁹ Michel Vergé-Franceschi, *Marine et Education sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 1991), pp. 66, 98; "Un enseignement éclairé au XVIII^e siècle: l'enseignement maritime dispensé aux gardes" *Revue Historique* 276 (1986): pp. 29-55; Roger Hahn, "L'Enseignement Scientifique des Gardes de la Marine au XVIII^e Siècle" in *Enseignement et Diffusion des Sciences en France au XVIII^e Siècle*, ed. René Taton (Paris, 1964): pp. 547-558; Guy Boistel, "La Réforme des Écoles de la Marine du 10 Août 1791 dans la correspondance Gaspard Monge-Pierre Levêque," in *Chronique d'Histoire Maritime*, 53 (2003): pp. 50-65.

²⁰ Ricardo Arroyo, "Las Enseñanzas de Náutica en el Siglo XVIII," in *Revista de Historia Naval*, 12 (1994): pp. 7-30.

Danish Royal Navy positions it closer to the British example in terms of the social diversity of officer recruits, citing the navy's preference for selecting the sons of civil servants to train as officers.²¹ Christopher McKee's survey of recruitment in the fledgling United States' Navy shows a number of similarities between American approaches to officer recruitment and those of the Royal Navy during the early-nineteenth century – with the emphasis being more on political connections.²²

These international perspectives are also useful in assessing the relationship between officer entry in the Royal Navy and the changing attitudes of the various social orders, from the aristocracy to the “middling sort,” when it came to a naval career. The influence of European, and particularly French, educational policies are further addressed in Chapter Four.

2. External issues

a. *Social theory*

Another important aspect of this study involved the search for social theories to explain the developments taking place in the Royal Navy between 1761 and 1831. J. C. D. Clark's system of “patrician hegemony” which, he suggests, prevailed until the parliamentary reforms of 1832, offers explanations for contemporary observations of a junior officer corps that increasingly became the preserve of the social elite. According to

²¹ Civil servants were considered gentlemen in eighteenth-century Danish society, see Jakob Seerup, "The Royal Danish Naval Academy in the Age of Enlightenment," in *Mariner's Mirror*, 93 (2007): pp. 330-31.

²² Christopher McKee, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession: The Creation of the U. S. Naval Officer Corps, 1794-1815* (Annapolis, 1991), pp. 76-81. McKee offers one of the few assessments of the social backgrounds of young gentlemen outside the studies conducted on the Royal Navy. The total sample of U. S. Navy midshipmen encompassed by the years 1794-1815 was only 858 young men. The manageability of the sample universe combined with the centralized system of entry in which the secretary of the navy oversaw all midshipmen's appointments, makes personal details of a young gentleman's parentage, age, and place of birth readily available. The accompanying references (which required personal knowledge of the applicant) also allow a clear assessment of a candidate's social and political connections.

Clark, the political, economic, and moral dominance of Britain's landed classes was maintained through a reliance on the old power hierarchy which hinged on assimilation rather than class conflict.²³ Roy Porter supports Clark's theories of a patrician hegemony but denies notions of a rigid old-order system based solely on political and religious foundations. He identifies an *ancien régime* that was "elastic" and resilient to social, economic, and cultural change.²⁴ Notions of patrician dominance in the late-eighteenth century find statistical backing in John Cannon's *Aristocratic Century*. Cannon's identification of "a massive consensus, based upon widespread acceptance of aristocratic values and aristocratic leadership," is supported by statistical analysis and reveals the closed nature of the British peerage which, despite a rash of new creations later in the century, actually shrank as a proportion of the growing population.²⁵ Lawrence and Jeanne Stone's work on the size of the landed gentry and the influx of newcomers or "purchasers" into the ranks of the landed gentry is addressed in, *An Open Elite? England, 1540-1880*. The Stones deny the "hoary myth" of an open elite in which wealthy businessmen could buy their way into the gentry through the purchase of a great estate. Instead, they suggest, "The real story of the English elite is not the symbiosis of land and business, but of land

²³ J. C. D. Clark, *English Society, 1688-1832: Religion, Ideology, and Politics during the Ancien Régime*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 36, 170.

²⁴ Porter, *Society*, p. 4. While Porter describes Clark as "myopic in his lack of interest in, even distaste for, so many areas in which the ways of life of ordinary English people changed dramatically during the eighteenth century," particularly in relation to a "society [which] was capitalist, materialist, [and] market-oriented," he agrees that the "the political institutions and the distribution of wealth and power were unashamedly inegalitarian, hierarchical, hereditary and privileged," *ibid.*, pp. xiii, 2-4.

²⁵ Cannon also shows that the numbers of English, Scots, and Irish peers, baronets, and knights were in decline from 1700 until 1770 and that in 1800 their combined total was considerably less than what it had been in 1700, Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, pp. viii, 32. Clark, however, notes that the system was less about consensus and more about patrician hegemony, citing that there was a "robust disrespect by inferiors for superiors, which seemed far removed from an idealized deference, and a contemptuous disrespect by superiors for inferiors which fell far short of idealized paternalism," Clark, *Society*, p. 170. Also see: John Phillips, "The Social Calculus: Deference and Defiance in Later Georgian England," in *Albion*, 21 (1989): pp. 426-49.

and the professions. . . .”²⁶ The influence of wealth and the *nouveau riche* bourgeoisie on the social make-up of the landed gentry is relevant to a discussion of class mobility within the society at large and the ways in which it affected naval recruitment. The extent to which the power of tradition aided the maintenance of an *ancien régime*, and the influx of middle-class wealth initiated a new era of social dynamism, are examined in Chapters Six and Nine.

Paul Langford suggests that massive social changes were already in motion by the middle years of the eighteenth century and that the growth of urban populations and the rise of a market economy “which occurred in Britain between the 1720s and the 1780s was nothing if not spectacular . . . and wrought a fundamental alteration in the English people.”²⁷ The idea that a social revolution occurred well before the 1790s is worth considering in relation to the Royal Navy. Langford sees a “debasement of gentility”²⁸ as the surest sign of social transformation, offering the observations of one contemporary as proof of the new mobility: “everyone is flying from his inferiors, in pursuit of his superiors who fly from Him with equal alacrity.”²⁹

Harold Perkin adopts an economic argument to explain the shift in English society that took place during the growth years of the Industrial Revolution, between 1800 and 1832. The birth of a “class society” during this period is attributed to the breakdown of the *ancien régime* – a breakdown caused by new economic conflicts which had begun to reshape the power elites.³⁰ Perkin’s sense of an emerging class consciousness in the first

²⁶ Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 402-03.

²⁷ Langford, *Polite*, p. 679.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

²⁹ Soame Jenyns quoted in Langford, *Polite*, p. 67.

³⁰ Perkin, *Origins*, p. 177. James Walvin also explores the impact of economic recession in the post-war years after 1815 and its effect on the development of class consciousness and early forms of class conflict represented by the Anti Corn Law League and the Chartist. James Walvin, *English Urban Life, 1776-1851*, (London, 1984).

decade of the nineteenth century echoes the impressions of a number of contemporary commentators on the progress of naval society and is useful in establishing a time line in the development of a new social mentality, both within the Royal Navy and society at large.

The theories proposed by these social historians will be considered in relation to the civil developments that impacted the Royal Navy and its attitudes towards recruitment and the junior officer corps.

b. *Youth, education, and masculinity*

As the majority of the candidates surveyed in this study were aged between thirteen and twenty-two, issues surrounding the problems of youth were pressing concerns for the Royal Navy.³¹ Individual captains and the administration ashore became responsible for the personal and professional development of recruits, the supervision of boys as they transitioned into manhood, and the attendant problems associated with education and discipline. The ways in which these responsibilities were managed are important aspects of this study as it relates to the influence of wider cultural factors which shaped the corps of officer aspirants.

The specific arrangements of naval recruitment rendered its example only marginally different from the experience faced by youth ashore. Quarterdeck recruits were separated from family and friends at an early age and thrust into a formalized environment in which they were placed at the lowest levels of the authoritarian structure.³² The

³¹ Broad sociological terminology for members of this age group suggests that “adolescence” refers to the years “around puberty, in the early and mid teens while youth denotes people in their mid teens . . .” to their mid twenties, I. K. Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (New Haven, 1994), p. 9.

³² This same pattern is identified in the gentry’s propensity to send boys away to boarding school at an early age as a means of separating them from the “apron strings” and forcing them to take a “first step on the road to manhood” see Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (New Haven, 1995), pp. 297-98. It is also applicable to the middle and working-class apprentices who were sent to live

ambiguities of a young gentleman's professional situation, discussed in Section 3 of this chapter, to a large extent reflected the vagaries of youth itself – as a fleeting state in which the capacity for responsibility was uncertain.³³ Giovanni Levi and Jean Claude Schmitt have addressed the process of transitioning from childhood to adulthood, while Philippe Ariès's model of a rapid evolution between the two, is well-suited to the naval model.³⁴

I. K. Ben-Amos addresses the substitution of the naval-military structure for the paternalistic family structure,³⁵ while Sabina Lorgia explores the link between the army officer trainee and the apprentice.³⁶ The young gentleman's condition, which granted him the status of an officer and a gentleman, highlighted the need to provide trainees with an education that went beyond the manual skills of a seaman.³⁷

Henry Dickinson's *Educating the Royal Navy*, addresses such issues in the context of the navy's rather limited educational resources. He also revisits the work of F. B. Sullivan, J. H. Thomas, and Daniel Baugh, concluding that the quality of the Naval Academy (and later, the Royal Naval College) and its graduates were far better than

with their masters, see Richard Aldrich, "Apprenticeship in England: An Historical Perspective," in *Lessons from History of Education: the Selected Works of Richard Aldrich* (New York, 1997), pp. 195-98.

³³ Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *A History of Young People in the West*, trans. Camille Naish (Cambridge, MA, 1997), p. 2.

³⁴ Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, R. Baldick trans. (New York, 1962), p. 411. The naval model is also applicable to sociological theories that suggest a certain amount of autonomy and responsibility was placed in the hands of young men embarking on careers, see Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 8.

³⁵ Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 8.

³⁶ Sabina Lorgia, "The Military Experience," in *A History of Young People in the West*, ed. Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt (Cambridge, MA, 1997), pp. 11, 26. Like other apprentices, the young gentleman began his training in adolescence; he learned his dual crafts of leadership and seamanship under the supervision of experts; he was often, though not always, bound to a particular captain, at least in the early years as a servant or volunteer; and he was required to undergo six years of service before being eligible to take the next step toward commissioned rank. For a description of the characteristics of apprenticeship also see Aldrich, "Apprenticeship in England," pp. 195-98; and Joan Lane, *Apprenticeship in England, 1600-1914* (London, 1996), pp. 13-18.

³⁷ For discussions on the relationship between social status and education see Rosemary O'Day, *Education and Society, 1500-1800: The Social Foundations of Education in Early-Modern Britain* (London, 1982); Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900," in *Past and Present* (1969): pp. 69-139; M. V. Wallbank, "Eighteenth Century Public Schools and the Education of the Governing Elite," in *History of Education*, 8 (1979): pp. 1-19.

previously thought. Dickinson also suggests that conditions at the school were no worse than those at contemporary public schools.³⁸ The formula for a Naval Academy was based on the French *écoles de la marine*, which also became a model for the Danish and Spanish equivalents.³⁹ A full discussion of the argument is presented in Chapter Four alongside a summary of the development of the Admiralty's first educational facility.

The development of a masculine ideal⁴⁰ through the school or the shipboard system of education and training was seen,

as a process of eliminating childishness and working, against the grain of youthful indolence, to produce men with a particular style of body, mind and character, men able effectively to head the social and gender order.⁴¹

The education of aspiring officers was also related to issues of “discipline”; both in the eighteenth-century sense of the word as a formative exercise, and in the more modern sense of punishment or correction.⁴² The relationship between youth and rebelliousness has been thoroughly documented in the social histories of Britain and her continental

³⁸ H. W. Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy: eighteenth and nineteenth-century education for officers* (London, 2007), pp. 43-44. Also see F. B. Sullivan, "The Royal Academy at Portsmouth, 1729-1806," in *Mariner's Mirror*, 63 (1977): pp. 311-26. The details of the curriculum and a comparison to the public school situation are presented in Chapter Four, Section 1.

³⁹ Vergé Franceschi, *Marine et Education*, p. 66; Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, p. 36; Seerup, "Danish Naval Academy," p. 328; Arroyo, "Las Enseñanzas de Náutica," p. 11. Arroyo notes that one of the main stumbling blocks for an academy devoted to scientific education and the training of navigational specialists was Spain's official reluctance to accept Copernican theory, which the mathematics masters were not authorized to teach until 1735, *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁰ For sea officers the masculine ideal underwent subtle changes during the period covered in this study. These changes tended to align with wider civil attitudes which, by the last decades of the eighteenth century, had moved away from aristocratic models associated with foppery and indolence, towards more middle-class virtues of industry, physical strength, and courage. See Rodger, "Honour and Duty," p. 443; Langford, *Polite*, p. 576.

⁴¹ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, p. 306. Also see Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity: Gender, Politics, and Poetics in the Writings of Burke, Coleridge, Cobbett, Wordsworth, De Quincey and Hazlitt* (London, 1999), p. 7.

⁴² The *OED* (2008) gives an eighteenth-century definition as: “a system or method for the maintenance of order.” Modern uses of “discipline” also refer to a code of behavior marked by obedience to formal moral and professional structures, as well as a form of punishment. Like their shore-based, public-school contemporaries, young gentlemen endured a variety of corporal punishments for their indiscretions which not only presented a means controlling rebelliousness, but were also thought to invest young leaders with the “fortitude and courage” necessary for their development, as “taking the birch like a man was part of learning to be a man,” see Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, p. 307. Also see Richard Ollard, *An English Education: A Perspective on Eton* (Berkeley, 1982), pp. 38-39.

neighbors.⁴³ According to Paul Griffiths, the “problem of youth” was a “problem of authority and socialization.”⁴⁴ John Byrn’s *Naval Courts Martial and Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy* touch briefly on the subject of young gentlemen who overstepped the bounds of naval authority, although no detailed account of their crimes or the causes that lay behind them is given. A survey of courts martial records relating to the crimes and punishments of young gentlemen is offered in Chapters Seven and Eleven as a means of identifying and quantifying the professional and social struggles faced by aspiring officers.

The relationship between civil and naval attitudes towards social status, masculinity, education, and the indiscipline of young gentlemen is examined in terms of the data presented in Parts II and III of this study.

⁴³ For a discussion of rebellious youth in England see Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, pp. 14-17; in France see Sergio Luzzatto, "Young Rebels and Revolutionaries," in *A History of Youth*, ed. Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt, pp. 175, 179-182; in Germany and Central Europe see Michael Mitterauer, *A History of Youth*, trans. Graeme Dunphy (London, 1992).

⁴⁴ Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996), p. 17.

Chapter Four: A brief history of Midshipmen and Quarterdeck Boys: recruitment and professional life, 1660 to the 1790s.

1. Naval traditions and the young gentleman, an historical summary

a. *The young gentleman conceived*

The restoration of Charles II concluded a period of political upheaval that saw a transition from Protectorate to Parliament (whose control was interrupted by a brief military *coup d'état*), and then to monarchy. The naval impetus behind these transitions highlighted the importance of England's wooden walls as a determining force in the political future of the country.¹ Charles II recognized the potential danger in such a force, particularly one officered by his former enemies,² and sought a way to introduce loyal, Royalist captains without destroying the professionalism and effectiveness of the service.³ His replacement of experienced "tarpaulin" captains with inexperienced but loyal "gentlemen" commanders gave rise to the infamous, if over-blown, conflict between the two socially and politically-diverse groups.⁴ The debate over political affiliations and

¹ Rodger, *Command*, pp. 30-31.

² Capp notes that the Commonwealth navy of 1649-1653 listed only twenty captains (of about three hundred) whose origins could be traced to the landed gentry and that, even then, the links were "tenuous." The recruitment of captains in the Interregnum Navy depended on equally rigorous religious and political affinities and, as a result, the majority of appointments fell to merchant shipmasters; often affluent, professional seamen, loyal to the new regime, and to men who rose from within the navy, having learned their craft as warrant or petty officers. The result was a strong showing of career or "tarpaulin" captains. See Bernard Capp, *Cromwell's Navy: The Fleet and the English Revolution, 1648-1660* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 164, 171, 176, 155; and J. D. Davies, *Gentlemen and Tarpaulins, the Officers and Men of the Restoration Navy* (Oxford, 1991), p. 5.

³ The majority of Charles's new naval appointments were aristocrats and high-ranking gentlemen whose allegiance to king and country was a natural product of their birth and social rank. The purge of interregnum captains and the introduction of Cavalier commanders began immediately after Charles's restoration. Capp notes that between 1661 and 1663, 91 of the captains who received commissions were Royalist "newcomers," compared to only thirty-eight Commonwealth officers. Capp, *Cromwell's Navy*, p. 376.

⁴ Davies suggests that both before and after the Second Dutch War "the gentleman-tarpaulin issue was essentially political, a question of the relative balance of royalist and republican elements in the navy." Nicholas Rodger goes further to suggest that the struggle became more about professional jealousies rather than social "class-wars," after the earlier political tensions had dissipated. This theory offers an explanation

social status as they related to the creation of effective naval officers became a major concern for the Crown and for naval administrators including Samuel Pepys who, like many other republican legacies, found a home in Charles II's administration.⁵ J. D. Davies notes Pepys's "almost obsessional antagonism" towards gentleman captains, a bias that persisted despite the changing nature of the gentleman-tarpaulin relationship.⁶

i. The volunteer per order

No matter what political or social concerns the debate involved, the Crown recognized the need for a long-term plan of reform, one that would safeguard both the professionalism and the political loyalty of the navy. In 1661 Charles targeted the source of the problem: a dearth of noble or genteel boys being raised as sea officers. General wisdom agreed that the best captains were those who went to sea young and learned their profession from the "ground" up. In 1683 Pepys made clear his belief in the need for an early start to a naval career:

Sir W. Booth and Mr Sheres do agree with me that gentlemen ought to be brought into the Navy, as being men that are more sensible of honour than a man of meaner birth . . . but then they ought to be brought up by times at sea . . .⁷

It was an opinion shared by the Crown and inspired changes at the most junior level of the command structure – entry-level recruitment. The development of a new rating, the

for the persistence of the gentlemen-tarpaulin debate which "long outlived the real problem in the Navy," Rodger, *Command*, pp. 113, 115, 117; also see Davies, *Gentlemen*, p. 35.

⁵ Charles II appointed Pepys, Clerk of the Acts on July 13, 1660, s.v. "Samuel Pepys," *ODNB* (2004).

⁶ Subsequent to the initial purge, the second Dutch war inspired a recall of experienced Interregnum officers who dominated the fleet between 1664 and 1667. After 1667 the situation changed once again due in part "to deaths of many old [Commonwealth] captains and their patrons," including Monck, Mountague, and Penn, and in part to the replacement of Sir William Coventry, secretary to the Lord High Admiral, with Matthew Wren, who supported the appointment of gentlemen officers. By the 1680s the focus of the gentlemen-tarpaulin debate had shifted to points of honor and manners. Differentiations were made between tarpaulins who came from the merchant service and those who were raised from the ranks of warrant officers, and the degree of personal and professional honor each brought to the management of a warship. Social concerns often centered on outward displays of gentility, from dress to forms of speech, with much personal criticism aimed at the roughness of tarpaulin captains. See Davies, *Gentlemen*, pp. 35-36, 16-37, 63.

⁷ "Notes General of the Navy, etc.," August 1, 1683 in Edwin Chappell, ed., *The Tangier Papers of Samuel Pepys*, Navy Records Society, vol. 73 (London, 1935), p. 122.

“volunteer per order,”⁸ was designed “to give encouragement to such young gentlemen as are willing to apply themselves to the learning of navigation, and fitting themselves for the service of the sea.”⁹ The Crown’s goal was to mitigate the problem of high-birth *or* skill, by investing young men of high birth *with* naval skill, and raising a new breed of politically-loyal and gentlemanly career officers. Initially the numbers of volunteers were small with 3rd rate ships allowed four volunteers per order; 4th rates, three volunteers; 5th rates, two volunteers; and 6th rates, only one. A volunteer was budgeted at £24 per annum including his allowance for victuals, although it was left up to individual captains to decide whether they would “take the 24*l.* and victual the volunteers at his own table, or leave them to diet themselves out of it.”¹⁰ By 1676 an age limit of sixteen was set for new volunteers per order who entered under the patronage of the king and therefore, came to be known as “King’s Letter Boys.”¹¹ Royal sponsorship imbued the volunteers with a substantial amount of social status which, it was hoped, might inspire “families of the better quality . . . to breed up their younger sons to the art and practice of navigation . . .”¹² Rodger points out that, “This was strong language for contemporaries. An ‘art or practice’ referred to the mechanical skill of a craftsman, or the acquired abilities of a middle-class professional.”¹³ As such, the volunteer per order was antithetical to the whole notion of what made a gentleman a gentleman.¹⁴ If, however, the crown was to maintain an effective

⁸ “Royal Proclamation,” May 8, 1676 in John B. Hattendorf, R. J. B. Knight, A. W. H. Pearsall, N. A. M. Rodger, Geoffrey Till, eds., *British Naval Documents (BND), 1204-1960*, Navy Records Society, vol. 131 (London, 1993), p. 283.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ J. R. Tanner, “The Administration of the Navy from the Restoration to the Revolution, 1679-1688. Part III,” in *The English Historical Review*, 14 (April, 1899): p. 279. The numbers of volunteers allowed to captains increased soon after this initial ruling.

¹¹ “The institution of the ‘King’s Letter Boys’, 1661,” in Hattendorf, *BND*, p. 283; Rodger, *Command*, p. 121.

¹² Tanner, “Administration,” p. 279. See “Naval Precedents,” p. 156 in TNA: PRO, ADM 2/1740, “Precedent Books 1660-1684”; also see “Royal Proclamation ,” May 8, 1767 in Hattendorf, *BND*, p. 293.

¹³ Rodger, *Command*, p. 121.

¹⁴ Elias, “Genesis,” p. 294.

navy, commanded by professional and preferably genteel captains, such old-order paradigms would have to shift. The volunteer per order was also a calculated move to elevate the status of a naval career, bring prestige to the service, and to unite the navy and the crown by capitalizing on the tacit loyalty of a socially-elite corps of future officers. Yet, the conflict inherent in the creation of a “professional gentleman” also proved persistent, affecting Admiralty policy throughout last quarter of the seventeenth century, and spurring arguments over the effects of social elitism on naval quarterdecks well into the nineteenth century.

The volunteer designation provided an alternative to the traditional system of patronage by which captains alone selected boys to go to sea as their “servants,” or protégés, with the express purpose of grooming them for commissioned rank.¹⁵ The only other route to the quarterdeck also lay within the control of a ship’s captain. The decision to raise a competent lower-deck man to a midshipman’s rating was often based on a captain’s personal opinion of the seaman and his belief in the man’s ability to become a diligent officer.

While the volunteer per order was intended to eventually become the only avenue to commissioned rank (a position upheld by the Admiralty from 1677 until 1701),¹⁶ the weight of tradition proved an immovable force as the captains’ servant system of entry continued to flourish, largely due to the fact that it served the interests of all involved.

¹⁵ It appears, however, that captains oversaw a two-tiered system of servants’ entry. The first was designed for gentlemen-officer candidates while the second existed for boys who would become “tarpaulin officers,” that is masters, lieutenants, and possibly commanders of smaller vessels such as ketches and fireships. Davies, *Gentlemen*, p. 61. This second-tier entry accounted for the Admiralty’s 1662 regulation which created a formal apprenticeship for captains’ servants who entered at age nine or ten and were indentured for a full seven years, rather than recruited season by season as the service demanded, *ibid.*, p. 16. This system of apprenticeship was short-lived, and collapsed altogether in 1689 with the accession of a monarch who took little interest in the career development of sea officers, Rodger, *Command*, pp. 204-05.

¹⁶ R. D. Merriman, ed., *Queen Anne’s Navy: Documents Concerning the Administration of the Navy of Queen Anne, 1702-1714*, Navy Records Society, vol. 103 (London, 1961), p. 311.

Recruits obtained a valuable placement from which to learn the profession of a sea officer, and make important professional contacts and alliances. Captains benefitted from exercising their powers of patronage; making or cementing social and/or political associations as they raised loyal followings of skilled young officers. The maintenance of servants also provided a boost to a captains' income as he retained the servants' allowance as "fee" for his professional supervision and training.¹⁷ Profits could be increased if a captain colluded with the recruit to enter his name in the muster as a lower-deck rating. This obviated the limits of the servant quota and allowed a captain to split the extra pay with his new "able seaman." A letter dated July 28, 1695 from Robert Wilkins, Muster Master for the Mediterranean Fleet, outlined the various methods of corruption involving captains' and officers' servants, including the entering of young gentlemen as

‘Ordinary’ and ‘Able’ . . . and suffering them to receive their own wages . . . when they are under private obligations with the officers for half [their] pay. And though I know this is no new thing, yet ‘tis now more practicable than ever.¹⁸

The increased frequency of such underhanded practices was likely a reaction to the reductions, made by the Admiralty in 1693, to the number of servants a captain was allowed to keep.¹⁹ The cuts not only reduced a captain's salary but curtailed his ability to exercise patronage. It is possible that heightened levels of abuse after 1693 were responsible for the Admiralty revising its position on servants. An Order in Council of April 18, 1700 raised the allocation, allowing captains "four Servants in every one hundred

¹⁷ This presented captains with the equivalent of an "apprentice premium," see Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, *Children in English Society: From Tudor Times to the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London 1969), p. 224; also see Lane, *Apprenticeship in England*, pp. 10, 13-18. For parallels to the shore-based apprenticeship system see Lorgia, "The Military Experience," p. 26; and Aldrich, "Apprenticeship in England," pp. 195-98.

¹⁸ Robert Wilkins, Muster Master with the Fleet in the Mediterranean, to the Navy Board, July 28, 1695 in R. D. Merriman, ed., *The Sergison Papers*, Navy Records Society, vol. 89 (London, 1950), p. 325.

¹⁹ After steady increases in their numbers, the ruling of February 14, 1693 directed that captains of 1st and 2nd rates may have six servants; captains of 3rd and 4th rates, five servants; and captains of 5th and 6th rates, four servants. Admiralty to King's Council, February 14, 1693 in *ibid.*, p. 269.

men,”²⁰ thereby enabling the captain of a 1st rate, with a complement of seven to eight hundred men, to appoint between twenty-eight and thirty-two servants. In addition, commissioned and warrant officers, as well as midshipmen, were allowed one servant each. Boatswains, gunners, and carpenters were allowed two.

From 1700 to 1794, the servant regulation remained unchanged and presented captains with a welcome supplement to their salaries, the potential to develop a vast following, and numerous opportunities to exercise their recruiting prerogatives. Such prerogatives were in fact, the source of much of captain’s social and professional power, granting him the ability to wield patronage and, in turn, become the beneficiary of it. The introduction of the volunteer per order undoubtedly raised concerns among captains over the Admiralty’s intrusion upon their time-honored “power of nomination.”²¹ The volunteer system in fact represented the Admiralty’s first attempt to centralize the appointment process as a means of controlling both the pace and the social quality of officer entry. The introduction of the King’s Letter Boy sought to replace naval patronage with political patronage – an effort that sparked more than one hundred and fifty years of quiet struggle for control of young gentlemen’s appointments.

ii. The midshipman

The origin of the midshipman’s rating is obscure, with some reports of “midschipmen” dating back as far as the mid-fourteenth century.²² The application of the term in a modern sense, for a “working petty officer in big ships,” was in use by the

²⁰ HC 1700 VI, p. 9.

²¹ Lewis coined this term to describe a captain’s monopolistic power over recruitment, Lewis, *Transition*, p. 100.

²² Geoffrey Penn, *Snotty: The Story of the Midshipman* (London, 1957), p. 1. It is understood that Penn’s scholarship is less than rigorous in most cases and is therefore used cautiously.

1630s,²³ and throughout the 1660s and 1670s the rating of “midshipman” was generally filled by an experienced seaman – someone who might aspire to a warrant officer’s rating, but not to commissioned rank.²⁴ In 1686, the number of midshipmen was limited in different rates of ship:

Table 2.1 Number of Midshipmen Permitted by Rate, 1686

<u>Rate</u>	<u>No. of Midshipmen</u>
1 st	18
2 nd	14
3 rd	10
4 th	7
5 th & 6 th	2-3
Yachts	1

Source: Tanner, “Administration,” p. 274.

With the new volunteer per order system, and the need to qualify these young gentlemen as seaman on their way to commissioned rank, the meaning of the midshipman’s rating diversified so that several different types of midshipmen could be active aboard any given ship. The first type was the well-born young gentleman who, having completed his two years as a volunteer per order, was engaged in his third year of training as a midshipman. The second type was the captain’s (or officer’s) servant who, having entered under the patronage of a commissioned officer, had completed his two years of basic seamanship in the rating of servant, or another entry-level rating. The third category of midshipman represented those who rose from the lower deck on merit alone and whose highest aspiration was that of warrant officer. The fourth variation was the

²³ N. A. M. Rodger, *The Safeguard of the Sea: A Naval History of Britain, 660-1649* (New York, 1998), p. 406.

²⁴ Merriman, *Queen Anne’s Navy*, p. 311.

midshipman ordinary. This classification referred to a “former volunteer per order or volunteer of the Royal Naval Academy, borne as a midshipman additional to complement.”²⁵ A midshipman ordinary took “the place and pay of an able seaman, but [was] otherwise rated as a supernumerary midshipman.”²⁶ The regulations of 1701 allowed the following number of midshipmen ordinary aboard various rates in conditions of war and peace:

Table 2.2 Number of Midshipmen Ordinary Permitted by Rate, 1701

Rate	Total no. of Midshipmen Ordinary Permitted (in war)	Total no. Midshipmen Ordinary Permitted (in peace)	No. of Midshipmen Ord. from Volunteers Permitted (commissioned officer candidates)
3 rd	16	12	4
4 th	10	8	3
5 th	6	4	2
6 th	2	2	1

Source: “Letter from the Admiralty to the Navy Board,” August 5, 1701 printed in Merriman, *Queen Anne’s Navy*, p. 318.

A fifth and final incarnation of the midshipman appeared on May 4, 1676, when the new rating of “midshipman extraordinary” was formalized in order to “provide employment for ex-commanders or lieutenants,” by carrying them “over and above the ordinary complement established for the ship in which they sailed.”²⁷ Originally referred to as “reformadoes,”²⁸ the position of midshipman extraordinary was available only to officers whose records were clear of “any misdemeanor or failure of duty” in their

²⁵ Rodger, *Command*, p. 759

²⁶ Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 25.

²⁷ Tanner, “Administration,” p. 279.

²⁸ Merriman, *Queen Anne’s Navy*, p. 312. In this context meant “reformado” meant “disbanded” or “paid-off”.

previous command.”²⁹ Only a limited number of openings for midshipmen extraordinary were ever available,³⁰ and made for serious competition among unemployed officers.

Confusion over the various ratings and the social and professional qualities they represented, provided a source of controversy within naval administration. The stigma associated with the rating of “midshipman,” a working petty officer or, in other words, a glorified seaman, stymied Admiralty decision-making regarding the requirements that allowed a young gentleman to qualify for a lieutenancy. The decision to institute an examination for lieutenants wavered on this particular issue. Pepys’s record of the meeting, which took place on December 1, 1677 notes the nature of the controversy:

obliging every person pretending to a lieutenancy to have actually served one year in the quality and perform(ed) the duty of an ordinary midshipman . . . [was] judged by some to be a service beneath the quality of a gentleman to go through . . .³¹

Although the minutes note the presence of a number of Admiralty Board members and a group of unnamed “navy officers,” it is unclear as to who stood on what side of the argument.³² The decision was postponed for a week with the same group reconvening in the presence of the king on December 8. Pepys submitted their recommendations to a body of experts made up of sea officers, representing both gentlemen and tarpaulins who

unanimously resolved . . . that whoever hereafter would be thought capable of being a lieutenant should, among his other qualifications, be able to shew that he had actually served one year and done the duty of an ordinary midshipman . . .³³

²⁹ Applicants were also required to present a certificate signed by their previous captain, lieutenant, *and* master attesting to their “civil and sober behavior and obedience to command.” The submission of a “perfect journal, fairly written, kept and signed by himself . . .,” upped the ante for candidates, Tanner, “Administration,” p. 280.

³⁰ Note: 3rd rate ships were allowed three midshipmen extraordinary, 4th rates allowed two, and 5th and 6th rates only one each, *ibid.*, p. 279.

³¹ “Admiralty Journal,” December 1, 1677 in J. R. Tanner, ed., *A Descriptive Catalogue of The Naval Manuscripts in the Pepysian Library (CPM)*, 4 vols., vol. 4 (London, 1923), p. 536.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 534. Present at the meeting with Pepys were: Prince Rupert; the Earl of Danby, Lord Treasurer; the Earl of Anglesey, Lord Privy Seal; Lord Ossory; George Carteret, Vice-Chamberlain; the Secretaries of State, Henry Coventry (Southern), and Joseph Williamson (Northern); as well as non-board members, Baron Ashley, Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Craven; and unnamed “Navy Officers.”

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 544.

The fact that the matter was “unanimously resolved” by any group of commanders from such diverse social and political backgrounds³⁴ suggests that a real problem existed in the professional development of young officers and that drastic action needed to be taken to vet the professional qualifications of would-be lieutenants.

iii. The examination for lieutenant

The examination for lieutenant was made official later in December 1677.

Qualifying standards for the examination required applicants to have passed three years at sea, with one of those years rated midshipman.³⁵ Examinations would be conducted by “flag-officers or half-pay commanders,” that is commanders of 1st and 2nd rate ships. Part of the original debate among the Lords Commissioners earlier in the month centered on whether examinations should involve the masters of Trinity House; although the Admiralty board agreed it would constitute “a diminution to the honour of lieutenants to be submitted to the examination of any but the King’s own commanders.”³⁶ Rodger notes the controversial nature of the decision as the “concept of a qualifying examination, [was] extremely rare” in the seventeenth century. Despite this, “the desirability of qualifying service and an examination from the Navy’s point of view was taken for granted.”³⁷ The unanimity of the decision supports the idea that Pepys was not necessarily off-base in his concern for the “the general incompetence and dullness of our lieutenants of ships” who:

³⁴ The “Officers of the Navy” and “principal commanders of the fleet” who met to debate the issue on December 8, 1677 included: Sir Thomas Allin, Sir John Tippetts, Sir Richard Haddock, Sir Anthony Deane, Mr. Thomas Hayter, Clerk of the Acts, Capt. George Legge, Capt. Arthur Herbert, Capt. Sir Roger Strickland, Capt. Gunman, Capt. William Davies, Capt. Sir John Berry, Capt. Sir John Wetwang, Capt. Willshaw, and Capt. Sanderson. These men represented a fairly even split between gentlemen and tarpaulins, although the majority were either Cavalier officers or post-1660 appointments, *ibid.*, p. 544.

³⁵ Order in Council of December 1677 quoted in Merriman, *Queen Anne’s Navy*, p. 317.

³⁶ Tanner, *CPM*, Vol. 4, p. 536.

³⁷ Rodger, *Command*, p. 121.

for the most part, made out of volunteers, who having passed some time superficially at sea, and being related to families of interest at Court, do obtain lieutenancies before they are fitted for it.³⁸

The theory that Pepys single-handedly authored and instituted the examination in pursuit of the Republican ideal of “advancement by merit” falters, however, when the magnitude of the new regulation is considered. The political climate of the day suggested that: “No decision of such political sensitivity could possibly have been taken by a civil servant alone . . . the chairman was Charles II and the decision had to be his.”³⁹ Charles’s support for the examination served his opinion that even young *gentlemen* must prove their ability as officers, thus safeguarding the effectiveness of the navy. It did not reflect a new, more “democratic” attitude towards advancement in which the best young man for the job, regardless of his connections, got ahead. The focus on social standards for King’s Letter Boys continued to cause problems, in spite of the new checks and balances, and Pepys found fault with the effectiveness of the examination as a tool of professional qualification:

Capt. Dering, they say, was not thought fit upon examination to be a lieutenant, and therefore was advised to take another voyage. Nevertheless he was soon after made a lieutenant and presently after a captain which he is now.⁴⁰

It is also uncertain whether the examination was universally applied to all officer candidates. Pepys noted the circumstances of Francis Wheeler, a protégé of Admiral Herbert, who “in one voyage went out a volunteer, got to be a lieutenant, then a captain . . .”⁴¹ More than a decade later in 1700, Edward Vernon, the son of James Vernon, Secretary of State to William III, entered the service as a volunteer per order under the patronage of Admiral Sir George Rooke. In 1702 he was made lieutenant and

³⁸ Samuel Pepys from Pepysian Manuscripts Admiralty Letters IX, pp. 242-5, quoted in F. B. Sullivan, “The Naval Schoolmaster during the Eighteenth Century and the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *Mariner’s Mirror*, 62 (1976): p. 313

³⁹ Rodger, *Command*, p. 121.

⁴⁰ Notes General of the Navy, etc.,” August 1, 1683 in Chappell, *Tangier Papers*, pp. 131, 118.

⁴¹ “Notes General of the Navy, etc.,” October 17, 1683 in *ibid.*, p. 145.

three years later, was given command of the frigate *Dolphin*. There is no record of Vernon sitting or passing the examination, which he was technically unqualified to take, being at least a year shy of the minimum sea-time required.⁴² Even in 1740, George Brydges Rodney appeared to make the transition from midshipman to lieutenant without sitting the examination. Considering the rapid pace of Rodney's promotion, in which he skipped the rank of master and commander and was promoted directly to post captain on April 4, 1743, it is possible that the influence of his patron, the Duke of Chandos, was instrumental in waiving the formalities of the examination.⁴³ In these particular cases, bending the rules did nothing to harm the effectiveness of the service as each young officer went on to distinguish himself at the highest levels of command.⁴⁴

The zeal with which Charles, and James II as his successor, set about refashioning the officer corps as a professional *and* social elite, did not continue under William and Mary's regime. Without the explicit backing of the sovereign, the value of a "King's Letter" declined and many well-born young men turned to naval patrons, who entered them as captains' servants, or followed other pursuits altogether. The immediate effect of this shift in patronage was to reinforce the influence of captains and admirals, a move that "effectively ended any hope of making the officer corps socially exclusive."⁴⁵ In 1701 the

⁴² B. McL. Ranft, ed., *The Vernon Papers*, Navy Records Society, vol. 99 (London, 1958), pp. 3-4; Bruno Pappalardo, *Royal Navy Lieutenants' Passing Certificates, 1691-1902*, 2 vols., vol. 2, List and Index Society, vol. 290 (Chippenham, 2001), p. 521.

⁴³ David Syrett, ed., *The Rodney Papers: Selections from the Correspondence of Admiral Lord Rodney, 1742-1763*, 2 vols., vol. 1, Navy Records Society, vol. 148 (London, 2005), pp. 7-9; Pappalardo, *Passing Certificates*, Vol. 2, p. 435. Gaps occur in the records for lieutenants' passing certificates at this time, making it impossible to confirm Rodney's avoidance of the examination with any certainty.

⁴⁴ Wheeler served as a captain in Herbert's Mediterranean fleet in the 1680s, Vernon became Admiral and commander in chief of the North Sea Fleet in 1745, and Rodney became an Admiral and an MP, distinguishing himself at the Battle of the Saintes in 1782. Unfortunately it is difficult, if not impossible, to learn the fates of those officers who managed to avoid the examination but did not go on to distinguish themselves in the navy. It is only by virtue of the fact that the cases cited above were particularly famous (or, in the case of Rodney, notorious) that the circumstances of their rise within the service have been recorded and preserved.

⁴⁵ Rodger, *Command*, p. 205.

Admiralty sent instructions to the Navy Board, officially revising their exclusionary policies that allowed only those who had entered as volunteers to sit the examination for lieutenant.

Whereas it hath been customary in the Navy to grant to such persons only, as have served two years as volunteer and one as midshipman . . . letters to be examined by your Board . . . [it] has been a very great discouragement to such persons as have not acted as volunteers . . . but nevertheless served many years as mates and midshipmen, and in every respect qualified themselves to perform the duty of lieutenant . . .⁴⁶

In practice, many had been admitted to the exam who had not been King's Letter Boys, and this memorandum can be seen as a formal acknowledgement of the real state of recruitment in the new century, which saw officers drawn from all ranks of society. By 1711 more than half of flag officers hailed from humble origins or, in the case of Sir John Jennings, poverty stricken circumstances.⁴⁷ Understandably, the sympathies of admirals, who had achieved their rank through ability and merit, did not necessarily lie with privileged young noblemen or gentlemen seeking adventure in a naval career. At the same time, captains could scarce ignore the workings of political and social interest in their selection of recruits. The outcome of the return to a system of recruitment based entirely on the patronage of captains and admirals was the perpetuation of a socially-diverse officer corps.

The pursuit of professionalism did, however, lead to more discriminating naval standards being set for junior officers. In 1703 the minimum sea-time needed to qualify for the examination increased from three years to four, and in 1729 it increased again to six

⁴⁶ "Letter from the Admiralty to the Navy Board," January 6, 1701 in Merriman, *Queen Anne's Navy*, p. 319.

⁴⁷ Rodger, *Command*, p. 205. Flag officers active in 1711 included the nobility: the Duke of Grafton, the Marquis of Carmarthen, Lord Berkeley of Stratton, Lord Dursley (Later the Earl of Berkeley); and the not-so-noble: John Benbow, Sir Andrew Mitchell, Sir John Leake, Sir John Jennings, and John Baker.

years, with the minimum age being raised to twenty.⁴⁸ The maintenance of a professional corps of junior officers ready to assume the responsibilities of commissioned rank was, however, subject to recruitment policies that altered with conditions of war and peace. The commencement of hostilities with France in 1743 highlighted a potentially crippling shortage of lieutenants. The six-years-at-sea requirement stipulated that from the date of entry, two years must be spent as a volunteer with another two years spent in the rating of midshipman or master's mate. For the two middle years a prospective officer could float between the ratings of able, ordinary, midshipman, or mate as he learned the craft of a seaman.⁴⁹

In an effort to increase numbers the Admiralty eased its requirements and in March 1745 allowed those with four years of merchant service and only two years of naval service to qualify for the lieutenants' examination. It is likely that standards for the examination were also loosened, for within a year problems began to surface. A letter from the Admiralty Secretary, Thomas Corbett, to the Navy Board chastised its officials for the "frequent informations of gentlemen passing their examination for lieutenants, who are very unfit and incapable to execute that office" for which he urged them "to be more strict and circumstantial in such examinations for the future."⁵⁰ Admiral James Steuart also voiced his concerns for the prevalence of lieutenants in capital ships who were "for the greatest part, very raw, very young officers."⁵¹

The problem appeared to improve only slightly as the century progressed. Rules regarding minimum age and service requirements continued to be overruled by

⁴⁸ Daniel Baugh, ed., *Naval Administration, 1715-1750*, Navy Records Society, vol. 120 (London, 1977), p. 35; Rodger, *Command*, p. 205.

⁴⁹ Baugh, *Administration 1715-1750*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ Admiralty Secretary, Thomas Corbett to the Navy Board, April 7, 1746 in *ibid.*, p. 75.

⁵¹ Admiral James Steuart to the Admiralty Secretary, Thomas Corbett, June 11, 1746 in *ibid.*, p. 75.

connections and influence. The requirement that a boy present a certificate attesting to his six years experience at sea was, in the later part of the century, to be accompanied by a baptismal certificate attesting to his age. Both requirements could, however, be circumvented. The court martial of Captain Isaac Coffin for “disobedience and contempt,” over his objection to three children being appointed lieutenants aboard the *Shrewsbury* in 1782, created a backlash among some senior officers who refused to honor patronage requests that defied the rules safeguarding professionalism.⁵² In 1783 Captain Charles Douglas vehemently opposed Charles Middleton’s requests to make Lord Colvill’s son a lieutenant, citing tougher regulations which emphasized that captains were “to make no lieutenants who have not served their full six years.” Douglas remained adamant noting: “it never was, nor is, in my power to get Mr. Colvill made a lieutenant, nor indeed in anyone’s power.”⁵³ While it may have been easier to flout regulations on foreign stations, which operated far from the watchful eye of the Admiralty,⁵⁴ abuses only served to toughen the resolve of other captains and admirals, who recognized the threat posed to the service by the promotion of inexperienced and ill-equipped young officers.

If the Admiralty had erected a barrier to arbitrary advancement, in the form of the examination, it had also taken a significant step towards centralizing control over a young gentleman’s progress towards commissioned rank. Captains and senior officers no longer

⁵² See notes in John Knox Laughton, ed., *The Letters and Paper of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron, 1758-1813*, 3 vols., vol. 1, Navy Records Society, vol. 32 (London, 1907), p. 286. It is worth noting that Coffin’s case was another instance of Rodney’s attempts to pervert the system of advancement and promotion.

⁵³ Douglas to Charles Middleton, April 23, 1783 in *ibid.*, pp. 285-86. The discussion concerned the Hon. John Colvill, 2nd son of the 8th Lord Colvill of Culross (and nephew of the late Rear-Admiral Alexander, 7th Lord Colvill), who was born in 1768, and eventually received a commission in 1793. By 1796 the younger Colvill was a captain and in 1811 he inherited the title after the death of his elder brother, Lieutenant the Hon. James John (Master of Colvill).

⁵⁴ Admirals and Commanders in Chief (C in C) on foreign stations had the authority to promote young gentlemen to the rank of lieutenant without the need for an examination. The appointment still required confirmation from the Admiralty in England, although appointments were usually accepted. Bruno Pappalardo, *Royal Navy Lieutenants’ Passing Certificates, 1691-1902*, 2 vols., vol. 1, List and Index Society, vol. 289 (Chippenham, UK, 2001), p. xiii.

determined the advancement of young gentlemen, a change that bit deep into their powers of patronage. There were, however, other ways to get around the unregulated system of examination and there is evidence that captains continued to wield their influence on behalf of well-connected boys in the form of sham examinations. While there is little testimonial evidence regarding the content of the examinations during the first half of the eighteenth century, James Anthony Gardner's exam in 1795 proved to be a less-than-harrowing experience. As he recalled, "One of the commissioners (Harmood) was an intimate friend of my father's; and Sir Samuel Marshall, the Deputy Controller of the Navy was a particular friend of Admiral Parry, my mother's uncle." The examination concluded when "Commissioner Harmood, after a few questions had been put to me said, 'I think we need not ask you any more'."⁵⁵ Seven of Vancouver's midshipmen from the *Discovery* (two of whom were his nephews while one was the son of the Earl of Bute) passed their examination in 1795 with ease. According to one nephew, Robert Barrie,

when we appeared before the great men to pass our examination, they tould [sic] us they thought it would be presumption in them to ask any questions so they passed us by wishing us all a speedy promotion.⁵⁶

Some decades later, Basil Hall noted that he knew of one well-connected candidate who was "asked how his father was, and if he would take a glass of wine, after which he was told that he had passed."⁵⁷

For most young gentlemen, however, the examination presented a professional challenge unparalleled in its ability to instill fear and awe in its subjects. John Hamilton Moore devoted a chapter in his *New Practical Navigator* to preparing midshipmen and

⁵⁵ Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 174.

⁵⁶ Robert Barrie to his mother, Mrs. George Clayton, November 6, 1795 quoted in Kaye Lamb, ed., *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Round the World, 1791-1795*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (London: 1984), p. 209. It should be noted that the experience obtained by these young gentlemen during their time with Vancouver certainly qualified them well beyond most of their contemporaries.

⁵⁷ Basil Hall in Penn, *Snotty*, p. 37.

mates for the kind of questions they might encounter during their *viva voce* examinations which, for most of the eighteenth century, were conducted by a panel of three post captains at the Navy Board Office in London.⁵⁸ Moore indicated that young aspirants should be fluent in a variety of skills from knowing how to determine stages in lunar cycles to being versed in emergency procedures such as losing a rudder at sea, or being dismasted in a gale.⁵⁹ Despite having a relative on the examining board,⁶⁰ Nelson described the ordeal as the equivalent of passing “my Degree as a master of Arts,”⁶¹ while William Dillon found himself under the scrutiny of his examiners on the job as well as in the examination room.⁶²

For the vast majority of prospective lieutenants the examination stood as an immovable hurdle on the path to a career as a sea officer. In theory at least, the examination, and the attendant qualifications, reduced issues of birth or ability to the deciding factor of competency, ensuring the navy’s commissioned officers knew their business, regardless of their social status or their manner of entry into the service. The longevity of the lieutenants’ examination attested to its ultimate effectiveness and made it “one of the keys to the long term efficiency of the Navy.”⁶³

⁵⁸ Except for those conducted on foreign stations.

⁵⁹ John Hamilton Moore, *The New Practical Navigator: being an Epitome of Navigation etc.*, 10th edition (London, 1794), pp. 288-306.

⁶⁰ Captain Maurice Suckling, Nelson’s uncle, sat at the head of his examination board, see Thomas Pettigrew, *Memoirs of the Life of Vice-Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London, 1849), p. 6.

⁶¹ Nelson, April 14, 1777 quoted in Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 41. Although there was (and is) no exam involved in obtaining an MA from Oxford or Cambridge, it is safe to assume that Nelson’s point was that the examination was extremely difficult. The comment may also refer to the observation that both the examination and an MA marked a critical step towards senior or adult status in their respective institutions.

⁶² Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 290.

⁶³ Rodger, *Command*, p. 122.

b. *Educating the officer corps: the early years*

i. Learning the ropes

Young gentlemen embarking on a naval career faced two, often distinct, processes of academic education and professional training. Throughout the period of naval reform under Charles II, aspiring officers were expected to come aboard with the rudiments of reading, writing, and if possible, arithmetic. An education that included more advanced mathematics and trigonometry, necessary to the art of navigation, could be learned at specialist schools ashore⁶⁴ or, if a boy were lucky enough to find a ship with a schoolmaster, learned at sea. Boys from more affluent backgrounds might also bring with them elements of a classical education that included Greek, Latin, French, geography, and geometry, subjects which related to the “practical and social accomplishments” of a gentleman.⁶⁵

Training involved the dissemination of skills dealing with the operation of a ship. For the most part these were taught on board in an environment more conducive to learning seamanship. A young gentleman’s knowledge of rigging, his ability to handle sail, and perform the tasks of an able seaman to “splice, knot, and reef a sail,”⁶⁶ was essential to his professional development. The Establishment of 1686 specified that the certificate a volunteer must obtain from the captain, lieutenant, and master of his last ship should specify, in addition to details of his civil, sober, and obedient behavior, a testament to his “having diligently applied himself to the study and practice of the art and duty of a

⁶⁴ Jonas Hanway’s “Maritime School” in Chelsea, founded in 1779 was one of the more respected and operated for more than fifty years. See Penn, *Snotty*, p. 14.

⁶⁵ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, p. 305. These subjects expanded on the constituents of a classical education which consisted of the trivium: grammar, logic, and rhetoric and the quadrivium: astronomy, arithmetic, music, and geometry.

⁶⁶ TNA: PRO, ADM 107/3, “Lieutenants’ Passing Certificate for John Clarke, April 14, 1740,” f. 372.

seaman.”⁶⁷ The importance of learning the ropes, in the manner of a trade apprenticeship, reflected the view of tarpaulin captains and particularly that of Samuel Pepys who, among many of his contemporaries (including Charles II), believed that the only way to become a good officer was for aspirants to: “make themselves masters of it [seamanship], by learning and doing and suffering all things.”⁶⁸

When combined in the right proportions, education and training produced the ideal sea officer – a learned gentleman with solid professional skills. As with most ideals, however, reality often failed to measure up. Admiral Sir Thomas Pye, who was born in 1713 and went to sea at an early age, felt the need to apologize for his scholastic shortcomings. In 1773 he concluded a letter to Lord Sandwich with the excuse,

Give me leave My Lord to make one Observation More and I have Don [sic] – and that is When You peruse Admiral Pye’s Letters you will please not to Scrutinize too close either to the spelng [sic] or to the Grammatical Part as I allow my Self to be no proficient in either, I had the Mortification to be neglected in my education, went to Sea at 14 without any, and a Man of War was my University.⁶⁹

Boys who began their careers at sea at an early age often sacrificed education for on-the-job training, while boys who spent too many years at school might miss out on the practical experience that would make them successful young officers. The need to strike a balance that would satisfy both requirements was a problem that would resurface throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries and give rise to a long debate over the merits of schooling ashore or afloat.

⁶⁷ Tanner, "Administration," p. 280.

⁶⁸ Chappell, *Tangier Papers*, p. 234.

⁶⁹ Admiral Pye to Sandwich, 1773 in G. R. Barnes and J. H. Owens, *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782*, 4 vols., vol. 1, Navy Records Society, vol. 69 (London, 1932), p. 36

ii. The schoolmaster

In the years after 1689, the fall-off in royal influence in the management of recruits only strengthened the almost universal opinion that the best education for a sea officer came from serving aboard an active man-of-war. Here the art of seamanship and the skills of navigation (which separated officers from mariners) could be taught in a practical setting under the watchful eye of the captain. This principle was supported by the fact that in some instances those who taught also *did*. There is evidence that during the last quarter of the seventeenth century, instruction in navigation was given to volunteers by midshipmen. James Nicholson, a midshipman aboard the *Cornwall*, taught mathematics in that ship and others prior to 1701. Thomas Grimbaldstone of Wapping served as midshipman aboard the *King's Fisher* in 1701, where he provided mathematical instruction to the volunteers and servants.⁷⁰ The quality of these midshipmen instructors was, at best, uneven. An anonymously published opinion piece, written by John Arbuthnot in November 1700, drew attention to the haphazard nature of such unregulated training. Arbuthnot's *Essay on the Usefulness of Mathematical Learning in a Letter from a Gentleman* highlighted the effectiveness of French royal policy relating to the "Ordonnance Marine," which required seaport towns to employ professional instructors to teach navigation. The immediate effects of the *Essay* are uncertain; however, Queen Anne's Order in Council of March 14, 1702⁷¹ appeared to address Arbuthnot's concerns and introduced the position of schoolmaster at sea to instruct volunteers in both the theory and the "practick part" of navigation.⁷² Although the term "schoolmaster" would not be

⁷⁰ Trinity House Minutes, 1699-1705, f. 140 quoted in Sulivan, "Schoolmaster," p. 316.

⁷¹ "Order in Council," March 14, 1702 quoted in Sulivan, "Schoolmaster," p. 314. Sulivan introduces the theory that Arbuthnot's *Essay* lit a fire under the Admiralty and spurred the crown's 1702 initiative.

⁷² Note: This Order in Council was enacted at approximately the same time as the establishment of the Royal Danish Naval Academy. Jakob Seerup notes that the Danish Navy also drew its example from the French,

officially coined until the first warrants were issued in 1712, the position demanded that navigation be taught by a holder of a Trinity House Certificate.⁷³ The applicant was also required to present a character reference from a “person of known credit” who could attest to the “sobriety of his life and conversation.”⁷⁴ For his efforts, the navigational “schoolmaster” received a bounty of £20 per annum in addition to the pay of a midshipman ordinary which, in 1702, amounted to £1 4s per lunar month.⁷⁵

Although the new measures attracted a strong initial response,⁷⁶ recent scholarship tends to support the argument that naval schoolmasters were few and far between. The 1712 Order in Council stipulated that 90 schoolmasters were to be employed in the Navy. Yet, in the years immediately following, from 1712 to 1720, the average number employed was only twenty-five and fell away quickly “with 12 of the following 25 years showing schoolmaster appointments in the single figures.”⁷⁷

In 1731 the schoolmaster was officially rated and the stipulations of 1702 were codified into five articles which dealt with issues of competency, qualification, and duties.⁷⁸ The expansion of the schoolmaster’s duties to include the teaching of English and

suggesting the possibility of a wider European interest in the naval training and education. See Seerup, “Danish Naval Academy,” p. 328.

⁷³ Richard Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare, 1650-1830* (Annapolis, 1999), p. 145. Such a certification confirmed that the bearer had been examined and was qualified to “take charges as Master of any of His majesty’s ships” within certain geographical limitations specified on the certificate. (This wording is taken from Lt. James Cook’s certificate dated 29/6/1757 from Trinity House, Deptford), see Sullivan, “Schoolmaster,” p. 315.

⁷⁴ Sullivan, “Schoolmaster,” p. 315.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 315; Penn, *Snotty*, p. 11; for a midshipman’s rate of pay see Appendix E, “Wages and Numbers of Junior Officers and Quarterdeck Boys, 1761, 1797, 1807.”

⁷⁶ F. B. Sullivan shows that sixty-two certificates were issued by Trinity House to aspiring schoolmasters between 1702 and 1705. Sullivan also estimates that Queen Anne’s “bounty” brought between five hundred and six hundred schoolmasters into the service during the course of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Sullivan, “Schoolmaster,” p. 317.

⁷⁷ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 19; Lewis, *Social History*, p. 259. An examination of the Register of Warrants issued for schoolmasters, chaplains, volunteers, and masters-at-arms between 1699 and 1756 shows that 182 schoolmasters received Admiralty warrants, although the nature of the register does not allow an assessment of the fall-off in schoolmaster numbers to be assessed, see TNA: PRO, ADM 6/427.

⁷⁸ The articles addressed his being examined by the master, wardens, and assistants of Trinity House, the submission of character references, the need to be consistent with schooling activities and diligent in his

mathematics (in addition to navigation), reflected an understanding on the part of the Admiralty that young gentlemen required basic literacy and numeracy if they were to be functional as sea officers *and* uphold the appearance of a gentleman.

The new regulations also made schoolmasters answerable to the captain, who had to report back on their competency and diligence before wages could be issued.⁷⁹ While such rigorous monitoring suggested the need to rectify problems of the past (drunkenness and idleness among them), they also suggested that the new-breed schoolmaster took his work seriously if he wanted to survive. Michael Lewis's classification of two types of schoolmaster: the first a barely-literate but ambitious petty officer incapable of providing a solid education, and the second, a "broken-down scholar, all too often a drunkard . . . ,"⁸⁰ fails to represent the entire body of men who, in some cases, were highly competent professionals who devoted their lives to the education of young gentlemen.⁸¹ Dickinson too, finds little support for Lewis's "picture of individuals 'fallen on evil days' or 'in the last stages of disintegration'."⁸² This is not to say that all schoolmasters, or even the majority of them, were first-rate instructors. *Ramblin' Jack's*, Captain John Cremer, who began his sea career in 1708 at the age of eight, shows that he learned little of spelling under a

Tuterer, [who] began his villanies to me always complaining against me that I would not mind my books . . . So Monday mornings was set apart to bring me to the gun called 'Market Day at Plymouth.' This was a weekly punishment and a

work, and his duty to "instruct the volunteers in writing, arithmetic and the study of navigation and in whatsoever may contribute to render them artists in that science." See "The Schoolmaster," Articles I-V, from "Regulations and Instructions for His Majesty's Service at Sea," 1745 edition, in Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 43.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 258.

⁸¹ Samuel Billingsley served as schoolmaster in eleven ships over a period of twenty-five years from 1712 to 1737. Thomas Brown performed his pedagogical duties in seventeen ships over the course of thirty-seven years from 1717 to 1754, while Richard Whithurst and William Rhodes each contributed more than twenty-seven years to the education of volunteers and young seamen during the course of the eighteenth century. Taken from Trinity House records in Sulivan, "Schoolmaster," p. 312.

⁸² Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 21.

Black List called over my past weeks' crimes, which my Tutorer always made out
anuf [enough]; and a Boatswain's Mate to wip me with a Cat of Nine-tailes . . .⁸³

The disciplinary responsibilities associated with educating young gentlemen meant that the situation of schoolmasters, whose rating was equal to the most junior midshipmen, was difficult at best. Their position allowed them no prospects for promotion or advancement⁸⁴ and forced them to live among their students in circumstances that often undermined their authority. Such arrangements doubtless contributed to the widespread disdain young gentlemen held for their schoolmasters.⁸⁵ The dramatic value of memoirs that depicted schoolmasters as paragons of vice also fueled the stereotype, making it difficult to rehabilitate their professional and personal reputations.

Dickinson, however, attempts to do just that, citing the contributions of a number of outstanding individuals whose personal achievements and contributions to their profession were significant.⁸⁶ The biggest problem with schoolmasters was that there were simply not enough to go around. The expansion of the service in the first half of the eighteenth century highlighted the desperate shortage of qualified teachers and hindered the navy's efforts to raise educated young officers. The question of how to impart both the

⁸³ R. Reynell Bellamy, ed., *Ramblin' Jack: the Journal of Captain John Cremer, 1700-1774* (London, 1936), pp. 44-45.

⁸⁴ There was no infrastructure for the promotion of schoolmasters in the Royal Navy, although apprentice warrant officers or midshipmen who received the qualification from Trinity House to teach mathematics could advance in their chosen careers. See: "Letter from the Lord High Admiral to the Navy Board," November 17, 1704 in Merriman, *Queen Anne's Navy*, pp. 323-24. Thomas Humphreys, schoolmaster of the *Alcide* in 1791, notably went on to a lieutenant's commission, see notes Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 19.

⁸⁵ For tales of conflict between young gentlemen and schoolmasters see Bellamy, *Ramblin' Jack*, p. 45; Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 229, Gardner, *Recollections*, pp. xvi-xvii.

⁸⁶ In 1702 William Jones (whom Lewis denigrates as "a poor scholar") passed the Trinity House examination, sailed as schoolmaster with Sir George Rooke at Vigo, established himself as a mathematics teacher in London, and published his *New Compendium of the Whole Art of Navigation*. In 1712 Jones was made a fellow of the Royal Society. John Collier began as a schoolmaster in 1711 and published a plan of learning for navigation at sea in 1729. Joshua Kelly went to sea early in his career then settled ashore opening a mathematical school in Wapping, and publishing a textbook in 1724. John Barrow served aboard the *Salisbury* in 1745 and published his *Navigatio Britannica* in 1750. George Kennedy had a lasting influence on George Brydges Rodney, while Pasco Thomas, who sailed with Anson on his round-the-world voyage, was responsible for instructing Vice-Admiral John Campbell, Vice-Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, and Admiral Augustus Keppel. See Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 19-21.

technical skills necessary to become a seaman and the education needed to be convincing as a gentleman remained a matter of utmost naval concern.

iii. The Naval Academy

The trend towards providing a shore-based education for boys embarking on a career at sea can be traced to Charles II's foundation of Christ's Hospital School for the Navy. Established in 1673 to train "40 poor boys . . . in the art of navigation"⁸⁷ the school recruited underprivileged boys for training as masters, the most senior of warrant officers. Commissioned rank, according the Admiralty and the crown, belonged in the hands of the nobility and the gentry.

The accession of George II in 1727 brought renewed royal interest in the cultivation of gentleman officers. On February 21, 1729 an Order in Council authorized the construction of a school to be built on the grounds of the Portsmouth dockyard. The new Naval Academy was designed to replace the volunteer per order entry system with a shore-based center for inducting recruits.⁸⁸ Daniel Baugh suggests that the Admiralty "probably envisioned that, at length, schoolmasters afloat would disappear and all prospective officers would take three years of academic instruction . . ."⁸⁹ at the Academy. In 1733 the new facility opened with accommodation for up to forty students who were between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. Designed exclusively to instruct the sons of the nobility and gentry, admission required "some considerable proficiency in the Latin Tongue,"⁹⁰ which implied a substantial degree of prior tutoring. Baugh argues that such standards were "not as exclusive as [they] sound," citing that the definition of "gentlemen" in the eighteenth

⁸⁷ Calendar of State Papers: Colonial Series 1675-76, IX, p. 333. Also see Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 25.

⁸⁸ TNA: PRO, ADM 1/5156, "Regulations for the Establishment of the Naval Academy at Portsmouth, 1729 and 1733."

⁸⁹ Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 38.

⁹⁰ TNA: PRO, ADM7/339, ff. 420-30, Art. 3, "Admiralty Memorial to the King in Council, January, 30, 1729;" Sulivan, "Academy," pp. 313-314; and Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 58.

century encompassed a “diffuse body of men.”⁹¹ The expense, however, of acquiring the Latin prerequisite, in addition to any fees,⁹² would have excluded all but the economic, and hence the social, elite.⁹³ Students were also expected to provide, at their own expense, a new Academy uniform each year which consisted of a “set of blue clothes . . . conformable to a pattern suit which will be lodged with the Mathematical Master.”⁹⁴

Classes in mathematics, writing, drawing, navigation, gunnery, fortification, French, fencing, and firearms were supervised by the Commissioner of the dockyard who also served as Governor of the Academy. The curriculum appears to have borrowed liberally from the French model for the education of its *gardes de la marine*,⁹⁵ for which schools were built at Toulon, Rochefort, and Brest during the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The scale of the French effort was, however, far greater with positions for 550 officer trainees between the three schools.⁹⁶

The principle instructor at the Academy was the mathematics master who presided over the majority of the lessons and received a salary of £200 per annum,⁹⁷ a considerable sum designed to attract a high-caliber instructor far beyond the standard naval schoolmaster. The Academy also offered professional benefits along with an education. A

⁹¹ Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 38.

⁹² It is likely that there was a fee associated with attending the Academy although the amount is unspecified in the Admiralty Memorial of January 30, 1729. See ADM 7/339 which outlines the accounting of the school in detail. Neither the Order in Council of February 21, 1729 nor that of July 19, 1733 mention fees. See ADM 1/5156. Dickinson is silent on the issue.

⁹³ Harold Perkin uses Gregory King’s estimates on income distribution in 1688 to show that only 1.2% of families in England and Wales, that is 16,586 families, represented the financial elite from peers through to esquires and gentlemen, see Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 18, 20. Roy Porter notes that roughly 15,000 “landed families,” ranging from baronets earning upward of £1700 per annum to “squires feeling the pinch on as little as £300,” in addition to the peerage, represented the financial and social elite, see Porter, *Society*, p. 66.

⁹⁴ ADM 7/339, ff.423-24, Art. 12; Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 59.

⁹⁵ Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, p. 36. Following suit were the Royal Danish Naval Academy founded in 1701, see Seerup, “Danish Naval Academy,” p. 328; and the Spanish *Real Compañía de Caballeros Guardiamarinas*, see Arroyo, “Las Enseñanzas de Náutica,” p. 10.

⁹⁶ Sullivan, “Academy,” p. 312. The Danish version of the Academy was also larger and more successful than its Royal Navy counterpart. According to Seerup it was a case of “a stagnating Danish navy with a flourishing academy on the one hand, and a dynamic Royal Navy on the other with a stagnating academy.” Seerup, “Danish Naval Academy,” p. 333.

⁹⁷ ADM 7/339, f. 421, Art.1; also see Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 58.

young gentleman's attendance counted as "sea time," and a curriculum followed for the maximum three years substituted for two years at sea, reducing the time a graduate would have to spend afloat before he qualified for the examination for lieutenant.⁹⁸ Depending on a scholar's aptitude, the Academy could provide a fast track to commissioned rank for the privileged few who attended the school. The express purpose of the Academy was to raise crops of aristocratic and gentlemanly young officers, effectively reviving Charles II's goal of socially restructuring command from the ground up, even as it sought to abolish his volunteer per order in favor of a shore-based system of recruitment and education.

The impracticalities of attempting this goal, forty boys at a time, soon became clear, although recent scholarship challenges traditional views of the Academy as an unpopular, poorly-attended bust in which unruly young degenerates ran roughshod over insipid and ineffective masters.⁹⁹ It is, however, true that during the first years of the school's operation attendance fell well below the forty available places. In 1735 enrollment stood at just twenty young gentlemen and throughout the middle years of the eighteenth century attendance averaged only 50 percent.¹⁰⁰

During his tenure as First Lord, Admiral Edward Hawke overhauled the rules of the Academy. In 1767 he demanded stricter oversight on the part of the masters and the Commissioner, imposed harsher codes of punishment, and raised the standard of living for scholars. These higher standards were offset by a £25 fee. Overall the changes were designed to improve the image of the school and attract a greater number of socially-elite students.¹⁰¹ Apparently the initiatives worked, as attendance improved during the 1770s to

⁹⁸ For changes to the sea-time qualification see pp. 88-89. Also see Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 35.

⁹⁹ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, chapter 2.

¹⁰⁰ Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 38; Sullivan, "Academy," p. 320.

¹⁰¹ "Admiralty Rules and Orders for the Academy at Portsmouth, May 2, 1767 in Ruddock Mackay, ed., *The Hawke Papers, A Selection: 1743-1771*, Navy Records Society, vol. 129 (London, 1990), pp. 403-07. Also see TNA: PRO, ADM 1/5168, "Academy Regulations, October 8, 1773."

the point that a number of “high-born and well connected” parents found it difficult to secure places for their sons.¹⁰² The exclusivity and expense of the Academy, coupled with the persistent belief that the best route to command was at sea under the patronage of a successful captain, ensured a small-scale operation. Even at its peak, just prior to closure in 1806, the Academy was never responsible for more than 2 percent of the Royal Navy’s total officer entry.¹⁰³

Another major impediment to the Academy’s early success was its appalling, if undeserved, reputation for indiscipline. Within months of opening, the Commissioner of the Portsmouth dockyard and the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty were embroiled in an inquiry into “the indecent and insolent behavior of the young gentlemen who have been admitted to the Academy.” In protest against the poor quality food being served at the school, the seven scholars present in January 1734 “rioted,” staging an “armed foray into the kitchens.”¹⁰⁴ Just weeks after this uproar, students were again the topic of concern. After escaping the Academy “by stealth” and proceeding to the nearest public house, students embarked on an initiation ceremony in which the new scholar, Mr. Dashwood, was rendered “almost dead drunk” and “like to have been destroyed.”¹⁰⁵ The two ringleaders were expelled for their efforts. Later, in 1776 a more serious incident involving “violent and riotous proceedings” led to the expulsion of three students, although there is evidence to suggest that Commissioner Gambier might have been the source of this

¹⁰² A commissioner’s report made after an inspection of the Academy in 1771 “stated that the upper limit for pupils was in fact 30” not forty. Dickinson suggests that this *de facto* capacity “would help to explain how the academy frequently seemed to be working below capacity while at the same time causing families of prospective pupils to explore the complexities of the patronage system to secure places.” Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 38-39.

¹⁰³ Dickinson shows that from 1775 to 1800 the school operated at its capacity of forty students and that from 1800 to 1806 it exceeded that capacity accommodating fifty-three students in 1801 and fifty-six students in 1803, *ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁰⁴ Sulivan, “Academy,” p. 316.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 317.

particular problem, and that with his departure the student body miraculously settled down.¹⁰⁶ A mundane record of six notable incidents in the Academy's seventy-year history, most of which involved drunkenness and absence without leave,¹⁰⁷ fails to support the impression of the school as a "sink of vice and abomination."¹⁰⁸

It seems unlikely that an Academy of between seven and thirty students could tax the supervisory skills of the three masters and three ushers charged with their care. It is possible that early reports of indiscipline derived from the need for cautious handling of the few students who represented the school's *raison d'être* and therefore the salaries of its employees. It is also possible that criticism of behavioral standards stood proxy for criticism of the institution itself. Naval professionals who opposed the whole notion of theoretical seamanship and those captains and admirals who opposed the Admiralty's attempt to wrest control of the recruitment process, even on a small scale, might well have found the rumors a convenient way to attack the source of their woes. Within the context of the eighteenth-century public school system, the truancy record of the Naval Academy hardly compared to that of Eton, Harrow, and Westminster where students drank, gambled, entertained prostitutes, rioted, and generally terrorized local populations on a regular basis.¹⁰⁹ The "virtual conquest of the public schools by those who attended them"¹¹⁰ at no time characterized the Naval Academy.

¹⁰⁶ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 42-43.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁰⁸ The Earl St. Vincent quoted in Hardin Craig Jr., ed. "The Letters of Lord St. Vincent to Thomas Grenville," in Christopher Lloyd, ed., *Naval Miscellany*, Vol. 4, Navy Records Society, vol. 92 (1952), p. 427. Lord Barham, St. Vincent's successor as First Lord, described the school as "a nursery of vice and immorality," see John Knox Laughton, ed., *The Letters and Paper of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron, 1758-1813*, 3 vols., vol. 3, Navy Records Society, vol. 39 (London, 1911), p. 298. It is likely that St. Vincent, Barham, and other detractors of the Academy drew at least partially on the poor reputation of public schools in general and on the novelist and playwright, Henry Fielding's opinion that: "public schools are the nurseries of all vice and immorality." From "The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews etc," in Henry Fielding, *The Works of Henry Fielding*, new edition (London, 1849), p. 339.

¹⁰⁹ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 44-45; Porter, *Society*, p. 161.

¹¹⁰ Edward C. Mack quoted in Clark, *Society*, p. 224.

At various stages the Academy's academic standards and the effectiveness of its principals also came under attack. In 1742, six scholars appealed to the Admiralty for assistance, complaining that:

The model of the *Victory* is so small, her rigging so slight that we cannot learn anything from it, neither do we know anything of rigging or the stowage of anchors or cables, we are quite ignorant of anything that belongeth to sails.¹¹¹

In fact, the practical side of seamanship was an important part of the curriculum with second and third year students working "twice a week in the dockyard under the direction of the master attendant, master shipwright, and boatswain of the dockyard."¹¹² Training in the art of rigging and ship maintenance complimented the theoretical education which included classes in advanced mathematics and geometry, geography, astronomy, fortification, and gunnery which students catalogued in their "Plan of Learning" notebooks.¹¹³

Other criticisms were leveled at the instructors whose undisputed mathematical qualifications were overshadowed by reports of faculty infighting, disunity, and high turnover. In the Academy's seventy years of operation, however, it saw only five headmasters, a fact that supports arguments for a staff characterized by "diligence, application, and some continuity." Admiralty inspections in 1749, and again in 1771, confirmed both the abilities of the masters and the care with which they managed students.¹¹⁴

Complaints about the standard of living for boys at the Academy also appear ill-founded, particularly when compared to the quality of life at the major public schools. Commissioner Gambier's gripe about the lack of maintenance on the school which, by

¹¹¹ Quoted in Sulivan, "Academy," p. 318.

¹¹² Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 34.

¹¹³ The "Plan of Learning" kept by each student was a "heavy notebook, extensively illustrated and subdivided into the sections of the syllabus" the format of which remained virtually unchanged from the 1750s until the school closed in 1806, *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

1774, had not seen a new coat of paint in decades was backed up by the complaints of one parent who called the Academy “the dirtiest school in England.”¹¹⁵ Accommodations, however, provided each student with a private room or “cabin,” conditions vastly superior to those at Eton, Harrow, and other exclusive schools where boys slept in mass dormitories and where younger students were denied even the privacy of their own bed. As for standards of cleanliness, the Academy represented a significant improvement over Eton where students were forced to share their living quarters with the school’s farmyard animals as a means of heating the frigid hall during winter.¹¹⁶

A reputation for poor quality instruction and even poorer discipline fuelled disdain for the Academy and its graduates among naval professionals. Captain Sir John Phillimore¹¹⁷ refused to accept graduates aboard his ship, while Admiral B. J. Sullivan, an Academy graduate, was told by the captain of his first ship that: “he had never known a collegian worth his salt . . .”¹¹⁸ These views, perpetuated by historians like Lewis and Sullivan, produce inevitable conclusions that the shore-based educational experiment was little more than an expensive failure. The best indication of the Academy’s success, however, was the Admiralty’s desire to expand upon it with the Royal Naval College which opened in 1808 and operated until 1837. It is likely that the slow progress made by the Academy in its first forty years of operation was largely due to the prejudice of senior officers and the long-standing belief that the best way to learn seamanship was at sea.¹¹⁹ As a result parents continued to push their sons into ships as captains’ servants where they received training (and possibly an education) under the supervision of a captain and his

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 44.

¹¹⁷ Phillimore was made post captain in October 1807 almost a year after the Academy was closed in preparation for its reinvention as the Royal Naval College.

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 45.

¹¹⁹ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 45.

officers. Accordingly, the issue of shipboard education remained pertinent and the schoolmaster-at-sea continued to be a fixture in the lives of more fortunate young gentlemen.

c. *The appearance of a gentleman*

Graduates of the Academy who made their way to sea were rated as volunteers per order and received the pay of an able seaman which amounted to £1 4s per lunar month.¹²⁰ The Admiralty directed that while scholars “shall be kept to the duty of seamen” they must “have the privilege of walking on the quarterdeck,”¹²¹ a sign of their status as officers-in-training and of their gentlemanly social rank. Recruits who entered the service independent of the Academy, through the influence of family and friends, represented a more socially-diverse group although all recruits shared the same quarterdeck privileges and were expected to display “sobriety, obedience, diligence, and skill,”¹²² in order to preserve the *appearance* of an officer and a gentleman.

i. The “weekly account”: midshipmen gain a uniform

The need for trainee officers to keep up appearances saw midshipmen included in the general request for a naval uniform in 1747.¹²³ The argument that a uniform would give “the Appearance which is necessary to distinguish their Class to be the Rank of a Gentleman, and give them better Credit and Figure in executing the commands of their Superior Officers . . . ,”¹²⁴ suggested that midshipmen were in need of help when it came to

¹²⁰ Mackay, *Hawke Papers*, p. 407; also see Rodger, *Command*, p. 624.

¹²¹ ADM7/339, ff.420-30, Art. 19; also see Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 60

¹²² ADM7/339, ff.420-30, Art. 24.

¹²³ The original petition was presented by the Admiralty as part of a larger appeal for the codification of navy ranks and their equivalencies to army ranks. The memorial stated that a lack of respect was forthcoming from army officers involved in combined operations, from the officers of foreign navies, and that problems of differentiation among quarterdeck officers themselves necessitated such measures. See TNA: PRO, ADM 2/71, “Lord’s Letters: Orders and Instructions, 1747-1748.”

¹²⁴ Ibid. A variation is reprinted in “Admiralty Memorial to the King in Council,” November 13, 1747 in Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, pp. 82-83.

exercising their authority. The introduction of a uniform in 1748¹²⁵ endeavored to present young gentlemen as officers and, more importantly, as gentlemen whose authority was natural and unquestionable. As Amy Miller notes, the order for a midshipman's uniform, "reinforces the assumption that social class corresponds to [naval] rank."¹²⁶

The choice of a blue frock coat, as opposed to "distinguished and martial red," did little to help sea officers shed the "middle-class" stigma of their profession.¹²⁷ Gold lace was used to signify senior ranks¹²⁸ although most officers' coats offered little distinction, prompting one lieutenant to lament that it was "only a common Blue Frock (such as almost every person wears) without anything military to distinguish it, and of consequence, creates not the least respect, either at home or abroad."¹²⁹ Commissioned officers were to supply themselves with a "dress sute" and a "frock," or undress uniform. The distinction was social rather than military, with "dress" being formal court attire, while "undress" referred to informal day wear.¹³⁰ Midshipmen required only one uniform that made no distinction between dress and undress¹³¹ and included a long, single-breasted coat with a fall-down collar which could be worn open or turned up to enclose the neck, showing off the white facing. The upturned collar provides a possible explanation for the origin of the midshipman's defining mark – the collar patch. Also known as the "weekly account," this white patch evolved into its more common form some time during the 1760s.¹³² The three brass buttons on each sleeve were, according to popular myth, designed to prevent

¹²⁵ Dudley Jarrett, *British Naval Dress* (London, 1960), p. 30.

¹²⁶ Amy Miller, *Dressed to Kill: British Naval Uniform, Masculinity and Contemporary Fashions, 1748-1857* (Greenwich, UK, 2007), p. 22.

¹²⁷ Rodger, *Command*, p. 325; Rodger, "Honour and Duty," p. 433.

¹²⁸ Epaulettes were not introduced as part of the regulation uniform until 1795, although there is evidence that some captains adopted them earlier as a mark of rank. Captain John Borlase Warren was known to have worn epaulettes in the 1770s. According to a disapproving Captain Horatio Nelson, Captains Ball and Shepard were wearing them 1783, see Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, pp. 27-28.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Rodger, "Honour and Duty," p. 433.

¹³⁰ Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 22.

¹³¹ Jarrett, *British Naval Dress*, p. 31.

¹³² Ibid., pp. 32-33. Exact dates on the evolution of the collar patch are elusive.

midshipmen from wiping their noses on their cuffs.¹³³ The introduction of a uniform did, however, lend midshipmen a measure of authority that had been lacking and supported “the dignity of their rank by a proper deportment and distinction.”¹³⁴ Miller’s survey of the development of naval dress shows, however, that between the 1750s and 1760s, the distinction between the clothing of a midshipman and that of a gunner, a warrant officer not of wardroom rank, was minimal. Common to the inventories of clothing items auctioned at the mast after the deaths of James Bearcroft, gunner in 1750, and Alexander Ferguson, midshipman in 1761, were “silver buckles, silk handkerchiefs, gold laced coats and nankeen waistcoats.” In addition Ferguson possessed a wig and a sword, the only outward marks of gentility that set him apart in social rank from the gunner.¹³⁵ The extent to which these examples represented exceptions – Bearcroft as a particularly well-heeled warrant officer and Ferguson as a somewhat insolvent midshipman – are not known. It is, however, likely that the expense of a uniform, especially for a rapidly-growing adolescent midshipman who might require new clothes each year, meant that only the sons of wealthy families could indulge in any marks of fashionable distinction over and above the standard uniform. In the case of one ship the expense associated with the new uniform necessitated the purchase of one coat which all lieutenants and junior officers could wear as their official duties required.¹³⁶ The best indication of the list of items required to outfit a midshipman comes from an inventory complied in 1780 by a servant detailing the contents

¹³³ Penn, *Snotty*, pp. 8, 55.

¹³⁴ Admiralty Memorial to the King in Council,” 13 November, 1747 quoted in Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 82.

¹³⁵ Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, pp. 18-19.

¹³⁶ John Barrow, *Life of George Lord Anson: previous to, and during the Seven Years' War* (London, 1839), p. 107.

of Midshipman W. H. Webley's¹³⁷ sea-chest:

- 1 Frock (took along with him).
- 2 Jacket Suits (took one of 'em along with him).
- 6 pr Trowsers (took two of 'em along with him).
- 2 great coats (took one of them along with him).
- 14 plain shirts, 4 ruffled ditto (three of them he took with him).
- 6 pr of thread, 6 pr of worsted, 6 pr of cotton and 2 pr of silk. [stockings]
- 9 red handkerchiefs, 3 white ditto, 2 black silk stocks.
- 2 black silk neckcloths, 6 pr shoes. A Quadrant.
- Robertsons Elements, papers and Pens, Seaman's Daily Assistant.
- Two pounds of powder, 2 pr Buckles (one of 'em he took along with him).
- 1 pr of boots he took along with him
- 2 pr nankeen breeches, 1 pr corduroy, 2 waistcoats, 2 roundhats [sic], 1 Bible,
1 Prayer Book, 6 towels, one pr sheets.
- One table cloth, 3 caps, two nets.¹³⁸

This list suggests that a considerable investment was necessary to equip a young gentleman for sea and that many of the items reflected practical necessities rather than a strict adherence to "uniform" standards. Great coats, for example, did not become regulation until 1825,¹³⁹ although the need for them was clear. The practice of supplementing official uniforms with functional civilian clothes was widespread, even later in the eighteenth century.

Outside the Naval Academy, volunteers per order and captains' servants received no distinguishing uniform and made do with whatever blue coat was available. Despite the 1748 regulations, a lack of consistency in officers' uniforms was common for many years after. Young gentlemen, often out of practicality, adopted the "short clothes" of the average seaman, which consisted of a cropped round jacket and trousers, clothes far more suited to duties that involved going aloft and scaling the ladders within the bowels of a ship. By 1759 the Admiralty saw the need to address the issue of conformity and commanded that: "no commission [sic] officer or midshipman is to presume to wear any

¹³⁷ Later became Rear-Admiral W. H. Webley Parry, C.B. (1764-1837).

¹³⁸ Quoted in Jarrett, *British Naval Dress*, pp. 46-47.

¹³⁹ Jarrett, *British Naval Dress*., p. 47.

uniform other than what properly belongs to his rank; patterns of which . . . are lodged at the Navy office and with the storekeeper of His Majesty's yard at Plymouth.”¹⁴⁰

An important element of an officers' dress, even a junior officers', was his sword. Dress swords marked the wearer's professional status as an officer and social status as a gentleman. Details regarding the type of swords to be worn as part of the midshipman's uniform are scarce although junior officers and lieutenants typically wore swords with black grips, while officers of commander's rank or higher used ivory grips, sometimes bound with gold wire.¹⁴¹ Swords could be “of such a length as may be convenient” which, for the younger and shorter midshipmen, often meant that they carried a dirk.¹⁴²

The midshipman's uniform aided aspiring officers in their efforts to adopt at least the outward appearance of a gentleman, reinforcing their right to walk the quarterdeck regardless of their social origins or professional qualifications.

2. A young gentleman's authority

While uniforms may have lent young aspirants the appearance of officers and gentlemen, other sources of authority were equally, if not more, important. When it came to upholding the authority of the quarterdeck, the Royal Navy had always operated on a tenuous thread that “rested more on persuasion than force.”¹⁴³ The mathematics of the shipboard community dictated that five or six hundred lower-deck men could not be

¹⁴⁰ “Additional Regulations Relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea,” from 1756, Article 40 quoted in Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 51.

¹⁴¹ Lavery, *Nelson's Navy*, p. 108; James P. McGuane, *Heart of Oak: A Sailor's Life in Nelson's Navy* (New York, 2002), p. 172.

¹⁴² Penn, *Snotty*, p. 55.

¹⁴³ Rodger, *Command*, p. 320; also see Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 120.

governed by a handful of officers without their tacit permission.¹⁴⁴ These dynamics were even more important when it came to sustaining the authority of quarterdeck boys and junior officers. Without the authority of experience or even a commission, young gentlemen maintained their place in the shipboard hierarchy through their proximity to the captain. Lord Cornwallis understood the importance of cementing the connection between officers and aspirants and urged his son upon entering the navy to “keep company with the captains of ships and of your superior officers as much as you can. It will certainly be advantageous to you.”¹⁴⁵

Another source of a junior officer’s authority stemmed from the axiomatic belief in the equation of an officer and a gentleman. The gentleman “assumed his rightful position because of who he was, not what he had learnt or achieved,”¹⁴⁶ a point of particular relevance to a young gentleman who had learnt little or nothing of seamanship and achieved even less in his short career. The authority of gentility, which often stemmed from the assumed gentility of authority, did much to persuade crews of experienced seamen to toe the line, even when it came to accepting the authority of inexperienced officers-in-training.

a. *Authority from the above: Regulations and Instructions, the Articles of War, and captains’ Order Books*

The Admiralty’s first attempt to codify the responsibilities of captains and officers came in 1731 with the issue of the *Regulations and Instructions relating to His Majesty’s Service at Sea*.¹⁴⁷ Commonly known as the *General Printed Instructions* this document

¹⁴⁴ This echoes Clark’s understanding of the workings of a hierarchical patrician state which “depended on widespread tacit and explicit support,” Clark, *Society*, p. 25. Porter also acknowledges that “Authority could be upheld only by consent,” Porter, *Society*, p. 65.

¹⁴⁵ Cornwallis quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 278.

¹⁴⁶ Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 427.

¹⁴⁷ Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 3, suggests this was the most common contemporary title. Also known as *Naval*

formalized expectations of commissioned and warrant officers in terms of the day to day management of a ship's people, including specifications on professional responsibilities, dress, diet, standards of safety, and of health and cleanliness. It also outlined the disciplinary guidelines by which a ship should be governed. Falconer's *Dictionary of the Marine* notes, however, that unlike commissioned officers "the midshipman, being invested with no particular charge from the government, is by consequence omitted in those official regulations."¹⁴⁸ Midshipmen were addressed in the *Regulations* only in terms of the captain's need to manage appointments "according to their abilities . . . without partiality or favour . . . ,"¹⁴⁹ and that none shall be rated midshipman until they "are in all respects qualified for it." Ultimately, the professional responsibilities of junior officers and quarterdeck boys remained at the discretion of individual captains. Such arbitrary definitions of a young gentleman's responsibilities only compounded confusion over the extent and nature of his authority, with standards varying from ship to ship. Despite the lack of detail in the *Regulations*, the emphasis placed on experience and the ability to handle at least some degree of quarterdeck authority was clear. *Additional Regulations and Instructions* appeared in 1733 and again in 1756 and dealt increasingly with issues relating to the living conditions of mariners and the codification of their duties but offered little clarification of the official expectations of young gentlemen.

The second document, which related primarily to captains and flag officers, was the *Articles of War*. Established by the Commonwealth Navy, amended by George II in 1747, and again in 1779, the *Articles* prescribed thirty-six points of law designed, first and

Instructions and Regulations, Instructions for His Majesty's Service at Sea, and General Printed Instructions.

¹⁴⁸ William Falconer, *An Universal Dictionary of the Marine: or, a copious explanation of the Technical Terms and Phrases employed in the Construction, Equipment, Furniture, Machinery, Movements, and Military Operations of a Ship* (London, 1780), p. 868.

¹⁴⁹ "Regulations and Instructions Relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea," from 1745, Part 2, Article 32 quoted in Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 12-13.

foremost, to deal with issues of treason and cowardice but which also accommodated other disciplinary contingencies, from drunkenness and insubordination, to embezzlement and murder. Articles 19, 20, and 22¹⁵⁰ addressed breaches of conduct with respect to shipboard hierarchies and cemented the authority of the quarterdeck, its young gentlemen included, with the threat of death looming over any seaman or officer who dared rattle the chain of command.

While these documents outlined the official authority of the quarterdeck, the authority specific to young gentlemen remained ambiguous. Some clarification came in 1759 with the advent of captains' Order Books, which saw the first formal qualification of the duties assigned to midshipmen. Aboard HMS *Magnanime*, Captain Richard Howe specified a series of responsibilities which required a midshipman to know the men assigned to his gun crew and be responsible for their presentation and professional readiness.¹⁵¹ Howe's grasp of the fundamentals of good leadership, beginning with the need for an officer to know the names of his subordinates, reflected in the new orders. The requirement that young gentlemen show themselves as leaders of men through the proper and respectful handling of a ship's people brought a new dimension of responsibility to the midshipman's duties.

It is likely that this Order Book simply codified long-held expectations of midshipmen and junior officers, although it is noteworthy that Howe recognized the need for a more formal outline of their duties. This understanding was based, at least partially, on the observation that "midshipmen were notoriously difficult to control."¹⁵² The ubiquity

¹⁵⁰ See "The Articles of War of 1749" in John D. Byrn, *Crime and Punishment in the Royal Navy: Discipline on the Leeward Islands Station, 1748-1812* (Aldershot, 1989), pp. 203-10.

¹⁵¹ Captain's Order Book, HMS *Magnanime*, 1759 in Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 84-85.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 75. The problem was not confined to the Royal Navy as Cormack notes of the French *gardes de la marine* that they "had a reputation for insubordination, rowdiness and violence. Imbued with a sense of

of “restless or rebellious youth”¹⁵³ along with the need to “break the natural ferocity . . . to subdue the passions and to impress the principles of religion, and morality and give the habits of obedience and subordination,”¹⁵⁴ was a problem faced by many captains including Prince William Henry who commanded the *Pegasus* in 1787. His Order Books recorded responses to the “shameful inattention and remissness of the young gentlemen” which included failure to appear on deck during watches, failure to return from leave in a timely manner, sleeping on watch, and the malicious destruction of the prince’s spare cot, which he deemed “one of the greatest marks of disrespect that can be shown to me as commanding officer.”¹⁵⁵ It is perhaps more telling of the prince’s unrealistic expectations that complaints about the “scandalous and disgraceful laziness of the gentlemen” continued in his next ship, the *Andromeda*.¹⁵⁶ It should also be noted that such meticulous attention to order and protocol often reflected the priorities of a peacetime navy, although many of the orders instituted during the peace carried over into periods of war as the century progressed.¹⁵⁷

The combined effect of these three documents went a small way to clarifying the responsibilities of junior officers and gave somewhat sharper form to the nature of their authority aboard ship. They also defined the qualities it took to become a sea officer with courage, patriotism, loyalty, decisiveness, and fairness ranking high on the list. Officers-in-training were expected, by both their superiors and their subordinates, to exhibit these

social superiority, these young noblemen were difficult for their commanders to control . . . ,” Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, p. 36.

¹⁵³ Luzzatto, “Young Rebels,” p. 174; also see Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁴ Sir John Eardley Wilmot quoted in Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, p. 330.

¹⁵⁵ Articles 122, 126 and 127 from Captain’s Orders, HMS *Pegasus* 1786-1788 in Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 111-12.

¹⁵⁶ William Henry’s reputation as a martinet was evidenced in his Order Book. Lavery notes: “Most order books give an impression of order and discipline but this one does the reverse, mainly because of the Prince’s habit of rebuking his officers in a ‘public manner’,” in *ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

¹⁵⁷ See NMM PAR/101 Captain’s Order Book HMS *Prince*, 1800-02; and PAR/102 Captain’s Order Book HMS *Amazon*, 1802.

qualities. In 1780 Captain the Hon. George Keith Elphinstone commended the “very active, diligent and spirited behavior”¹⁵⁸ of a group of midshipmen serving under him during the siege of Charleston. A few years later, Captain Cuthbert Collingwood stressed the importance of other qualities when he urged one young recruit to observe “a strict and unwearied attention to your duty, and a complaisant and respectful behavior, not only to your superiors but to everybody . . .”¹⁵⁹ Young gentlemen who failed to display such universal tact became the subjects of scorn. Able seaman Jacob Nagle resented the brutality of one fifteen-year old midshipman whose free use of a rattan led a group of seamen to retaliate and “[tell] him we would not be treated in such a manner by a boy.” Nagle also railed at the incompetence of another midshipman whose “stoborness” and disregard for the dangers noted by his jolly-boat crew resulted in four men being drowned.¹⁶⁰ Judgment from above was equally harsh for young gentlemen who did not measure up to officerlike expectations. Collingwood remarked of one young failure:

The boy Pennyman is quite a plague, a dirty lad without one good quality to set against a great many bad ones. He is the dirtiest, laziest boy in the ship, gets drunk, neglects his duty, learns no one thing, has been in every mess in the ship, and been turned out of them all.¹⁶¹

A young gentleman’s ability to display the “right stuff” as an officer and a gentleman was one of the surest sources of authority, earning him the respect of subordinates and superiors alike, regardless of his ambiguous professional and often unqualified social status.

¹⁵⁸ Elphinstone to Admiral Arbuthnot, May 12?, 1780 in W. G. Perrin, ed., *The Keith Papers: Selected from the Letters and Papers of Admiral Viscount Keith*, 3 vols., vol. 1, Navy Records Society, vol. 62 (London, 1927), p. 175.

¹⁵⁹ Collingwood to O. M. Lane, November 7, 1787 in Newnham Collingwood, *Correspondence*, p. 24.

¹⁶⁰ John Dann, ed., *The Nagle Journal: A Diary of the Life of Jacob Nagle, Sailor, from the year 1775 to 1841* (New York, 1988), pp. 106-107, 118.

¹⁶¹ Collingwood to his sister, Betsy, January 2, 1785 in Edward Hughes, ed., *The Private Correspondence of Admiral Lord Collingwood*, Navy Records Society, vol. 98 (London, 1957), p. 18.

Chapter Five: Eighteenth Century Selection: Junior Officers and Quarterdeck Boys, 1761 to 1771

1. Overview of the Period

The first two sample years to be addressed span periods of war, demobilization, and peace set against a backdrop of political strife and, after the death of Admiral Lord Anson in June 1762, much instability within the Admiralty. The Seven Years' War, which began under George II and the first Newcastle ministry, got off to a shaky start, particularly when it came to the navy. The fall of Minorca in 1756 and the execution of Admiral John Byng for failing to do “his utmost”¹ in the heat of battle, cast a shadow over naval command. Throughout the war incidences of cowardice and inaction continued to blight the service. Admiral Pocock had little luck with the captains under his command, three of whom were court martialed after failing to engage a French squadron off the Coromandel Coast in 1758.² At the siege of Havana in 1762 the captain of Pocock’s vanguard turned tail and ran before his ship came under the guns of *El Morro*.³ Despite these inglorious episodes, victories at Louisburg (1758), Quiberon Bay (1759), Havana (1762), and Manila (1762), asserted the global dominance of the Royal Navy over her French and Spanish enemies, improving opinions of the service as a career for motivated young gentlemen. The romance of war and the glory of victory were enough to inspire many new recruits. The appearance of Edward Augustus, the Duke of York, who entered the navy as a nineteen-year old midshipman under the care of Captain Lord Howe in 1758,⁴ also helped to heighten interest in a naval career, even if the prince’s attentions lay, for the most part, outside the

¹ S.v. “John Byng” in *ODNB* (2004).

² Rodger, *Command*, p. 275; Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 247.

³ Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 247.

⁴ Mackay, *Hawke Papers*, p. 227.

navy.⁵ The infectious spirit of adventure stirred up by Hawke's success at Quiberon Bay was evident in the request sent by a five-year old follower of the action:

Sir Edward Hawke,
I hear you have beat the French fleet when they were coming to kill us and that one of your captains twirled a French Ship round till it sunk. I wish you was come home, for I intend to go to sea if you will take me with you.

I am Lord Granby [sic] second son
Charles Manners⁶

Enthusiasm for a naval career often originated with the boys themselves, in spite of parental objections. In 1756 one father resignedly wrote, "I intend him for the sea, as it's his inclination."⁷ John Jervis, the son of a solicitor to the Admiralty, reduced his mother to tears when he "resolved that I would not be a lawyer, and that I would be a sailor." Jervis cast his decision after absorbing the "stories of the happiness of sea life . . ." from his friend Lieutenant Patrick Strachan.⁸ Even after the fervor of wartime glory faded into a period of peace, a young James Trevenen found excitement in the prospect of exploration as he prepared to sail with Lt. James Cook aboard *Resolution*: ". . . and what pleasure is seeing foreign countries and exploring new worlds! I should fill my sea chest with curiosities of all sorts."⁹ Alexander Ball too, was spurred by dreams of adventure "in consequence of the deep impression and vivid images" conjured by reading *Robinson Crusoe*.¹⁰ Regardless of the state of war or peace, the life of a sea officer carried substantial appeal for boys who sought action, adventure, and the rewards of prize money.

⁵ S.v. "Prince Edward Augustus, Duke of York and Albany" in *ODNB* (2004).

⁶ Quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 255.

⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 255.

⁸ Edward Pelham Brenton, ed., *Life and Correspondence of John, Earl of St. Vincent, G.C.B., Admiral of the Fleet, etc., etc.*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London, 2005), pp. 16-17. Jervis entered the service in 1749.

⁹ Excerpt from an unaddressed letter from 1775 in Christopher Lloyd, ed., *A Memoir of James Trevenen* (London, 1959), p. 12.

¹⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Sir Alexander Ball" in *Half Hours with the Best Authors*, ed. Charles Knight, new edition (Philadelphia, 1881), p. 157. Ball entered the service in 1768.

The view from within the service was, however, less dazzling. During the early 1750s the fleet had been allowed to deteriorate, and the slow pace of mobilization in 1755 confirmed its unpreparedness for war, both in terms of ships and men.¹¹ While the shortage of seamen continued to plague the service throughout much of the conflict, at the other end of the shipboard hierarchy, the problem was reversed. An overabundance of commissioned officers meant that unemployment was an issue, although the proportion of lieutenants employed in 1758 marked an all time high for the last half of the century, with 80 percent of their number on active duty.¹²

When it came to officer recruits, a lack of information regarding the number of applicants for servant positions makes it impossible to know exactly how the equation balanced, although it is likely that the problem tended towards a surplus. As Roger Knight notes: “Far more boys wanted a naval career, and with it the possibility of prize money, than there were positions.”¹³ The situation was compounded by the fact that the patronage system worked best when captains exercised their prerogatives to the fullest extent, in other words, the more a captain used his powers of patronage to create or cement social, political, and professional networks, the more he benefited.¹⁴

In terms of the total career openings available for recruits, the List Books for 1761 (ADM 8/36) allow an estimate to be calculated. Using the data on the number of ships of various rates in commission for a given year, the number of officers and men borne on

¹¹ Later in 1755 George II noted: “Thus it appears that 39 ships of the line and 474 men over is all that can be raised in the first year in addition to the numbers of the peace establishment,” quoted in Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 96. In fact, more than 33,000 men were borne on the books of naval ships in 1755, see Rodger, *Command*, p. 638.

¹² Rodger, “Commissioned Officers’ Careers,” p. 14; Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 252.

¹³ Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 13.

¹⁴ Rodger notes that patronage was “the natural cement of society in the middle years of the eighteenth century” and that it was not a “corrupt method which sacrificed public interest for private gain.” It worked to the benefit of aspirants, captains, and the service as a whole due to the fact that it was in the best interests of all to advance young gentlemen of ability. See Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 273-75.

those ships, and the rule of April 1700 which set numbers for captains' servants at four per one hundred crew,¹⁵ 1761 saw approximately 3,236 positions available.¹⁶ Additional openings for admirals', lieutenants', and warrant officers' servants might have brought the total available positions to just over 4,000 vacancies. This figure agrees roughly with the Marine Society's estimate of 4500 servants¹⁷ needed for the wartime navy, of which roughly 1,000 positions were set aside for young gentlemen as officers-in-training.¹⁸ It can also be estimated that approximately 2567 vacancies were available for midshipmen and junior officers in 1761.¹⁹ Together, positions for servants and midshipmen represented approximately 8 percent of the total 80,954 officers and men borne²⁰ on ships' books for that year.

The peace of 1763 only exacerbated the problem of oversupply. Within a year, naval manning dropped to roughly one quarter the size of its wartime establishment. Even mobilization for war with Spain over sovereignty of the Falkland Islands in 1770, saw the fleet at only one third of its peak wartime manning, with between 26,000 and 31,000 officers and men borne in 1771.²¹ This translated into significantly fewer opportunities for young gentlemen with approximately 1444 captains' servant and 1100 junior officer positions available.²²

¹⁵ HC 1700 VI, p. 9.

¹⁶ See Appendix B1, "Estimated number of Quarterdeck Boys, 1761."

¹⁷ As a private philanthropic institution founded in 1756, the Marine Society endeavored to fill a portion of the gap with the teenage orphans and destitutes rescued from the streets. James S. Taylor, *Jonas Hanway: Founder of the Marine Society* (London, 1985), pp. xiii-xiv.

¹⁸ Rodger cites the Marine Society's calculations which estimated that the wartime navy of 1756 "needed about 4,500 boys as servants," Rodger, *Command*, p. 313.

¹⁹ See Appendix C1, "Estimated Number of Junior Officers, 1761."

²⁰ Rodger, *Command*, p. 636.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 638.

²² See Appendix B2, "Estimated number of Quarterdeck Boys, 1761;" Appendix C2, "Estimated Number of Junior Officers, 1761."

The popularity of a naval career did not help matters. One of the reasons for this popularity, particularly among parents, was that it cost very little to begin a naval career.²³ Unlike the army, the navy did not allow the sale of commissions, so the expense of “purchase” was eliminated. For the younger sons of aristocratic and gentry families, particularly the more impecunious ones, the navy provided an attractive option. The only costs associated with entering the service were in outfitting a young gentleman with the necessary clothing, books, and equipment, as well as an allowance for him to live on as his pay, of £12 per annum, went to the captain. An allowance of £20 a year was considered sufficient throughout the 1760s and 1770s,²⁴ although different captains appeared to have required different amounts depending on the boy. In 1779 Admiral George Rodney requested an allowance of at least £30 a year for one young gentleman who also happened to be the son of a duke.²⁵ If a boy was lucky enough to enter the service as a rating he could draw the pay that came with the position. For midshipmen and those rated able seamen, this amounted to £15 12s per annum (in 1st rates),²⁶ and many young gentlemen made do on their wages alone. John Jervis noted the hardships he faced as a young gentleman surviving on what he earned. In 1748 his father sent him to sea with twenty pounds at starting, and that was all he ever gave me . . . I immediately changed my mode of living; quitted my mess, lived alone, and took up the ship’s allowance, which I found quite sufficient; washed and mended my own clothes; [and] made a pair of trowsers out of the ticking of my bed²⁷

²³ Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 253-54.

²⁴ Rodger, *Command*, p. 388.

²⁵ Mundy, *Life of Rodney*, Vol. 1, p. 208. Cormack notes of noble *aspirants* in the French Royal Navy that parents had to provide “a hefty allowance, and this often prevented more than one son of a poor noble family from pursuing naval careers,” Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, p. 36.

²⁶ The Scale of Sea Pay established in 1700 remained unchanged until 1797. Midshipmen, able seamen earned £1 4s per lunar month, Rodger, *Command*, p. 624. See Appendix E for tables of wages in 1761 and 1797.

²⁷ Brenton, *Earl St. Vincent*, Vol. 1, pp. 19-20.

The affordability of a naval career, even for boys with little or no financial support, and the attraction of a lifestyle that promised adventure and the possibility of a fortune in prize money,²⁸ made the service a popular option for young men from a variety of backgrounds.

With abundant demand for the limited positions, who then made the cut? From the start of the eighteenth century, individual captains and admirals had dominated decision-making when it came to recruiting future officers, while the Admiralty wielded virtually no direct influence over the selection of young gentlemen.²⁹ The mechanism of patronage, however, operated on multiple levels particularly within the naval/political bureaucracy. Indirect Admiralty influence could manifest itself in the pressures applied to captains and admirals, making the will of the Lords Commissioners felt just as effectively. In 1760 Rodney, ever mindful of intrusions upon his powers of patronage, asked Admiralty Secretary Cleveland to remind the Board “that seventeen of the said supernumeraries [aboard his ship *HMS Deptford*] are petty officers and young gentlemen of mine, several being recommended to me by some of their Lordships.”³⁰ Yet, despite the efforts of the Admiralty to wield at least minimal control over officer recruitment, the bulk of servant selection remained in the hands of individual captains and officers. By selecting servants from the community of the ship it was easier for a captain to build a network of followers, first by cementing existing professional relationships with his commissioned and warrant officers and second, by ensuring the next generation of loyal and professional officers, hand-picked and raised by him. Within the larger community of the navy itself, the same professionally “incestuous” standards applied. Rodger notes that captains and admirals

²⁸ During the French Revolutionary Wars midshipmen in 3rd to 5th rate ships could reasonably expect to double their salary through prize-money, see Benjamin, “Golden Harvest,” p. 22, Table 9.

²⁹ Except for those it nominated through the Academy.

³⁰ Rodney to Secretary Cleveland, July 11, 1670 in Syrett, *The Rodney Papers, Vol. 1*, p. 361.

jealously guarded the naval system [of patronage] against interference from outside. Politicians and men prominent in public life could not be allowed to interfere in naval patronage, not only because they would not understand the importance of professional ability, but because their interference threatened the admirals' monopoly of the real power in the Navy.³¹

This view of a “closed” system of patronage is visible in the traceable sample for quarterdeck boys in 1761, 1771, 1781, and 1791, grouped for the purposes of this study as “Eighteenth-Century Selection.” Beginning with an examination of the data collected for 1761 and 1771, the relative weights of professional, social, and political influence as they acted upon the selection of quarterdeck boys and junior officers can be assessed. The extent to which the navy looked within the service for officer recruits or succumbed to external influences, sheds light on the question of who benefited from the workings of patronage and why, during the Seven Years’ War and beyond.

2. Recruitment: quarterdeck boys

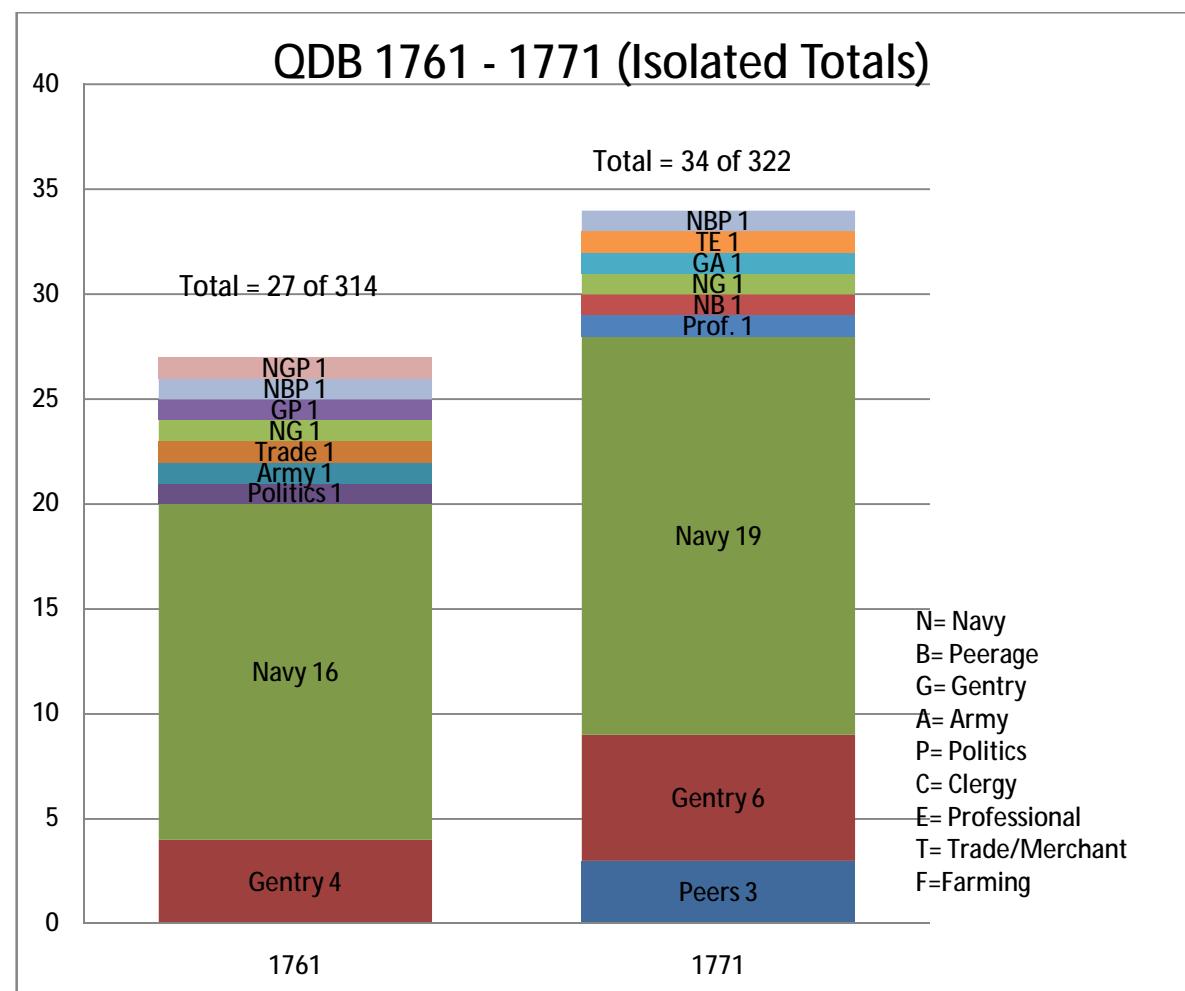
a. *Discussion of the data: the importance of naval connections and the resurgence of the seafaring peer.*

For the years 1761 and 1771 the sample consists of 314 and 322 quarterdeck boys respectively. Of the 314 captains’ and lieutenants’ servants sampled in 1761 the social backgrounds of twenty-seven (9 percent) were traceable while another twenty were identified without social backgrounds. Of the 322 sampled in 1771, thirty-four (nearly 11 percent) were traceable to one or more of the nine categories (navy, peerage, gentry, army, politics, the professions, clergy, trade, and farming) discussed in Part I, while an additional twenty-two turned up career histories without social backgrounds. As the traceable proportions for these years are very low a cautious approach to the data is required.

³¹ Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 173.

Due to the nature of the sample it is likely that a large portion of those surveyed were not in fact, young gentlemen. The high number of untraceables suggests that many of the captains' and lieutenants' servants included here were never destined for commissioned rank and were instead being groomed as seamen or warrant officers, or were serving as domestics. This caveat is, in fact, applicable to all quarterdeck boys' samples up until 1821 and 1831. With this in mind, the following conclusions are sustainable for the data from 1761 and 1771.

Figure 5.1 Quarterdeck Boys, 1761 and 1771 (Isolated Totals)



In terms of actual numbers (isolated totals),³² boys with connections *only* to the navy represented the single largest traceable category although, it will be seen, this was true of all the samples of quarterdeck boys throughout the survey. In 1761 and 1771 naval influence alone accounted for more than half of the traceable candidates. The navy's tendency to choose servants from within the naval community is also the reason why no differentiation has been made within the classification of "N," or "naval" influence, as to whether the servant in question was connected to an Admiral or a dockyard worker. Allegiances within the service could be complex and result in boys from a variety of social backgrounds entering under a captain's patronage. Even so, the sons, grandsons, or nephews of fellow officers were common among officers' servants. Of the nineteen servants who entered through naval connections in 1761, fifteen were the sons of admirals, captains, or lieutenants. In the case of Commander John Bagster, four of the five servants borne on the books of the sloop *Barbadoes* were his sons.³³ Captain John Rushworth of the frigate *Alarm* carried both his sons on the books despite the fact that in 1761, Edward was six and John was only two-years old.³⁴ While it is possible that Edward actually went to sea with his father, it is certain that John did not.³⁵

This is just one example of many uncovered in the data in which captains engaged in the illegal but common practice of false muster. Theoretically, the mustering of non-existent servants could benefit both the captain, who pocketed the boy's allowance, and the servant who could count his fictitious time on the books as part of the six years sea-time needed to be eligible to sit the examination for lieutenant. Recent studies, however,

³² See Chapter One, Section 2 for an explanation of the forms of tabulation used.

³³ Appendix F1, "Quarterdeck Boys 1761," Q61-SL-12 to 16.

³⁴ Appendix F1, Q61-5-07 and 08.

³⁵ There is evidence of boys actually going to sea at the age of six see Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 27; Rodger, *Command*, p. 507; and Lewis, *Social History*, p. 161; while James Anthony Gardner began his seagoing career at five, Gardner, *Recollections*, p. xii.

highlight the impracticalities of false mustering recruits as infants in order to expedite their careers, as the minimum age for the examination was twenty.³⁶ John Rushworth would have been eight-years old when he acquired the necessary sea time, but would have been too young and too inexperienced to take the examination. False muster could only benefit young gentlemen who began their careers later, in their mid-teens, and whose abilities were such that they were ready to pass the examination by age twenty. It will be shown in Chapter Seven that the minimum-age rule for the examination was, however, frequently ignored. In this respect it was possible that false muster could benefit those ready to sit the exam early, who *also* possessed the connections to get away with it. For the most part though, the real beneficiaries of false muster were the captains who used the additional servants' allowance to supplement their incomes.

Beyond the appointment of immediate family, naval connections could also include the sons and nephews of those who served the navy ashore. Clerks and dockyard officials could make life easy for captains they liked or to whom they were obliged. In 1776 Captain Charles Middleton noted such a *quid pro quo* system of favors when he took aboard the son of an assistant to the Master Shipwright at Chatham:

Another young man, son to one of the Builder's assistants, walks the quarter deck, but is rated landman. He is a modest boy, and his father has been very civil and attentive in fitting the ship.³⁷

From the sample, Captain Alexander Schomberg carried two sons of John Cleveley, a shipwright at the Deptford dockyard and carpenter aboard HMS *Victory* in 1778, who also made a name for himself as a self-taught painter of dockyard scenes.³⁸ Schomberg's connection to Cleveley is unspecified, but most likely began at the Deptford yard where

³⁶ N. A. M. Rodger, "Lieutenants' Sea-Time and Age," the *Mariner's Mirror*, 75 (1989): pp. 269-70.

³⁷ Charles Middleton to Lord Mulgrave, November 11, 1776 quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 267.

³⁸ For the works of John Cleveley Sr. see www.nmm.ac.uk "Maritime Art at Greenwich."

construction on Schomberg's ship, HMS *Essex*, took place. The *Essex* was commissioned in August 1760 and completed in October of that year.³⁹ It is likely that Schomberg formed a working friendship with the shipwright at this time and agreed to take on young Robert and James⁴⁰ as captains' servants.

Other boys were fortunate enough to have their naval connections reinforced by influences such as social rank and political weight. Edward Knowles⁴¹ was the son of the notoriously difficult Admiral Sir Charles Knowles, Bart.,⁴² governor of Jamaica. John Child Purvis⁴³ was the son of George Purvis, secretary of the Sick and Wounded Board, and the grandson of George Snr. of Darsham, MP and one-time Controller of the Navy. Political connections sufficed for young John Holloway⁴⁴ whose recommendation to the service came from James Grenville, Lord of the Treasury and the brother of George who, in 1761, became Treasurer of the Navy. John Saunderson,⁴⁵ the son of an Irish gentleman who claimed the viscountcy of Castleton, was also the younger brother of the MP for Cavan, and leveraged his connections to gain a position aboard the *Namur* under Captain Matthew Buckle.

Together the influence of politics and the privileges of gentry rank are visible in approximately one third of the traceable sample for 1761, although a large proportion of these also claimed naval connections. This pattern of dominant naval influence occasionally infused with political weight exemplified the atmosphere created by George Anson as First Lord of the Admiralty from June 1757 until his death in July 1762. From what little is known of Anson's personal feelings on the matter of patronage his actions as

³⁹ For information on HMS *Essex* see Winfield, *British Warships*, p. 92.

⁴⁰ Appendix F1, Q61-3-28 and 29.

⁴¹ Appendix F1, Q61-3-32.

⁴² For Anson's opinion of Sir Charles Knowles see Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 301.

⁴³ Appendix F1, Q61-SL-54.

⁴⁴ Appendix F1, Q61-3-04.

⁴⁵ Appendix F1, Q61-1-14.

both Commander in Chief and First Lord suggested a strong sense of loyalty to those within the service and a belief in the need to appoint young gentlemen based on the service of their fathers, brothers, and uncles. Anson's actions also demonstrated a keen appreciation for political relationships and respect for the traditional workings of patronage. It took considerable skill to balance the two and Anson's ability to maintain both a professional fleet and a position of esteem in government were testament to his diplomacy.⁴⁶

What is discernable from the rather limited data set for 1761 is that, of the twenty-seven servants whose backgrounds were traceable, high birth played a very limited role in the selection of officers' servants. Only one boy, Edward Knowles, claimed a direct connection to the peerage although, as noted, he was able to support that interest with strong naval connections. Confidence in the accuracy of this assessment is high due to the fact that background searches relating to the peerage and the landed gentry are among the most reliable and the quality of the sources remained consistent throughout the period under consideration.

The data analyzed here points to two key factors affecting the selection of quarterdeck boys in 1761. First, among the known quantities there was a strong preference for recruiting protégés from within the naval "family". Second, external connections involving the landed gentry and political associations exercised only a moderate influence on recruitment, while aristocratic influence was negligible. It should also be noted that the very high proportion of untraceable quarterdeck boys (91 percent) in the 1761 sample suggests that the vast majority of servants came from backgrounds without social or political interest and were not destined for commissioned rank. The presence, however, of

⁴⁶ Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 300, 315-316; Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 57.

another twenty servants who went on to become commissioned officers, but whose social backgrounds could not be traced, provides evidence of a navy less concerned with social qualifications when it came to officer recruitment than would be seen in later years. These results tend to confirm Rodger's assertion that the Seven Years' War saw the end of an era in which the officer corps was largely "unconscious of class."⁴⁷ Within a decade, in fact, the situation had begun to change.

In 1771 naval influence remained paramount with twenty-one of the thirty-four traceable quarterdeck boys turning up connections to a naval relative. Again, a pronounced mix of the social orders is visible within the naval sphere of influence, with five of the twenty-one boys revealing connections to service personnel other than commissioned officers. William and Herbert Browell,⁴⁸ servants aboard the *Princess Amelia*, were the sons of William M. Browell, a midshipman who served under Anson on his round-the-world voyage and lived to tell the tale. Henry Browell⁴⁹ was mustered as captain's servant aboard the *Namur* and was likely a nephew of the elder William. Captain John Elliot of the *Portland* appointed Richard Dark,⁵⁰ a Marine Society boy, as captain's servant in 1770, although it is certain that Richard, like his older brother Charles, who appeared in the same ship as gunner's servant, was destined for the lower deck or possibly career as a warrant officer.⁵¹ The career path intended for Alexander Schomberg Silver⁵² aboard the sloop *Martin* is less clear. As the son of Captain Alexander Schomberg's coxswain,⁵³ it was likely that the boy's appointment resulted from the captain's desire to reward a loyal

⁴⁷ Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 206.

⁴⁸ Appendix F2, "Quarterdeck Boys 1771," Q71-3-44 and 45.

⁴⁹ Appendix F2, Q71-1-27.

⁵⁰ Appendix F2, Q71-4-32.

⁵¹ For details on Charles Dark see ADM 36/7470 "Muster Book, HMS *Portland*," October 1770 to November 1771, f. 5.

⁵² Appendix F2, Q71-SL-15.

⁵³ See ADM 36/5471, "Muster Book, HMS *Essex*," April 1761 to March 1762, f. 22.

crewman by arranging for Lt. Thomas Hayward⁵⁴ (in command of the *Martin*) to take the boy on as a servant.

The most significant change visible in the data for 1771 was the rising influence of high-birth on the appointment of quarterdeck boys. Together the sons of the gentry and the peerage, independent of any naval connections, accounted for 26 percent of the traceable sample. From the peerage, Archibald Lord Cochrane, later the 9th Earl of Dundonald, the Hon. Michael de Courcy, and the Hon. Peter Napier,⁵⁵ all appear in the musters sampled for 1771. In each of these cases, noble birth was accompanied by impoverished circumstances⁵⁶ which, for Cochrane, were so dire that even as the eldest son and heir he was forced to try and make a living at sea. Another seven of the thirty-four traceable boys showed connections to families of the landed gentry, with one, George Oakes, the son of Lt. Colonel Hildebrand Oakes of the 33rd Foot, also boasting a military heritage.⁵⁷

Only two other captains' servants were identifiable outside connections to the navy, the peerage, the landed gentry, and the army. Francis Cole⁵⁸ of Marazion, Cornwall was the son of an attorney, while Philip Gidley King,⁵⁹ who went on to distinguish himself as

⁵⁴ Thomas Hayward received his lieutenant's commission on November 6, 1762 and died in 1795 see Marioné, *Complete Navy List*. Not to be confused with Thomas Hayward, midshipman of the *Bounty* who was asleep on watch when the mutiny broke out. See: George Mackaness, *The Life of Vice-Admiral William Bligh* (London, 1951), p. 573.

⁵⁵ Appendix F2, Q71-3-01, Q71-3-60, Q71-4-51. Peter Napier appears as "Hon." in the two monthly musters examined for HMS *Warwick*, (ADM 36/7701, no folio markings) although no other details of his social background could be found in Burke's *Peerage* or Balfour Paul's *Scots Peerage*. The Hon. Patrick Napier, 3rd son of Lord (Francis Scott) Napier by his second marriage, passed the lieutenants' examination and received his commission in 1777, became a post captain in 1783, and died in 1801. Although the muster clearly records the name "Peter," the timing makes it possible that we are actually looking at Patrick.

⁵⁶ S.v. "Archibald Cochrane, 9th Earl of Dundonald," in *ODNB* (2004); for the state of the de Courcy family see Edward Walford, *Tales of our Great Families*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London, 1877). In the case of Napier, a lack of funds is assumed through his connection to the impoverished Scots barony, see *Gentleman's Magazine*, July-December, 1842, pp. 280-81.

⁵⁷ Appendix F2, Q71-3-61. It should be noted that the muster for *Trident* (ADM 36/7692, June 1771 – July 1772) is problematic in that the monthly muster that covers June 1, 1771 to July 31, 1771 shows both George Oakes and the Hon. Michael de Courcy as midshipmen, while the muster covering June 1 to August 7 lists them as captains' servants. For the sake of consistency in the rules of sampling, these names appear on both the Quarterdeck Boys' and Junior Officers' samples for 1771.

⁵⁸ Appendix F2, Q71-5-26.

Governor of New South Wales, was the son of a Cornish draper and the grandson of a Devonshire attorney.⁶⁰ With so small a sample, conclusions about the commonalities in professional influence and the geographical circumstances of these two subjects are difficult to draw. A more general discussion of the geographical distribution of recruits follows at the end of Chapter Six.

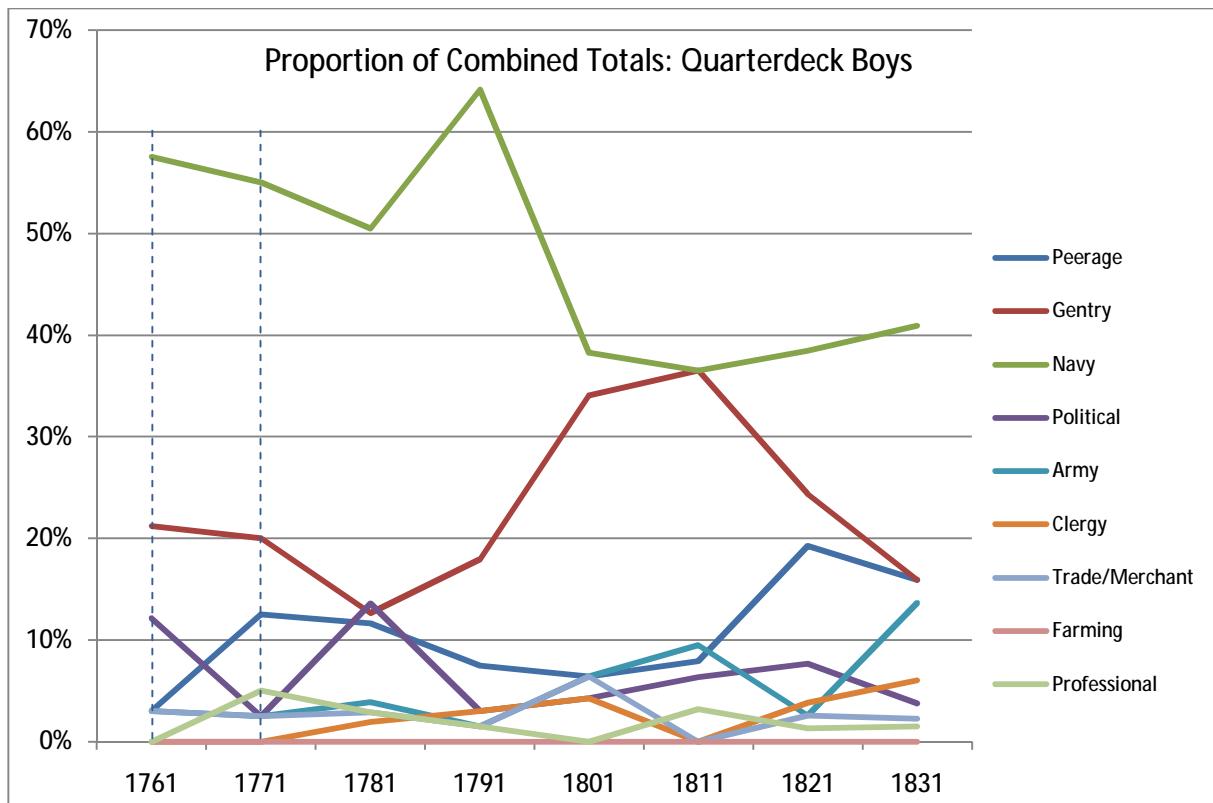
b. *Approaching the data effectively*

A more useful way to address the data, particularly when dealing with the small numbers of traceable samples, is to present the various socio-professional categories as proportions of the traceable whole. This approach evens out discrepancies between the small number of quarterdeck boys identified in 1761 and 1771 and the larger numbers identified in 1781, 1821 and 1831, presenting the various influences as percentages of the traceable total for each year. The results appear as follows:

⁵⁹ Appendix F2, Q71-SL-46.

⁶⁰ For Francis Cole see Richard Carew, "The Survey of Cornwall," in *An Epistle concerning the Excellencies of the English Tongue* (1769), p. iv; s.v. "Philip Gidley King" in *ODNB* (2004). Both are mentioned in Marioné, *Complete Navy List*.

Figure 5.2 Proportion of Combined Totals, Quarterdeck Boys, 1761-1771.



From this graph it is possible to see the relative importance of the nine socio-professional classifications. It should be made clear that this graph does not reflect real numbers or a percentage of the whole sample for each year. It does, however, allow different sets of data to be viewed from a common baseline, providing a statistically-relevant means of comparing data from year to year and an accurate way of measuring how influences on officer recruitment changed over time.

The most significant detail in traceable data for 1761 and 1771 is that while naval connections were, by far, the single most important factor in the selection of quarterdeck boys they were, by 1771, in shallow decline relative to other external or civilian

influences.⁶¹ The increasing importance of the social elites on recruitment can be seen in the small rise in the proportion of gentry connections and the steep rise in aristocratic influence in 1771. In terms of percentages, the relative importance of connections to the peerage increased from 3 percent of the traceable sample in 1761 to 13 percent in 1771. Overall the social elites (peerage and gentry) grew from 22 percent of the traceable sample in 1761, to 33 percent in 1771.

The dramatic drop in political influence is problematic and care must be taken with its interpretation.⁶² The inherent political value of family connections to the aristocracy during the eighteenth century would tend to support an increase in political influence concurrent with the increase in the presence of young nobility. The method of classifying data from this survey does not, however, allow a political connection to be recorded unless it was explicitly mentioned in the histories of the candidates examined. Of the five known quarterdeck boys who claimed peerage connections only one, William Cockburn also laid claim to specific political influences via his connection to Sir James Cockburn, MP for Linlithgow.⁶³ The sharp drop in the appearance of political influence in 1771 is accurate to the point that it reflects a standard of classification that has been universally applied to the samples from each year. It would, however, be dangerous to speculate that the decline in political influence from 13 percent of the combined total in 1761, to 3 percent in 1771 was indicative of a real decline in the importance of political connections. The inherent relationship between social and political power must be recognized, although the data is perhaps telling of altered attitudes towards how explicit the use of such interest should be.

⁶¹ As no data was taken for the years that fall between the sample years, no assumptions can be made about what may have occurred during the ten year gap. These conclusions relate strictly to changes between sample years.

⁶² See Chapter Two, Section 6 for a discussion of the problems associated with the “politics” category.

⁶³ Sir James Cockburn was one of William’s uncles. S.v. “Sir James Cockburn, 5th Bart.,” and “Sir George Cockburn, 8th Bart.,” in *ODNB* (2004). Also see Roger Morriss, *Cockburn and the British Navy in Transition: Admiral Sir George Cockburn, 1772-1853* (Columbia SC, 1997), pp. 7-8.

Intense political strife during the war and the escalation of parliamentary infighting that came with the Peace of Paris in 1763⁶⁴ may have resulted in less overt use of political interest when it came to naval appointments. Paul Langford notes the new incarnation of the Whig-Tory conflict that appeared with the expulsion of Bute and the rise of the Grenville ministry, suggesting that, “to many the Whigs seemed more like an aristocratic clique” while “tradition characterized the court and its supporters as Tories.” Confusion over the fact that “most of George III’s supporters were of impeccable Whig background” and the reality that “Toryism no longer represented a coherent creed” may have resulted in a more “covert” use of political interest.⁶⁵ While it is debatable whether such subtleties would be picked up by the methods used in this survey, the instability of the political situation at this time provides a possible explanation for the decline in the *visibility* of direct political influence.

As for the sharp increase in the presence of peerage connections and the steady rise in gentry connections seen in 1771, a combination of several factors might explain the change. First, the popularity of a naval career increased in the wake of victory during the Seven Years’ War. As shown in the previous chapter, the sons of tradesmen and aristocrats alike found inspiration in the fame that attended Hawke and Howe after their victories at sea. Second, the onset of peace brought a massive reduction in the fleet,⁶⁶ limiting the number of positions available for young gentlemen. In addition, there was the fact that almost all officer promotions took place in wartime.⁶⁷ Peace therefore, brought little upward movement within the commissioned ranks and the young gentlemen’s ratings that

⁶⁴ Langford, *Polite*, pp. 347- 357.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 375.

⁶⁶ The peacetime establishment for 1766 was set at 16,000 officers and men. During the Seven Years’ War, manning peaked at about 85,000 officers and men in 1762. See Mackay, *Hawke Papers*, p. 395; and Rodger, *Command*, p. 636.

⁶⁷ Rodger, *Command*, p. 380.

fed them. This inertia trickled down to affect recruitment with fewer positions opening up as the result of the “promotion” of servants to junior officer ratings.

As a result, demand increased for significantly fewer entry-level positions. Senior officers, both afloat and within the administration ashore, upheld traditional thinking on matters of social precedence when it came to distributing appointments for young gentlemen. Peace-time reductions in the fleet also threatened employment opportunities at the highest levels. For captains, a strong patronage network, established through the selection of noble or well-connected sons, was the best safeguard against redundancy. Social traditionalism and career preservation therefore, may be seen as two of the driving forces behind the rise in the presence of the social elites in 1771.

When it came to the administration ashore, the appointment of John Montague, the 4th Earl of Sandwich, to the First Lord’s chair in January 1771 saw traditional thinking on patronage challenged in the most fundamental way, with deservedness and ability trumping social rank and political sway. Sandwich paid the political price for such radicalism which “seemed to ignore or devalue the rightful claims of the leaders of society.”⁶⁸ As First Lord, Sandwich exhibited considerable loyalty to naval tradition, placing seniority and the merits of distinguished service ahead of aristocratic and political connections. His influence, however, would have come too late to impact this sample which was taken from the early months of 1771. The majority of the quarterdeck boys surveyed here were the product of Edward Hawke’s Admiralty and his policies of recruitment and promotion which subscribed to the principal that: “thinking all men are alike in the service, must bring the Navy to destruction at last.”⁶⁹ This belief did not preclude Hawke from helping the careers of talented young officers who lacked the interest

⁶⁸ Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 175.

⁶⁹ Lord Hawke to S. Barrington, June 1780 quoted in Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 178.

of powerful patrons.⁷⁰ Neither did it render him a slave to social and political pressure. The low incidence of political connections in the data from 1771 may, to an extent, be supportive of this claim.⁷¹ While the influence of the First Lord and the Admiralty board operated only indirectly when it came to the appointment of young gentlemen, it is likely that their ability to influence the decisions of recruiting captains and admirals increased during peacetime. With fewer ships to command, Board members held the professional fates of senior officers in their hands and could therefore, exercise greater (indirect) control over the appointment process. As for the increase seen in the influence of the aristocracy, it is important to note that in 1771 Hawke was sixty-six years old and conservative in his approach to young officers.⁷² Essentially, the First Lord was a traditionalist, happy to uphold the privileges that had always accompanied social rank.⁷³ Such a position may well be reflected in the data which shows the proportion of traceable quarterdeck boys with connections to the peerage greater in 1771 than at any time over the next forty years.

Despite the slight decline in the proportion of naval connections in 1771, the influence of relatives and friends within the service remained an important factor in obtaining one of the limited entry-level positions. Nearly 60 percent of those whose social backgrounds could be traced claimed some form of naval connection. One of the most famous recruits in naval history, made his appearance during the Falklands mobilization thanks entirely to the influence of his uncle, Captain Maurice Suckling. A twelve-year old,

⁷⁰ Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 279.

⁷¹ Unlike Anson, Hawke was no politician. His “naïf and unworldly” approach to political relationships stymied his administrative career, *ibid.*, p. 279 It has also been suggested that, like Anson, Hawke’s distinguished service and vast operational experience saw him “better placed than a career politician to resist political encroachment on naval patronage,” s.v. “Edward Hawke, 1st Baron Hawke” in *ODNB* (2004).

⁷² As evidenced in the reforms he instituted at the Naval Academy in 1767. See Chapter Four, Section 1b for a discussion of Hawke’s reforms.

⁷³ Rodger, *Command*, p. 329. Hawke himself began his career through the patronage of his uncle, Colonel Martin Bladen who, as commissioner of Trade and Plantations from 1717 to 1746, wielded considerable social and political influence.

Horatio Nelson⁷⁴ was lucky to obtain a spot aboard Suckling's ship HMS *Raisonnable*, albeit in the rating of able seaman. Nelson progressed rapidly in his career, thanks again to the far-sighted thinking of Suckling who pushed his nephew into the merchant service⁷⁵ when demobilization would have otherwise beached him and put a halt to his naval ambitions.

It is apparent from the sample that of the twenty-one quarterdeck boys with naval connections less than half progressed to commissioned rank, and of those only four obtained post rank.⁷⁶ Here is evidence of Rodger's theory that timing of entry into the service was everything. A young gentleman's date of birth largely determined his date of entry while the coincidence of that date with an extended period of war, which provided the opportunity for advancement, was all important in determining the progress of his career.⁷⁷ For Charles Mouat, Thomas Colvill, and Charles Banks,⁷⁸ all sons or nephews of captains with good professional prospects and social connections, the aborted mobilization of 1770 saw them rapidly retrenched. By the start of the American conflict these young gentlemen were either too old to begin again in the service, or they had moved on to pursue other interests, as none feature in the records as having passed the examination for lieutenant.⁷⁹ Unlike Nelson, they appear not to have taken the professional detour into the merchant service. Their careers, like so many others, became casualties of the peace and of bad luck at having been born too early or too late to make the best of their connections.

⁷⁴ Nelson was not part of the 1771 sample which did not include HMS *Raisonnable*.

⁷⁵ Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 26. A stint in the merchant service was not uncommon for young gentlemen. In a sample of 815 midshipmen who passed the examination for lieutenant between 1745 and 1757, 21 percent showed experience in the merchant service, Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 270.

⁷⁶ See Appendix F2, "Quarterdeck Boys 1771: High Ranks." Only Thomas Larcom, William Browell, Herbert Browell, and William Daniel made it to the rank of post captain or beyond.

⁷⁷ Rodger, "Commissioned Officers' Careers," p. 22.

⁷⁸ Appendix F2, Q71-5-05, Q71-5-52, Q71-5-44.

⁷⁹ See Pappalardo, *Passing Certificates*, Vols. 1 & 2.

As in 1761, the vast majority (89 percent) of the 1771 quarterdeck boys' sample remained untraceable. The presence of Marine Society boys speaks to the existence of captains' servants who were just that, servants, in the menial sense, or boys who were destined for careers as seamen or warrant officers. Considering the navy's estimate of the need for 4500 officers' servants (during the Seven Years' War), of which less than one quarter were designated as aspiring officers, then the low traceability of the sample can be better explained. A largely invisible sample suggests that the majority of these quarterdeck boys were not, in fact, officer aspirants and did not go on to careers as commissioned officers. The way in which these proportions changed in subsequent years will help clarify the extent to which the system of entry altered, particularly after 1794.

3. Moving up: midshipmen and junior officers

The majority of young gentlemen began their careers in the traditional way, entering as officers' servants and, after two years of training in that capacity, progressed to the rating of midshipman, or one that substituted for it. It is, for the most part, impossible to know from the musters whether a young gentleman rated "midshipman" was a two-year-plus veteran of the system or a new recruit. It is, however, safe to assume that for most of the young gentlemen surveyed in 1761 and 1771, a separation in terms of both age and experience existed between servants and the midshipmen, masters' mates, and acting lieutenants who make up the "junior officer" sample. Rodger's statistics, which cover the years from 1764 to 1782, show that nearly 40 percent of midshipmen and masters' mates were between sixteen and twenty years of age. The next largest group (nearly 35 percent), were aged between twenty-one and twenty-five. The majority of servants on the other hand

(roughly 53 percent), were between thirteen and fifteen-years old.⁸⁰ This separation between the groups is reinforced by the socio-professional data for junior officers which differs substantially from the quarterdeck boys' samples for 1761 and 1771.

There are several possible explanations for the differences between the samples. The first is that the junior officers' sample included two-year-plus veterans and therefore reflected recruitment practices from two or more years earlier than the date of the sample. The second possibility, which could overlap the first, is that the sample reflects the progress of those who survived the initial weeding-out years and had taken the next step towards commissioned status; in other words, those recruits who were most likely to succeed and go on to careers that could be traced. The third possibility is that "midshipman" was the entry rating preferred by those with influence, be it naval or social/political. These factors are examined in relation to the data in an attempt to explain the differences between the patterns of influence affecting the selection and advancement of junior officers.

a. *Discussion of the data: the push of 1771*

Of the 258 junior officers sampled in 1761 social backgrounds could be traced for 25 (10 percent). The numbers more than doubled in 1771, with 73 of the total 303 junior officers (24 percent) traceable to one or more of the nine socio-professional categories. The reason for this substantial increase in the traceability of the sample is uncertain, as little changed in the record-keeping procedures for musters between these years. Despite revisions to the mustering regulations in 1764,⁸¹ the majority of muster books did not comply with the new rules, particularly when it came to young gentlemen. Up until the

⁸⁰ Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 362-63.

⁸¹ See Chapter Two, Section 3 for an explanation of the changes.

1781 sample, the recording of age and place of birth is patchy, and offers only limited assistance in the search for histories on individual junior officers.

One possible explanation for the sudden availability of records that would allow three times more junior officers to be traced in 1771 than a decade earlier was that junior officers active in 1771, who followed through with their naval careers, would have been between thirty-five and forty-five by the start of the French Revolutionary Wars and were likely to have reached commissioned rank by that time. The period from 1793 to 1815 has received intense scrutiny from historians and substantial work has been done on the biographies of officers serving at the time. This work has made it easier to trace the social backgrounds of individuals who began their careers in 1771 than those who began in 1761 and would have been closer to retirement age during the French Wars.

Age might also present an explanation for the data which shows twice as many junior officers than quarterdeck boys traceable in 1771, as midshipmen and masters' mates were more likely to become commissioned officers with the onset of the American conflict. Passing the examination for lieutenant meant that young gentlemen became part of the navy's formal record-keeping system which made limited amounts of background information centrally available. It also meant that young officers were ideally placed to advance their careers by the start of the French Revolutionary Wars.

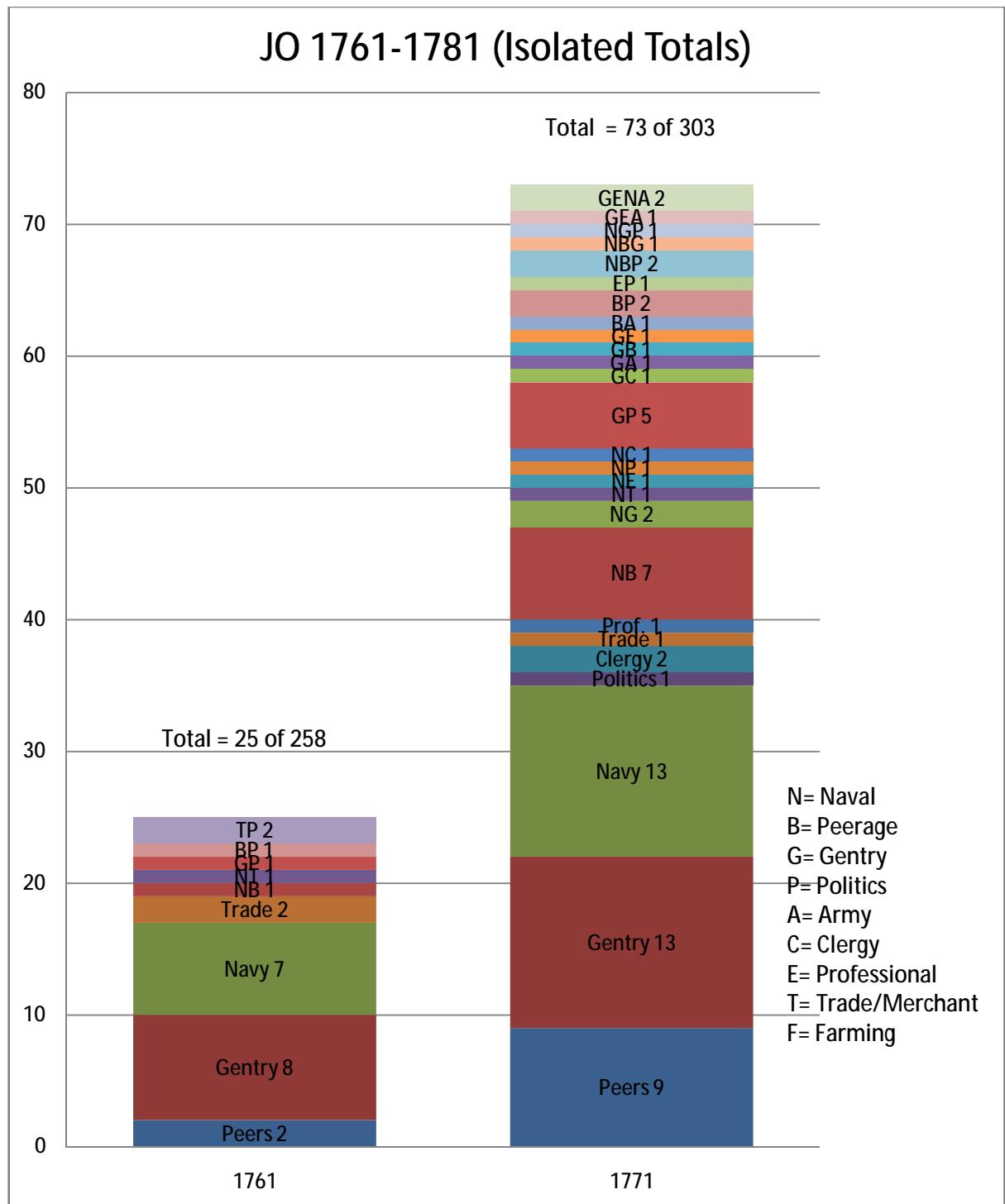
In addition to the increase in the amount of traceable data in 1771, there is an equivalent increase in the complexity of the data. As more information became available on individuals, more details of their social backgrounds were uncovered resulting in twenty-six different socio-professional combinations seen in the isolated totals.

b. *Comparing the data*

The most striking detail in the isolated data for 1761 is the virtual equivalency of naval and gentry influences, with 28 percent of traceable junior officers claiming *only* naval connections and 32 percent claiming *only* gentry connections. Compared to the 61 percent majority of quarterdeck boys who claimed only naval connections in 1761, the rise in gentry influence, at the expense of naval influence among midshipmen and mates appears substantial. The strength of the social elite within the ranks of traceable junior officers was reinforced by the strong showing of peerage connections, compared to their negligible presence among quarterdeck boys in 1761. Of the four midshipmen claiming connections to the peerage, only Philip Howard,⁸² the grandson of Captain Charles Howard, also registered a direct naval connection. Overall, the crossover of naval influence with other external influences was less in the junior officer sample than it was in the sample of quarterdeck boys for 1761.

⁸² Appendix G1, “Junior Officers 1761,” J61-5-37.

Figure 5.3 Junior Officers, 1761 and 1771 (Isolated Totals)



With the high relative importance of gentry and peerage connections shown here, it is surprising that political influence did not appear in more than four of the twenty-five

traceable junior officers in 1761, although the problems with “politics” as a category of influence have already been noted. Overall, political influence for junior officers in 1761 was consistent with the quarterdeck boys sample for that year, the combined totals in each at roughly 15 percent.

Outside the naval and social/political spheres of influence, midshipmen with connections to trades provided the next largest group in 1761. Five of the twenty-five junior officers turned up trade or merchant connections: William Hollamby, the son of a “tradesman and innkeeper;” Isaac Valiant, the son of an “eminent bookseller who served the sheriff of London;” the Patton brothers, Philip and Charles, whose uncle was a successful ship-owner from Leith; and Thomas Byard, the son of a London mercer. Byard alone of the five could also claim a naval heritage through his maternal grandfather, Captain Thomas Monk, who also happened to be a cousin to the Duke of Albemarle.⁸³ Overall the presence of trade and merchant interest appears proportionately higher than peerage or political interest although the size of the sample for 1761 is small and the data must be understood in that context.

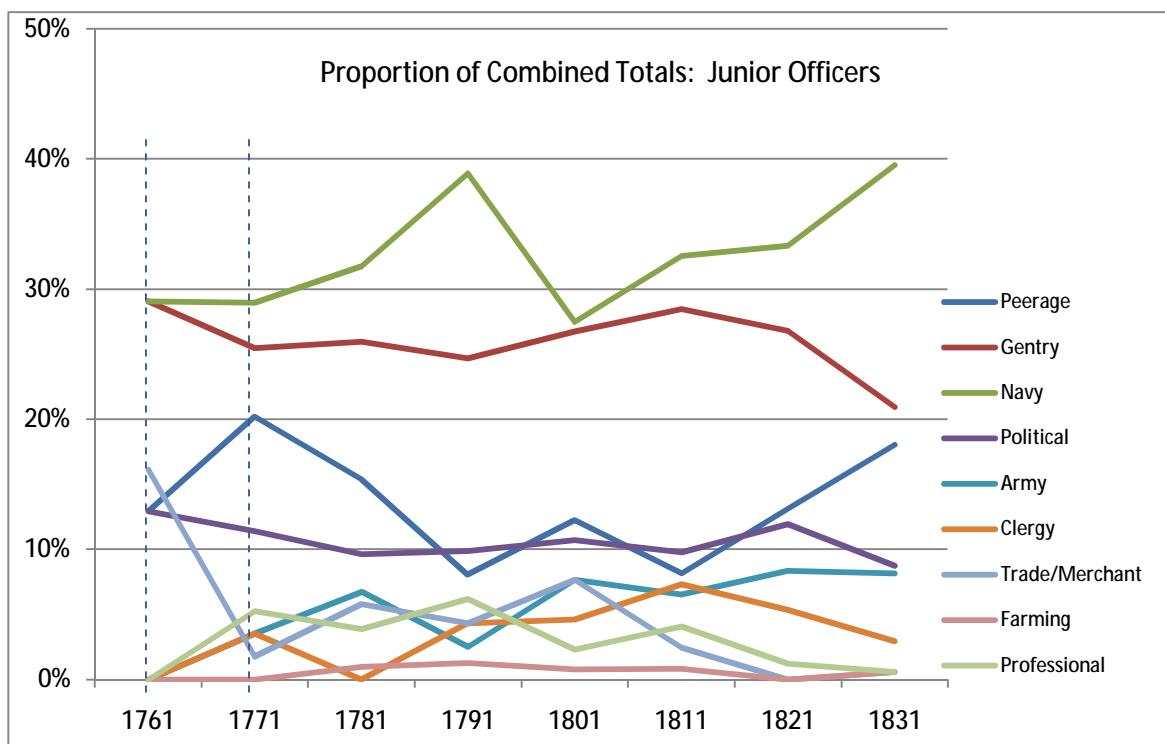
By 1771 the presence of the social elites was even more pronounced in the junior officer data with young gentlemen claiming connections to the peerage or the landed gentry *only*, making up the largest single group which accounted for 30 percent of the traceable sample. Naval influence alone represented only 19 percent. Compared to the isolated totals of quarterdeck boys for 1771, where naval influence alone represented

⁸³ See Appendix G1, J61-3-32, J61-3-47, J61-1-03, J61-4-45, J61-5-12. For Hollamby see Marioné, *Complete Navy List*; and www.captaincooksociety.com; for Valliant see *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 12 (1804), p. 511; for the Pattons, s.v. “Philip Patton” in *ODNB* (2004); for Byard see J. Bernard Burke, ed., *The St. James’s Magazine and Heraldic and Historical Register* (London, 1850), p. 158; and Marioné, *Complete Navy List*. Note: Byard’s connection to the peerage is thus far unsubstantiated and was not categorized as such in the primary databases.

nearly 60 percent of the sample, the junior officers' data suggests that it took more than just naval connections to secure a midshipman's rating in 1771.

Beyond this, the data reflects a complicated web of multiple socio-professional connections which, apart from two large groups, become difficult to interpret in their isolated form. A block of seven junior officers claimed both naval and peerage connections, while another block of five showed gentry and political connections. The importance of these relationships is, however, more visible in a proportional representation of the combined totals.

Figure 5.4 Proportion of Combined Totals, Junior Officers, 1761-1771.



The equivalency of naval and gentry connections (31 percent each), and of peerage and political connections (14 percent each) are notable features in the 1761 data. It is a vastly different scenario from that of quarterdeck boys for the same year, in which the dominance of naval influence in the traceable sample was overwhelming. The

proportionately equal importance of peerage and political connections in 1761 is more indicative of the expected links between the two influences. That equality stands out here, however, due to the widening gap that separated peerage and political influences in 1771. The same pattern of change was mirrored in the quarterdeck boys' sample, and the similarity between both sets of data for 1771 tends to support the explanations proposed in Section 2b, for the separation of overt social and political influences.

The equal importance of both naval and gentry connections in 1761 is more surprising when seen against the 41 percentage point difference that separated the two in the quarterdeck boys' sample for the same year. Such a difference suggests that the sons of gentlemen were more favored when it came to midshipmen's appointments, either as entry-level positions or as promotions from servants' ratings. These options are further explored in the next sub-section. By 1771 a separation of several percentage points appeared between gentry and naval influence, with naval influence taking a visible lead. Both these influences fell, however, against the sharp rise in the presence of young nobility which was greater in 1771 than at any time in this study. This increase paralleled a similar rise in the presence of aristocratic quarterdeck boys in the same year. Among junior officers, however, a 7 percentage point increase placed the influence of the nobility (20 percent) roughly on a par with that of the gentry (25 percent) and the Royal Navy (29 percent), an instance of equality between the three influences that would not be seen again within the parameters of this study.

The push from the social elites in 1771, and the differences that separate the data for quarterdeck boys and junior officers in that year, provides further evidence that those young gentlemen with social connections were able to secure a greater proportion of the available junior officer appointments, thereby positioning themselves one step closer to

commissioned rank. The surge in the appearance of the social elites, particularly the peerage, in 1771 was likely the product of peacetime reductions in the fleet, increased competition for limited positions and, as we have seen, the willingness of sea officers and the peacetime Admiralty to support the traditional rights and privileges of social rank and the machinery of patronage that was oiled by it. The relatively high proportion of trade/merchant connections in the 1761 sample is consistent with the observations in the quarterdeck boys' data which showed a high level of social diversity. The actual numbers behind the data for 1761 are, however, very small and must be treated with caution.

i. Ages of quarterdeck boys and junior officers

The strong showing of the social elites in the junior officers' data for 1761 and 1771 tends to support two of the theories proposed earlier: first, that the social elites preferred a midshipman's rating as an entry-level position for their sons and relatives; and second, that among the traceable influences, social rather than naval connections tended to propel nascent careers in the junior officer ratings. One way to test these theories is to look at the ages of the traceable candidates as a way of determining what stage in their careers these junior officers were at when the sample was taken.

Due to the small amounts of age data available for 1761, the comparison can only be effectively carried out for 1771. Table 5.1 shows the difference in age ranges of the traceable young gentlemen from both data sets.

Table 5.1 Ages of Quarterdeck Boys and Junior Officers, 1771.

Ages	Quarterdeck Boys 1771	Junior Officers 1771
<11	5 (15%)	2 (3%)
11-15	10 (29%)	14 (19%)
16-20	4 (12%)	32 (44%)
21-26	1 (3%)	15 (21%)
>27	0 (0%)	4 (5%)
No Record of Age	14 (41%)	6 (8%)
Total Traceable Sample	34	73

Sources: Appendix F2, “Quarterdeck Boys 1771”; and Appendix G2, “Junior Officers 1771.”

The largest age category shown for quarterdeck boys in 1771 was that of twelve to fifteen-year olds. This conforms to Admiralty guidelines which required that servants not be younger than thirteen or, for the sons of sea officers, not younger than eleven. A small number of older servants, aged between sixteen and twenty, represented a mix of naval and gentry “sons.” The regulations for the Naval Academy, allowed that the majority of scholars were aged between sixteen and nineteen when they graduated and entered the service as volunteers per order. By these standards there was nothing unusual in the presence of these older servants. At the extreme end of the scale, Lord Cochrane was twenty-three and although he was rated able seaman, his name appeared on the *Centaur’s* books immediately beneath the entry for Captain John Bentinck along with the other captains’ servants.⁸⁴

The majority of junior officers (44 percent) were, as expected, between sixteen and twenty years of age; however a strong showing of younger midshipmen (nearly 20 percent) were between the ages of eleven and fifteen. It is unlikely that these youngsters had

⁸⁴ Archibald Cochrane did not make a career in the Royal Navy (or the army, which he also attempted) and it is likely his late appearance as Bentinck’s “protégé” was the product of social connections and perhaps of their shared interest in mechanical inventions, rather than a true example of a servant’s career progress. S.v. “John Albert Bentinck” and “Archibald Cochrane, 9th Earl of Dundonald,” in *ODNB* (2004).

acquired the two years at sea in order to be officially rated as midshipmen, therefore it is probable that this group (and the 2 individuals who were under the age of eleven) reflected entry-level recruits. These sixteen midshipman entrants were not, however, dominated by one particular socio-professional group and it is important to note that the principle categories of navy, gentry, peerage, and politics are represented among this sub-group in almost the same proportions as they are in the larger sample of junior officers. The proportions of the combined total of junior officers under the age of sixteen are presented alongside the proportions of the traceable sample of all junior officers:

Table 5.2 Proportions of Junior Officers under 16 and the Traceable Junior Officer Sample, 1771

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Proportion of Jnr. Officers under 16</u>	<u>All Traceable Jnr. Officers</u>
Naval	32%	29%
Gentry	25%	25%
Peerage	14%	21%
Politics	11%	11%
Professional	7%	5%
Army	7%	3%
Clergy	4%	4%
Trade	0%	2%

Sources: Appendix G2, "Junior Officers 1771: Ages."

The idea that the aristocracy and the landed gentry wielded more influence when it came to starting their sons and relatives in the service as midshipmen is sustainable in that collectively the elites represented the largest portion, 39 percent, of the traceable *entry-level* group of midshipmen and mates. Conversely, when it came to captains' servants, the peerage and gentry together accounted for 33 percent of the total, but came in a far second to naval influence at 56 percent.

Of the seventy-three traceable midshipmen from 1771, the careers of fifty-three could be followed, and of these, fifty-one achieved commissioned rank. The majority of these (66 percent), reached the rank of post-captain or higher. Of these high-ranking individuals, roughly one quarter began as entry-level midshipmen. As entry-level midshipmen also made up about one quarter of the traceable sample, it is evident that an early start in the rating of midshipman did not provide a statistical advantage when it came to a successful naval career.

Table 5.3 Highest Rank achieved by Traceable Junior Officers compared to Entry-Level Midshipmen, 1771

<u>Highest Rank Achieved</u>	<u>No. All JOs</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No. of Entry-Level Mids</u>	<u>%</u>
Mid	2	2.7	1	6.3
Lt	11	15.1	3	18.8
Cmdr	3	4.1	1	6.3
Ret Cmdr	1	1.4	0	0
Post	14	19.2	3	18.8
Ret RA	2	2.7	0	0
RA	2	2.7	0	0
VA	4	5.5	3	18.8
Adml	10	13.7	1	6.3
Adml of Fleet	1	1.4	1	6.3
RM officers	3	4.1	0	0
Unknown	20	27.4	3	18.8
Total	73	100	16	100

Source: Appendix G2, “Junior Officers 1771: High Ranks.”

c. *Summary*

Apart from the data for junior officers in 1771, the traceable samples for the first two years of this survey are too small to draw conclusions with much certainty. An inability to identify such a large portion of the samples suggests that the majority of these

young gentlemen hailed from middle or working-class origins and possessed no obvious social or professional connections to propel their careers. This may be indicative of more open attitudes towards recruitment from the lower social orders, including the lower deck. It may also be indicative of a situation in which the majority of those sampled were not intended for careers as commissioned officers. If, however, estimates suggest that less than one quarter of all servant positions were slated for young gentlemen, then the data for junior officers from 1771, in which 24 percent of the sample was traceable is, statistically speaking, more representative of those who were actually officers-in-training. Among this group, the virtual equivalency of naval, gentry, and peerage influence was a striking characteristic, and suggests that during the peace, when positions were scarce, a disproportionate number of opportunities went to the social elites. Of the 303 midshipmen sampled in 1771, forty-nine (16 percent) claimed connections to the peerage or the landed gentry. In terms of the breakdown of English society in 1770, which estimates an elite population of around 15,400 families,⁸⁵ roughly 0.2 percent of the total population of England and Wales, the high proportional representation of the social elites in the navy's junior officer corps becomes clear. The results indicate that during the peace of 1771 a naval career was not only popular among elite sons, but that captains were ready and willing to satisfy elite demand for appointments, even to the detriment of those with naval connections.

⁸⁵ This estimate comes from Horn and Ransome's population figures for England and Wales which in 1770 totaled 7,428,000 see David Horn and Mary Ransome, eds., *English Historical Documents, 1714-1783* (London, 1998), p. 508. John Cannon's estimates on the size of the English peerage for 1770 totaled 197 peers, see Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 32. Roy Porter estimates that there were roughly 15,000 "landed families" ranging from baronets and knights, to squires, see Porter, *Society*, p. 66.

Chapter Six: Eighteenth Century Selection: Junior Officers and Quarterdeck Boys, 1781 to 1791

1. Overview of the period

The American Revolution began with skirmishes between the army and colonial rebels at Bunker Hill in June 1775. In spite of Lord North's policies of appeasement the conflict escalated and saw Britain embroiled in a war that included combatants from all over Europe. In 1778 France officially lent her support to the American cause, committing a sizable fleet, under the Compte d'Estaing, to the naval effort. Engagements fought off the American coast and in the Caribbean brought mixed results for the Royal Navy. The loss of Senegal to the French, the ongoing struggles between French and British interests in India, and the commencement of Spanish attacks on Gibraltar in the spring/summer of 1779 further complicated the war effort. The struggle between Lord George Germain, who wished to divert larger line of battle ships to America, and First Lord Sandwich, who saw a greater threat closer to home,¹ was compounded by the Franco-Spanish alliance of August 1779 which highlighted the local dangers and ensured a war on multiple fronts. The declaration of Russian armed neutrality in 1780 further strained naval forces while the Dutch continued to ship naval supplies from the Baltic States to America, France, and Spain; a move that forced Britain's intervention. The seizure of a Dutch convoy provoked a war with the Netherlands and resulted in Admiral Rodney's attack on the Dutch colony of St. Eustatius in 1781. At home the Gordon Riots of 1780 and the presence of the Franco-Spanish fleet in the Channel did nothing to improve political stability under Lord North.

¹ R. J. B. Knight, "The Royal Navy's Recovery after the early phase of the American Revolutionary War," in *The Aftermath of Defeat: Societies, Armed Forces and the Challenge of Recovery*, ed. G. J. Andreopoulos and H. E. Selesky (New Haven, 1994), pp. 11-12.

By the start of the American War, Sandwich's view from the Admiralty was equally daunting. The need for new ships and vastly more efficient ways of building them were pressing concerns.² In terms of manpower the American War saw huge recruiting efforts with naval manning trebling between 1776 and 1783.³ This increase meant substantial opportunities for recruits after a long period of peace-induced freezes on appointments and promotions for aspiring officers. If the full force of Sandwich's "democratic" attitudes towards patronage were not visible in the early months of 1771, they were fully evident in the years that followed. Ever conscious of rewarding merit and long service, Sandwich's explanation to Lord Berkeley in 1779 summed up the temper of his Admiralty when it came to patronage:

The candidates for promotion in the Navy are so numerous, that . . . I am obliged to have the most strict attention to the seniority of those who either by themselves or friends solicit preferment. The rule of seniority indeed usually gives way in cases that have the good fortune to distinguish themselves in battle, but I cannot agree with your Lordship that exertions in harbor duty, though very meritorious should give the same pretention.⁴

Sandwich's flouting of tradition, which demanded promotional preference be given to young men of social rank and influence, made him far from popular and opened him to much personal and professional criticism.⁵

² Many British war ships were coming to the end of their useful lives in the first years of the 1770s. The need for a concerted ship-building effort aimed at producing long-lasting, well-built vessels would easily overwhelm the limited resources of the naval dockyards. Sandwich's personal involvement in reforming the yards both fiscally and operationally, and his support for new techniques of hull preservation such as coppering, helped build a strong, fast fleet of warships which remained seaworthy long after the close of hostilities in 1783, Rodger, *Command*, pp. 370-74, 344; *Insatiable Earl*, pp. 131-41. Also see Roger Knight, "Recovery," pp. 10-25.

³ Estimate on seamen and marines borne in 1776 range from 24,000 to 31,000. By 1782-83 the numbers range from 105,000 to 107,000, see Rodger, *Command*, p. 638.

⁴ NMM, SAN/V/13, Lord Sandwich to Lord Berkeley, written between February 16 and April 13, 1780.

⁵ Sandwich was attacked for his impartial handling of patronage and for advancing men based on merit and seniority. Much of the controversy stemmed from Sandwich's insolvency and his unconcealed political ambition, which aroused concerns over his susceptibility to bribery and corruption. Other concerns involved the misuse of patronage – by favoring the friendless, non-elites Sandwich could build a navy loyal to him, rather than to king and country. See Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, pp. 167-68, 320. For Sandwich's conflicts with

The high number of promotions for midshipmen and junior officers to commissioned rank during the American War kept the wheels of patronage moving, although Sandwich was at pains to enforce the absolute necessity of a young gentleman obtaining a full six years experience before being eligible to sit the examination for lieutenant.⁶ Others, it seemed, were not so stringent. The rash of new officer creations caused one captain to complain that the loss of sails, rigging, “and many other misfortunes” that had befallen his ship were due to rapid promotion and “making young ignorant boys lieutenants.”⁷ In 1780 Rodney remarked on the increase in the frequency of promotions in a letter to his wife: “The young man you recommended, Mr. Macloud, is made a lieutenant, in short so very numerous promotions has never happened before.”⁸ Such observations may have inspired Rodney to promote his fifteen-year old son from midshipman to post captain within the course of a year.⁹

This upward movement of junior officers meant vacancies at the lowest levels and opportunities for a vast number of recruits. The situation benefited a wide range of officer hopefults from the five-year old James Anthony Gardner, who entered as captain’s servant aboard his father’s ship *Boreas* in 1775, to the young Prince William Henry, third son of George III. The impact of William Henry’s appearance as a midshipman is discussed in the following section.

Charles Middleton over dockyard appointments see R. J. B. Knight, “Sandwich, Middleton and Dockyard appointments,” the *Mariner’s Mirror*, 57 (1971): pp. 175-92.

⁶ Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, pp. 175-77.

⁷ Captain Walter Young to Sir Charles Middleton, December 12, 1780 in Laughton, *Barham Papers*, Vol. 1, p. 86.

⁸ Vice-Admiral Rodney to Lady Rodney, February 7, 1780 in David Syrett, ed., *The Rodney Papers: Selections from the Correspondence of Admiral Lord Rodney, 1763-1780*, 2 vols., vol. 2, Navy Records Society, vol. 151 (London, 2007), p. 347.

⁹ David Syrett, “Admiral Rodney, Patronage, and the Leeward Island Squadron, 1780-82,” in *Mariner’s Mirror*, 85 (1999): p. 411.

The fall of North's ministry and the rise of the Rockingham Whigs in 1782 brought a new instability to the war effort, at home and abroad. Sandwich's replacement, Admiral the Hon. Augustus Keppel,¹⁰ brought practical experience to the Admiralty although his tenure was dogged by extremist party politics while his "exclusively political and at times vindictive handling of patronage aroused disgust."¹¹ Brief appearances by Lord Shelburne and the Duke of Portland, as ministerial heads sympathetic to the American cause, ended with George III actively working to bring down the Whigs, a plan that succeeded close on the heels of Britain's defeat in 1783.¹²

Keppel's replacement, Richard Lord Howe, was an experienced admiral though "devoid of political gifts."¹³ Described by contemporaries as "austere, morose, and inaccessible,"¹⁴ Howe managed to alienate both naval and political associates alike. The new prime minister, William Pitt the Younger, possessed a keen understanding of naval affairs and together with the help of Sir Charles Middleton, the long-serving Controller of the Navy, increased parliamentary spending on ships and materiel, producing a powerful fleet and larger peacetime establishments for manpower which reached 18,000 men in 1784 and 20,000 men in 1788.¹⁵ In the same year Pitt appointed his elder brother John, the second Earl of Chatham, as First Lord of the Admiralty.¹⁶ Undoubtedly loyal, Chatham was "a man reputed to possess an excellent understanding, but whose very name was

¹⁰ Upon his appointment as First Lord, Keppel was made Viscount Keppel and Baron Elden.

¹¹ Rodger, *Command*, p. 354.

¹² Keppel's parting gesture at the Admiralty was to initiate another promotion boom, a move capped by making eighteen post captains in his last day of office in January 1783, *ibid.*, p. 355

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

¹⁴ Joseph Harris quoted in *ibid.*, p. 363.

¹⁵ Michael Duffy, *The Younger Pitt* (London, 2000), p. 56; also see Rodger, *Command*, p. 362.

¹⁶ In spite of this appointment Pitt was known for his "disdain for patronage and strong sense of probity," William Hague, *William Pitt the Younger* (New York, 2005), p. 249. According to Duffy, Pitt was well aware that the appointment of Chatham left him open to criticism, although he felt that "establishing a compleat concert with so essential a department," justified the move, see Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, pp. 56, 102.

almost proverbial for enervation and indolence.”¹⁷ In spite of his brother’s shortcomings, Pitt continued to manage the naval situation with intelligence and foresight.

Across the Channel, the Bourbon regime faltered under the financial burden of war with Britain, in America and elsewhere, and by the start of 1789 France was on the verge of revolution.¹⁸ Troubles with Spain over Nookta Sound in 1790 were met by a Royal Navy that represented the most powerful sea-going force in the world,¹⁹ formidable enough to ensure a Spanish capitulation before hostilities could break out. National hubris over such an easy victory led to the ill-considered confrontation with Russia over the fortress of Ochakov on the Black Sea and an embarrassing retreat in 1791.²⁰

These mobilizations highlighted the dearth of young officers, particularly lieutenants, many of whom had fallen out of the service after the Peace of Paris in 1783. Even for those young gentlemen who were fortunate enough to remain employed, peace brought prospects of idleness. The loss of professional skills that resulted from their lack of use was of particular concern to senior admirals. In 1783 Lord Hood observed “we shall have scarce a Lieutenant that will know his duty . . . we have so many ignorant Boys . . . which from being any time ashore will of course become more ignorant.”²¹ Of greater concern to the corps of aspiring lieutenants was the professional stasis brought on by the peace. In 1788, while captain of the *Boreas*, Nelson remarked on the lamentable career prospects facing his young gentlemen:

¹⁷ Edmund Burke, ed., *The Annual Register: or a view of the History, Politics and Literature for the year 1809* (London, 1821), p. 223.

¹⁸ This state of affairs prompted Pitt to consider France “an object of compassion,” quoted in Hague, *Pitt*, p. 268.

¹⁹ In 1790 the navy possessed “upward of 90 sail of the line in good condition with every article of their stores provided,” and presented a formidable force. Charles Middleton quoted in Rodger, *Command*, p. 362. In terms of tonnage, British battleships in 1790 surpassed their nearest rival France by almost 100,000 tons, and Spain by 124,000 tons, see Glete, *Navies and Nations*, p. 382.

²⁰ Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, p. 177; Hague, *Pitt*, pp. 285-27.

²¹ Lord Hood to George Jackson, January 29, 1783 quoted in Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 84. (Hood’s emphasis).

The rated mates had each been near Twenty years at sea [and] been for years Lieut[enant]s in the late war but had not the good fortune to be confirmed. The mids were young men who had altogether or nearly served their time & without fortunes . . .²²

The prospect of a new war changed the situation almost overnight. The Nootka Crisis brought hope to the beleaguered corps of passed midshipmen and mates as mobilization saw “a large number of promotions: 303 new lieutenants in 1790, including over 150 on a single day, November 20, 1790.”²³ William Dillon began his long career in the summer of 1790, inspired by the opportunities made available during the Crisis. In that year his father observed: “many ships are now fitting out, and I think there will be little difficulty in finding a berth.”²⁴ Although he did not figure on William being too young to enter the service at age ten-and-a-half,²⁵ the senior Dillon nevertheless found his son a position with Captain Sir Andrew Snape Douglas who placed him aboard the *Saturn* which was fitting out in Spithead.

Dillon, and many like him, were fortunate that the abortive mobilizations of 1790-91 were quickly bolstered by the sure-fire promise of a lasting employment that came with the declaration of war by revolutionary France in February 1793. The effects of war on naval recruitment and the social implications of such mass inductions into the service are examined in relation to the data in Section 3.

²² Horatio Nelson, December 3, 1788 quoted in *ibid.*, p. 85.

²³ Rodger, *Command*, p. 380. Charles Consolvo notes that these promotions were “reward[s] for service during the mobilization” although a motivating factor in the Admiralty’s decision to promote so many new lieutenants must have involved concerns over the size of the officer corps. See Charles Consolvo, “The Prospects of Promotion of British Naval Officers, 1793-1815,” in *Mariner’s Mirror*, 91 (2005): p. 137.

²⁴ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 8

²⁵ Dillon’s first application to the Duke of Dorset met with the duke’s observation that “He is too young. Young gentlemen are not placed in the Navy till they are fourteen,” quoted in *ibid.*, p. 9.

2. The Royal Service: Prince William Henry goes to sea

In 1779 George III sent his son, the fourteen-year old Prince William Henry, to sea as a midshipman with the instructions: “I desire he may be received without the smallest marks of parade,” and insisting that “the young man goes as a sailor, and as such, I add again, no marks of distinction are to be shown unto him: they would destroy my whole plan.”²⁶ Exactly what the king’s plan was is open to speculation,²⁷ although the widespread approval for the move showed it to be a masterful public relations exercise. Popular poems and ballads sang the praises of the “naval prince”:

*England’s young, but future pride;
William’s a name which fate ordains
To spread his country’s glory wide.*²⁸

William’s appearance aboard the *Prince George*,²⁹ one of the largest ships in Rodney’s fleet, brought much pride to the king who saw in his son the requisite qualities of a sea officer. In May 1779 George wrote to Sir Samuel Hood: “I flatter myself you will be pleased with the . . . boy who neither wants for resolution nor cheerfulness, which seem necessary ingredients for those who enter into that noble profession.”³⁰ In the early stages of Prince William’s career, it appeared that his father’s enthusiasm was well founded. William was fortunate to be part of Rodney’s “Moonlight Battle” in 1780 which ended with the capture of a Spanish convoy and earned him the esteem of friends and foes alike.

The *Annual Register* reported the comments of the distinguished Spanish prisoner,

²⁶ George III to Sir Samuel Hood, June 11, 1779 in John Knox Laughton, ed., *The Naval Miscellany*, Vol. 1 Navy Records Society, vol. 20 (London, 1902), pp. 226-27.

²⁷ One account suggested that George III’s “resentment for the behaviour of his brother, the Duke of Cumberland, at the trial of Admiral Keppel” lay behind his plan to ensure that the Duke “was never to be Lord High Admiral, which he would have been otherwise,” quoted in John Timbs, *A Century of Anecdote, from 1760 to 1860* (London, 1860), p. 275.

²⁸ Quoted in Charles Napier and John Leyland Robinson, *The British Tar in Fact and Fiction: The poetry, pathos, and humour of the sailor’s life* (London, 1909), p. 238.

²⁹ The *Prince George* was the flag ship of Rear-Admiral Digby.

³⁰ George III to Sir Samuel Hood, May 27, 1779 in Laughton, *Naval Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 226.

Admiral Don Juan de Lángara who, upon seeing the young prince doing the duties of a humble midshipman was said to exclaim: “Well may England be mistress of the sea, when the son of her king is thus employed in her service.”³¹ The action inspired another popular poem “The Royal Sailor” which praised the commitment and patriotism of the young prince and was further affirmation of public support for William’s naval career.

His courage gave rapture to each jolly tar,
Who look on Prince William their bulwark in war.
He’s royal, he’s noble, he’s chosen to be
*The guard of this isle and the prince of the sea.*³²

The political exigencies of restoring dignity to the service in the wake of the disastrous Keppel-Palliser affair (1779),³³ which ended in the courts martial of both admirals, and the need to bolster a fragile North ministry suggested that William’s naval service, whether by accident or calculation, provided a much needed public distraction.

For the prince, his early experiences afloat may have been less about fame and glory and more about striking a balance between service rank and social rank. According to an early biography the prince “never [wore] any other dress than his uniform, and his star and garter only when receiving addresses, or on any other public occasion.”³⁴ The leveling principles of the midshipmen’s berth also impacted the prince’s conduct. One story suggested that, “in the first week of his cruise, for some impertinence at mess, [the prince] received a drubbing from one of his mates.” When William threatened to report the

³¹ Quoted in James Dodsley, ed., *The Annual Register, or a view of History, Politics, and Literature of the Year 1837* (London, 1837), p. 195.

³² “The Royal Sailor” (author’s italics) in C. H. Firth, *Naval Songs and Ballads*, Navy Records Society, vol. 33 (London, 1908), pp. 262-66.

³³ On October 15, 1778 an anonymously published letter blamed the insubordination of Vice-Admiral Sir Hugh Palliser for the inconclusive outcome of Admiral Keppel’s action against the French off Ushant earlier that year. The controversy devolved into a politically-charged media event which concluded with Keppel’s court martial, on charges brought by Palliser, of “misconduct in action,” and Palliser’s own court martial for similar charges. Both men were acquitted, although Palliser “was forced out of the Admiralty and his career was ruined,” Rodger, *Command*, pp. 337-38.

³⁴ *Ralph’s Naval Biography* quoted in Mundy, *Life of Rodney*, Vol. 2, pp. 216-17.

messmate to his father, the mate replied, “I would serve your father in the same way if he were in your place and behaved as unlike a gentleman.” Apparently the lesson was well learned. Years later William, then king, met his old mate and thanked him for his “first hiding at sea,” saying that “it helped to make a man of me.”³⁵

While such sentiments may well be apocryphal, the trouble William stirred with Captain the Hon. Patrick Napier was not. In 1782, despite the supervision of Sir Samuel Hood, the royal midshipman quarreled with his captain, a situation that caused his father to lament: “I cannot admire the warmth he has shown in the disputes that have arisen between him and Captain Napier . . . William has ever been violent when controlled.”³⁶

Despite George’s wish that his son receive no special favor when it came to his career, William was made a lieutenant in 1785 and given his first command despite the general opinion that he was “Spoilt, temperamental and barely experienced enough to stand a watch . . .”³⁷ The king’s desire to hold his son to the standards of a naval meritocracy was backed up by his admonition to William to conduct himself professionally as “the Prince, the gentleman and the officer . . . that by the propriety of your conduct I can alone with justice to my country advance you in your profession.”³⁸ Both George’s convictions and his actions in sending William to sea on an ostensibly equal footing with all other young gentlemen were astonishing by the social standards of the day. Such a “socially radical, even revolutionary”³⁹ decision had long-ranging effects on the perception of a naval career. In the short term, however, the old biases held firm: that sea officers, regardless of their social qualifications, were a rough and ready lot for whom “the good

³⁵ Dr. Doran quoted in Timbs, *History of Anecdote*, p. 275.

³⁶ George III to Sir Samuel Hood, April 16, 1783 in Laughton, *Naval Miscellany*, Vol. 1, p. 227.

³⁷ Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 108.

³⁸ George III to Prince William, August 1784 quoted in Jeremy Black, *George III: America’s Last King* (New Haven, 2006), p. 114.

³⁹ Rodger, *Command*, p. 388.

breeding of a fine gentleman [was] a character totally unknown”⁴⁰ The truth of this opinion, along with an assessment of the influence of William’s presence as a midshipman on the social aspects of recruitment, is examined in Section 4.

a. *Naval perspectives versus public perceptions*

Throughout the eighteenth century the efforts of the Admiralty and the crown to boost the social cachet of a naval career met with relatively little success. The rough living and working conditions aboard a man-of-war hindered most attempts to recast the cockpit as a well-mannered environment suitable for raising young gentlemen. The conditions were enough to shock one young commentator who noted “scenes of licentiousness, drunkenness, swearing and immorality.”⁴¹ Such an environment did little to foster gentlemanly behavior and the qualities of presentation and address prized by polite society. Despite the king’s emphasis on his son behaving as an officer and a gentleman, the assumption that a commission went hand in hand with genteel status did not always ring true. In 1783 George III complained to Richard Grenville that, “William is rather giddy and has rather too much the manners of his profession, polishing and composure are the ingredients wanting to make him a charming character.”⁴² By the following year the king was ready to take up the matter with William directly: “the natural attendance whilst at sea certainly was no advantage to your manners”⁴³

The problem of ill manners was by no means limited to the royal midshipman. A general consensus among polite society was that sea officers were coarse, unrefined, and incapable of exhibiting social restraint. Admiral Vernon, the product of a privileged upbringing, observed that

⁴⁰ Major the Hon. H. F. R. Stanhope quoted in *ibid.*, p. 387.

⁴¹ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 14.

⁴² George III to Richard Grenville, July 15, 1783 quoted in Black, *George III*, p. 155.

⁴³ George III to William, February 13, 1784 quoted in *ibid.*, p. 155

The general notion about sea officers is that they should have the courage of brutes, without any regard for the fine qualities of men, which is an error they too often fall into. This levels the officer with the common seaman, gives a stark wrong idea of the nature design and end of the employment⁴⁴

Vernon held fast to the rule that officers should also conduct themselves as gentlemen and was disturbed by the unfortunate reputation being reinforced by poorly-raised recruits.

Just how poorly-raised was a matter of frequent discussion in the memoirs of James Anthony Gardner. In 1782 Gardner was introduced to his messmates aboard the *Panther* by a “rugged muzzled midshipman” who “sang out with a voice of thunder ‘Blister my tripes – where the hell did you come from?’,” while the young gentlemen of his next ship, the *Salisbury*, were “a terrible lot of wild midshipmen . . . [who] would play all manner of wicked pranks”⁴⁵ Such casts of characters inspired Captain Collingwood to charge his young friend O. M. Lane to be mindful of the company he kept in the midshipmen’s mess and to “guard against ever submitting yourself to be the companion of low, vulgar, and dissipated men.”⁴⁶

To some degree the reputation for poor manners stemmed from a lack of education. An “Essay on Gentlemen” published in the *Gentleman’s and London Magazine* of 1785 touted the virtues of education when it came to forming a genteel spirit: “any one can be born a gentleman - Nature makes men, indeed, and sends them into the world, but education must make *gentlemen* or *brutes*.”⁴⁷ As discussed in Chapter Four, the absence of schoolmasters aboard the vast majority of ships, and the exclusivity of access to the Naval Academy at Portsmouth, meant that for many young gentlemen the only education they

⁴⁴ Admiral Vernon quoted in Rodger, "Training," p. 8.

⁴⁵ Gardner, *Recollections*, pp. 19-20, 48-49.

⁴⁶ Collingwood to O. M. Lane, November 7, 1787 in Newnham Collingwood, *Correspondence*, p. 25.

⁴⁷ Anonymous, "Essay on Gentlemen," in *The Gentleman’s and London Magazine* (August, 1785), p. 418. (Author’s emphasis).

received was in seamanship and navigation.⁴⁸ Peter Borsay suggests that the late-eighteenth century saw a preference for educating children and adolescents through “real-life experience” which was “in some respects more valuable than formal education” when it came to learning the social skills that would set a youth on the road to success.⁴⁹ Young men and boys who went to sea certainly learned by experience – although the closed system of the ship meant that seamanship was rarely augmented by the kind of social or educational diversions that would make them functional members of polite society. Niceties such as dancing, etiquette, and manners often went untaught and left many young men without the social qualifications that would be required of them when they became officers and “gentlemen.” The importance of dancing was noted by many, including the instructors at the Naval Academy as “dance and bodily deportment in general, were one of the principle mechanisms in the adult world for expressing politeness and thereby gentility.”⁵⁰ As a young captain, Nelson took great pains to exercise his recruits at social skills as well as seamanship. According to his first lieutenant, Nelson “encouraged Music, Dancing and Cudgeling and Young Gentlemen acted plays which kept up their spirits and kept their minds employed.”⁵¹

The environment of the cockpit, governed by other junior officers, lacked mature supervision and often became a scene of unchecked mischief. Gardner was stabbed with a bayonet during a “game” which the midshipmen of the *Edgar* indulged in while the officers dined in the wardroom. As retribution he loaded a musket with powder only and fired it at his attacker. The young man’s face “was black as a tinker’s, with the blood

⁴⁸ See Chapter Four for a full discussion of the educational opportunities, and the lack thereof, provided for young gentlemen during the eighteenth century.

⁴⁹ Peter Borsay, “Children, Adolescents and Fashionable Urban Society in Eighteenth Century England,” in *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century: Age and Identity*, ed. Anja Müller (Aldershot, Hampshire, 2006), p. 56.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁵¹ James Wallis, First Lieutenant of the *Boreas*, March 25, 1787 quoted in Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 84.

running down occasioned by some of the grains of powder sticking in it.” Gardner was rewarded with a nickname for his wild and rather dangerous efforts.⁵² Aboard the *Salisbury* in 1785, a group of midshipmen, “some of whom were members of the Hell-fire Club”⁵³ cut off the lower part of a fellow midshipman’s ear “because he kicked a little at the tyranny.”⁵⁴

Scenes of heavy drinking punctuated by indecent songs were common in the cockpits of many ships, going unnoticed or consciously unchecked by the senior officers.⁵⁵ Michael Lewis suggests that the level of crudeness exhibited in the midshipmen’s mess was dictated by the social quality of its inhabitants,⁵⁶ although William Dillon noted that even among a mess of “highly connected” young gentlemen, “such as Byng, Herbert, Digby, Pigot, and Ayscough,” there were others “of a different stamp” who influenced much of the raucous behavior seen in that part of the ship.⁵⁷ It is questionable though whether there was much difference between the behavior of these “other” midshipmen and that of the high-borns.⁵⁸ Prince William himself exhibited a “foul mouth and a strong head,” while a “vast repertoire of dirty stories made him the terror of every genteel

⁵² Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 83.

⁵³ The second incarnation of the Hell-fire Club, founded by Sir Francis Dashwood in the mid-eighteenth century, was a socially-exclusive organization devoted to paganesque decadence, although reports of “debauchery” and “blasphemous rituals,” were likely overblown myth inspired by political rivalries. By 1780 Dashwood’s club was all but defunct although various recreations of the Hell-fire club, based on its principles of anti-morality and its rejection of the Reformation of Manners, continued to appear into the nineteenth century. Geoffrey Ashe, *The Hell-fire Clubs: A History of Anti-Morality*, revised edition (Charleston, SC, 2000), pp. 133, 167. While it is highly unlikely that any of the *Salisbury*’s midshipmen actually belonged to one of the new clubs, their claim sought to identify them as well-heeled rakes who renounced the conventions of polite society.

⁵⁴ Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 44.

⁵⁵ See Dillon on his experiences aboard the *Alcide* in 1792 in Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, pp. 38-40, 199.

⁵⁶ Lewis, *Social History*, pp. 268-69.

⁵⁷ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 21.

⁵⁸ It has been noted that in the French *Marine Royale*, whose aspirants were made up entirely of young noblemen, that “all efforts were directed to turn gentlemen into sailors and no attempt was made in the opposite direction,” see James S. Pritchard, *Louis XV’s Navy, 1748-1762: A study of organization and administration* (Montreal, 1987), p. 66.

drawing room.”⁵⁹ Traditions of initiation, the desire to assimilate with messmates, and the need to earn one’s stripes within the community of junior officers ensured a continuation of many of the behaviors that reinforced the reputation for poor manners. To polite society even the navy’s most well-born recruits failed to impress. As Rodger notes, “Many people in and outside the Navy observed that sea officers, whatever their birth, lacked something of the social graces expected of a gentleman.”⁶⁰

By the start of the 1790s there was, however, some evidence of a change taking place, at least in terms of how officer recruits saw *themselves* as gentlemen-in-the-making. Dillon’s highly class-conscious commentary suggested that while leveling attitudes still circulated in the cockpit (one midshipman aboard the *Saturn* ridiculed Dillon over the fact that his mail had been “franked as usual by a lord”⁶¹), the merits of high-birth, genteel manners, and education were becoming points of pride in the midshipmen’s mess. In 1791 Dillon recalled his introduction to Captain Sir Andrew Douglas, who expressed delight in both the quality and the breadth of his education. “When I told him that I had partly been educated in France,” Sir Andrew “made a few observations on the necessity of naval officers being familiar with foreign languages.”⁶² A conversation Dillon had with his father some years later also spoke to a noticeable change in the living conditions of young officers. His father began:

“Bill, I see you have table cloths, silver, spoons and forks. Is that the custom in the Navy now?” “Yes, Sir,” [Dillon] replied. “Well then, it’s all over with the Navy. We are done for! When I was in it we ate our meals out of bowls and platters. Silver indeed!”⁶³

⁵⁹ Philip Ziegler, *King William IV* (London, 1973), p. 78.

⁶⁰ Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 433.

⁶¹ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. I, p. 16.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

Gardner wrote of the midshipmen's accommodations aboard *Barfleur* in 1790 which "were fitted up in great style (the beginning of luxury which the war soon after put a stop to) . . ." He also remarked on the strict attention to cleanliness and order which demanded fines from those midshipmen who took candles from the tables or forgot to hang up their hats, a practice that was "all very well for the dandy aristocracy, but did not suit some of us who had formerly belonged to the old Edgar. . . ." ⁶⁴ Several years later, the eleven-year old George Perceval, who later became the 6th Earl of Egmont,⁶⁵ arrived aboard the *Orion* and noted the high standard of the accommodation: "I like the cockpit very much for we are all very merry and we have everything as comfortable as I could wish it."⁶⁶

In the last decades of the century it was also apparent that young gentlemen were taking particular pride in their appearance. Peter Cullen, a surgeon's mate, admired one young midshipman who was "very finely dressed for going to a ball" in a "fine waistcoat, neatly frilled shirt, and superfine cravat, very ostentatiously displayed," even if he did not think much of the young man himself.⁶⁷ The change was also noted by some senior officers who equated affectations of elegance with signs of effeminacy and weakness. In 1789 a young midshipman aboard the *Edgar* felt the wrath his admiral, the Hon. John Leveson Gower,⁶⁸ who was "a mortal foe to puppyism." Gower observed "one of our midshipmen going aloft with gloves on . . . for which he got a rub down that I am certain he remembers to the present day . . ."⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 108.

⁶⁵ George James Perceval was the third son of Lord Arden and nephew of the Rt. Hon. Spencer Perceval, who was Attorney General to the second Pitt administration in 1805 and became Prime Minister in 1809, Marioné, *Complete Navy List*; s.v. "Spencer Perceval," *ODNB* (2004).

⁶⁶ PER/1/2, George Perceval to his father, Lord Arden, August 9, 1805.

⁶⁷ Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, p. 56.

⁶⁸ Gower himself was the son of an Earl.

⁶⁹ Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 67.

The appearance of dandyism among sea officers was widespread enough to be satirized at the playhouse. In 1791 Edward Thompson's, *The Fair Quaker of Deal: or the Humours of the Navy*,⁷⁰ saw the protagonist, Captain Mizen, portrayed in macaroni⁷¹ grandeur with a cabin full of “girandole glasses, a fortepiano, a fine Turkey carpet and a blue damask sofa, all of which had to be protected from the tobacco-spitting colleagues.” Mizen was a rake and a dilettante with no ability or enthusiasm for his profession. According to Paul Langford, much of the popularity of the play “arose from [Thompson's] implied warning that the new foppery had infected the very source of martial valour and national honour.”⁷² The threat to the image of the sea officer as a symbol of rugged masculinity which, by the end of the century had become inextricably linked to the national identity,⁷³ was a focus of the dialogue between the old-school Commodore Flip and Rovewell “a man of fortune”:

Rove: Most noble commodore, your humble servant.

Flip: Noble! A pox of nobility, I say! the best commodores that ever went between two ends of a ship, had not a drop of nobility in them, thank Heaven.

Rove: Then you still value yourself for being a brute, and think ignorance a great qualification for a sea-captain.

Flip: I value myself for not being a coxcomb; that is what you call a gentleman captain; which is a new name for our sea-fops, who, forsooth, must wear white linen, have field beds, lie in Holland sheets, and load their noodles with thirty ounces of whores' hair, which makes them hate the sight of an

⁷⁰ The original author of the *Fair Quaker of Deal* was Charles Shadwell. Thompson altered the play significantly in 1773 and again for a new production at the Theatre Royal in 1791. See Edward Thompson, *The Fair Quaker: or, the Humours of the Navy* (London, 1773); John Bell, ed., *Bell's British Theatre: consisting of the most esteemed English plays*, vol. XIV (London, 1797), p. 1.

⁷¹ The term “macaroni,” coined in the 1760s, applied to wealthy and educated young men who returned from the Grand Tour of Europe influenced by Italian manners and fashion. It was intended as a movement against the “sober, stuffy insularity” of previous generations, but excess, affectation, and immoral behavior made the term synonymous with foppery and ignorance, see Langford, *Polite*, p. 576. The *Oxford Magazine* of 1770 complained of the androgynous Macaroni: “It talks without meaning, it smiles without pleasantry, it eats without appetite, it rides without exercise, it wenchess without passion,” quoted in Joseph Shipley, *The Origins of English Words: A Discursive Dictionary of Indo-European Roots* (Baltimore, 2001), p. 143.

⁷² Langford, *Polite*, p. 577.

⁷³ Timothy Jenks, *Naval Engagements: Patriotism, Cultural Politics, and the Royal Navy, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 2006), p. 76.

enemy, for fear bullets and gunpowder should spoil the beau wig and laced jacket . . .⁷⁴

The Fair Quaker presented two opposing images of a sea officer, separated by both social rank and professional ability. It recalled the old “gentlemen/tarpaulin” conflict and highlighted the new social and professional tensions through dramatic hyperbole. As with any satire, however, the play’s humor stemmed from a kernel of truth. Whether the threat posed by the new manners to professionalism and the image of the service as a bulwark of masculine virtue was real or imagined, change was perceived in the way that young officers presented themselves, both to their naval colleagues and to society at large. Thompson’s forward to the 1791 production of the *Fair Quaker* summarized the general concern:

Much of the roughness of the naval manner is, however, wearing off – All that remains to be wished is, that the high spirit of valour, exulting in peril unequalled though the various stations of life, may not, by the change, be lowered, and the British Navy in consequence ceases to be deemed invincible.⁷⁵

b. *Agents of change*

Two factors, working in concert, provide an explanation for the changes noted by these naval and civilian commentators in the ways young gentleman conceived of themselves as members of a social *and* a professional elite. The first was the broadening definition of what made a gentleman a gentleman and its effect on notions of honor and duty. Nicholas Rodger’s monograph on the evolution of aristocratic concepts of personal honor towards more “middle class virtues of duty and service in public esteem” identifies a paradigm shift in both naval and civil consciousness which took place at the end of the eighteenth century. Evangelical morality, bourgeois professionalism, and heightened

⁷⁴ Act 1, Scene I, “The Fair Quaker of Deal” revised by Edward Thompson in Bell, *Bell's British Theatre*, pp. 14-15.

⁷⁵ Edward Thompson, forward to “The Fair Quaker of Deal,” in *ibid.*, p. 7.

nationalist sentiment saw “the old idea of honor . . . infiltrated by the new ideal of duty.”⁷⁶

The individualism implied by honor which “emerg[ed] out of a long-established military and chivalric tradition . . . characterized above all by a stress on competitive assertiveness”⁷⁷ was, by the last decades of the eighteenth century, becoming less suited to the collective needs and institutional expectations of the navy. As a result, the old idea that “tedious, unspectacular duty in obscure or unprofitable situations was inherently dishonorable,”⁷⁸ began to give way to a sense of obligation to the service and, through a heightened sense of patriotism that flourished during the post-American War years, obligation to one’s country.⁷⁹

Anna Bryson identifies the change as a movement from “courtesy to civility,”⁸⁰ one which saw a fundamental change in the perception of gentility and the qualities that defined a gentleman.⁸¹ According to Peter Borsay “Inherited position and attributes were valued less and less; appearance and behavior were esteemed more and more.”⁸² In short, manners were becoming the mark of a gentleman, a change that placed greater emphasis on outward signs of refinement such as “carriage and demeanour, affability, speech and benevolence to each other”⁸³ rather than on lineage. Such a cultural sea-change was the

⁷⁶ Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” pp. 425, 446.

⁷⁷ Mervyn James, *Society, Politics and Culture: Studies in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 308-09.

⁷⁸ Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 437.

⁷⁹ Cain, *Imperialism, Vol. I*, p. 649.

⁸⁰ Bryson expands on Norbert Elias’s “civilizing process” and Michel Foucault’s notions of “shifting patterns of meaning which underlie the historical development of . . . codes of practice” to assert that the aristocracy of early modern England came to redefine manners in terms of a more personal, ordered, humanist “civility,” Anna Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility: Changing Codes of Conduct in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 15-16.

⁸¹ Also see William Willcox, *The Age of Aristocracy, 1688 to 1830*, 3rd edition (Lexington, MA, 1976), pp. 75, 174; Dewald, *European Nobility*, pp. 54-56; Black, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 90.

⁸² Borsay, “Children, Adolescents,” p. 60.

⁸³ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, p. 332. Guy Miège, a distinguished French commentator, noted in 1748 that “The title of gentleman is commonly given in England to all that distinguish themselves from the common sort of people, by a genteel dress and carriage, good education, learning, or an independent station,” quoted in Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770* (London, 1898), p. 227.

product of economic expansion and the subsequent growth of the professional, merchant, and business classes whose new-found wealth “created the need for greater accessibility to status.”⁸⁴ One essayist in 1785 noted the prevalence of ideas which held

that the outward forms of politeness are the constituents of a *gentleman*. In this light, we have *gentlemen* hair-dressers, and *gentlemen* apothecaries.— a duke has by this definition no superiority over his valet, and the first courtier at the castle is on a par with one of the battle axes.⁸⁵

Other contemporaries remarked on the very noticeable increase, during the second half of the century, of people referring to themselves as “Mr,” “Mrs,” and “Esquire.”⁸⁶ Paul Langford sees this as one of the products of a social revolution which took place during the later part of the eighteenth century, and effected the “debasement of gentility” through the influence of wealth, education, and manners.⁸⁷ While most historians agree that the titled aristocracy remained the dominant force in the organization of British society in the eighteenth century and beyond,⁸⁸ economic and industrial changes were redefining the parameters of gentility, enriching a new middle class to the point that old equations of high birth, social status, and wealth became less tenable.⁸⁹ If the actual ranks of the hereditary elite failed to expand⁹⁰ then attitudes toward how gentility was defined certainly did. Ostentatious signs of wealth and rank became less palatable, while intangible qualities

⁸⁴ Fletcher, *Gender, Sex, and Subordination*, p. 60; also see Langford, *Polite*, pp. 65-66.

⁸⁵ Anonymous, "Essay on Gentlemen," in *The Gentleman's and London Magazine* (August, 1785), p. 418. (Author's italics).

⁸⁶ John Nichols quoted in Langford, *Polite*, p. 65.

⁸⁷ Langford, *Polite*, p. 67.

⁸⁸ Rudé, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 77; Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 169; David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New York, 1999), p. 9.

⁸⁹ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. xv, 177; Langford, *Polite*, pp. 66-67; Porter, *Society*, pp. 50; Black, *Eighteenth Century*, pp. 95-96; Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society, 1680-1730* (London, 1982). For statistical evidence of the *nouveau riche* and the sustainability of the landed elite see Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 210, 402-03.

⁹⁰ Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 32.

such as manners, worldliness, and urbanity, qualities that did not depend on heredity, increasingly became the hallmarks of fashionable society.⁹¹

The Reformation of Manners also ushered in a broadening definition of honor which increasingly became “a currency in which people of modest rank could deal even if their stock in it were small . . .”⁹² The remodeling of old-order social structures helped broaden the definition of a “gentleman” to include anyone with the education, manners, and financial means to assume at least the appearance of a gentleman and the code of honor that went with it.⁹³

The second factor affecting the way in which officer recruits saw themselves and the ways in which society perceived the new-breed sea officer, lay in the old assumption that an officer was automatically a gentleman. According to one young commentator, a commission conferred “an independency and the rank of gentleman in every society and in every country.”⁹⁴ As discussed in Chapter Four, the equation of the two was one of the foundations on which the system of naval hierarchy and authority was built, ensuring the social and professional separation of lower-deck and quarterdeck and investing young aspirants with the natural authority of gentility.⁹⁵ As not-quite-officers, however, many quarterdeck boys and junior officers who were not gentlemen by birth, laid claim to the title of “gentleman” solely through their aspirations to one day become a commissioned officer. Such tenuous professional and therefore, social claims, necessitated obvious displays of gentility through other means – dress, deportment, and manners – indicators that could be learned or purchased by those with the necessary smarts or resources. The

⁹¹ Dewald, *European Nobility*, pp. 52-54.

⁹² Jonathan Powis, *Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1984), p. 4.

⁹³ See Lord Chesterfield’s opinions on the appearance of gentility in Charles Pullen, “Lord Chesterfield and Eighteenth-Century Appearance and Reality,” in *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* (Summer, 1968): pp. 501, 75; also see Langford, *Polite*, p. 66.

⁹⁴ Edward Baker to Samuel Homfray, July 18, 1800, quoted in Hattendorf, *BND*, p. 546.

⁹⁵ Elias, “Genesis,” pp. 294-95.

process, however, was not a leveling down, to the lowest common social denominator, but a leveling up – a confirmation that aspiring officers, regardless of their social origins, were members of a social and professional elite on par, at least for a time, with a prince of the blood.

The question of whether such a heightened sense of gentlemanly privilege among recruits was the product of a real increase in the appearance of socially-elite young gentlemen also raises the question of whether the presence of royalty in the service had any effect on recruitment. An examination of the data provides a way of assessing (on a limited scale) whether the presence of William Henry influenced the social quality of officer candidates by raising the prestige of the service through royal association, or whether the changes noted by Dillon, Gardner, and others were the product of wider social influences.

3. Recruitment: quarterdeck boys, 1781 and 1791

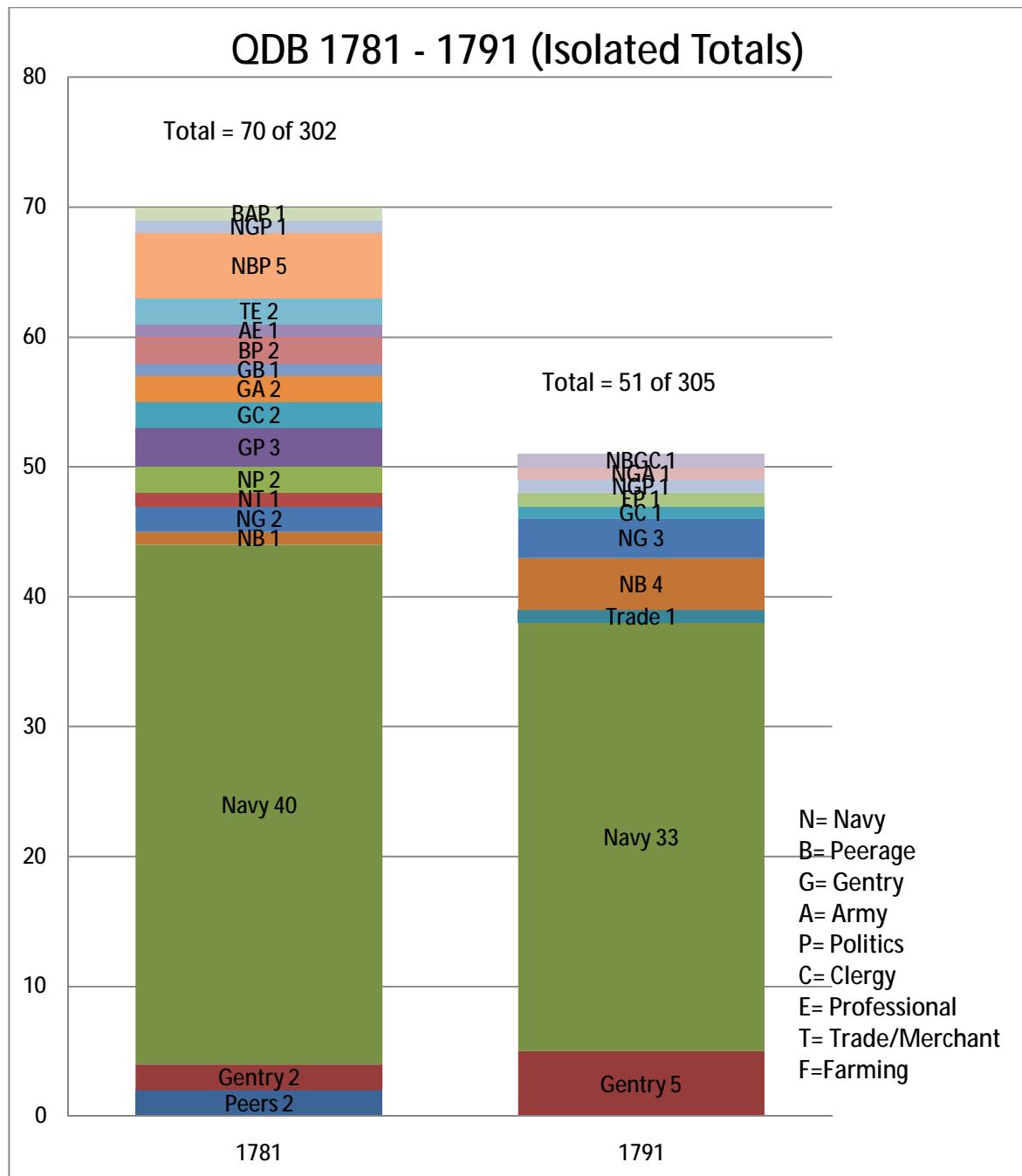
a. *Discussion of the data: naval interest at an all time high*

From the 1781 sample of 302 quarterdeck boys, seventy candidates (23 percent) turned up traceable backgrounds. For 1791 the sample of 305 quarterdeck boys revealed only fifty-one traceable candidates (nearly 17 percent). Overall these results reflect a vast improvement in the traceability of the sample from the earlier years of the study. A key reason for the improvement was discussed in Chapter Five, and suggested that the timing of naval careers begun as servants and junior officers during the opening years of the American War, increased the likelihood that these young gentlemen would go on to long careers in the well-documented French Wars. Augustus Keppel's propensity to promote, especially as his tenure as First Lord was coming to an end, also assisted this process of moving recruits up and into the more traceable ranks of commissioned officers. This said,

the fact remains that more than three-quarters of the candidates sampled in 1781 and 1791 remained untraceable. The possibility, however, that two-thirds to three-quarters of the total number of officers' servants surveyed here were not young gentlemen destined for the quarterdeck, remained high. With this in mind, there is a strong possibility that the traceable portions of the samples represent a sizable segment of actual officer aspirants.

In 1781 and 1791 the importance of purely naval connections remained paramount among traceable candidates. In both years, quarterdeck boys who entered the service *only* through connections to the navy accounted for the vast majority of recruits: 57 percent of the traceable sample in 1781, and 67 percent of the traceable sample in 1791.

Figure 6.1 Quarterdeck Boys, 1781 and 1791 (Isolated Totals)



Of the forty servants who entered with *only* naval interest in 1781, 95 percent claimed connections to a commissioned sea officer, from lieutenants to admirals. Only two, George Ralph Collier, whose father was chief clerk of the Victualling Board and Stephen Hookey,

a relative of William Hookey, who served as timber master of the Deptford Dockyard, possessed naval connections that did not involve a commissioned officer.⁹⁶

By 1791 there appeared to be more diversity in the type of naval influence at work. While 84 percent of quarterdeck boys claiming only naval connections were related to commissioned officers, the options appeared to open a little for boys related to pursers, warrant officers, and Navy Board officials. It is possible that this slight broadening of opportunity reflected the needs of recruiting captains to fill vacancies quickly, a situation that resulted in their looking beyond the obvious ranks of commissioned officers to other potentials within the naval “family.” It may also reflect attitudes which embodied the new openness to the qualities that defined an officer and a gentleman.

In 1781 the presence of servants with *only* connections to the peerage and the landed gentry was small; 6 percent of the traceable sample. If, however, those social connections were combined with naval interest then the presence of young elites can be seen as more substantial, accounting for 19 percent of the known sample. William Beauclerk⁹⁷ was the second son of the 5th Duke of St. Albans *and* the grandson of Admiral Lord Vere Beauclerk. Similarly, Charles Elphinstone⁹⁸ was the second son of Lord Elphinstone and the nephew of Admiral Lord Keith, a close friend of the Prince of Wales. In these cases, and others like them, the most effective forms of interest were in play; naval influence combined with the highest social backing.

These numbers suggest that in the last two decades of the eighteenth century there was a substantial drop in the incidence of quarterdeck boys with purely social ties entering the service. The fall-off is most noticeable when compared to the data from 1771, in which

⁹⁶ Appendix F3, “Quarterdeck Boys 1781,” Q81-3-21, Q81-3-62.

⁹⁷ Appendix F3, Q81-4-54.

⁹⁸ Appendix F3, “Quarterdeck Boys 1781,” Q81-4-56.

the sons of peers and the landed gentry, without any connection to the navy or explicit political ties, accounted for 27 percent of the traceable sample.

Table 6.1 Quarterdeck Boys: Comparison of Peerage *only* and Gentry *only* Connections, 1761 – 1791, as a percentage of the Traceable Samples (Isolated Totals)

<u>Social Connections</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>
% Peerage Only	0	9	3	0
% Gentry Only	12	18	3	10
% Total Elites	12	27	6	10

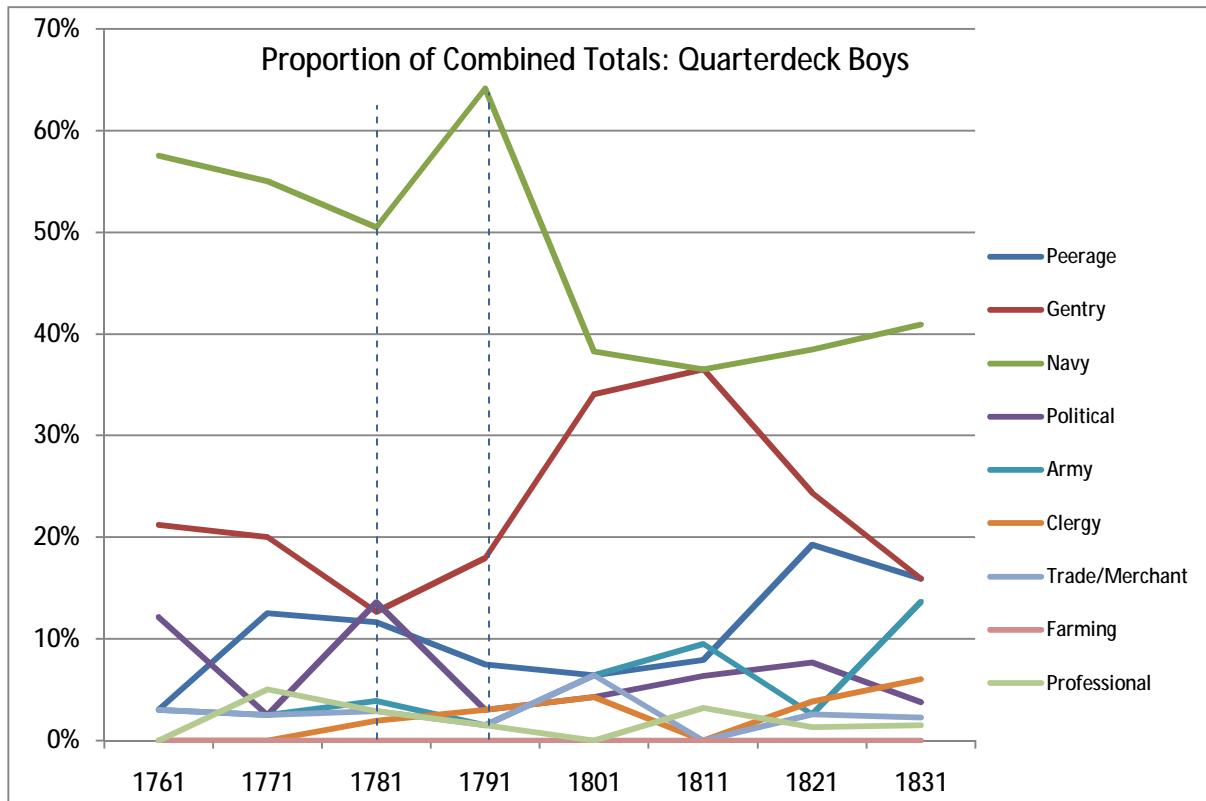
Sources: Appendix F1, “Quarterdeck Boys 1761;” Appendix F2, “Quarterdeck Boys 1771;” Appendix F3, “Quarterdeck Boys 1781;” Appendix F4, “Quarterdeck Boys 1791.”

In terms of the proportional data, which uses combined totals to compare the relative importance of the various forms of interest,⁹⁹ the superiority of naval influence becomes immediately visible among the traceable candidates. The data for 1781, however, showed a slight decrease in the relative importance of naval connections from the 1771 sample, although the peak that occurred in 1791 reflected the largest showing of naval influence at any time during this study. This increase coincided with the Nootka Sound and Ochakov mobilizations and their attendant increases in recruitment. In terms of comparison between the traceable categories it appeared, more than ever, that the Royal Navy in 1791 looked within the service to answer its need for officer recruits. The untraceable majority of quarterdeck boys can also be seen as support for this theory. It is possible that a good portion of these unknowns hailed from the lower deck or from obscure working-class families with distant or indirect ties to recruiting captains. In essence, the monopoly held by captains over the appointment process, meant that the overwhelming majority of entry-level positions were, in the final analysis, the product of some form of naval influence.

⁹⁹ See Chapter Two, Section 5 for an explanation of the calculation methods used.

Coincidentally, the importance of associations with the social elites fell significantly, almost by half, for the landed gentry between 1771 and 1781, although their presence made a small resurgence in 1791.

Figure 6.2 Proportion of Combined Totals, Quarterdeck Boys, 1781 to 1791



What is most noticeable in the proportional data is the spike in the relative importance of political influence in 1781. A boy's connections to a relative with political sway appeared to be of equal importance to either peerage or gentry connections when it came to securing an entry-level position. This scenario likely reflects a more reliable assessment of the relationship between social and political influence than the data for 1771. The equivalency of these three forms of interest was to be expected, although it stands out here as one of the few times during the course of this study that expectations matched the data results. As confirmation of the natural link between political and social ties, all of the

thirteen servants who claimed political connections also revealed explicit social interest, with the majority being the sons or relatives of peers.¹⁰⁰

It is worthwhile noting that 1781 marked a year in which the Admiralty was headed by Lord Sandwich, a notably non-traditional player when it came to distributing patronage.¹⁰¹ The degree of preference usually shown to high-borns was not as apparent under Sandwich, a situation that appears to be reflected in the data. While political influence rose to meet the levels of social influence, the overall importance of social connections when it came to securing servants' appointments in 1781 was noticeably less than it had been in 1771. As the Admiralty exercised very little direct control over entry-level appointments it is possible that the data shows a purely coincidental reduction in the appearance of social influence among entry-level recruits and the arrival of Sandwich. It is also possible that Sandwich's attitudes towards patronage echoed those of many recruiting captains who then capitalized on the support from above to offer positions to the sons of deserving colleagues and acquaintances rather than the sons of those who exerted the greatest social pressure. The state of war in 1781 also meant that most captains and admirals faced matters more pressing than officer recruitment. The expediency of appointing servants from the nearest available source, in this case the sons of service men and fellow officers, may have been at least partially responsible for the decrease in the presence of the elites in that year.

¹⁰⁰ James Ross, 2nd son of a baronet; George Lord Garlies, 4th son of an earl; Digby Macworth, son of a baronet; Henry Sylvester, relation of a baronet; William Beauclerk, 2nd son of a duke; Charles Elphinstone, 2nd son of a baron; Charles John Carey; grandson of a viscount; Thomas Sarden Lethbridge, relation of a baronet; and William Elphinstone, relation of a baron.

¹⁰¹ The degree to which Sandwich's attitudes towards patronage differed from other First Lords, before and after him, is yet to be examined in detail although Rodger notes that Sandwich may have been even more rigorous at excluding political influence than his mentor, Anson. See Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, pp. 167-68, 178.

An alternative explanation for the sharp increase in the appearance of political influence in 1781 lies in the suggestion that while Sandwich may have been immune to political handling, recruiting captains and admirals were not. A high degree of political turmoil occurring in and around the North ministry in 1781 would certainly have raised political awareness among senior officers. The presence of the Rockingham Whigs and Charles James Fox, coupled with anti-catholic sentiment stirred up during the Gordon Riots, bled over into the Royal Navy which continued to feel the sting of the politically and religiously charged Keppel-Palliser affair.¹⁰² The extent to which politics boiled over into naval matters was noted by Lord Sandwich in December 1781 when he wrote of Admiral Keppel and his loyal captains:

though I acknowledge there are some very good officers and very good men among them, they have suffered politics to lead them so totally that the good of the service is a very secondary consideration with them.¹⁰³

For others, self-interest rather than explicit political ideology provided a rationale for recruiting decisions. The actions of Admiral Rodney, as Commander in Chief of the Leeward Islands station, could singlehandedly have contributed to the apparent spike in political appointments. As indifferent as Sandwich was to social and political influence, Rodney was invested, as “no one rose faster under Rodney’s command than the sons of the powerful.”¹⁰⁴ The presence of Prince William Henry in Rodney’s squadron, only underlined the point, as the Admiralty could be certain that Rodney would not miss an opportunity to show the utmost deference to his royal charge. An early-nineteenth century

¹⁰² Though it appears that Keppel was little more than “a-glove puppet for extremists of the Rockingham party” the affair became a touchstone for political faction. See Rodger, *Command*, pp. 337-38; Langford, *Polite*, p. 547. Rodger also notes that it was common knowledge “that the Pallisers had once been Catholics, and that some of them were still, so it was even suggested that Sandwich and Palliser were in secret league to overthrow Protestantism and liberty,” Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 246.

¹⁰³ Memorandum by Lord Sandwich, December 31, 1781 in G. R. and J. H. Owens Barnes, ed., *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782*, 4 vols., vol. 4, Navy Records Society, vol. 78 (London, 1938), p. 298.

¹⁰⁴ Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 176.

biography of Rodney, written by his son-in-law, remarked of the event: “It was a circumstance no less gratifying than flattering to Sir George Rodney that he was selected by his Majesty to introduce [Prince William], to the service of his country . . .”¹⁰⁵

From the available data it is difficult to determine which of these explanations best accounts for the decline in the presence of the social elites and the rise in the appearance of political interest. The most likely explanation is that the situation reflected a combination of all of the above-mentioned scenarios which were occurring simultaneously, and were almost entirely dependent on the personal and professional preferences of individual captains and admirals. It is interesting to note that the preference shown to the sons of political players coincided with a decline in the relative importance of naval connections (1781), although the nature of the data necessarily produces a zero-sum scenario throughout.

What is clear, however, is that this pattern did not last. The onset of peace, combined with the political and social volatility of the times, appeared to initiate a shift in the handling of naval patronage over the next decade.

b. *1791: Crisis of the aristocracy?*

The significant decline in the relative importance of connections to the peerage and to politics, which occurred among quarterdeck boys in 1791, was matched by a distinct rise in the importance of connections to the landed gentry. Until 1791 the influence of the peerage and the landed gentry rose and fell together. Although the steepness of their movements varied, the overall trends remained parallel. In 1791, however, the trend lines diverged for the first time with the relative importance of gentry connections almost

¹⁰⁵ Mundy, *Life of Rodney*, Vol. 2, p. 216.

doubling between 1781 and 1791, while the importance of peerage connections fell almost by half. This separation may be attributable to a number of factors.

First, it is possible that changes in both the government and the Admiralty affected general attitudes towards recruitment. Differences in the personal feelings and political affiliations¹⁰⁶ of Sandwich and Chatham may well have reflected in their handling of patronage, and it was likely that these attitudes trickled down to affect the actions of recruiting captains when it came to entry-level appointments. Politics may also have accounted for another possible explanation for the decline in peerage connections in 1791. The fall of the Portland ministry in 1783 saw the Whigs in opposition against Pitt's ministry.¹⁰⁷ By the election of 1790, faction was rife and it is not unreasonable to expect that Whig peers might have avoided the navy while it was under the stewardship of their political rivals. Throughout the years of the French Wars, tenuous coalition governments under Pitt drew greater opposition from the more radical (and aristocratic) Whigs.¹⁰⁸ Despite a strong showing of Whig peers at the Admiralty from 1794-1804, the pattern of declining peerage influence among quarterdeck boys continued throughout the French Revolutionary War years.

A third possible explanation for the fall-off in peerage influence may also be attributable to the fact that while 1791 was essentially a peacetime year, the early months still reverberated from the large-scale mobilizations of the previous year. The threat of war, first with Spain then with Russia, undoubtedly raised interest in the armed forces –

¹⁰⁶ Characterizations of Sandwich as essentially Whig and Chatham as a Tory are too schematic for the complexity of the political climate at the time. Differences in their “political affiliations” refers more to the manner in which politics impacted patronage decisions. See Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, pp. 10-12; Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, pp. 62-63.

¹⁰⁷ Despite the shifting nature of party politics after 1745 a large number of peers, including both younger sons who held seats in the Commons and their seniors in the Lords, remained steadfast Whigs of one flavor or another. Tories on the other hand, became the party of the “King’s friends” and “country gentlemen,” Hague, *Pitt*, pp. 55-59.

¹⁰⁸ Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, pp. 61-63.

although the sons of the nobility had traditionally gravitated towards the army¹⁰⁹ which afforded greater prestige and obviated the need for six years of on-the-job training before being eligible to become an officer.¹¹⁰ The army provided a path of less resistance – for those who could afford to purchase a commission – and an opportunity to distinguish oneself without the “middle-class professional” taint often associated with the navy.¹¹¹ In the late-eighteenth century aristocratic attitudes to professions, even higher professions like the navy, “spurned the calling as derogatory to their birth.”¹¹² Such a possibility could also explain the distinct rise in the appearance of gentry sons in 1791. The navy may have held greater appeal for the sons of the middle-classes and the gentry who generally displayed more favorable opinions toward the professions than the nobility.¹¹³ Young gentlemen of more modest means had little choice but to stick with the navy.

Lastly, it is possible that the divergence in gentry and peerage influence echoed perceptions of a widening gap between the two branches of the social elite, one that had matured by the last decades of the century. Throughout the early to mid-eighteenth century the separation between the titled hereditary aristocracy and the untitled landed gentry was primarily political, with many aristocrats gaining automatic entry to the House of Lords.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ For elite preferences for the army, and particularly the cavalry, see Morris Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier: A Political and Social Portrait* (Glencoe, IL, 1960), p. 95; and Andrew B. Wood, *The Limits of Social Mobility: social origins and career patterns of British Generals, 1702-1815*, unpublished PhD research in progress (London School of Economics, 2009), personal notes. My thanks to Andrew Wood for permission to note his work.

¹¹⁰ Lord Robert Manners, brother of the Duke of Rutland, considered the input of time and energy necessary to prepare for a commission as “trifling too much with one of the first families in the kingdom,” quoted in Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 437. Lord Mansfield explained to Sandwich that Manners was “genuinely keen on the Navy, but ‘the same ambition makes him impatient of being humbled, mortified and kept back’, and he would quit the Service if he were obliged to wait for promotion,” Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, p. 175.

¹¹¹ Rodger suggests that the navy “had always been a professional, quasi-bourgeois organization . . . ;” Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 447.

¹¹² Sir George Stephen on attitudes toward the legal profession as an example, quoted in Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 11, 158-59. See Chapter Two, Section 6 for the definition of “higher professions.”

¹¹³ Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, pp. 1, 174; Cain, “Gentlemanly Capitalism,” pp. 505-07.

¹¹⁴ All English peers were entitled to a seat in the Lords, while only sixteen representative peers from Scotland (after 1700) and twenty-eight from Ireland (after 1801) received a seat in the House of Lords, see Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, pp. 9-10.

Although it must be acknowledged that both the gentry and the peerage incorporated a number of sub-strata differentiated by wealth, land-ownership, social status, and political power, in essentials, they possessed much in common.¹¹⁵ Towards the end of the century, however, a gulf had begun to open. It has already been noted that the qualifications which defined a “gentleman” had broadened by this time. The redistribution of wealth brought on by a thriving market economy and nascent industrialism combined with an emphasis on education for the children of upwardly mobile, middle-class families; a reformation of manners; and the infiltration of evangelical morality into the fabric of British society had, by the 1780s and 1790s, become a movement in which “nobility” no longer referred solely to a hereditary right, but also to a kind of “personal nobility”¹¹⁶ derived from the new cultural standards.

The adoption of these revised principles of gentility was aided by the domestic virtues of King George himself whose morality and reserve appealed to a growing middle class who “saw in the royal couple the living embodiment of respectable family life.”¹¹⁷ “Farmer George’s” simple and moralistic principles (which were not emulated by his male offspring), struck a chord with a public weary of aristocratic corruption and excess. Fox’s decadent personal life was further sullied by his support for the American rebels which, as the century wore on, translated into an almost traitorous lack of patriotism.¹¹⁸ The equation of aristocratic values with immorality, excess, and revolutionary politics, grew more potent

¹¹⁵ A public education, a dual residence between country estates and town houses, a leisured existence with no need for work, an obsessive attention to matters of “honour, precedence, and protocol,” and an interest in “voluntary service to the state . . . as civilian and as military men,” marked out common ground between the titled grandees and the gentry, see Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 13.

¹¹⁶ Vicesimus Knox quoted in Langford, *Polite*, p. 691.

¹¹⁷ Langford, *Polite*, p. 581. Colley also treats the adulation afforded by “George’s domestic reputation.” In 1789 the *Times* described Queen Charlotte as “a pattern of domestic virtue, which cannot be too much admired,” see Linda Colley, “The Apotheosis of George III: Loyalty, Royalty and the British Nation, 1760-1820,” in *Past and Present* (February, 1984): p. 125.

¹¹⁸ Hague, *Pitt*, p. 60; Langford, *Polite*, p. 559; Colley, “Apotheosis,” p. 104.

in the wake of the Regency Crisis of 1788 and the start of the French Revolution.¹¹⁹

William Wilberforce noted his despair for: “the universal corruption and profligacy of the times, which taking its rise amongst the rich and luxurious, has now extended its baneful influence and spread its destructive poison through the whole body of the people.”¹²⁰ Such attitudes produced a backlash which helped to elevate the middle-class virtues of industry, piety, morality, and nationalism to new heights – beyond those of the natural authority granted by aristocratic birth.¹²¹ They were virtues that sat more easily on the shoulders of the nebulous, porous, and common gentry. This is not to say that the navy or society at large rejected aristocratic power on the social or political level. It did, however, present a challenge to aristocratic social hegemony;¹²² a challenge that depended on the presumption of a certain amount of social mobility, at least between the middling orders and the gentry. According to one historian “the typical middle-class Englishman . . . loved a lord” and although “he did not think he could become a lord he did think his son could become a gentleman.”¹²³ The mobility enabled by the new standards of gentility allowed the middle classes greater access to genteel status.

¹¹⁹ Newman addresses the construction of aristocracy as “frenchified,” immoral, and cosmopolitan. See Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830*, revised edition (New York, 1997), pp. 46, 101, 138.

¹²⁰ Wilberforce to Lord Muncaster, August 14, 1785 in R. I. Wilberforce and S. Wilberforce, “Life of William Wilberforce,” in *The Monthly Review* (May-August, 1838): p. 163.

¹²¹ Black, *Eighteenth Century*, p. 91; Langford, *Polite*, p. 582.

¹²² In his counter to J. C. D. Clark’s theory of a continuing patrician hegemony, Paul Langford’s argument that “Peers had influence, but not power, let alone hegemony” hinges on the idea that “blue blood and rank, without property, counted for very little,” see Langford, *Polite*, p. 690. John Cannon, however, shows that peers “maintained their share of the expanding national income” and that there was “a distinct improvement in the financial position of the peerage in the eighteenth century,” see Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, pp. 131-32.

¹²³ Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman: The Rise and Fall of an Ideal* (London, 1993), p. 9. Defoe noted of the “politer son” that “if he was sent early to school, has good parts, and has improv’d them by learning, travel, conversation, and reading, and abov [sic] all with a modest and courteous behavior . . . he will be a gentleman in spite of all the distinctions we can make . . . ,” Daniel Defoe, *The Compleat English Gentleman* (Charleston, SC, 2009), p. 258.

In terms of the navy such mobility was, and had always been, an essential part of quarterdeck society, expressed in the equation of an officer and a gentleman, independent of his social origins. When it came to the handling of patronage within the service, the apparent alignment of civic and naval opinions regarding the qualities that defined a gentleman, and a preference for the more middle-class virtues gentlemen now embraced, may have translated into a significant increase in the importance of gentry ties when it came to selecting officer recruits.

Each of these possibilities attempts to explain the single most significant aspect of change taking place between 1781 and 1791 – the decline in the appearance of peerage connections and the simultaneous leap in gentry connections. It is likely that a combination of all these factors was responsible for the changes visible in the quarterdeck boys' data. As with the surveys for previous years it is important to note that while 32 percent of quarterdeck boys were traceable overall in 1781, social backgrounds were only available for about three quarters of these. In 1791, 29 percent of subjects could be traced, although just over half of these turned up family histories. Such small numbers limit the certainty of any conclusions and demand a careful use of the data.

In the biographies that do *not* include information on parentage or other family connections it can be inferred that while these junior officers did progress in their careers,¹²⁴ they had no wish to declare their origins in official documentation and/or did not rise to a level of professional notoriety that would warrant detailed scrutiny of their origins. Whether out of shame for their inferior circumstances, fear of professional

¹²⁴ In most cases of young gentlemen who turned up career histories without family backgrounds, their service record was available due to the fact that they had achieved commissioned rank which made them visible in sources such as Pappalardo's *Lieutenants' Passing Certificates* and O'Byrne's *A Naval Biographical Dictionary*, among others.

prejudice, or the fact that they simply regarded the information as irrelevant, their social backgrounds remain unknown – at least within the limits of this study.¹²⁵

4. Junior Officers

a. *Discussion of the data: midshipmen mirror quarterdeck boys*

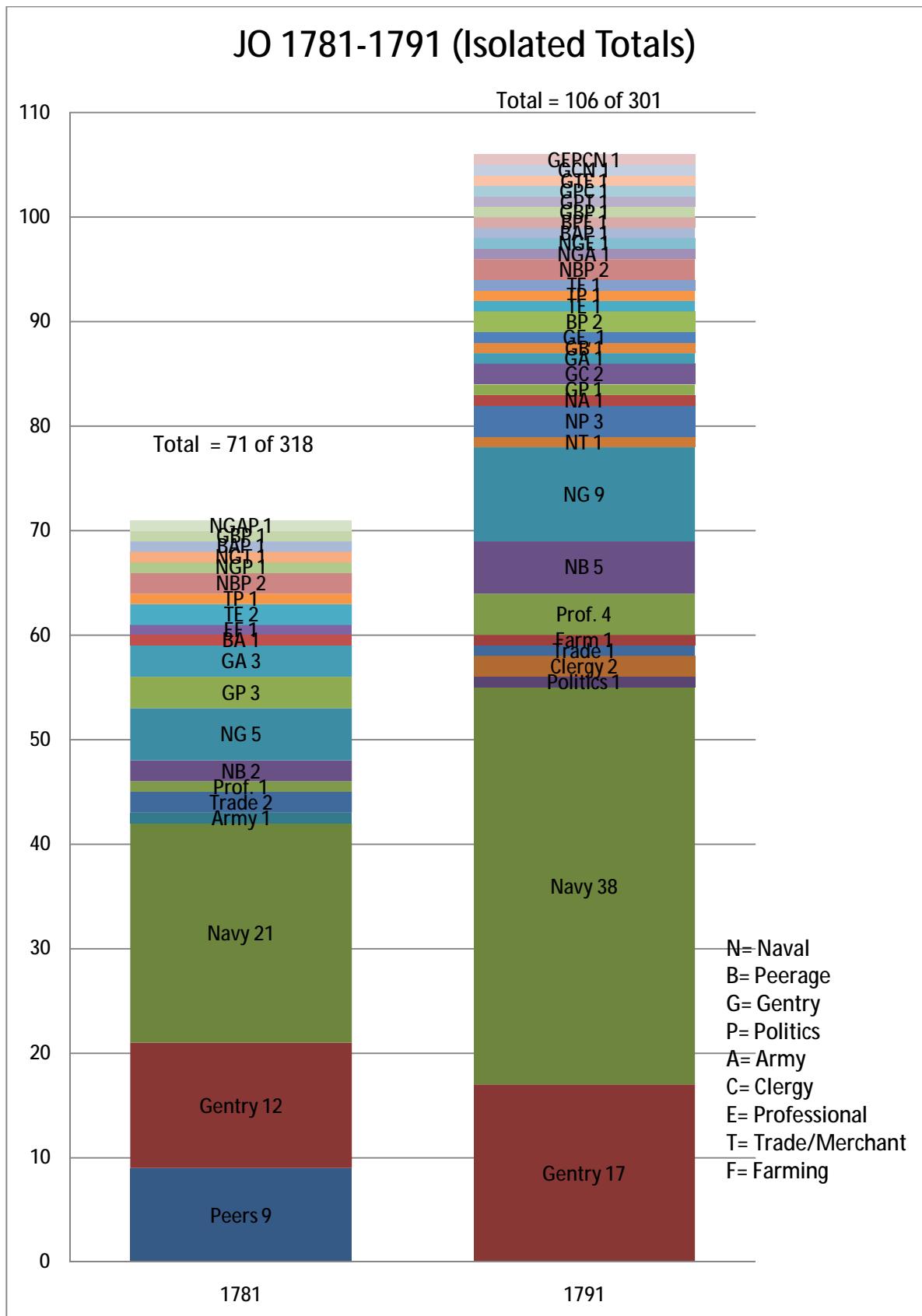
When it came to the social make up of the corps of midshipmen, masters' mates, and acting lieutenants the trends observed among quarterdeck boys were not only echoed but amplified. Allowing for a significant increase in the number of traceable young men in the junior officers' sample, the similarities tend to reinforce the explanations offered in the previous section, particularly those that speak to the subtle changes in attitudes towards social status as they affected recruitment practices.

In 1781 a total of seventy-one junior officers could be traced to one or more of the nine socio-professional categories. Of the 318 sampled, this represents just over 22 percent – a figure that roughly equaled the traceable sample of quarterdeck boys for the same year. In 1791 the proportion of traceable junior officers jumped to 35 percent, with 106 of 301 total candidates turning up socio-professional links. This represents approximately twice the number of traceable junior officers than quarterdeck boys in 1791. The great improvement in the availability of background information on junior officers in 1791 is largely attributable to the fact that as midshipmen and mates, these young gentlemen were perfectly positioned to take the step to commissioned rank by the onset of the French Wars in 1793.

¹²⁵ It is important to remember that despite the large number of untraceables in both samples, the assessment of the information offered here is based on observations of movements *within* particular socio/professional categories over time, which, with the consistent methods used to classify candidates, provides a reasonably accurate picture of change within each particular group.

As the graph below reveals, along with the increased traceability of the sample, there was a parallel increase in the complexity of the socio-professional relationships involved. In 1781 a total of twenty socio-professional combinations appeared in the data, while in 1791, that number exploded to thirty-two categories, many of which involved two or more different connections.

Figure 6.3 Junior Officers 1781 and 1791 (Isolated Totals)



What is visible from the isolated totals is the strong showing of gentry and peerage only influence in 1781, followed by a complete fall-off in peerage-only influence in 1791 – a pattern that mirrored trends for quarterdeck boys in the same year.

Where the two databases diverge, however, is in the breakdown of the numbers behind those trends. Junior officers with *only* peerage and gentry connections represented just under one third of the traceable sample in 1781, a proportion that nearly equaled the number of navy *only* connections. In the quarterdeck boys' sample the proportion was much lower, with the combined numbers of peerage and gentry connections only one tenth that of naval connections. It is interesting to note, however, that between 1771 and 1781 there was very little numerical difference in the representations of those with only social influence, although the incidence of junior officers with only naval connections increased significantly.

Table 6.2 Comparison of Junior Officers' Isolated Totals 1771 to 1781 (numbers of traceable candidates)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Navy Only</u>	<u>Gentry Only</u>	<u>Peerage Only</u>
JOs from 1771	14	13	9
JOs from 1781	22	12	9

One explanation for the continuity in the number of junior officers with connections solely to the peerage between 1771 and 1781 is that a midshipman's rating remained popular as an entry-level position for the sons of the nobility. Of the nine junior officers with peerage-only connections, six were aged between eleven and seventeen, two were nineteen, and one's age was unknown. When all junior officers with peerage plus *other* connections were considered, of the total of fifteen, eleven boys were aged between nine and seventeen, two were nineteen, and two were unknown. If the average age of the

midshipmen claiming peerage connections was 13.3 years in 1781, then this marks a significant decrease in the average age of those junior officers who claimed peerage connections in 1771, when the mean was 18.1 years.

Table 6.3 Average Ages of Junior Officers claiming Peerage Connections, 1761-1791.

<u>Average Ages JOs</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>
<u>Years</u>	19.3	18.1	13.3	19.6

Sources: Appendices G1-G4, "Junior Officers 1761 – 1791."

This dramatic, if short lived, drop in average ages of noble junior officers suggests that captains were more apt to appoint the sons of aristocrats to the rating of midshipmen as an *entry level rating* in 1781, even more so than in 1771. Ambiguous as it was, the midshipman's rating still suggested seniority and greater professional prestige than that of a captain's servant. During the American War it was likely that captains awarded such favors as a means of fast-tracking young honorables to commissioned rank. These efforts indicated a typical patronage play in which captains ingratiated themselves to grandees by appointing their sons to positions that provided every opportunity for success, and in return, the grandees were expected to assist captains in bettering their situations, professionally, socially, or politically.

In short, the sons of the aristocracy accounted for a significantly younger group of midshipmen – between the ages of nine and seventeen - who occupied junior officer ratings as entry-level appointments. By the start of the new decade, however, the preferential treatment offered to noble sons appeared to require qualification. In 1791 no junior officers appeared in the traceable sample claiming *only* peerage connections. According to the sample, a combination of naval and/or overt political influence was a necessary adjunct to aristocratic interest. As significant as the drop in purely noble

connections was, the increase in the presence of ties to the landed gentry was just as dramatic with gentry influence, alone and combined with other influences, accounting for 38 percent of the traceable sample.

In the other more sparsely represented socio-professional categories the “sons” of clergymen, traders/merchants, and professionals made a stronger showing in 1791 although it should be noted that they often did so in tandem with naval, political, or gentry interest. Midshipman John Whitby was the second son of the Reverend Thomas Whitby of Creswell Hall in Staffordshire, a kinsman of Captain John Jervis and a close follower of Admiral Cornwallis, whose flag-captain he became.¹²⁶ Nineteen-year old John Eveleigh of Lyme was the son of a tradesman "so fortunate as to interest Mr. Addington, since Lord Sidmouth, who in 1788 obtained the patronage of Sir Alex. Hood . . ."¹²⁷ Tristram Robert Ricketts was the son of John, a surgeon of Basingstoke, who was also elected burgess of Southampton in 1770 and was a relative (likely a nephew) of William Henry Ricketts Snr., and therefore the nephew of Ricketts's brother-in-law, Captain John Jervis.¹²⁸ One of the more noteworthy midshipmen surveyed in 1791 was Thomas Masterman Hardy, who served as *Victory*'s captain under Nelson at Trafalgar. Hardy was the son of a yeoman farmer from Dorset – one of only two junior officers traceable to a farming background in this sample.¹²⁹

Hardy's example highlights, once again, the main shortcoming of a study of this type – the fact that traceable histories will always be skewed towards the top end of the social and professional spectrum. In addition to the 106 junior officers who were traceable

¹²⁶ Appendix G4, “Junior Officers, 1791,” J91-3-20.

¹²⁷ Appendix G4, J91-SL-12; George Roberts, *The History and Antiquities of the Borough of Lyme Regis and Charmouth* (London, 1834), p. 290. The connection here was most likely a local Devon/Dorset one.

¹²⁸ Appendix G4, J91-3-24. Jervis's other nephew, William Henry Ricketts Jr., was given the honor of writing the first letter home, informing family and friends of Jervis's capture of the French 74, *Pégas* in April 1782, see Tucker, *St. Vincent*, Vol. 1, p. 74.

¹²⁹ Appendix G4, J91-5-21.

in 1791, another 81 could be traced in terms of their careers, although no biographical information was available on the social or professional status of their families. As discussed in Chapter Five, it is likely that this portion of unknowns entered the navy with intentions of becoming commissioned officers, although their obscure origins make them difficult to identify in a social context. These 81 likely owned to farming, trade, or merchant connections, not easily uncovered by the survey methods used here. The 115 junior officers who were untraceable at all were likely not true quarterdeck boys with “reasonable prospects” of obtaining commissioned rank.¹³⁰ As so many of the potentials for these middle and working-class categories remain unknown, this study attempts to focus on comparisons *within* the categories over time, rather than between other underrepresented groups as a way of eliminating some of the biases inherent in such an incomplete sample.

With this in mind, it is possible to see a slow but steady rise in the representation of trade/merchant backgrounds between 1771 and 1791, a trend that paralleled the growth of manufacturing and commercial markets, both in Britain and overseas, and saw a slow but steady increase in the wealth of trade and merchant families.¹³¹ While the costs associated with sending a boy to sea remained significantly less than the army, they were, by the end of the century, on the rise. The allowance of £20-£30 which “for most of the century seems to be regarded as ample” increased during the French Revolutionary Wars to “anything

¹³⁰ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 25. It is, however, impossible to know just who understood their prospects for command as “reasonable” and who did not. It is likely that many hundreds, perhaps thousands, of boys entered the service believing that they had a “reasonable” shot at commissioned rank regardless of their family connections. Lewis’s assumption, like the assumption made here, is based on whether the young “gentleman” who entered met the most basic financial and educational standards to gain admittance as a quarterdeck boy and therefore secure a chance a becoming an officer.

¹³¹ The high proportion of trade/merchant connections in 1761 must be seen in the context of a very small sample.

from £30 to £60 a year . . .”¹³² Economic success broadened the prospects of these more prosperous trade and merchant families whose sons might then capitalize on the opportunity by achieving commissioned rank and ultimately the status of a gentleman. The potential for social mobility among trade and merchant sons embarking on a naval career appeared to increase as the century progressed and may be seen as a direct function of the wider professional opportunities afforded by a thriving commercial economy.

b. *The proportional data, junior officers*

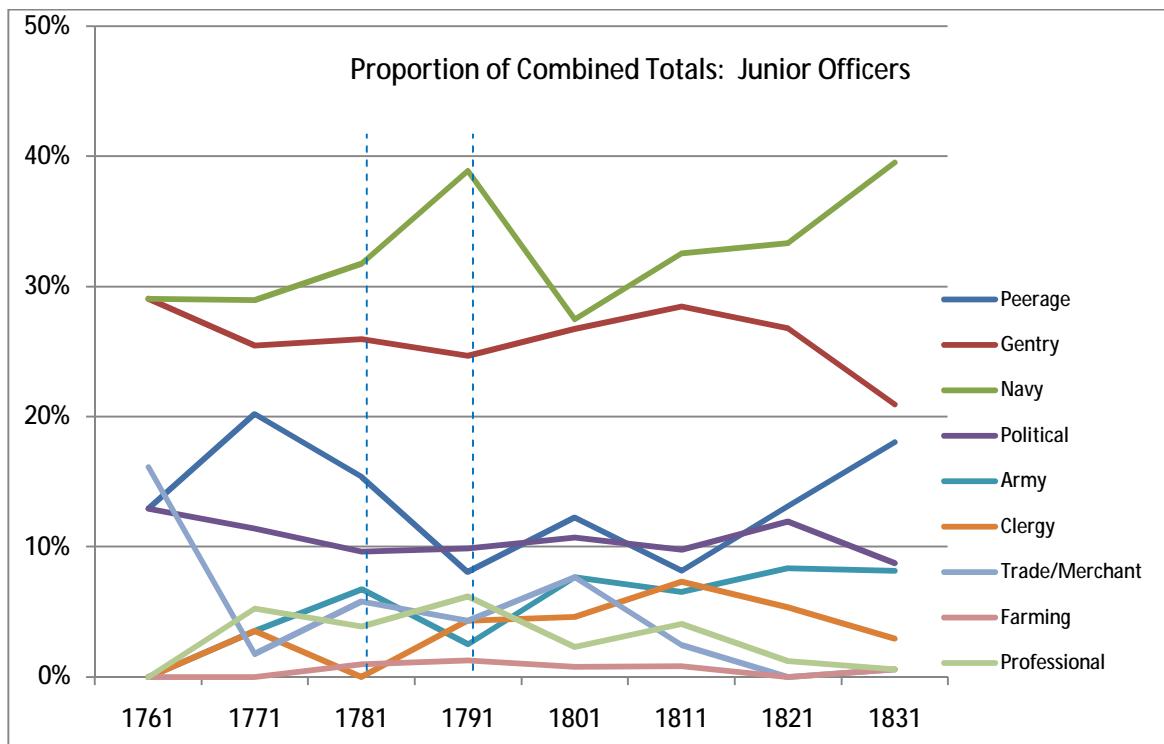
A more cohesive picture of the relative importance of the various social and professional categories is provided by the proportional data. In terms of the influence of the peerage on the workings of patronage, 1781 and 1791 showed a steady decline and a fall of more than 12 percentage points from 1771. Unlike the spike shown in the gentry figures for quarterdeck boys in 1791, the trend line for junior officers with gentry interest remained high and steady. The degree of change among political connections was also slight between 1771 and 1791, although the overall importance of gentry connections was more than double that of political influence throughout the period. The static appearance of these two trends may be seen as evidence of the correlation between political influence and the gentry, although the separation between them suggests that not all the landed gentry were explicitly engaged in political pursuits.¹³³ Equally noticeable is the growing alignment of trends for peerage and political influence after 1771, with 1791 marking the beginning of a long period in which aristocratic and political influence remained virtually equal.

¹³² Rodger, *Command*, p. 388. There is no data available to assess the incomes of the families of junior officers or to back up the supposition that junior officers were more solvent during the last decades of the eighteenth century. There is, however, an appreciable increase in the allowance demanded by captains who took on young gentlemen. This suggests that the families of young gentlemen had to be more financially secure than in previous decades in order to maintain a boy in the service.

¹³³ See Chapter Two, Section 2 for an explanation of the division between the categories.

The most important movement, one that offset the dramatic fall in peerage connections in 1791, was the increase in naval connections among traceable junior officers.

Figure 6.4 Proportion of Combined Totals, Junior Officers, 1781 to 1791



As with the quarterdeck boys' sample, it appears to be a case of more abundant opportunities (which came with mobilization in 1790) favoring those within the naval family, seemingly to the detriment of noble sons. It is telling of the level of preparations for war around this time that 1791 presented the only year within the framework of this survey when naval interest rose in importance while peerage influence fell during a time of "peace."¹³⁴

Mirroring the upward trend in the importance of naval interest were greater showings among the clergy and the professions, which for the purposes of this study

¹³⁴ The peacetime samples from 1771, 1821, and 1831 all show a gain in peerage influence. The trends in naval influence in the peacetime years of the nineteenth century are discussed in Chapter Nine, Section 3.

include both the “higher” and “lower” callings.¹³⁵ As discussed earlier in this section, the increasing social acceptability of the professions, particularly among the gentry, was one of the more significant changes taking place during the last quarter of the eighteenth century¹³⁶ and it is not surprising that the relative importance of professional and gentry connections rose together in the data. While professionals remained essentially middle class, their status became increasingly associated with that of “gentlemen” through their specialist knowledge, their service to the community, and their acquisition of wealth.¹³⁷ Some professions allowed an even greater range of social mobility. The *Contemporary Review* of 1859 cited “the Church, the Bar, the Army and the Navy as higher professions” by virtue of the possibility that their practitioners could earn the “‘ultimate reward,’ a peerage.”¹³⁸

This conceptualization of the higher professions in reference to a peerage is indicative of the confusing, sometimes contradictory, late-eighteenth century social experience. At the same time that the aristocracy appeared to have fallen from grace, along with macaroni manners, the Prince of Wales’s excesses, and Fox’s scandalous personal and political affairs, nobility remained the pinnacle of social ambition and the standard by which professional endeavor was set, particularly within the navy. The possibility of receiving a knighthood or a peerage as a reward for gallant service was the carrot dangling at the end of the Admiralty’s very long stick. For a lucky few, the pursuit paid off. Sir

¹³⁵ As defined in Chapter Two, the higher professions consisted of those whose professional training was often combined with elements of a liberal education. This group included lawyers, physicians, bankers, architects, civil engineers, and academics. The clergy is separated here due to the comparatively high number of connections to the church turned up by genealogical searches in the primary databases. Michael Lewis also separates the church as a professional category. The “lower professions,” for the purposes of this study, consist of skilled artists, musicians, and writers of note whose *success* allowed them to live as gentlemen. See Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 9-11; Perkin, *Origins*, p. 255.

¹³⁶ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 254-55.

¹³⁷ Cain and Hopkins argue that the “gentlemanlike” quality of capitalist professionals was that they did not *seem* to work and that the occupations of bankers and wealthy mercantilists seemed like the kind of pursuits that gentlemen engaged in anyway, Cain, “Gentlemanly Capitalism,” pp. 505-07.

¹³⁸ “Contemporary Review,” VII, I, xii 59 quoted in Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 150.

Hugh Palliser was the son of an army captain from an obscure Yorkshire family, who rose on his own merit and eventually received a baronetcy after serving two years as governor and Commander in Chief at Newfoundland and another three years as Controller of the Navy.¹³⁹ Samuel and Alexander Hood were the sons of a vicar from Somerset and eventually became viscounts.¹⁴⁰ Swynfen Jervis, a “moderately successful”¹⁴¹ Admiralty lawyer, did not live long enough to see his son receive an earldom for his victory at the battle of Cape St. Vincent. Charles Middleton was elevated to the peerage as Lord Barham upon his appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty, although his father had been a customs collector from Linlithgow.¹⁴² Most notable of all, Horatio Nelson, the son a parish clergyman became Viscount Nelson in the wake of his victory at the Nile and later received a foreign dukedom.¹⁴³

The fact that a peerage could be the reward for professional excellence was in itself indicative of a certain degree of social mobility in British society, based not only on wealth but on service. It also spoke to a social flexibility that allowed the aristocracy to bend and adopt the middle-class virtues of morality, manners, and duty that were infiltrating polite society and which, according to Langford, were “subtly reshaping the role of that governing class”¹⁴⁴ Linda Colley argues, however, that peerages were given only very selectively to “exceptional men,” who also possessed the appropriate political, social,

¹³⁹ S.v. “Sir Hugh Palliser” in *ODNB* (2004); Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, pp. 155-57.

¹⁴⁰ Samuel Hood Snr. was himself the “younger son of Dorset lesser gentry stock.” Samuel Jnr. was raised to the English peerage as Viscount Hood in 1795, see Michael Duffy, “Samuel Hood, 1st Viscount Hood, 1724-1816,” in *Precursors*, p. 271. Alexander became Viscount Bridport in 1800.

¹⁴¹ Swynfen Jervis died in 1771 while Jervis’s first honor, a knighthood (KB) came in 1782 after taking the French *Pégas*, Crimmin, “John Jervis,” in *Precursors*, pp. 325, 328.

¹⁴² Laughton, *Barham Papers*, Vol. I, p. viii; Roger Morriss, “Charles Middleton, Lord Barham, 1726-1813,” in *Precursors*, pp. 319-21.

¹⁴³ Knight, *Pursuit*, pp. 398-99.

¹⁴⁴ Langford, *Polite*, p. 67.

and/or property qualifications.¹⁴⁵ While opportunities may have been broadening by the 1790s,¹⁴⁶ the system of rewards based on peerages and knighthoods served only to reinforce the desirability of the traditional hierarchy that characterized an old-order society.

c. *Rates of promotion to commissioned rank*

During the last four decades of the eighteenth century junior officers faced varying circumstances when it came to rates of promotion. One of the most telling indicators of change manifested in the time it took for junior officers to obtain a commission after passing the examination for lieutenant. It would be expected that transition time might be less during periods of war, when full-scale mobilization meant a greater number of opportunities, and deaths in battle opened more vacancies. This however, was not always the case.

In 1761 nearly 48 percent of those with traceable career paths waited more than six years for promotion. Despite the navy's extensive scale of operations during the Seven Years' War, the needs of a wartime navy did not appear to expedite the careers of young officers. Charles Patton a younger son of Philip Patton, Collector of Customs in Kirkcaldy, Fife passed the examination for lieutenant in 1762 after only four years in the service,¹⁴⁷ although he had to wait eighteen years before receiving his commission in 1780. From there, his career progressed comparatively quickly; he became a commander in 1781 and a post captain in 1795.¹⁴⁸ Patton's failure to gain a commission before the end of the war

¹⁴⁵ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, 2008), p. 191.

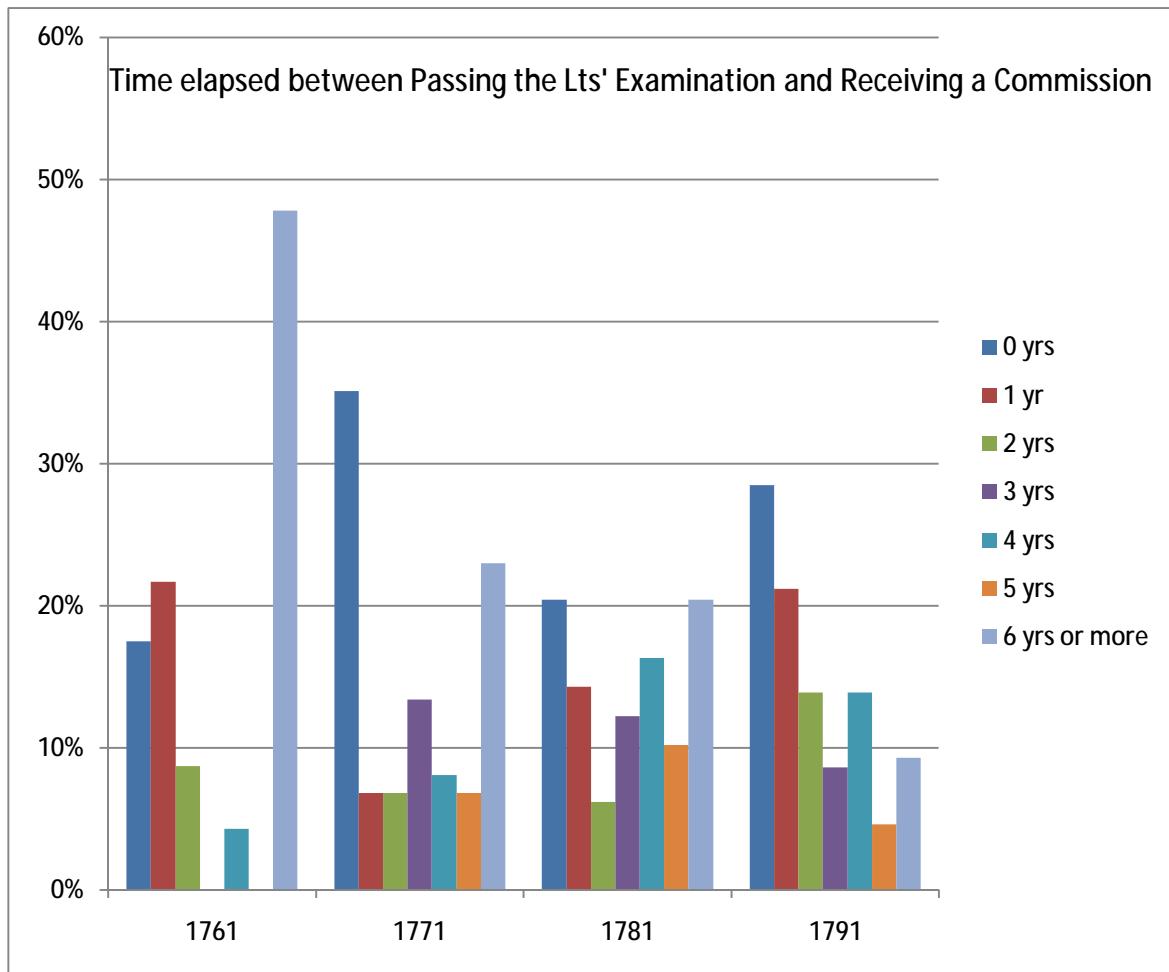
¹⁴⁶ Rodger supports Colley's argument but suggests that by the 1790s the prerequisites were changing and that peerages were beginning to be awarded based on what officers had done, not who they were, implying a new kind of "service nobility," Rodger, *Command*, p. 513.

¹⁴⁷ Appendix G1, "Junior Officers 1761," J61-1-03. Pappalardo confirms the date of 1762 for Charles Patton passing the examination. It is possible that Patton attended the Royal Naval College and obtained a two year credit on his sea time although there is no reference of him doing so. See: Pappalardo, *Passing Certificates*, Vol. 2, p. 389.

¹⁴⁸ S.v. "Charles Patton" in Marioné, *Complete Navy List*.

forced him into a professional stasis which remained effective until the onset of the American War.

Figure 6.5 Time elapsed between passing the Lts' Examination and receiving a Commission, 1761-1791.



Source: Appendix G1-G4, "Junior Officers 1761-1791: Ages and Ranks."

Note: The percentage shown is the proportion of junior officers whose career information was available in each year.¹⁴⁹

Others like Ambrose Wareham were less fortunate. After passing the examination in 1765, he waited thirteen years to receive his commission, which came in 1778, although

¹⁴⁹ The breakdown of the proportion of junior officers with traceable careers for each year is as follows:

1761:	23 of 258	(9%) of the total sample
1771:	74 of 303	(24%) of the total sample
1781:	49 of 318	(15%) of the total sample
1791:	151 of 301	(50%) of the total sample

Wareham remained a lieutenant until he died in 1798.¹⁵⁰ These two examples present similar promotional experiences during the Seven Years' War and the period of peace that followed. While Patton may have been able to leverage his father's professional and political connections, Wareham turned up no helpful family interest and his career may well have suffered for it.

It is not possible to determine with any certainty a correlation between the career progress data from 1761 and the data on social backgrounds for that year as the sample sets for both are small.¹⁵¹ It is interesting to note, however, that despite the reasonably strong showing of young gentlemen with peerage connections in 1761, only one, Henry Tuite, the second son of an Irish baronet, turned up any professional history.¹⁵² The dearth of information for 1761 makes it impossible to say whether the sons of the social elite progressed faster than those with other social or professional connections. It is reasonable, however, to conclude that if those with peerage connections were not part of the career progress sample for 1761 then the high incidence of junior officers who had to wait more than six years for promotion meant that those without powerful social connections tended to fare badly when it came to career fast-tracking. It is also reasonable to infer from the lack of career information that junior officers with peerage connections did not always pursue careers in the navy.

By 1771, however, things appeared to change dramatically. The single largest group of junior officers with traceable details on their examination, twenty-six of seventy-four (35 percent of the known sample), received a promotion to the rank of lieutenant in the same year that they passed their examination. Of these twenty-six, nearly half passed

¹⁵⁰ Appendix G1, J61-SL-14.

¹⁵¹ In other years the data also varied considerably in that not all junior officers with traceable family backgrounds could be followed in terms of their careers, and vice versa.

¹⁵² Appendix G1, J61-3-63.

the examination and were promoted in 1778.¹⁵³ This was the year that France joined America in her war against Britain, sparking hostilities on three continents and increasing the demand for young officers. Of the twenty-six rapid promotions, exactly half were untraceable in terms of their social backgrounds. Of the remaining thirteen, the highest representations were among those with naval and peerage connections.

When it is considered that 1771 marked a year in which more junior officers with connections to the peerage were traceable than at any other time in the survey, it is not unreasonable to expect to see a greater number of peers progressing at a faster rate. Of the junior officers who advanced to a commission in the same year, five were connected to the peerage, five claimed naval connections, four claimed gentry connections, and four claimed political influence.¹⁵⁴

Table 6.4 Proportion of Junior Officers in 1771 who passed the exam and received a commission in the same Year (Combined Totals)

Category	Comb. Total	%
Navy	5	15.2%
Peerage	5	15.2%
Gentry	4	12.1%
Politics	4	12.1%
Clergy	1	3.0%
Professions	1	3.0%
Unassigned	13	39.4%

Source: Appendix F2, “Junior Officers 1771: Calculations”

Proportionately, the distribution of promotions differed slightly from the distribution of the socio-professional data¹⁵⁵ which placed gentry influence above that of peerage influence when it came to gaining a junior officers’ appointment. This suggests that while gentry sons may have been favored when it came to obtaining junior officers’ positions in 1771,

¹⁵³ See Appendix G2, “Junior Officers 1771: Lts Passing.”

¹⁵⁴ Note: These figures are based on combined totals – if a junior officer claimed three connections then he was counted three times – once in each connection.

¹⁵⁵ See the Proportional Data, Combined Totals (Figure 6.4).

having connections to the peerage wielded greater weight when it came to obtaining a commission soon after passing the examination.

In 1781 the circumstances for promotion shifted again. Even during a time of worldwide conflict, the distribution of promotion rates remained evenly spread, with the percentage of those obtaining promotion in the same year that they sat the examination (22.5 percent), roughly the same as those for whom a commission took six years or more to materialize (20.4 percent). The data suggests a general slowing of promotions among the junior officers sampled in 1781, a situation that is probably more representative of the conditions of peace that followed in 1783.

Overall, 9 percent fewer careers were traceable from the 1781 sample than the decade before. The reason for this sudden loss of professional transparency is uncertain, as roughly the same number of socio-professional backgrounds were traceable in 1781 as in 1771. One explanation is that many junior officers did not pursue careers in the navy after the Peace of Paris. Demobilization meant that employment opportunities shrank rapidly, beaching many new recruits. Those who were unwilling or unable to hold out until the Nootka mobilization or the start of the French Revolutionary Wars would have been forced to pursue careers away from the navy.

What is visible in the 1781 career sample is that among those whose social backgrounds were traceable, there was very little differentiation (only 3 percentage points) in the rates of promotion between the socio-professional categories – particularly among the three largest groups: naval, gentry, and peerage interest.

Table 6.5 Total Promotions of Junior Officers 1781, by Socio-Professional Category

Category	Comb. Total	%
Navy	7	11.5%
Peerage	6	9.8%
Gentry	5	8.2%
Politics	4	6.6%
Army	4	6.6%
Professions	2	3.3%
Trade/Merchant	1	1.6%
Farming	1	1.6%
Unknown	31	50.8%
		100.0%

Source: Appendix G3, "Junior Officers 1781: Calculations."

This suggests that in 1781 circumstances of birth and connections played less of a role in the progression of budding naval careers than they had done in 1771. Such a scenario is perhaps telling of the needs of the wartime navy in which promotion rested less on interest and more on other matters ranging from ability and skill, to the luck of being in the right place at the right time to fill a vacancy.

In 1791 the patterns of promotion changed yet again. One of the most significant differences lay in the number of junior officers whose career histories could be traced. Of the 305 junior officers sampled in 1791, 151 (50 percent) turned up information on their passing dates, a vast improvement over previous samples.

Table 6.6 Percentage of Traceable Careers with details of Passing the Examination for Lieutenant, 1761 to 1791

Year	1761	1771	1781	1791
% with details of Passing	9%	24%	15%	50%
# with known Passing information	23	74	47	151
Total sample size	258	303	318	301

Source: Appendices G1-G4, "Junior Officers 1761-1791: Calculations."

As in 1771, the majority of promotions in 1791 were rapid, with 29 percent of the known sample becoming lieutenants in the same year that they passed the examination, and another 21 percent gaining a commission within a year of passing. The incidence of

slow promotions, those taking five years or more, accounted for only 14 percent of the traceable sample.¹⁵⁶

Of the 151 careers that offered details of passing the examination the vast majority referenced junior officers with naval connections – a group that accounted for 25 percent of all promotions and 28 percent of same year promotions. As in 1781, it appeared that there was a direct correlation between the socio-professional distribution of promotions overall, and the distribution of rapid (same year) promotions. Again, these figures appear to indicate promotion practices that favored professional interest as much as social or political influence.

Table 6.7 Comparison of All Promotions and Same-Year Promotions, 1791
(in order of importance)

All Promotions (Combined data) 1791			Same Year Promotions 1791		
Category	Comb. Total	%	Category	Comb. Total	%
1. Naval	57	25.4%	1. Naval	15	27.8%
2. Gentry	34	15.2%	2. Gentry	8	14.8%
3. Political	15	6.7%	3. Political	4	7.4%
4. Professional	10	4.5%	4. Professional	3	5.6%

Source: Appendix G4, “Junior Officers 1791: Calculations.” Percentages shown are proportions of the combined totals.

Of the thirty-four same-year promotions nearly two thirds took place in 1794 and 1795 as the war with revolutionary France began to escalate. There is insufficient data to determine whether this concentration of promotions was the result of the influx of young gentlemen into the service just prior to the Nootka Sound crisis, although there are several examples of recruits who made good professional use of the 1790 mobilization. Both George Moubray, the son a lieutenant and grandson of a Royal Navy captain, and his

¹⁵⁶ These figures agree with the findings from Consolvo’s research into the careers of 225 lieutenants who received commissions in 1790. According to Consolvo, 28% of those surveyed received a commission in less than a year after passing the examination, while 38% received a commission with one to two years of passing. See Consolvo, “The Prospects of Promotion,” p. 143.

cousin, Richard Hussey Moubrey, who also happened to be the nephew-by-marriage of Rear Admiral Sir Richard Bickerton, entered the service in 1789.¹⁵⁷ Richard had been borne on the books of an unnamed ship since 1787 and took advantage of this early, if fictitious appearance, sitting the examination for lieutenant in 1793 after only four years in the service (although the details of his schooling are unknown). He received his commission before the end of the year, despite being only seventeen-years old.¹⁵⁸ George on the other hand, did not benefit from early entry on the books, although he passed the examination in 1794 and was made a lieutenant soon after.¹⁵⁹ Both young men went on to successful careers in the service with Richard becoming a vice-admiral and George becoming a captain.

The circumstances by which Richard Hussey Moubrey was allowed to sit the examination a full three years shy of the minimum age required by the Admiralty does not appear to be that unusual in the sample of junior officers taken from 1791. In addition to Moubrey, twenty-seven other cases could be identified where junior officers passed the examination before the age of twenty.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Appendix G4, “Junior Officers 1791,” J91-4-09, J91-1-31.

¹⁵⁸ S.v. “Richard Hussey Moubrey,” in Marioné, *Complete Navy List*.

¹⁵⁹ S.v. “George Moubrey,” in O’Byrne, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 794. Also see Bernard Burke, *A Genealogical and Heraldic History of the Landed Gentry of Great Britain and Ireland*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London, 1863), p. 1047; and Marioné, *Complete Navy List*.

¹⁶⁰ Age calculations were made using date of birth or date of baptism, as the ages given in the ships’ musters are often unreliable. While the first incidence of a baptismal certificate being attached to a lieutenants’ passing certificate was in February 1779, the practice of providing proof of age did not become regular until after 1789. Pappalardo, *Passing Certificates*, Vol. 1, p. xiv. In order to avoid perjuring themselves by passing underage candidates, examining captains testified only to the fact that “We have examined Mr. ___, who by certificate *appears to be* more than (20) years of age,” see ADM 6/94, “Lieutenants’ Passing Certificate for Edward Moore. 1795.” (My italics.)

Table 6.8. Passing Ages for the Lieutenants' Examination, 1791

Passing Ages 1791	No. Found	% of the Known Total
19 or younger	28	19%
20 years old	18	12%
21 years old	18	12%
22-24 years old	54	37%
25-28 years old	23	16%
29 or older	5	3%
TOTAL	146	100.0%

Source: Appendix G4, "Junior Officers 1791: Lts' Passing."

Of these, six cases showed the young gentlemen to be fifteen or sixteen at the time of passing. Henry West, John Whitby, Tristram Robert Ricketts, Graham Eden Hammond, John Dick, and Alex Wilmot Schomberg all brought considerable naval and/or social interest to bear on their early careers.¹⁶¹ West and Hammond managed to parlay those connections, along with what must have been considerable talent, into lieutenancies while they were both just sixteen. West became a successful captain while Hammond went on to become Admiral of the Fleet in 1862, the year he died. Schomberg was fortunate enough to be stationed in the West Indies, which may have aided the rapid progress of his early career.

Of the remaining twenty-three junior officers who passed the examination before their twentieth birthday, all but six were traceable to families of considerable influence, particularly naval (which was apparent in half the known cases), and gentry or peerage interest (which applied to more than one third of cases). Overall, it is surprising that 28 of the 146 junior officers (20 percent) whose passing ages could be identified in 1791, flouted the minimum age requirement for the examination.¹⁶² Such figures suggest that there was a critical shortage of lieutenants in the opening years of the war with France. The fact that so many of the "under-aged" candidates possessed strong naval connections also

¹⁶¹ Appendix G4, J91-3-04; J91-3-20, J91-3-24, J91-3-61, J91-4-68, J91-4-50.

¹⁶² See Table 6.8 above.

reflected the trend which saw a steep increase in the importance of naval interest after 1781.

This set of early achievers was also notable for their high level of professional success. Of the twenty-eight, more than half reached the rank of captain or higher. Out of the entire sample of 172 junior officers whose highest rank could be traced, only 36 percent achieved a captain's rank or higher. The early starters who possessed good naval connections were, therefore, at a distinct advantage when it came to overall career success.¹⁶³

In a comparison of high ranks produced by the four sample years covered so far, there is remarkable consistency in the data, particularly when it came to those who reached lieutenant or post captain as their highest rank. Samples taken from 1771 and 1781 show high numbers of junior officers from those years who went on to achieve flag rank: between 20 and 22 percent of the traceable-career sample. The percentage of candidates who achieved flag rank fell almost by half in the 1791 sample, a drop that was perhaps indicative of the losses sustained during the twenty-two years of French Wars – conflicts in which the junior officers from 1791 were likely to have been involved. Beyond the rank of post captain, progression to flag rank was a matter of seniority and longevity. Of the 173 junior officers from the 1791 sample whose career history and dates of death could be traced, 45 percent died or left the service during the French Wars.¹⁶⁴

In summary, the sample years from 1761 to 1791 present a pattern of accelerated promotion for junior officers with a gradual shortening of the time it took between passing the examination for lieutenant and receiving a lieutenant's commission. Except for the

¹⁶³ See Appendix G4 for full details.

¹⁶⁴ See Appendix G4 for data breakdown.

sample taken from 1781, when the trend backed slightly, the average wait time shrank from 5.5 years in 1761 to 2.2 years in 1791.

Table 6.9 Average number of years between passing the Examination and receiving a Lieutenant's Commission, 1761-1791.

	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>
Average Time	5.5 yrs	3.1 yrs	3.4 yrs	2.2 yrs

Source: Appendix D, "Average Ages and Passing Times."

The data also shows that the average age of junior officers who passed the examination for lieutenant changed little over the years, although candidates from the 1791 sample showed a slightly higher average passing age than those sampled in 1761.¹⁶⁵

Table 6.10 Average passing Ages of Junior Officers, 1761-1791

	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>
Ave Age	21.0 yrs	21.1 yrs	22.9 yrs	22.1 yrs

Source: Appendix D, "Average Ages and Passing Times."

It is also noteworthy that the average age of those receiving a commission was substantially lower in the 1791 sample¹⁶⁶ than in the 1781 sample and is again reflective of the Admiralty's perceived need to rapidly increase the number of lieutenants.

Table 6.11: Average Age of Junior Officers receiving a Commission, 1761-1791

	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>
Ave. Age	26.3 yrs	25.3 yrs	27.2 yrs	24.4 yrs

Source: Appendix D, "Average Ages and Passing Times."

Each of these sets of data confirm that with the onset of war with revolutionary France, the demand for lieutenants meant faster career progress for junior officers, progress that

¹⁶⁵ This data agrees with Consolvo's calculations that the average age of the 225 lieutenants commissioned in 1790, at the time they sat and passed their examination, was twenty-two years old. See Consolvo, "Prospects of Promotion," p. 155.

¹⁶⁶ Again, there is agreement with Consolvo's data which found that the average age of those who received a commission in 1790 was twenty-four years old. *Ibid.*, p. 143.

increasingly appeared to rely on a combination of naval connections and ability rather than on social influence.

d. *Summary of the data, 1781 and 1791*

The samples of quarterdeck boys and junior officers for 1781 and 1791 both reflect a general increase in the relative importance of naval influence when it came to starting a career in the service. This increase was accompanied by a substantial decrease in the incidence of young gentlemen claiming peerage and/or political connections after 1781. Such a decline suggests that despite Prince William Henry's appointment as a midshipman in 1779, his presence did little to encourage noble or gentry sons to enter the service, at least in the sample year immediately following (1781), or that of a decade later (1791).¹⁶⁷

Whether these results were the product of personal and professional differences among the relevant First Lords, Whig political reactions against a Royal Navy in the hands of a “Tory” ministry, a navy that was less enticing to elite sons who traditionally gravitated towards the army, shifting attitudes towards the naval profession and the qualities that defined an officer and a gentleman, or a combination of all these factors, 1791 saw the social quality of quarterdeck boys and junior officers radically altered from the earlier peacetime sample of 1771. The last decades of the eighteenth century essentially saw the decline of social interest and the rise of the professional classes in the Royal Navy's entry-level ratings.

5. The geography of recruitment, 1761-1791

The data regarding the geographical origins of officer recruits suffers from many of the same constraints surrounding the identification of social background. There are,

¹⁶⁷ In 1781 gentry presence among quarterdeck boys was at the lowest point seen in the course of this study while peerage influence was in shallow decline. Among junior officers there was a sharp decline in the presence of peerage influence in 1781 (which continued in 1791 when peerage connections reached their lowest point), and almost no change in the showing of gentry interest.

however, several factors that enabled geographical origins to be identified when details on family background could not. After 1764 ships' musters recorded, or were supposed to record, the place of birth for all aboard although, as noted, this procedure was only patchily observed until the 1780s. There is also the question of accuracy among a number of the musters that record such details. The uniformity shown in some records, in which twenty men consecutively were born at "Plymouth Dock," suggests the possibility that men and boys gave their cities of residence rather than their cities of birth.

Even so, it is typical that information on the place of birth is more readily available than information on social backgrounds; and only the samples for quarterdeck boys from 1761 and 1781 yielded fewer known places of birth than social backgrounds. When it came to the sample of junior officers from 1791, 280 of the 301 candidates were traceable to a city, county, and/or country.

Table 6.12 Comparison of Social Backgrounds and Place of Birth Traceability, 1761-1791

<u>QDB TOTALS</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>		
Total Sample	314	322	302	305	Total QDB	1243
# Soc. B/G Traced	26	34	70	51	Total QDB Traceable	181
% Soc. B/G Traced	8.3%	10.6%	23.2%	16.7%		14.6%
# POB Traced	20	43	42	71	Total QDB with POB	176
% POB Traced	6.4%	13.4%	13.9%	23.3%		14.2%
<u>JO TOTALS</u>						
Total Sample	258	303	318	301	Total JO	1180
# Soc. B/G Traced	25	73	71	105	Total JO Traceable	274
% Soc. B/G Traced	9.7%	24.1%	22.3%	34.9%		23.2%
# POB Traced	25	163	82	280	Total JO with POB	550
% POB Traced	9.7%	53.8%	25.8%	93.0%		46.6%

Note: Figures in blue denote data summaries for socio-professional backgrounds, while figures in green denote summaries of geographical data.

Key: QDB = Quarterdeck Boys

JO = Junior Officers

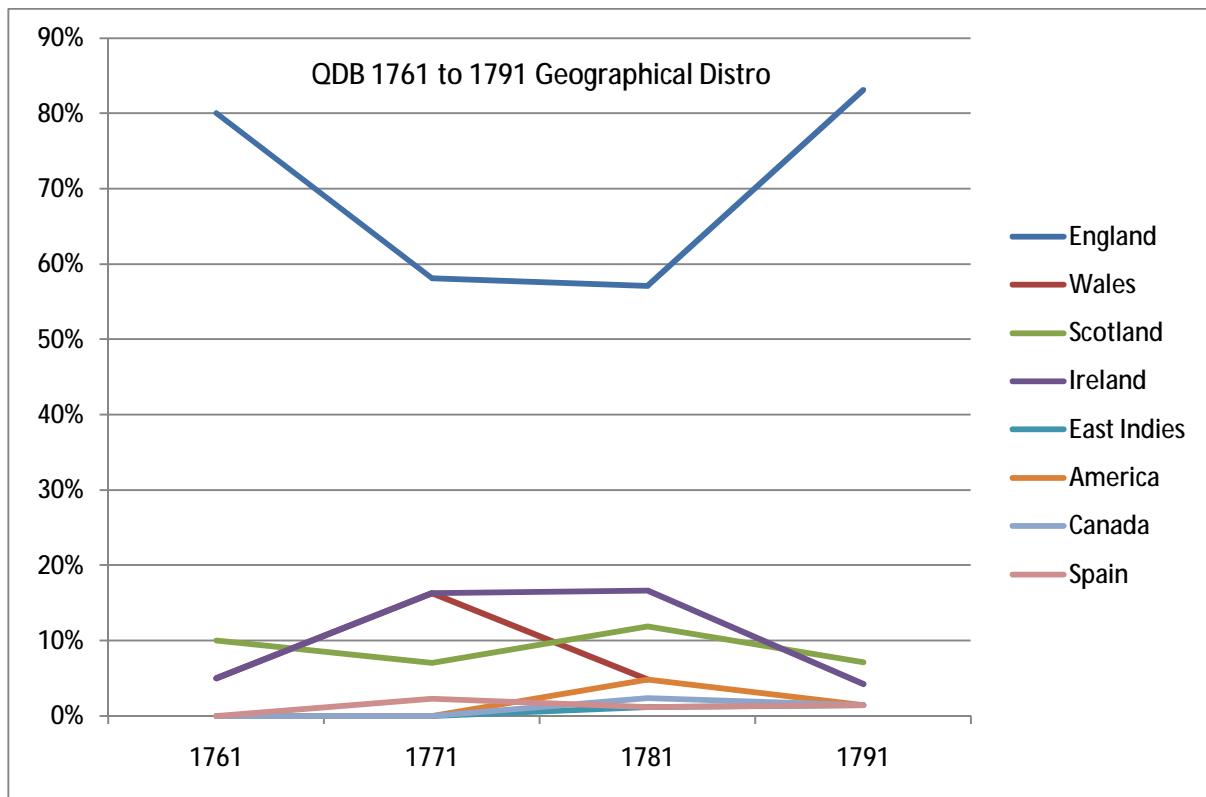
Soc. B/G = Social Background

POB = Place of birth

The variability of the geographical data, which ranges from 6 percent of the known sample of quarterdeck boys in 1761, to 93 percent of junior officers in 1791, suggests that some samples are more representative than others. With this in mind, the following conclusions are sustainable.

On the national and international level, most obvious (and expected), is the overwhelming dominance of Englishmen in the sample. In the data for quarterdeck boys, however, there was a noticeable fall-off in the proportion of Englishmen in 1771 and 1781. This was accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the presence of Irishmen in both those years, when their participation more than tripled (from 5 percent to 16 percent). This increase was matched in 1771 by the appearance of Welshmen, and approached in 1781 by Scotsmen. By 1791, however, a noticeable decline in these three groups was clear while the proportion of Englishmen increased significantly. What is also clear in the data is the opening of opportunities for non-English candidates in 1771 and 1781. The small spike in the appearance of American and Canadian-born recruits in 1781 aligns with expectations that loyalist interest in a naval career might have increased with the onset of war with the American rebels.

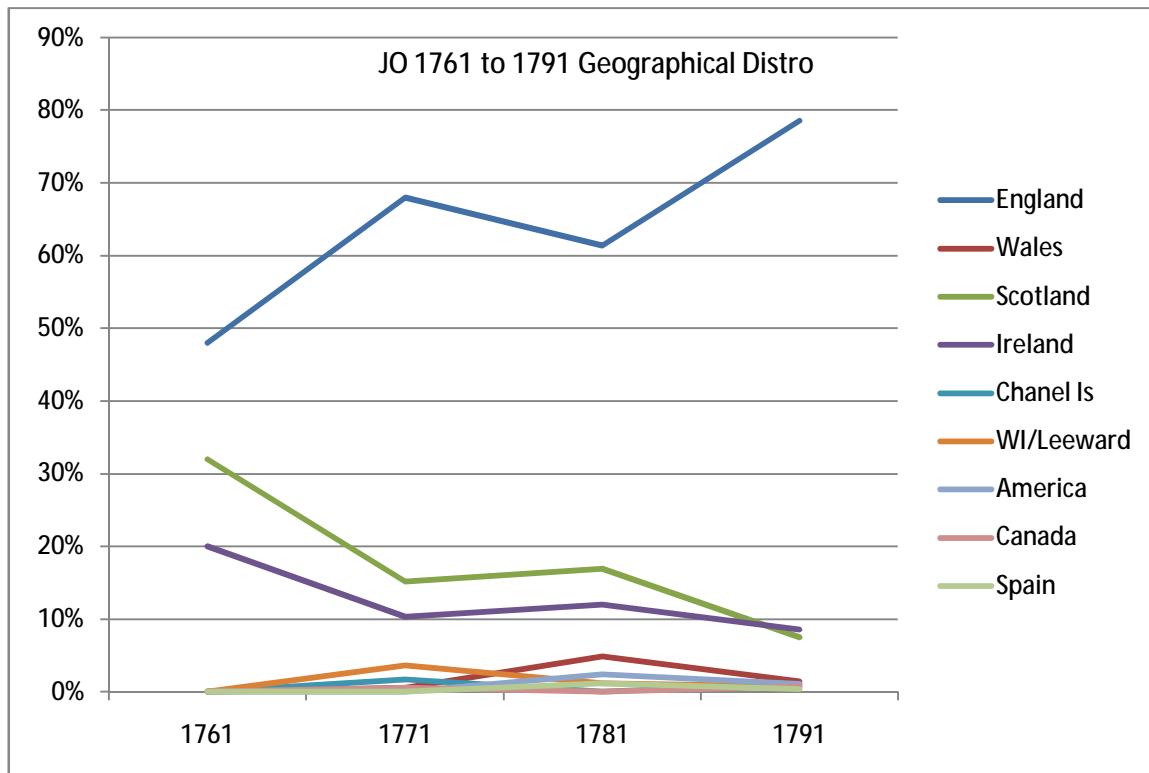
Figure 6.6 Geographical Distribution of Quarterdeck Boys, National/International, 1761 to 1791



When it came to junior officers, a relatively strong showing of Scotsmen (15 to 17 percent) and Irishmen (10 to 12 percent) was visible in 1771 and 1781, although both showed a steep decline after 1761. This fall-off must be treated carefully due to the small number of traceable candidates, although a showing of eight Scotsmen and five Irishmen, out of a total of twenty-five traceables in 1761, represented a significant proportion of the whole. The spike in American participation in 1781 mirrors that seen among quarterdeck boys, although the synchronous increase in the number of Welsh junior officers is likely reflective of broadening opportunities for recruits during the American conflict.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ These figures roughly marry with Rodger's data derived from baptismal records attached to lieutenants' passing certificates from 1789-1791, in which English young gentlemen made up 69% of the sample of 334 passing certificates. N. A. M. Rodger, "Devon Men and the Navy, 1689-1815," in *The New Maritime History of Devon, Vol. II: From the Late Eighteenth Century to the Present Day*, ed. Michael Duffy et al (Exeter, 1994), p. 210.

Figure 6.7 Geographical Distribution of Junior Officers, National/International, 1761 to 1791



In both samples it is clear that by 1791, the presence of non-Englishmen was in decline while the incidence of English aspirants dramatically increased. For a year in which naval manning was almost double the peacetime levels after the American War¹⁶⁹ it might be expected that greater employment opportunities would result in a broader geographical cross-section of recruits. This, however, was not the case and likely reflected a heightened sense of patriotism and national identity in the face of preparations for war in 1791; a situation fuelled by the loss of the American colonies and the start of the French Revolution. Despite the longstanding union with Scotland, fears for lingering Jacobite sympathies and a resurrection of the Auld Alliance, coupled with traditional attitudes

¹⁶⁹ Rodger, *Command*, p. 639.

toward Irish rebelliousness¹⁷⁰ may have impacted decision making during the mobilization of 1790 and resulted in a decidedly more “English” midshipmen’s berth.

The English contingent of quarterdeck boys and junior officers can be further broken down by county. In both samples the highest representation was among young gentlemen hailing from London and the coastal counties. In both samples the same top five counties accounted for the vast majority of candidates. Among quarterdeck boys the contributing counties were ranked as follows:

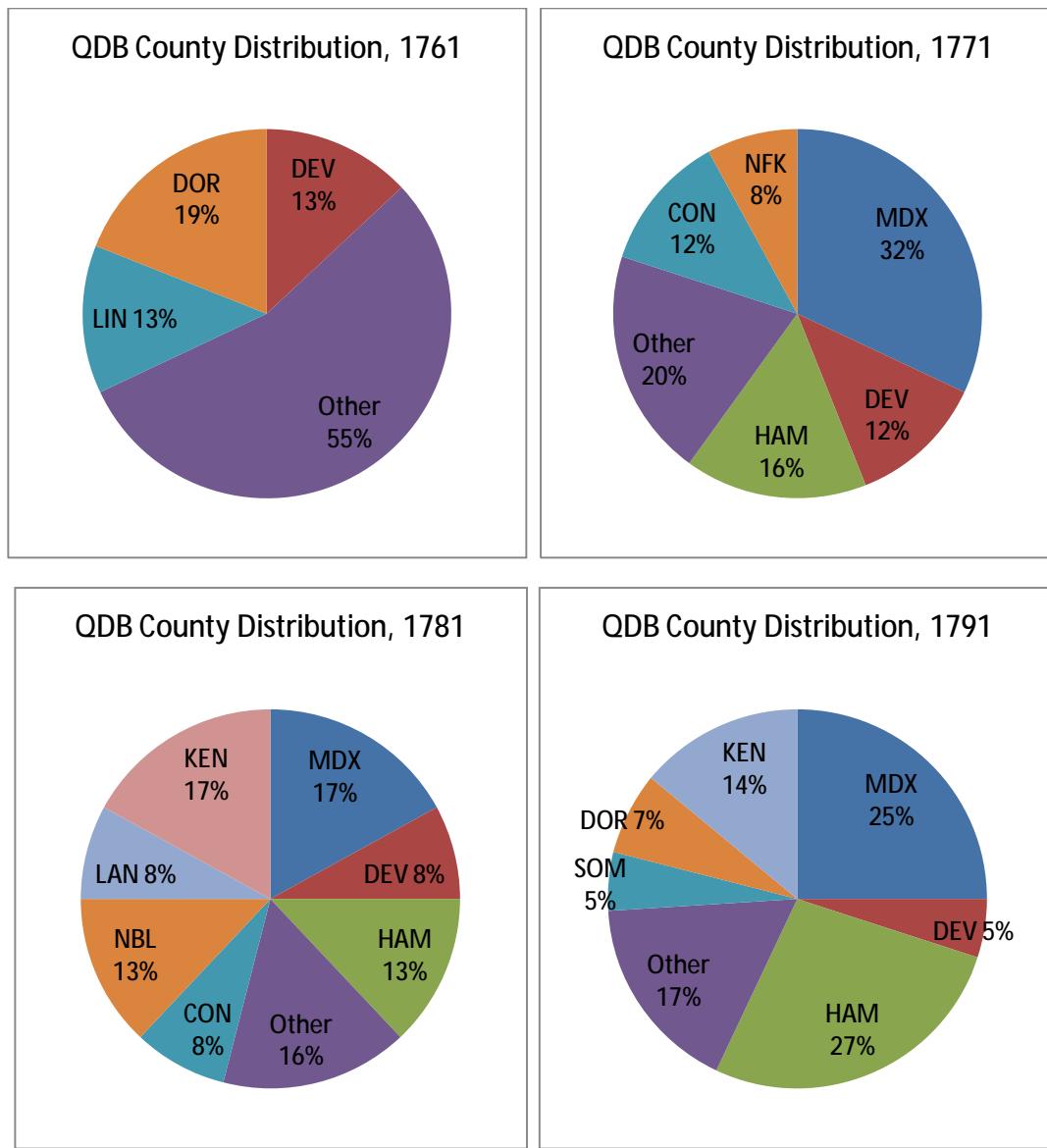
1. Middlesex
2. Hampshire
3. Devonshire
4. Kent
5. Cornwall

Note: rankings relate to English recruitment between 1761 and 1791

These counties represented the vast majority of known English recruitment for each of the sample years from 1761 to 1791. This data reflected a distinct concentration of young gentlemen from the southern counties while East Anglia and the north were only sparsely represented.

¹⁷⁰ For a summary of the various national tensions see Porter, *Society*, pp. 34-35. Newman explains the heightened levels of patriotism and the importance of “Englishness” in the wake of the French Revolution, Newman, *English Nationalism*, pp. 230-31; while Langford addresses the xenophobia of Englishmen and the “otherness” of the Scots, Welsh, and Irish, Paul Langford, *Englishness Identified: Manners and Character, 1650-1850* (Oxford, 2000), p. 223. Wahrman notes a direct “Jacobin appeal to the inhabitants of Scotland . . . calling to denounce the corrupt and bellicose ministry and to hope for a French Invasion,” Dror Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 151.

Figure 6.8 Quarterdeck Boys: Geographical Distribution within England, 1761 to 1791



Most significant among the top five counties of birth was the shift in the size of their contributions over time. While Middlesex (MDX) remained the largest contributor of servants overall, its input dipped as a proportion of the whole after 1771. Hampshire (HAM) and Kent (KEN) saw the greatest increases in their representation as the century progressed while the contributions made by Devon (DEV), Cornwall (CON), and Dorset (DOR) declined. The concentration of recruiting efforts in the south-eastern counties in 1791 is one of the more noticeable trends among the sample of quarterdeck boys. The focus

on centers of large naval bases such as Portsmouth, related directly to the increase in the presence of quarterdeck boys possessing naval connections.

In many cases it is possible that Middlesex, as a place of birth, represented a gentry family in London for the Parliamentary session or the social season.¹⁷¹ This is sustainable in that the pattern of distribution for Middlesex, which dips in 1781, reflects the same trends in the data for the social elites.¹⁷² Unfortunately there is insufficient information available on exact dates of birth to determine whether the majority of these young gentlemen were born during the Parliamentary session and therefore could represent members of the social and political elites.

The data for junior officers showed a similar concentration of young gentlemen from the southern counties and although the top five counties were repeated in this sample, the ranking of contributions varied.

1. Middlesex
2. Devonshire
3. Kent
4. Hampshire
5. Cornwall

Note: rankings relate to English recruitment between 1761 and 1791

Overall these counties showed a much more even proportional spread when it came to the geographical origins of junior officers.¹⁷³ It is significant that the contributions made

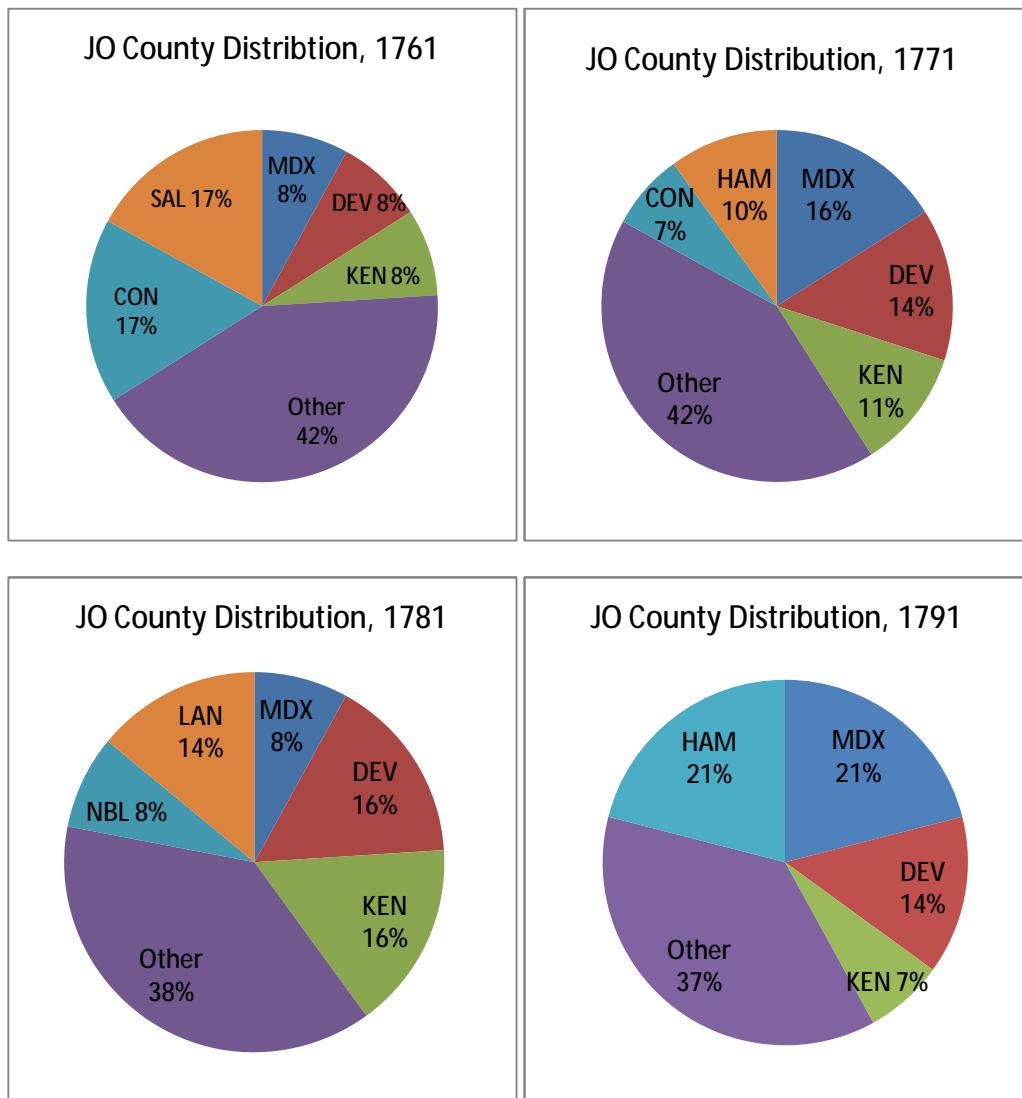
¹⁷¹ Parliament was in “session” from January or February (depending on the weather which determined the quality of shooting and hunting) until mid summer, around late-June, of each year. The social season was synchronous with the Parliamentary session, often beginning around Christmas, although many society families remained at their country estates until March or April. According to one contemporary: “The season depends on Parliament, and Parliament depends upon sport.” It is likely that young gentlemen hailing from Bath or Dublin at this time of year could also claim a social/political background. See Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist - the Facts of Daily Life in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York, 1993), pp. 102, 51-52.

¹⁷² The socio-professional data shows gentry influence at 21% in 1771, 13% in 1781, and 18% in 1791. No similar parallel trends were visible between gentry connections and Middlesex recruitment in the junior officers’ sample.

¹⁷³ Rodger’s data shows that the order of contribution for the various counties was 1. Middlesex, 2. Devon, 3. Hampshire, 4. Kent, 5. Somerset/Dublin, and 6. Cornwall. Rodger, “Devon Men and the Navy,” p. 210.

by Middlesex and Hampshire increased dramatically in 1791, after relatively small showings in the previous sample year. 1781 also saw Lancashire (LAN) prominent in junior officer recruitment, a situation that appeared to break the monopoly of the southern counties.

Figure 6.9 Junior Officers: Geographical distribution within England, 1761 to 1791



It should be noted, however, that the strong showing of young gentlemen from Lancashire was largely due to the contribution of one ship from the sample, the *Adamant*, commanded by Captain Gideon Johnstone, himself hailing from Northumberland.¹⁷⁴

The data shows that Devon's contribution remained relatively stable throughout the second half of the century although it grew a little with each decade. Cornwall's representation on the other hand diminished over time. Starting as one of the largest single contributors of midshipmen and masters' mates in 1761 (17 percent), its input fell over the next thirty years, so that by 1791, Cornwall had become one of the smallest contributors of the big coastal centers, responsible for just 4 percent of English recruits.

The primary difference bewteen the quarterdeck boys' and junior officers' samples was the overall importance of Devon which, until 1791, was the largest single contributor of junior officers. In 1791 Hampshire and Middlesex both surpassed Devon's contribution bringing the focus onto the south-eastern counties, a change that would last until the final years of this study.

This data varies substantially from that collected by Michael Lewis on the geographical distribution of commissioned officers. Although the top five counties visible in this study are consistent with Lewis's, the order in which they appear and the numbers separating them, vary widely. It must be noted however that Lewis's figures refer to the period of the French Wars and beyond so that a more reliable comparison of the data is offered in Chapter Ten which deals with the geographical distribution of recruits bewteen 1801 and 1831. Despite the differences, it is possible to see a progression in the

¹⁷⁴ S.V. "Gideon Johnstone," in Marioné, *Complete Navy List*. This is one example of the problem addressed in Chapter Two, Section 8 regarding the issue of small sample numbers and their ability to distort the overall appearance of the data. Out of 51 junior officers whose place of birth was traceable in 1781, 7 hailed from Lancashire. While this represents a significant percentage of the traceable group it may not, however, be representative of the proportions of relative to the whole sample.

geographical distribution of young gentlemen towards that of the commissioned officers observed by Lewis.

Lewis's study found that the largest county of provenance for the commissioned officers surveyed was Devonshire, followed by Kent, Hampshire, and London (whose representation was less than half that of Devon).¹⁷⁵ In the surveys of both quarterdeck boys and junior officers from 1761 to 1791 London, or Middlesex, ranked first – although the difference separating Middlesex and Devon in the junior officers' sample was marginal. In terms of entry-level recruits, however, a significant majority of those with known places of birth hailed from London. This suggests the possibility of a more diverse field of connections - be they social, political, professional, or mercantile. Such a representation for Middlesex might therefore be indicative of the patronage process operating in non-naval circles. It does, however, seem to be at odds with the supreme importance of naval influence shown in the socio-professional data for the first four sample years, in that one would expect to find the hub of naval interest residing in "naval counties" such as Hampshire and Devon. Rodger offers an explanation for the discrepancy suggesting that naval interest, in Devon at least, was highly localized. He also notes that outside of Plymouth, naval interest held little sway in Devonian political or social spheres.¹⁷⁶

This data spread suggests that while Lewis's commissioned officers hailed primarily from the maritime counties of Devonshire, Kent, and Hampshire, young gentlemen were more likely overall to be Londoners. A comparison of the data therefore suggests that while city-centered connections – social, political, professional, and

¹⁷⁵ Of 1500 known places of birth, Lewis shows 123 for Devonshire, 106 for Kent, 89 for Hampshire, and 61 for London/Middlesex. Lewis, *Social History*, p. 62.

¹⁷⁶ This translated into the decidedly non-naval character of Devon politics which "remained firmly in the hands of the county families," while "naval men, like nabobs and other rich outsiders, had to buy their way into corrupt boroughs or force their way in as clients of government," Rodger, "Devon Men and the Navy," p. 211.

mercantile – were important in gaining a start of a naval career, the ability to keep one going tended to favor those from the maritime counties where naval interest remained dominant.

Chapter Seven: Outside the Law: Junior Officers overstep the bounds, 1755-1795.

It is clear from the previous chapters that a number of external factors affected the selection and appointment of young gentlemen in the last half of the eighteenth century. In the broadest terms, the data showed a decline in the relative importance of connections to the peerage and an increase in the importance of professional and naval connections. These developments ran concurrent with changing civil attitudes towards the characteristics that defined gentility; changes that were affecting the ways in which a) recruiting captains set their criteria for selection, b) the professions were perceived among different social orders and, c) the way that aspiring officers perceived themselves as gentlemen. So far, however, these changing perceptions have only been observable through the data and contemporary accounts, which were colored by the personal agenda of the various commentators.

The need for an independent, measurable way to evaluate the changing attitudes of aspiring officers to their position, both within the shipboard hierarchy and society at large, requires a systematized means of assessing behavioral change. The Admiralty's courts martial records allow such an assessment to be made (albeit of *bad* behavior), against the fixed points of law set down by the *Articles of War*. An examination of the crimes committed by junior officers during the last half of the eighteenth century provides insight into how young gentlemen interpreted their place in naval society, conceived of their authority, and then used or abused that authority. The ways in which the Admiralty, as the governing body, reacted to such breeches of naval law and custom provides further perspective on wider cultural changes taking place in English society. Emile Durkheim's interpretation of punishment "as a morality-affirming, solidarity-producing mechanism," presents a useful means of characterizing naval justice during the period of this study, although the "ritualized expression of social values" took place within a closed system of

naval authority with only the worst, most infamous cases breaking through into the civilian sphere via newspapers and published journals.¹

The emphasis on public punishment based on a set of standardized penalties informed seamen and officers of the consequences of overstepping the bounds of propriety and often included a ship's company in the performance of the sentence, bonding them with a common sense of institutional justice. From "running the gauntlet," and "flogging around the fleet,"² to the standard flogging of offenders, which was carried out on a weekly basis, punishment was a public affair requiring the assembly of all to act as witnesses. In each of these penalties the "solidarity enhancing effects"³ of Durkheim's view of punishment are clearly visible. By placing the offender in direct opposition to those law-abiding seamen and officers, the differences between "them and us," "right and wrong," were emphasized. Byrn suggests that the public nature of these "solemn, formalized ritual[s] designed to make horrible examples of the victims" also left "lasting impressions on those who witnessed them"⁴ thereby discouraging, in theory at least, any further attempts to break with naval law.

Young gentlemen as officers-in-training were not above the ritual elements of naval justice. Offences minor enough to be dealt with by a captain, without the need

¹ David Garland, "Sociological Perspectives on Punishment," in *Crime and Justice*, 14 (1991): pp. 115, 123. Durkheim's argument that crime is "indispensable to the normal evolution of law and morality," justifies the use of a study of the crimes and punishments of young gentlemen as an indicator of wider social change, see Piers Beirne and James Messerschmidt, *Criminology*, 3rd edition (Boulder, CO, 2000), p. 97; also see Roger Cotterrell, *Emile Durkheim: law in a moral domain* (Edinburgh, 2002), p. 75.

² The "gauntlet" required sailors to whip an offender with knotted ropes as he walked past each man in succession, thereby transforming a prisoner's shipmates into the deliverers of justice. Typically, such a punishment was meted out to suit crimes which affected a ship's company as a whole such as theft or uncleanliness, Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 77. The practice of "flogging around the fleet" involved the officers and men of all the ships on a station assembling to witness the punishment of a prisoner who was rowed around to each vessel in turn, receiving a set number of lashes at the side of each, *ibid.*, p. 69.

³ This point is one on which Durkheim has received much criticism although its application to the naval example is appropriate and useful, quoted in Garland, "Perspectives on Punishment," p. 125; also see Cotterrell, *Durkheim*, pp. 93-94.

⁴ Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 69.

for a court martial, often incurred punishments that displayed the offender in some form of public humiliation. Mastheading required a young gentleman to climb to one of the platforms attached to a mast and sit there for a period of time, a punishment Byrn describes as “the naval equivalent to standing in the corner.”⁵ A young gentleman might also find himself “spread-eagle,” with his arms and legs tied outstretched to the standing rigging of the main or mizzen mast. During his time “in the rigging” a defaulting junior officer became an object of scorn, on display to the entire crew. Being disgrated to “serve before the mast” as a common sailor or being shackled “in the bilboes,” along with defaulting lower-deck men, were other forms of public degradation intended to injure a young gentleman’s honor and shame him into contrition. Flogging at the gratings was not unheard of as a punishment for midshipmen and masters’ mates, although it usually required the sentence of a court martial and was often reserved for older offenders.⁶ More common, particularly among youngsters, was the practice of “kissing the gunner’s daughter” which required a young gentleman to bend over a gun and receive a beating from a cane, a strap, or a rope.⁷ Aboard the *Mediator* in 1787, Jeffery Raigersfield described the process in which he and three other midshipmen

were tied up one after the other to the breech of one of the guns, and flogged upon our bare bottoms with a cat-o’-nine-tails, by the boatswain of the ship; some received six lashes, some seven, and myself three. No doubt we all deserved it, and were thankful that we were punished in the cabin instead of upon the deck, which was not uncommon in other ships of the fleet.⁸

⁵ Ibid., p. 80.

⁶ Six courts martial brought on the home station between 1756 and 1803 saw sentences of 24 to 200 lashes meted out for midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants. Five of the sentences were for desertion which, except in the case of William Russel, likely involved junior officers who had been raised from the lower deck rather than young gentlemen who entered the service as ambitious volunteers. The sixth case involved charges of embezzlement. See: TNA: PRO, ADM 12/22, the cases of James Gibson, 11/1/1803; John Tosh and Jeremiah McCarty, 10/3/1761; William Russel 24/7/1756; John Leslie 12/1/1760, all for desertion; and ADM 12/23 D. Gilbert, 17/8/1782 for embezzlement.

⁷ Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 80.

⁸ Jeffery Baron de Raigersfield quoted in Oliver Warner, *The Life and Letters of Vice-Admiral Lord Collingwood* (London, 1968), p. 25.

In 1791 Captain George Vancouver opted for a slightly more public form of punishment when he gave the order to flog the sixteen-year old midshipman, Thomas Pitt, later Lord Camelford, for disobedience. The flogging was conducted “at a gun in the cabin before all the officers.”⁹ Though the audience was selective, such ritualized humiliation before one’s professional, if not social, superiors sought to reinforce the same rigorous code of conduct based on obedience and duty that was just as applicable to officers as it was to mariners. Pitt’s case, however, brought secondary complications. His social status as the son and heir of a peer and the first cousin of the Prime Minister, muddied the waters of authority and the appropriate use of a captain’s prerogative to punish. It was a problem Vancouver would face on at least two other occasions – both of which saw Pitt flogged for his indiscretions and finally dismissed from the ship – and resulted in lasting animosity between the mentally unstable Camelford and his captain.¹⁰ The Camelford Affair was one example of the confusion that arose between social rank and naval rank, a confusion that appeared to increase among young gentlemen as the century progressed. The depth of this problem is addressed in Section 2 of this chapter.

Ritual was also a key element in the final flourish of punishments involving dismissal from the service. Being “drummed ashore” to the cadence of the “Rogue’s March” with a halter around one’s neck, or a young gentleman having his “uniform coat

⁹ Sir Joseph Banks quoted in Edward Smith, *The Life of Sir Joseph Banks: with some notices of his friends and contemporaries* (London, 1911), p. 144. Another account suggests that the flogging was “given in the Presence of all the midshipmen who were summoned for the occasion,” quoted in Lamb, *Vancouver’s Voyages*, Vol. 1, p. 213.

¹⁰ In 1795 Camelford wrote to Vancouver challenging him to a duel in consequence of the indignities he had suffered aboard *Discovery*. Public confrontations, a letter writing campaign, and even a published sketch by Gillray were contrived on Camelford’s part to humiliate and denigrate Vancouver. See Stephen R. Brown, *Madness, Betrayal and the Lash: The Epic Voyage of Captain George Vancouver* (Vancouver, 2009), pp. 203, 209-11.

stripped from his back and his sword broke over his head,”¹¹ were symbolic events designed to humiliate offenders in front of both the shipboard society and the civilian society they were being turned out to face. Just as punishments made use of cultural norms as the standard by which to denigrate offenders, cultural influences on naval crimes were visible in the motivations behind many of the charges that came before courts martial boards. Issues of pride and honor, which showed heightened sensitivity to the qualities that defined a gentleman and to perceptions of the masculine ideal, as well as general matters of youth and indiscipline, give evidence of the types of social and professional pressures acting upon officer aspirants.

The naval justice system was based on the principles of common law¹² although its legal parameters and punishments differed to cope with the specifics of the profession. Naval law, presented in the *Articles of War*, applied only to “members of the fleet ‘in actual service and in full pay’.”¹³ The *Articles* provided a framework for the execution of naval justice although, as the courts martial records show, they were far from comprehensive. The nebulous Article 36, which allowed for “all other crimes not capital . . . or for which no punishment is hereby directed to be inflicted, shall be punished by the laws and customs in such cases used at sea,”¹⁴ was a common catch-all charge. The precise meaning of those laws and customs was left to the discretion of captains and admirals who administered justice, case by case, in accordance with naval conventions.¹⁵ While Michel Foucault has identified a shift, which took place between 1750 and 1820,

¹¹ TNA: PRO, ADM 12/23, the case of Midshipman John Tipper, 28/5/1799 from “Courts Martial by Crime, 1/1/1755 to 1/1/1806.”

¹² Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 185.

¹³ John MacArthur quoted in *ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-10.

¹⁵ For example, the “Court of Inquiry” which “had no statutory basis” was one example of naval custom superseding the conventions of civil justice. Byrn notes that when it came to courts of inquiry, “it was from [naval] tradition that their legitimacy derived,” *ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

away from punishment that “operate[d] as a public spectacle of bodily violence” towards a more modern, non-public, prison-based system,¹⁶ it is difficult to see such developments in the naval example of the eighteenth or early-nineteenth centuries. The perpetuation of a system of justice based on the need for cohesiveness and maintenance of the “collective conscience”¹⁷ is understandable in the close quarters of a ship where the survival of all depended on unity. Even mariners, those most likely to suffer at the hands of the navy’s system of corporal punishment, accepted its ubiquity in daily life. As Archibald Sinclair, an able seaman, noted in the early years of the nineteenth century: “A certain indefinite amount of flogging was a necessary evil, without which the machinery would go all wrong”¹⁸

1. Courts martial records, 1755-1795

An examination of the courts martial records for crimes committed by junior officers: midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants who were tried on the home station,¹⁹ provides a view of the ways in which the machinery could and did go wrong. The data for this period is divided into two sections. The first covers the years from 1755 to 1775, up until the start of the American War, and the second covers the years from 1776 to 1795. These dates allow a few years on either side of the primary samples used in this study. They also allow for the inclusion of all the available data from the courts martial records by creating divisions at the mid-point of the decades. The evolution of crime and

¹⁶ Foucault cited Jeremy Bentham’s “panopticon” as an example of this new movement in the British system of criminal justice, see Garland, “Perspectives on Punishment,” pp. 135, 137.

¹⁷ The “collective conscience” presented Durkheim’s idea of a consciousness separate from that of the individual which existed for the purpose of preservation of both the collective and the individual. Denes Nemedi, “Collective Consciousness, Morphology, and Collective Representations: Durkheim’s Sociology of Knowledge, 1894-1900,” in *Sociological Perspectives*, 38 (Spring, 1995): p. 42.

¹⁸ Archibald Sinclair, *Reminiscences etc., 1814-1831* quoted in Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 73.

¹⁹ The records examined in the TNA relate to courts martial brought on the home station, typically from ships belonging to the Channel Fleet.

punishment among young gentlemen from 1796 to 1831 is addressed in Chapter Eleven.

Over the entire period of this survey (1755 -1831) a total of 215 cases involving junior officers were recorded. Only fifty of these related to the periods addressed in this chapter while the majority referenced crimes tried between 1796 and 1831.²⁰

a. *The nature of crime*

Between 1755 and 1775 the total number of recorded cases was low, with only fourteen courts martial being brought against junior officers. The number of cases overall increased to thirty-six between 1776 and 1795. The increase was, however, likely to be a reflection of more centralized record-keeping procedures, rather than evidence of the rising indiscipline of young gentlemen. Wherever available the classification and nomenclature of the criminal charges was taken directly from the Admiralty records, in particular those courts martial digests indexed alphabetically by crime covering the years from 1755 to 1806.²¹ Classification of the cases indexed in the “Black Books” covering 1741-1815,²² and the “Court Martial Index” from 1812 to 1855,²³ represent an attempt to follow the categories outlined in the contemporary record. In all, a total of nineteen categories surfaced covering charges of “contempt and disobedience” to one instance of “lunacy”²⁴ in 1779, which reflected the verdict rather than the actual charge. The categories include:

²⁰ See Appendix M, “Courts Martial Summary, 1755 to 1831.”

²¹ TNA: PRO, ADM 12/21-26, “Courts Martial Digests by Crime, January 1, 1755 to January 1, 1806.”

²² TNA: PRO, ADM 12/27 B-D, “Black Books.”

²³ TNA: PRO, ADM 12/27F, “Court Martial Index, 1812 – 1855.”

²⁴ ADM 12/24, “Courts Martial by Crime, J-M, 1755-1806,” shows master’s mate John Richmond of the *Britannia* “charged by his Captain with various offences, of which the Prisoner appeared to have been guilty; but it appeared likewise, that he was at intervals insane”

Table 7.1 Breakdown of Charges involved in Courts Martial, 1755-1831

<u>Charges Brought</u>	<u>Total # of Cases</u>
Contempt/Disobedience/Insolence/Assault (toward a superior officer)	73
Unofficerlike Behavior (including one case of breaking parole)	10
Desertion	11
Mutiny	9
Murder (all cases involved subordinates or fellow petty officers)	9
Sodomy	11
Plundering	6
Absent without leave	6
Cruelty/Abuse/Violence (toward subordinates or fellow petty officers)	11
Fighting	2
Fraud	6
Falsifying Age for the Examination	3
Lunacy	1
Embezzlement	12
Theft	6
Drunk	8
Drunk and disorderly (with implications of violence)	11
Neglect of duty	15
Loss of ship	5
Total # of Courts Martial Brought against Young Gentlemen, 1755-1831	215

Source: Appendix M, "Courts Martial Summary, 1755 to 1831."

Not all these categories aligned with charges directly applicable to the *Articles of War*.

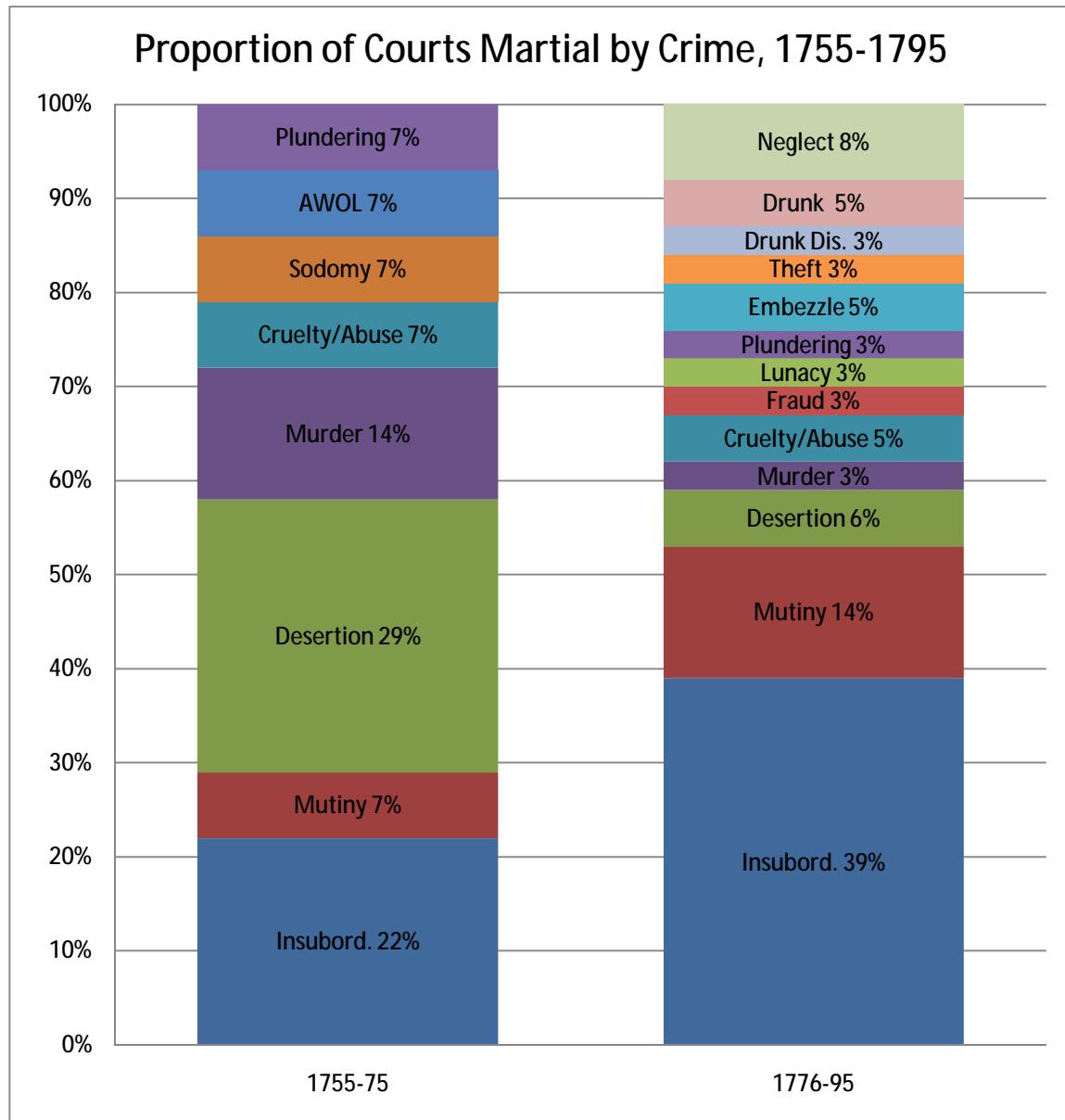
There was, for example, no specific provision in the *Articles* for fraud.²⁵ In some cases, particularly in the records after 1812, the relevant articles under which the charges were brought are cited, usually in combination, in order to cover crimes not specifically addressed by the letter of the law. Of the records that exist for the period between 1755 and 1775, the majority of cases (30 percent) dealt with the crime of desertion. Statistics show that desertion was more likely to occur among men aged twenty to thirty-nine, who had been pressed, brutalized, or simply saw the economic advantages of deserting to a merchantman or a shore-based living.²⁶ The higher incidence of desertion during this

²⁵ See Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 203-210.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 158; Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 194-95.

period coincided with a higher incidence of older midshipmen and mates who had been raised from the lower deck, a practice that waned with the close of the eighteenth century.²⁷

Figure 7.1 Crimes by Period, 1755-1795



* The omission of a number of categories in the earlier period simply reflects the fact that no court martials were brought against junior officers for those crimes during that time according to the available records.

²⁷ See Appendices G1-G2, "Junior Officers 1761-1771: Ages and Ranks;" also see Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 264.

The dramatic fall-off in desertion cases between 1776 and 1795, might suggest the presence of more junior officers who had entered the service voluntarily and who possessed long-term career ambitions. It might also reflect the possibility that it became more difficult to desert as time went on, resulting in the presence of more junior officers who indulged in crimes of mutiny or insubordination.

The punishments awarded to junior officers who deserted also underwent a transformation, with a reduction in the severity of the sentences visible as the century progressed. In 1756 William Russell, a midshipman of the *Prince George*, delivered a prize to Portsmouth Harbor, obtained leave and promptly disappeared for six months. It appeared from the trial summary that Russell fell ill ashore and traveled to London for his convalescence. His actions, which included sending his bedding and belongings aboard the prize, along with a letter stating that “he would be down in four or five days,” convinced the court that he showed “no intention of deserting the Service,” yet despite this, and the consideration given for his long illness, the court sentenced Russell to be “turned before the mast, and whipped with 200 lashes on his naked back, with a halter about his neck.”²⁸ A similarly severe punishment was passed in 1760 on John Leslie, a midshipman belonging to the *Alcide*. Leslie deserted to a merchant ship and received 200 lashes for his efforts, which were also to be administered “with a halter around his neck.” He was subsequently disgraced to serve “before the mast.”²⁹ Leslie’s reasons for deserting were unstated, although the superior pay offered by merchantmen may have played some part in his decision.³⁰

²⁸ ADM 12/22, Court martial of William Russell, 27/4/1756. It should be noted that all verdicts had to be confirmed by the Admiralty and it is possible that the sentences passed were commuted in many cases, Rodger, *Wooden World*, p. 223.

²⁹ ADM 12/22, Court martial of John Leslie, 12/1/1760.

³⁰ Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 194-95.

The severity of these punishments was highlighted by the comparative lack of action taken against Richard Ramsay, master's mate, who deserted the *Prince George* in 1781 and was merely disgrated for the offence. When it is considered that in the same year, seamen who deserted were punished with 200-500 lashes,³¹ it appeared that Ramsay was extremely fortunate. Henry Hindle, master's mate of the sloop *Hawke* in 1794, could also count himself lucky, being awarded only six months in the Marshalsea prison for his second offence for desertion.³² While the personal and professional circumstances of the deserters are unknown it appears, from the evidence described, that the severity of the punishments for this particular crime lessened as the century drew to a close.

No similar pattern was visible when it came to punishments handed down for other crimes. For certain offenses it appeared that sentences grew more severe as time passed. Charges of insubordination, disobedience, or abuse of a superior officer, grouped here under the heading of “insubordination,” accounted for the second largest category of crimes brought to trial between 1755 and 1775. Charges of disrespecting lieutenants and verbally abusing senior officers brought sentences that ranged from dismissal from the ship to disgrating. Midshipman Thomas Fuller’s insolent and abusive behavior towards a lieutenant in 1755 resulted in his being disgrated, rendered incapable of promotion, and being “towed standing up in a boat, with one hand tied up to the sheers, and his sentence read alongside each of His Majesty’s ships . . . now in the harbor.”³³ The court’s decision to impose a ritualized form of humiliation was designed to injure the young gentleman’s honor, but spared him any corporal punishment and the prospect of unemployment.

³¹ ADM 12/22, Courts Martial of James Ayrley, 10/1/1781 of the *Triumph* (sentenced to 200 lashes for desertion), and Richard Clarke, 12/1/1781 of the *Egmont* (sentenced to 500 lashes).

³² ADM 12/22, Court Martial of Henry Hindle, 29/12/1794.

³³ ADM 12/24, Court Martial of Thomas Fuller, 10/10/1755.

During the 1780s however, Benjamin Lees and John Buller, both masters' mates, were sentenced to be hanged for their abusive behavior towards superior officers. In 1783 a drunken Lees threatened a lieutenant with violence, while in 1787 Buller objected to being called a "rascal" by his first lieutenant and retaliated by striking him across the mouth "which made the blood spring; collared him, and tore off his shirt."³⁴ Of the remaining eleven cases of insubordination recorded between 1776 and 1795, one was dismissed from the service, one received a two-year sentence in the Marshalsea, five were disgrated and delayed in their ability to receive promotion, two received reprimands, and two were acquitted.

Punishments for charges of insubordination appeared equally severe as those meted out for charges of mutiny (as the vast majority of mutiny cases were, in fact, cases of disobedience). Of the five mutiny cases brought between 1776 and 1795 only two received a hanging sentence and these referred to rare instances of mutiny which involved violent attacks on command. The most famous of these mutinous midshipmen was Peter Heywood of the *Bounty*, a young man of good family and excellent naval connections³⁵ who received a royal pardon at the request of the court. The other three cases brought reprimands, disgratings, and short prison sentences of one to four months.³⁶

One explanation for the increasing severity of the punishments for charges of insubordination and mutiny was their increasing prevalence among young gentlemen

³⁴ ADM 12/21, Court Martial of Benjamin Lees, 7/3/1782 and ADM 12/26, Court Martial of John Buller, 2/10/1787.

³⁵ Peter Heywood was the son of a prosperous gentleman from Douglas on the Isle of Man and the nephew of Commodore Thomas Pasley. Heywood was also a relative by marriage of Captain Albermarle Bertie, who was one of the twelve senior officers presiding at the court martial. See Gavin Kennedy, *Bligh* (London, 1978), pp. 24, 166-67; Caroline Alexander, *The Bounty: The True Story of the Mutiny on the Bounty* (New York, 2004), pp. 214-15. Two hanging sentences were recorded for Peter Heywood, (ADM 12/24, 18/9/1792) and A. Murphy (ADM 12/24, 10/6/1779).

³⁶ ADM 12/24, Court martial of John Fullarton and John Harrison, 19/9/1795; ADM 12/25, Court martial of Edward Moore, 16/8/1791.

during the last quarter of the century. Courts martial for insubordination and related crimes rose from 29 percent of all charges recorded between 1755 and 1775, to 53 percent between 1776 and 1795. Another explanation for both the increased incidence of charges and the increasingly harsh punishments handed down for these crimes was the political and social anxiety stirred up by the American rebellion and, even more so, by the French Revolution.³⁷ As those in authority became more aware of tensions within the service, and more attuned to the revolutionary possibilities that could come from small instances of unrest, their tolerance for attacks on authority waned. The increase in the number of prosecutions may therefore, reflect a navy in which captains and admirals were less inclined to dismiss acts of insubordination and disobedience as mere products of a restless youth and were more willing to nip the potentially-disastrous seeds of upheaval in the bud.

Just as significant during this period was the decline in the proportion of charges for murder, cruelty, and abuse – crimes which, for the purpose of this study, involved victims who were subordinate or held an equivalent petty officers’ rating. Between 1755-75 and 1776-95 the proportion of crimes aimed at subordinates or equals fell by almost two thirds. Although the actual number of cases was small during both periods (only six cases total), it is notable that three of the charges of murder involved situations in which death was accidental. Of these, two involved unintentional shootings and saw the defendants acquitted,³⁸ while the last came about under circumstances that appeared as bizarre and as tragic to the court as they did to the midshipman on trial.

In 1779 William Kirk, the son “of a low woman . . . who came aboard the *Alexander* . . . bringing some wares to sell,” fatally stabbed his mother in a desperate

³⁷ Lamb notes that “discipline had become harsher during the unpopular American Revolutionary War,” especially for midshipmen aboard *Discovery*, Lamb, *Vancouver’s Voyages*, Vol. 1, p. 215.

³⁸ ADM 12/24, Court martial of R. Mitchell, 1758 and court martial of Thomas Whitewood, 1756.

attempt to protect both himself and his young wife from her abuse. The minutes of the trial extolled the virtues of the distraught Kirk suggesting “that he was worthy of a better woman for his mother” while they confirmed the inexorability of his fate:

On a review of these circumstances, it is impossible, without compassion, to read the sentence of death which the court pronounced, by ordering this unhappy prisoner to be hanged.³⁹

Kirk’s fear that his mother’s appearance “would disgrace him” in front of his shipmates and superiors was well founded and the trial summary notes his being overcome “with grief, indignation, and shame” at her verbal abuses which included some of the harshest language quoted in any of the transcripts examined here.⁴⁰ The threat perceived by the young midshipman to his professional and personal credit was dire. It was clear that Kirk had worked hard to rise in his profession, despite his inauspicious beginnings, and that he had earned the respect of his messmates and the *Alexander*’s officers. It was also clear that he felt the need to defend his honor with deadly force. In a year which saw a royal prince inducted into the service, the maintenance of gentlemanly honor, even and perhaps especially among midshipmen, became increasingly important.

An aspiring officer’s ability to convey at least the appearance of a gentleman was fast becoming a prerequisite for professional advancement. Peter Cullen noted the importance of appearances when it came to career considerations for a group of midshipmen aboard the frigate *Squirrel* in 1790: “they were the most strictly disciplined [midshipmen], and the most truly gentlemanly conduct inculcated and enforced . . . if ever

³⁹ ADM 12/24, Court martial of William Kirk, 18/3/1779. A death sentence was mandatory in the case of murder, see Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Kirk’s mother was quoted as having “without the least provocation” called Kirk a “son of a bitch . . . may God blast him” and “damned his wife for a Brimstone and a whore,” ADM 12/24. By contrast, the 1791 trial of James Francis Kelly hinged on him being described as a “blackguard” by a lieutenant of the Royal Marines and Kelly’s response in which he called the lieutenant “a dirty fellow and a poltroon,” see ADM 12/21, Court Martial of J. F. Kelly, 23/8/1791.

a black sheep discovered himself [amongst them], he was soon dismissed.”⁴¹ When it came to matters of honor, even well-born young gentlemen would go to extremes to protect such a fragile virtue. Midshipman the Hon. Charles Stuart informed his captain, George Vancouver: “if Sir you ever flog me I will not survive the disgrace.” Stuart then produced a razor and declared that he would rather cut his own throat than suffer such an indignity.⁴² The reality of a situation in which “The honour of an officer may be compared to the chastity of a woman, and when once wounded can never be recovered,”⁴³ went some way to explaining the desperate actions of William Kirk and other young gentlemen who were brought before courts martial hearings for various crimes during the last two decades of the century.

b. *Changing targets – superiors become the focus of aggression*

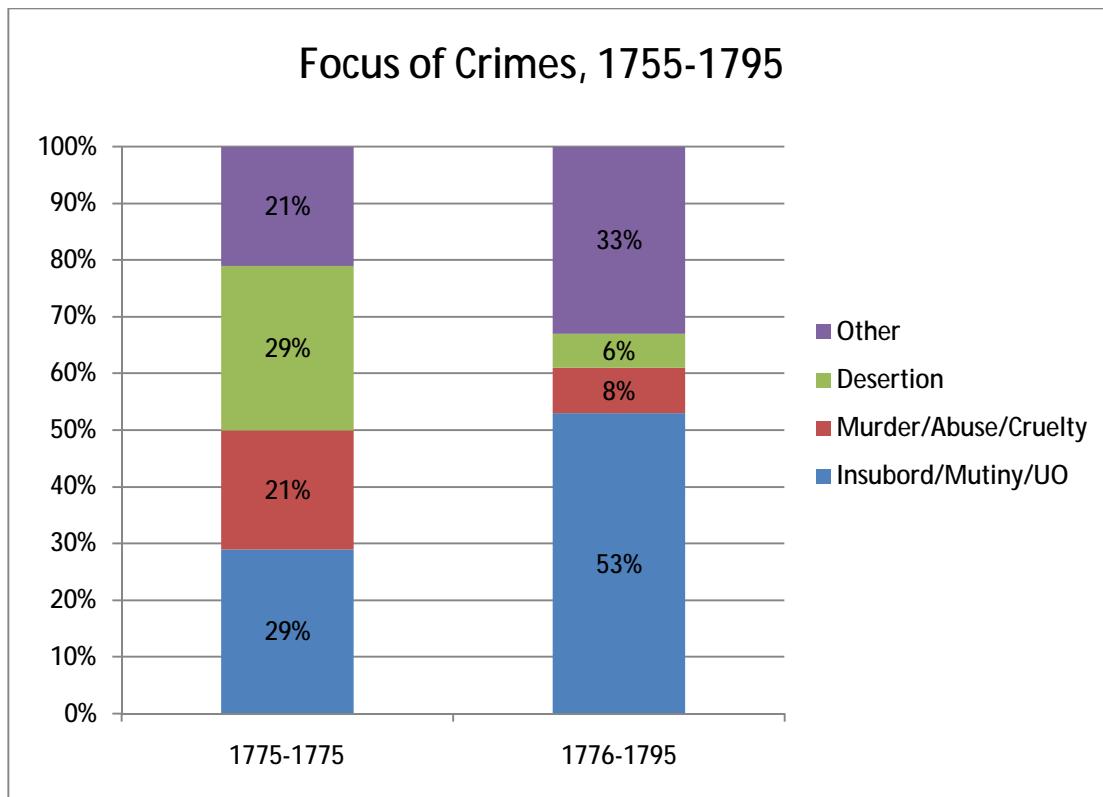
The most significant pattern visible in the courts martial data is the shift in the nature of the crimes committed by junior officers – a shift which saw their aggressions aimed at superiors rather than subordinates or other petty officers. Records from 1755 to 1795 show that charges for crimes against superiors (insubordination, disobedience, contempt or abuse of superior officers, unofficerlike behavior, and mutiny) increased dramatically after 1775 becoming the single largest category of charges brought against junior officers between 1776 and 1795.

⁴¹ ‘Peter Cullen’s Journal’ in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, pp. 59-60.

⁴² Stuart was the son of the Earl of Bute. Details from a memorandum by Sir Joseph Banks quoted in Lamb, *Vancouver’s Voyages*, Vol. 1, p. 214.

⁴³ Lord St. Vincent to Lord Spencer, December 24, 1800 quoted in Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 436.

Figure 7.2 Courts Martial of Midshipmen, Mates, and Acting Lieutenants, 1755-1795



Conversely, attacks on fellow petty officers and subordinates fell sharply as the century progressed. From 1755 to 1775 the percentage of attacks aimed at lower-deck men and other petty officers (cases of abuse, cruelty, and murder) roughly equaled the proportion of attacks aimed at superiors (21 percent to 29 percent respectively). Between 1776 and 1795 the difference between the two was pronounced – 8 percent of charges aimed at those below, 53 percent aimed at those above.⁴⁴

One possible explanation for the change was the junior officers' need to assert himself socially as a gentleman and professionally as an officer, goals which increased the likelihood of conflict with superiors. A growing confusion over which took precedence, social rank or service rank, may have lay at the heart of the new aggressions and appeared

⁴⁴ It is possible, though unlikely, that harsher attitudes towards discipline after the American War (see Rodger, *Command*, pp. 403-04), meant that young gentlemen were less likely to be prosecuted for crimes against inferiors although no direct evidence could be found to support this theory.

to escalate as the century drew to a close. Such confusion may well have been symptomatic of the wider social changes taking place. As discussed in Chapter Six, the definition of a “gentleman” was broadening during the last decades of the century to include those with the manners, education, and financial means to assume at least the appearance of a gentleman. Aspiring officers increasingly had to measure up to the new social norms in addition to professional expectations. From the records it appears that naval issues relating to the system of officer recruitment, and civil issues relating to changing conceptions of honor, and the related matters of authority, social status, and masculine virtues, lay at the heart of the shift in criminal behavior exhibited by junior officers.

i. The naval issues

Partly to blame for the changes in the behavior of young gentlemen were two fundamental inconsistencies that fed the conflict between social rank and professional rank. The first appeared in the disconnect between Admiralty policy and naval practices regarding the recruitment of officer candidates. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Admiralty had always preferred its commissioned officers to be gentlemen or aristocrats by birth. Since the Restoration, its efforts had focused on encouraging the sons of the nobility and the gentry to enter the service. Yet, despite the Admiralty’s efforts, the reality of officer entry was that it depended almost entirely on individual captains who exercised their powers of patronage at their discretion and appointed boys from a wide variety of social backgrounds based on their own personal and professional interests. The result was a socially-diverse corps of young gentlemen which dominated the entry-level ratings throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ See Chapter Ten for the social make-up of young gentlemen in the post-war period.

The second critical inconsistency lay in the navy's need to create a unique social/professional hybrid.⁴⁶ The development of the "professional gentleman" was a "socially revolutionary and politically all but subversive,"⁴⁷ arrangement that, nevertheless, formed the basis of recruitment and training throughout the eighteenth century. Despite the fact that the professional gentleman had become more common-place by the 1780s and 1790s, the old conflict remained at the forefront of naval concerns. Corfield notes that a profession was "respectable" and "fit for the elusive but desirable character of a 'gentlemen'" in that "professional work was dignified and not menial,"⁴⁸ a description not well suited to the situation of an officer-in-training. The fact that the navy in the late-eighteenth century "was a hard service; [in which] a midshipman was a kind of water-dog, to fetch and carry . . . ,"⁴⁹ meant that even by professional standards, a naval career involved a high degree of manual labor that fell well short of what would have been considered "dignified."

Both these factors, which presented various contradictions to the young gentlemen who were forced into the mold, contributed to the confusion over which standards took precedence, social rank or naval rank, birth or merit.

ii. The civil issues

Outside the influence of the Admiralty or its captains, changing social dynamics would also have an effect on the way in which young gentlemen reacted to perceived attacks on their status as professionals and their gentlemanly honor. Rodger notes a heightened sensitivity among sea-officers regarding issues of honor and gentility, "for as

⁴⁶ See Chapter Four for a full discussion.

⁴⁷ Rodger, *Command*, p. 121. Also see Elias, "Genesis," p. 294.

⁴⁸ See Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 174. According to Cain and Hopkins a gentleman, and even a gentleman capitalist "kept his distance from the everyday and demeaning world of work," see Cain, "Gentlemanly Capitalism," p. 505.

⁴⁹ Chamier, *Life*, p. 15

not-quite gentlemen they had more to be sensitive about.”⁵⁰ The issue was even more prickly for the majority of midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants who, as not-quite officers, could only lay tentative claims to the status of gentlemen. Ambiguities over a young gentleman’s place in both the shipboard hierarchy and the social hierarchy also helped to confuse matters of honor and duty.

In 1771 the poet and playwright Robert Dodsley “stressed the socially discriminatory aspects of honour”⁵¹ with his lament: “What’s Honour? A vain phantom rais’d, To fright the weak from tasting those delights, Which nature’s voice, that law supreme allows.”⁵² Such an attitude reflected the *ancien régime* conception of French honor “as applying wholly to personal characteristics, including virtue, courage, and the desire for distinction, terms reflecting largely aristocratic preoccupations.”⁵³ By the mid-eighteenth century the proliferation of bourgeois concepts of “merit . . . assiduity, competence, utility, and benevolence,” were redefining notions of traditional honor in France.⁵⁴ The new standards appeared equally in the British social example, which was also aided by a “vigorous capitalism” and a “spiritual or moral”⁵⁵ component. The new, broader concept of honor, which the French Revolution crystallized on both sides of the Channel, combined the middle-class ideals of duty, industry, sentiment, and “moral discipline” with the old order principles of “personal courage,” and the “desire for distinction.”⁵⁶

The coalescence of ideals of honor and duty presented aspiring officers with some difficult choices as they sought to carve out a social and professional niche. A duty to

⁵⁰ Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 435.

⁵¹ Langford, *Polite*, p. 464.

⁵² Robert Dodsley quoted in *ibid.*, p. 464.

⁵³ Nye, *Masculinity*, p. 16.

⁵⁴ Guy Chaussinand-Nogaret quoted in *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵⁵ Nye, *Masculinity*, pp. 27, 16.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 16.

uphold one's personal honor often conflicted with a young gentleman's duty to obey his superiors, a situation increasingly reflected in the charges brought before naval courts between 1776 and 1795.

In 1782 Mr. Edwards, a midshipman belonging to the *Suffolk*, was ordered by his captain, Sir George Home, "to go on the forecastle to do his duty as an able seaman." Edwards refused to go stating that: "he was qualified for an officer." The captain repeated his orders and each time Edwards refused "with a sneer of contempt." The midshipman was punished with five days in irons and a further eighty days in confinement for his insubordination.⁵⁷ In 1785, William Skidmore James, master's mate of the *Unicorn*, was charged with disrespecting his captain, after the ship's carpenter accused James of damaging one of the boats and threatened to report his incompetence to the commanding officer. James's indignation led him to lash out, "Damn Capt. Barclay, and damn you too!" The court presented James with an ultimatum: apologize and promise "future respect to his superior officers," or be dismissed from the service. James complied – and was forced to swallow some of his professional pride.⁵⁸ In 1791, Mr. Robertson, midshipman of the *Adamant*, was charged with "sending a challenge" to Lieutenant Darby of the Royal Marines. The matter over which the duel was to be fought involved a separate charge of mutinous language. Robertson had encouraged another young gentleman to speak his mind, even though it differed from Darby's, asserting that: "If a man gives his opinion freely, Damn and bugger my eyes, but I will give mine, were I to be hoisted at the yard-arm for it." Robertson's sentence was not so drastic, although the court dismissed him from the service, without chance of reinstatement.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ ADM 12/22, Court martial of B. Edwards, 1/11/1782.

⁵⁸ ADM 12/23, Court martial of William Skidmore James, 16/8/1785.

⁵⁹ ADM 12/23, Court martial of D. Robertson, 18/5/1791.

In these examples, which were brought to trial on charges of insubordination, indiscipline, and mutinous behavior, the defense of personal and professional honor was of paramount concern to the young men involved, to the extent that it superseded matters of subordination and their sense of duty to obey a superior officer. These cases provide evidence of the perceived threats to an aspirant's status as an officer and a gentleman; his professional and therefore, his social competence; and his masculine dignity based on ethical principles and professional ability. The changing sense of what qualities defined honor, and the merger that had taken place between concepts of honor and duty, propelled much of the conflict between young gentlemen and their superiors.

2. The Midshipmen's Mutiny, 1791

a. *Background*

One of the most outstanding examples of this type of conflict took place in 1791. The “Midshipmen’s Mutiny” represented a series of events which distilled all the anxiety and confusion experienced by young gentlemen into a single expression of discontent. The details of the story lacked the high drama of the *Bounty* mutiny, which had taken place two years earlier, and as a result the episode received little attention outside of naval circles. It is now visible primarily through the memoirs of the officers and men who were observers of the events⁶⁰ and whose commentary offers valuable insight into the crises of identity and authority affecting the navy’s officer corps during the last decades of the eighteenth century.

⁶⁰ The “mutiny” is discussed in Gardner, *Recollections*, pp. 81-82; Dillon, *Narrative, Vol. I*, pp. 28-29; Charles Dodd, *The Annual Biography: being lives of eminent or remarkable persons who have died within the year 1842* (London, 1843), pp. 439-40; Pettigrew, *Memoirs of Nelson, Vol. 2*, pp. 141-42; William Richardson, *A Mariner of England: An Account of the Career of William Richardson from Cabin Boy in the Merchant Service to Warrant Officer in the Royal Navy, 1708-1819*, ed. Spencer Childers (London, 1908), p. 69.

On August 16, 1791 Edward Moore a midshipman belonging to the *London*, a 98 gun ship stationed in Portsmouth Harbor, was tried before a court martial on charges of sedition and forming a mutinous combination among the young gentlemen of the fleet. The charges involved the circulation of letters “tending to the hindrance of His Majesty’s Service, and to the subversion of good order and discipline in the Fleet.”⁶¹ The letters, copies of which were presented at Moore’s trial, were directed to the “Mates and Midshipmen” of the ships in Portsmouth Harbor and called on them to collectively support a fellow midshipman, twenty-year old Thomas Leonard, of the *Saturn*, whose professional and gentlemanly honor had been impugned by the first lieutenant of that ship some weeks earlier.

According to the testimony given at Moore’s trial, Mr. Leonard had failed to report the firing of the evening gun to Lieutenant William Shield⁶² and was ordered to the masthead as punishment. Leonard, however, refused to go, declaring that such a punishment was beneath the dignity of an officer and a gentleman. This enraged Lieutenant Shield to the point that he ordered a gantline⁶³ rigged from the main topmast. The fall of the rope was tied to Mr. Leonard and he was hauled aloft. During his ascent Leonard collided with part of the rigging and was injured, although he managed to untie the rope and made his way back to the deck. Shield ordered him aloft again but Leonard protested, saying that his injuries prevented him from making the climb. The *Saturn*’s surgeon was

⁶¹ TNA: PRO, ADM 1/5329, “Court martial transcript for Edward Moore, August, 1791.”

⁶² William Shield received his commission in 1779. In 1795 he commanded the *Audacious* (74) in a celebrated action of Fréjus. He then commanded the frigate *Southampton* under Nelson at Genoa and after several years of service off the coast of Spain and in the North Sea, was appointed Commissioner of the Dockyard at Malta in 1807. In 1808 he became Commissioner of the Cape of Good Hope station and in 1815 was made resident Commissioner of Plymouth Dockyard. Shield became a rear-admiral in 1840 and died on June 25, 1842. See Dodd, *Annual Biography, 1842*, p. 439-40.

⁶³ A gantline, or “girtline” as it was termed during the trial, involved rigging a block to the top of the mast, through which a rope was sent. This arrangement was used to haul relatively light weight articles aloft. ADM 1/5329, ff. 50-51; William Burney, ed., *Falconer’s New Universal Dictionary of the Marine, 1815 Edition* (Annapolis, 2006), p. 116.

called in to adjudicate and confirmed that Leonard's bruising was severe enough to discontinue the punishment. Leonard subsequently attempted to prosecute Lieutenant Shield, but was officially denied a court of inquiry or a court martial to address his grievances.⁶⁴

The circumstances of the incident became the talk of Portsmouth and aroused great indignation among the other junior officers on that station. William Dillon was a twelve-year old midshipman aboard *Alcide* at the time and noted in his memoirs that, "This event became known through the Fleet, and caused a very strong sensation among Midshipmen, many of whom were of the first families in the country."⁶⁵ Just how much of a stir Leonard's story created became evident on the afternoon of July 3, when Edward Moore paid a social call on his old shipmates aboard the *Edgar* and dined with them in the cockpit. Bad weather forced Moore to remain aboard the *Edgar* until after dinner the next day and sometime during his stay discussion turned to the subject of Thomas Leonard. Moore became involved in a plan to rally the mates and midshipmen of the fleet and call on them to write letters of support to Mr. Leonard, encouraging him to proceed with the prosecution of Lieutenant Shield as "the dignity of the Corps from which every future naval commander must rise, depends on it."⁶⁶ These letters signed, "The Gentlemen of the *Edgar*" were brought back to Moore's ship and read in the cockpit where they roused much support from the junior officers of the *London*. Copies of the letter were made then

⁶⁴ ADM 1/5329, f. 61. One source suggests that an action was brought against Lt. Shield by Mr. Leonard in the Court of Common Pleas in 1792. The case was heard by Lord Chief Justice Loughborough who instructed the jury to rule in favor of Lt. Shield. See Edmund Burke, *The Annual Register of World Events: A Review of the Year 1842* (London, 1843), p. 273. An examination of the records TNA: PRO, CP 40/3797-99, 3801-02 which cover Trinity term 1791 through Michaelmas term 1792 include no details of Shield's trial.

⁶⁵ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 29. Seaman William Richardson also notes that the events "made a great stir at the time," Richardson, *A Mariner of England*, p. 69.

⁶⁶ ADM 1/5329, "Copy of Circular Letter from the Gentlemen of the London, July 4, 1791."

sent via the post office to the mates and midshipmen of at least eight ships of the line in Portsmouth Harbor.⁶⁷

According to Moore's testimony, he acted on the belief "that he did not think, the order of a Lieutenant ordering a Midshipman to the Masthead, a legal one." When asked by Lord Hood, Commander in Chief, who presided at the earlier court of inquiry, whether he had never heard of a midshipman being mastheaded, Moore replied, "yes, a boy, but I do not think it a punishment proper for a man." Hood and the members of the court "expressed some surprise at the Prisoner's answer."⁶⁸ During the court martial, however, the testimonies of the young gentlemen of the *London* echoed Moore's concern for the unsuitability of the punishment and for the attack leveled at gentlemanly honor. Mr. Conally, a midshipman, summed up the general feeling when he announced, "we thought it a disgrace to the Corps of Gentlemen [for Mr. Leonard] to be treated in that unofficerlike manner . . ."⁶⁹

Throughout the trial Moore acted as his own advocate (in the presence of his attorney, Mr. Callaway⁷⁰) and asked witnesses to confirm that the letters were distributed openly, without secrecy, and without any intention of disrupting the good order of the service. Of the thirty-five witnesses called at the trial, all who were asked testified to Moore's professional credentials as a diligent and obedient officer and to his excellent

⁶⁷ Witnesses were called from the ships *Illustrious*, *Alfred*, *Hannibal*, *Princess Royal*, *Formidable*, *Carnatic*, and *Duke*, see ADM 1/5329. Dillon also recalls receiving one of the circular letters aboard the *Alcide*, see Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, pp. 29-30.

⁶⁸ ADM 1/5329, f. 28. Depending on the ship, mastheading could be a very common event. According to one midshipman who served aboard the *Salisbury* in 1785-86, there was "Mastheading upon every trifling occasion," see Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 43.

⁶⁹ ADM 1/5329, f. 70. Testimony of Mr. John Conally, midshipman HMS *London*.

⁷⁰ It was standard practice for defendants to cross-examine witnesses during courts martial although the presence of an attorney was very atypical and suggests that Moore was not only wealthy enough to afford a lawyer but well-connected enough to have his request for counsel to be present approved. See Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 44.

character as a gentleman. None, including Captain Westcott⁷¹ of the *London*, or the openly hostile Captain Linzee of the *Saturn*, admitted that Moore had ever displayed dissatisfaction with the service or the desire to undermine its authority. The eight character witnesses called by the defense included Lord Amelius Beauclerk (then a lieutenant aboard *Swiftsure*), Captain Robert Faulkner, and Captain Stephen Mouat each of whom gave glowing reports of Moore's conduct and character.⁷²

b. *Outcomes*

The court judged that the case against Moore was "in part proved," and sentenced him to one month in the Marshalsea prison and a reprimand admonishing him to "be more circumspect in future." It was an astonishingly light sentence considering the nature of the crime and the fact that the court regarded him "principally concerned" in the letter writing campaign.⁷³ Compared to other punishments handed out to mates and midshipmen at the time, the sentence was remarkable in its leniency. In the same year Mr. Bissel, a midshipman of the *Winchelsea*, was sentenced to two years in the Marshalsea for sending a threatening letter to a lieutenant of the Royal Marines, while in 1792 Archibald Walsh, midshipman of the *Busy* cutter, was dismissed from the service, without possibility of reinstatement, for his abusive behavior towards a lieutenant.⁷⁴

Both the quality and quantity of Edward Moore's character references certainly influenced the court's decision, and although little personal information is available on Moore, Lord Beauclerk declared that his "Conduct gained him highest esteem and [his]

⁷¹ George Westcott was Rear Admiral Goodall's flag-captain aboard the *London* and was a notable example of an officer who rose from obscure origins: he was the son of a baker from Honiton. S.v. "George Blagden Westcott," in *ODNB* (2004).

⁷² See ADM 1/5329, ff. 94-97; James Anthony Gardner was one of Edward Moore's messmates aboard the *Edgar* and mentions him frequently in the most admirable terms, see Gardner, *Recollections*, pp. 76, 81-83, 92.

⁷³ ADM 1/5329, ff. preamble, 98.

⁷⁴ ADM 12/26, Court martial of Mssrs. Bissel and Vaughn, 26/12/1791; and ADM 12/27B, Court martial of Archibald Walsh, 8/4/1792.

private character as a Gentleman was always that of a man of Honour and whose acquaintance I always wished to know.”⁷⁵

Edward Moore was born in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire and was baptized on March 2, 1760.⁷⁶ He was likely the grandson or nephew of Edward Moore, Esq. who served as town sheriff in 1705.⁷⁷ Beyond this reference, however, the social standing of his family is obscure.⁷⁸ The argument from silence suggests that Moore did not descend from any notable family possessing landed estates or displaying a coat of arms. It is more likely that he came from a successful professional or merchant family, or possibly minor squirearchy.⁷⁹ The success of the family is alluded to by William Dillon, a notorious snob, who offered harsh commentary on young officers he deemed to be of inferior birth and connections. Dillon was a fellow midshipman of Moore’s when they served together aboard the *Alcide* and described Moore as “a gentleman of independent fortune,”⁸⁰ a glowing social reference by Dillon’s standards. Moore’s financial ability to hire his own legal counsel, his articulate and convincing performance in the court, and the quality of his written statement suggested that he was a man of means and education. Neither, however, sufficed to set him on the fast track to promotion.

⁷⁵ Lord Amelius Beauclerk, in ADM 1/5329, f. 95. Gardner also described Moore as: “A lieutenant, well-known in the navy and highly respected by a numerous acquaintance,” Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 92.

⁷⁶ Baptismal certificate attached to Moore’s Passing Certificate, TNA: PRO. ADM 107/12, f. 59.

⁷⁷ Public Record Office, *List of Sheriffs for England and Wales, from the earliest times to A.D. 1831: compiled from documents in the Public Record Office*, Lists and Indexes, vol. 9 (London, 1898), p. 275; TNA: PRO, ADM 36/10923, “Muster book HMS London, 1791.”

⁷⁸ The family is not included in social registers including *Burke’s Landed Gentry, Commoners of Great Britain, or Extinct and Dormant Baronetcies*. Neither are the Moore’s mentioned in Thomas Nicholas, *Annals and Antiquities of the Counties and the Country Families of Wales*, 1782.

⁷⁹ This assumption is based on the fact that town sheriffs were typically esteemed members of the community whose “legal powers and official dignity still remained of great importance in the administration of the county,” see Sidney Webb, *English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act: The Parish and the County* (London, 1906), p. 289. The professional status of a town sheriff, either as a lawyer or someone of civic authority, is implied in the description of the office: “As a judicial officer, the Sheriff had the administration of justice in the County Court; as a ministerial officer he has the execution of all process, whether civil or criminal, mense or final,” from John Impey, *The Office of Sheriff*, 1789 quoted in Webb, *Local Government*, p. 289.

⁸⁰ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 29.

Moore joined the service at the age of sixteen or seventeen and was thirty-one years old at the time of the trial, having served in the navy for roughly fourteen years.⁸¹ He passed the examination for lieutenant in December 1789 while aboard the *Edgar*,⁸² but did not gain a commission until 1795.⁸³ Moore's professionalism and ability received universal praise during the trial, so it is likely that he was the victim of peacetime freezes on promotion rather than a bad seed left to rot in the midshipmen's berth. In light of the rash of promotions awarded during the Nookta Sound mobilization Moore must have felt the slight.⁸⁴ At the trial, several colleagues noted Moore's ambition to "get ahead" in service,⁸⁵ and it is possible that anxiety over his professional prospects and his status as an aging midshipman fuelled his outrage over the treatment of Mr. Leonard.

What is striking about this case is the speed and vigor⁸⁶ with which the senior captains and admirals pursued the prosecution of actions they believed would "incit[e] Mutiny or Sedition in the Fleet,"⁸⁷ followed by the virtual dismissal of the case with a

⁸¹ Captain Molloy of the *Edgar* testified that Moore had served fourteen years in the Royal Navy at the time of the trial (ADM 1/5329, f. 28), although Moore's passing certificate for lieutenant shows his first ship as the *Medea* which he joined on July 1, 1780 (TNA: PRO, ADM 6/94, f. 198, "Certificates of Service for Promotion, 1795.")

⁸² TNA: PRO, ADM 107/12, f. 59, "Lieutenants' Passing Certificates, 1789"; Pappalardo, *Passing Certificates*, Vol. 2, p. 351.

⁸³ ADM 6/94, f. 198; Lewis in Dillon's *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 29, dates his commission from December 1, 1794. According to Gardner, Moore was given a lieutenancy aboard the *Cumberland* by Admiral Macbride, a member of the court at his court martial, see Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 82.

⁸⁴ The *London* was Rear-Admiral Goodall's flagship in the fleet assembling for the Ochakov Crisis and was therefore a large ship with officers and men new to one another, a factor that may have contributed to Moore's overall discontent.

⁸⁵ ADM 1/5329, ff. 20, 37, 44, 56.

⁸⁶ The letter to Mr. Leonard and the original circular letter originated on board the *Edgar* on July 4, 1791. A court of enquiry was approved by the Admiralty on July 14, and Moore's court martial began on August 16. He was in imprisoned in the Marshalsea on August 29. While the law allowed that three years could pass between the perpetration of a crime and the filing of a letter of complaint and request for a court martial, the "general unwritten rule was that letters of complaint were to be drawn up and submitted at the earliest possible opportunity if they were to lead to a court martial," Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 35. It should be noted that most courts martial followed quickly after a court of enquiry or upon the determination that a court martial was required. There are some notable cases in the records, however, where defendants waited nearly a year for a trial.

⁸⁷ Capt. Anthony James Pye Molloy's testimony in ADM 1/5329, f. 27.

cursory punishment and a slap on the wrist for one of the ringleaders.⁸⁸ Moore's position as a gentleman, by appearance if not by birth, with money and good connections in the service, marked him as someone not to be dismissed out of hand as a criminal. In essence Moore epitomized the new breed of gentleman – complete with a heightened sensitivity to issues of gentility and professionalism – which led him to champion the case in defense of the honor of the corps of aspiring officers. He testified to a belief that Leonard's duty to obey the orders of a superior officer did not extend to the blind acceptance of authority that would undermine his personal and professional credit. It is clear that none of the midshipmen who gave evidence at Moore's court martial believed that their support for Leonard meant an abandonment of their duty to the service. It is also clear that they felt a *duty* to uphold the honor of young gentlemen, even if it meant challenging naval discipline and the strict observance of naval hierarchy.

The judgment of the presiding captains and admirals suggested that they believed Moore's claim that his call to action was not intended to stir mutiny or unrest. Their decision also lent implicit support to Moore's conviction that officers (even junior officers) had a right to defend their honor.⁸⁹

The Midshipmen's Mutiny and the events surrounding Moore's trial exemplified the changing social and professional issues affecting junior officers during the last decades of the eighteenth century in the way that they perceived themselves as gentlemen and in the way they interpreted the concepts of honor and duty. As not-quite officers, the vast majority of midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants were entitled to the rank of

⁸⁸ Gardner suggests that two weeks of Moore's month-long sentence in the Marshalsea was spent aboard the guardship, see Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 82. This suggestion is supported by the fact that Moore's name appears in the muster book for the *London* dated September 1 to September 24, 1791, see ADM 36/10923.

⁸⁹ ADM 1/5329, f. 90.

“gentleman” only as a courtesy, and sensitivity to threats on their tenuous status resulted in more attacks on superior officers who threatened, or appeared to threaten, their claims.

The Mutiny encapsulated the effects of conflicting naval and civilian influences on a young gentleman’s professional and social status. On the naval side, the Admiralty’s policies emphasized the importance of old-order standards of hereditary gentility, while its practices allowed that the appearance of a gentleman sufficed when it came to the raw materials needed for an aspiring officer. Such confusing institutional standards reflected confusing standards in society at large. As Britain led the fight against French Revolutionary ideals in defense of the *ancien régime*,⁹⁰ it also headed the charge towards a new civil order, one which redefined gentility based on manners and wealth rather than the traditional qualification of birth.⁹¹ The comparative ease of passing for a gentleman in society further emphasized the need for genteel standards to be observed on the quarterdeck, particularly among those at the lowest, most vulnerable levels of command.

If the real social make up of the midshipmen’s berth did not change, what did was the willingness of inferior officers to defend their gentlemanly honor at the expense of naval discipline and subordination. The Midshipmen’s Mutiny expressed the anxieties raised over the new conceptions of gentility, honor, and duty and it showed that while the service would not tolerate threats to its hierarchy and its structures of discipline, it

⁹⁰ Many contemporary arguments over the Revolution were couched in terms of aristocratic versus anti-aristocratic or republican sentiments. Edmund Burke championed the advantages of the “older, less doctrinaire, and more humane political and moral structures which had evolved from the distant past.” Seamus Deane, *The French Revolution and Enlightenment in England, 1789-1832* (Cambridge, MA, 1988), p. 3. Thomas Paine, however, attacked the aristocracy as “as an unproductive estate foreign to the body politic,” J. S. McClelland, *A History of Western Political Thought* (London, 1996), pp. 402-04. Also see Frank O’Gorman, *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy*, ed. Geraint Parry (London, 2004), p. 11; Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man: Being an answer to Mr. Burke’s attack on the French Revolution*, ed. Moncure D. Conway, abridged edition (London, 1894), pp. 382-83. While the war undoubtedly began with rather prosaic interests in mind (the opening of the Scheldt and the breach of the Treaty of Westphalia) the focus soon shifted to more emotional, patriotic arguments which saw Pitt move to quash any signs of Jacobinism in Britain, see William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 2002), pp. 200, 212-13.

⁹¹ See Dewald, *European Nobility*, p. 55.

simultaneously upheld the rights and privileges of gentlemanly claims, particularly when those claims were supported by wealth and powerful naval connections.

c. *A cause for concern?*

One of the more significant points about the Midshipmen's Mutiny was its obscurity outside of naval circles. The potentially-explosive events conceived of by Moore and his colleagues appear to have been largely unknown to the general public, though whether this was the result of discreet handling of the affair by the Admiralty or the possibility that the event failed to capture civilian imaginations, is unknown. In light of the seriousness of the charges and the speedy efforts to prosecute at least one of the perpetrators, it is unlikely that any case of mutiny and sedition, particularly one that involved the Channel Fleet's future officers, would have been considered un-newsworthy.

Reports of the trial did appear in several London newspapers, including the *Whitehall Evening Post*, *Lloyd's Evening Post*, and the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*,⁹² although none made reference to the charge of mutiny in their reports. *Whitehall* made no mention of any charges at all, stating simply that there had been a court martial aboard the *Royal William*.⁹³ Both *Lloyd's* and the *Morning Post* printed the same story which gave the following details:

Saturday ended at Portsmouth, a Court Martial held on board the Royal William, which had taken up several days, on Mr. Edward Moore, an officer of the London man of war, writing what was termed a seditious letter respecting the tyrannical and oppressive conduct of Lieutenant Shields [sic], of the *Saturn*, towards Mr. Leonard, midshipman, in causing him to be hoisted up the yard-arm; whereby he was greatly maimed and bruised, and improperly exposed to the ship's company.⁹⁴

⁹² Note: no extant copies of the *Portsmouth Telegraph* or the *Portsmouth Gazette* were available for examination. The possibility that the story received additional coverage or was given a different spin in the local press cannot therefore, be assessed.

⁹³ *Whitehall Evening Post*, August 23, 1791.

⁹⁴ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, August 24, 1791; *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, August 25, 1791.

The tone of this report appeared to favor the position of the defendant, justifying his actions as retaliation against the brutality of William Shield.⁹⁵ In 1791 the *Morning Post* remained an ostensibly Whig publication⁹⁶ and it may be assumed that the appearance of the same copy in *Lloyd's* indicated that publication's similar leanings. Lingering political divisions among the Channel Fleet's officers, legacies of the Keppel-Palliser affair and the more distant American War, might well have been responsible for the defensive spin placed on the reporting of Edward Moore's case. The political sentiments stirred up by the French Revolution were, in 1791, largely split with Whigs vocally supporting the natural "rights of man," and the "overthrow of Tyranny" espoused by the revolutionaries.⁹⁷ Such "tyrannical and oppressive" conduct on the part of the Royal Navy, while it was in the hands of a Tory government, provided an opportunity for a political attack. While William Shield's political affiliations are unknown, it is clear that the Whig papers also sought to burden him with the blame for the events that led to Moore's court martial. It was a scenario almost as damaging to the image of the service as it was to the officer who ordered the punishment. At a time when the sentimental revolution was ushering in new

⁹⁵ It is noteworthy that a few years later in 1794, the crew of the *Windsor Castle* "mutinied" off Corsica, protesting the treatment they received from Rear-Admiral Linzee and his flag-captain, William Shield. C in C, Vice-Admiral Hotham responded by removing Captain Shield (as well as his first lieutenant and boatswain) and sending them to another ship. Richard Woodman, *A Brief History of Mutiny: Furious, Savage and Bloody: 400 years of Rebellion* (New York, 2005), p. 97. Nelson noted of the incident that the officers were tried "at their own request" and were "most honourably acquitted . . . I am of the opinion 'tis mistaken leniency and will be the cause of the present innocent people being hanged," Nelson to his wife, Fanny, November 12, 1794 quoted in Rodger, *Command*, p. 445.

⁹⁶ Daniel Stuart purchased the *Morning Post* in 1795, transforming it into a moderate Tory publication. See Wilfred Hope Hindle, *The Morning Post, 1772-1937: Portrait of a Newspaper* (London, 1937), p. 65. Prior to 1795 it was owned by a syndicate of "Citymen" including John Bell (bookseller), James Christie (auctioneer), and Richard Tattersall (horse dealer), although private ownership did not eliminate political bias, which in the case of the *Morning Post* lent Whig from its inception in 1772. Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1998), p. 56.

⁹⁷ Charles James Fox's outspoken support for the French Revolution was supported, at least initially, by radical philosophers, writers, and poets including Thomas Paine, Samuel Parr, Robert Southey, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge among others, see Deane, *French Revolution and Enlightenment England*, pp. 45-46; Lionel Madden, *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1984), p. 5; Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity*, trans. Catherine Porter (Durham, NC, 2001), p. 122-24.

standards of civility and charity,⁹⁸ the barbarism of unjust corporal punishment inflicted upon a young gentleman appears to have been more newsworthy than the mutinous proceedings stemming from it. The position of the *Whitehall Evening Post* as a government vehicle,⁹⁹ and its cursory treatment of the story, tends to support theories of a political rationale for the different approaches to reporting the case.

The conspicuous omission of the word “mutiny” from any of the extant reports also supports notions of a political agenda. From the Whig point of view, the “tyranny” of Lt. Shield may have been less convincing in the context of a charge of mutiny, and all its sensitive implications. From the government’s point of view, the very public airing of hostilities between Keppel and Palliser had given the service a serious black eye, while the failure of the Ochakov crisis in that same year had fallen on both the Pitt ministry and the Admiralty. According to Jeremy Black, Ochakov “revealed how the press could be used by the opposition . . . to seriously embarrass the ministry.”¹⁰⁰ The navy, as its primary fighting force, suffered accordingly. The need to downplay events that might be taken as evidence of a service that did not have control of its own house, and more particularly its junior officers, may have justified moves to manage the trial as discretely as possible. It is not possible to say with any certainty that the navy intended to cover up the circumstances surrounding Moore’s trial, or that they had any power to do so. It is, however, reasonable to assume that considering the political circumstances, it was in the best interests of the service to keep internal matters internal.

Beyond issues of politics and the popular press, the Midshipmen’s Mutiny raised serious questions within the service itself. It is particularly noteworthy that despite the

⁹⁸ Langford, *Polite*, pp. 461, 481.

⁹⁹ Barker, *Newspapers*, p. 57.

¹⁰⁰ Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1987), p. 185.

rebellious streak in the Channel Fleet’s junior officer corps, the testimony of the many witnesses called to give evidence at Moore’s trial failed to turn up any answers as to who, besides Moore, had been involved in the creation of the offending letter. Most witnesses claimed ignorance as to the identities of the culprits while William Heard, a midshipman of the *Edgar* “desired to decline answering” Sir Hyde Parker’s direct question on the subject.¹⁰¹ The *Edgar*’s muster books for July/August 1791 reveal no notable midshipmen or masters’ mates whose implication in the crime might bring down a dynasty or a ministry,¹⁰² although the court’s obvious lack of persistence in its attempts to establish the identity of the cabal responsible for the letter suggested they were content to prosecute Moore, make an example of him to deter future efforts, and put the matter to rest. Four days of testimony and deliberation showed the seriousness with which the court approached Moore’s case. Their attentions confirmed the perception of a very real threat which had been posed to good order and discipline in the fleet. Yet, throughout those four days, only four out of the nineteen midshipmen and mates belonging to the *Edgar*¹⁰³ were called to testify and of those none were pressed on the issue of who had collaborated with Moore to write the original letter.

The leniency shown by the court suggests that Moore may have served as something of a test case for official reinforcement of the chain of command and the assertion of the principle that lieutenants were senior to midshipmen regardless of their age, experience, or social status. As a gentleman in the new sense of the word, without significant family, but with sufficient resources, talent, and interest to ensure the survival

¹⁰¹ ADM 1/5329, f. 53.

¹⁰² TNA: PRO, ADM 36/11018, “Ships’ Muster, HMS *Edgar*, September 1790 – August 1791.”

¹⁰³ The Edgars who testified included: Edward Hodder, Charles Lydiard, William Heard, and George Bush, all midshipmen. See ADM 1/5329.

of his person and his career, Moore was an excellent candidate to shoulder the burden of guilt for both himself and his fellow junior officers.

The Midshipmen's Mutiny presented the Royal Navy with a real cause for concern on two levels. Internally, it made visible a fracture in the navy's otherwise immutable chain of command and highlighted the potential for indiscipline and insubordination, even among officer candidates. During a time of great social and political upheaval in France and, to a lesser extent, in Britain, the mutiny only emphasized the fragility of the social and professional hierarchy within the service. The events of August 1791 would, in fact, prove the first in a long series of mutinous uprisings that would shake the Royal Navy to its foundations over the next decade.¹⁰⁴

On the external level, the already bruised and battered image of the Royal Navy faced another pounding from the partisan press over the details of Moore's crimes and the circumstances that inspired them. For detractors the navy appeared culpable as an enabler of tyranny and barbarism or, from the opposite side of the coin, as an institution unable to control its rebellious youth. Despite the unfavorable slant on the story presented in the *Morning Post* and *Lloyd's*, the extant press coverage of the Midshipmen's Mutiny can best be described as superficial. Even the more hostile Whig publications failed to grasp (or chose not to highlight) the most obvious headlines generated by the case. Whether this was the result of careful handling by navy officials in Portsmouth and London, or the fact that other news was thought more pressing at the time, the importance of the events as a tell-

¹⁰⁴ In 1794, the men of the *Culloden* mutinied over the unseaworthiness of the ship, while smaller disturbances occurred aboard the *Orion*, *Barfleur*, *Berwick*, *Windsor Castle*, and *Minerva*. In 1795 a mutiny took place aboard the *Defiance* lying in the Firth of Forth; 1796 saw the seamen mutiny aboard the frigates, *Blanche* and *Shannon*. In 1797 the crew of the *Hermione* brutally murdered their captain and most of the officers; and in the same year the Great Mutinies occurred at Spithead, Yarmouth, and the Nore. The circumstances surrounding the "Admiral's Mutiny" of 1795-6 are described in Chapter Eight, n. 21. See Woodman, *Mutiny*, Chapter 6; Rodger, *Command*, pp. 444-45.

tale of changing times and their effect on the navy's junior officer corps was not lost on those closest to the action and those who witnessed the uproar firsthand.

A Social History of Midshipmen and Quarterdeck Boys
in the Royal Navy, 1761-1831.

In 2 Volumes
(Volume 2 of 2)

Submitted by Samantha A. Cavell

To the University Of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
February, 2010

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PART III **Tides of Change. The Admiralty Strikes Back: 19th Century**
Recruitment

Chapter Eight: Nineteenth-Century Selection: The War Years, 1801 and 1811, developments in officer entry and the emergence of Admiralty control

The data examined so far shows changes in the relative importance of various social and professional influences as they acted upon the individual captains and admirals who wielded almost exclusive control over the recruitment of young gentlemen. Between 1761 and 1791 these influences affected captains' selections in various ways, although the most important pattern visible in the data was the diminishing appearance of peerage connections and the rising importance of naval connections among recruits.

With the onset of war with revolutionary France, the dynamics appeared to change once again. The new demands for officers and men saw rapid recruitment efforts which almost doubled the size of the navy between 1793 and 1795.¹ This expansion opened significant opportunities for young gentlemen although the Admiralty too, saw an opportunity to reassert their position on the social aspects of officer recruitment. For the first time since the foundation of the Naval Academy in 1729, the Admiralty and the government² turned their preference for recruiting officers from the ranks of the social elites into policy – one which presented a direct challenge to a captain's monopoly on the selection of entry-level officers.

¹ Rodger, *Command*, p. 639.

² Colley notes that "William Pitt's first public appeal for civilian volunteers and war subscriptions in 1794 was addressed specifically and exclusively to 'gentlemen of wealth and property,'" Linda Colley, "Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain, 1750-1830," in *Past and Present* (November, 1986), p. 109.

1. The Order in Council of 1794 and its impact on officer entry

On April 16, 1794 the Privy Council issued an order upon the advice of the Admiralty under First Lord, John Pitt, the 2nd Earl of Chatham, to restructure the system of recruitment for young gentlemen. The non-specific servants' rating, which included commissioned officers-in-training as well as warrant-officer aspirants and domestics, was abolished and replaced by three new classes of recruits: "volunteer 1st class," "boy 2nd class," and "boy 3rd class."

Prior to 1794, all servants (from young gentlemen to domestics), accounted for roughly 6 percent of the total crew. Therefore, in a seventy-four gun ship carrying six hundred men, forty servants were allowed to the captain, his commissioned officers, and the warrant officers.³ Captains' servants were apportioned at four per one hundred crewmen;⁴ so, in the same ship, a captain could claim twenty-four servants, of whom eight to twelve might be officer aspirants.⁵ The official limits for captains' servants were, however, frequently ignored. In 1761 Captain Denis of the *Bellona* (74) took nearly the full allocation of servants for himself, with thirty-four boys borne as captains' servants. Lieutenants' and warrant officers' servants accounted for an additional twenty young men. Before he left the *Warspite* in May 1761, Captain Sir John Bentley had accumulated thirty-two captains' servants who, alone, represented 6 percent of the total crew.

³ HC 1794 XXXII, p. 537.

⁴ HC 1700 VI, pp. 5-11.

⁵ This estimate is based on the data discussed in Chapter Five, Section 1 which suggests that only about one quarter of all servants were officer aspirants. As captains' servants represented the lion's share of young gentlemen's positions it is estimated that up to half of these may have been set aside for officer aspirants.

Table 8.1 Captains' Servants aboard 74's, 1761 – 1791

<u>Year</u>	<u>74 Gun Ships</u>	<u>Actual Complement (excluding R.M.)</u>	<u>Captain's Servants</u>	<u>Ratio & % of Capt's. Servants to Complement</u>
1761	<i>Bellona</i>	483	34	1:14 (7%)
	<i>Warspite</i>	493	32	1:15 (6%)
1771	<i>Centaur</i>	556	27	1:20 (5%)
	<i>Orford</i>	451	24	1:19 (5%)
1781	<i>Superb</i>	502	24	1:20 (5%)
	<i>Gibraltar</i>	508	31	1:16 (6%)
1791	<i>Alfred</i>	452	34	1:13 (7%)
	<i>Swiftsure</i>	470	23	1: 20 (5%)

Sources: TNA: PRO, ADM36/5105, Muster Books "HMS *Bellona*, Jan 1761-Oct 1761"; ADM36/5838, "HMS *Warspite* Muster, May 1761-Dec 1761"; ADM36/8312 "HMS *Centaur* Muster, April 1770- June 1771"; ADM36/7652, "HMS *Orford*, Mar 1771-Mar 1771"; ADM 36/1007, "HMS *Superb*, May 1781-Dec 1781"; ADM 36/9453, "HMS *Gibraltar*, Jan 1780-Jul 1781"; ADM 36/10757, "HMS *Alfred*, Dec 1790-Aug 1791"; ADM 36/10974, "HMS *Swiftsure*, Mar 1791 – Sept 1791."

According to the samples, the actions of these captains were unexceptional and would have drawn little or no criticism from colleagues. The pervasiveness of such practices only highlighted the autonomy of naval captains to do as they pleased when it came to recruiting.

The Order in Council of 1794 made three significant changes to these long-established patterns of selection and appointment. First, it placed limitations on the number of protégés a captain and his officers could bring aboard, cutting the official total by approximately a quarter, so that a 3rd rate of six hundred men would be allowed thirty boys, and of those only six were to be captains' protégés, or aspirants, that is one per hundred of the total crew.⁶ Compared to the figures shown in the table above, the new regulation represented a small yet powerful blow to a captain's power of nomination.

⁶ HC 1794 XXXII, p. 537.

Table 8.2 Recruitment for 1801, showing the post-1794 policies in action

<u>74s for 1801</u>	<u>Actual Complement (excluding RM)</u>	<u>V1/B2/B3</u>	<u>Ratio & % V1 to Complement</u>	<u>Total V1/B2/B3 to Complement</u>
<i>Centaur</i>	485	6/10/16	1:80 (1%)	32 (6%)
<i>Bellona</i>	433	6/12/18	1:72 (1%)	36 (8%)
<i>Excellent</i>	545	7/11/14	1:77 (1%)	32 (5%)

Sources: TNA: PRO, ADM36/14167, "HMS *Centaur* Muster Dec 1800- Jul 1801," ADM36/14355, "HMS *Bellona* Muster, Mar 1801-Dec 1801," ADM36/15236, "HMS *Excellent* Muster, Jan 1801-Dec 1801."

Key: V1 = Volunteer 1st class
 B2 = Boy 2nd class
 B3 = Boy 3rd class

The second major change instituted by the Order lay in the structure of compensation. Captains and officers traditionally collected the wages of the servants in their charge as a supervisory "fee." It appears, however, from the wording of the Order that the mobilization of 1793 opened vast numbers of servants' positions which captains found difficult to fill. As a result many senior officers were feeling the pinch financially and it is clear that they made their concerns known to the Admiralty. According to the Order:

The Captains of your Majesty's Fleet having represented to Us the Hardship they suffer with regard to that part of their Pay which is considered to arise from the number of Servants allowed by the present Establishment . . . [acknowledge] the Difficulty of obtaining upon any considerable Armament a sufficient number of Boys to be vested Servants being insuperable at home, even with the Aid of the Marine Society and other Institutions of the like nature . . . unavoidably subjecting them to heavy Losses, as no Servants are allowed to be borne for Wages, who are not also mustered for Victuals.⁷

It is unlikely that the shortages affected the portion of servants who entered as young gentlemen and were more likely to have impacted those who were aspiring seamen and warrant officers. Regardless of a boy's ambitions or social status, a captain's inability to fill servant positions meant a drain on his purse and those of his officers. Couched as a remedy to the problem, the new system abolished the practice of keeping servants' wages and instituted compensations which offered captains, lieutenants, and warrant officers

⁷HC 1794 XXXII, pp. 535-36.

£11 8s 2d per annum, per servant by the old conventions.⁸ The new recruits received their own wages allocated at: £6 per annum for 1st class volunteers, £5 per annum for 2nd class boys, and £4 per annum for 3rd class boys. The differences in pay were indicative not only of the responsibilities assigned to each class but of the professional roles they were destined to assume.

The third and, by far, the most significant change lay in the social implications of the Order. Volunteers of the 1st class were to be over the age of eleven and were “young gentlemen intended for Sea Service,” that is, prospective commissioned officers. Boys of the 2nd class were to be between the age of fifteen and seventeen and would be “divided into the watches with the seamen in order to make them such.” These boys were to be groomed as seamen or, if they showed promise, as warrant officers. Boys of the 3rd class were to be between thirteen and fifteen years of age and were designated as “servants” in the menial sense. Besides the differences in pay and job description, there was also an implicit social delineation, one which separated gentlemen by birth from everyone else.⁹ Here is the clearest indication of an Admiralty plan to segregate the social orders from the moment a boy entered a ship. The Order of 1794 sent a clear message to recruiting captains; that 1st class volunteers, as commissioned-officers-in-training, should be of the gentry classes or higher, a designation that included “the sons of sea officers” who, by definition, were gentlemen themselves.¹⁰

For the first time since 1661, Royal Navy captains faced a real encroachment on their time-honored monopoly on the selection of quarterdeck recruits.¹¹ Although a captain

⁸ HC 1794 XXXII, p. 536.

⁹ Rodger, *Command*, p. 508.

¹⁰ HC 1794 XXXII, pp. 536-37.

¹¹ It has already been shown that the impact of the Naval Academy and its graduates on captains’ nomination was minimal. See Chapter Four, Section 1.

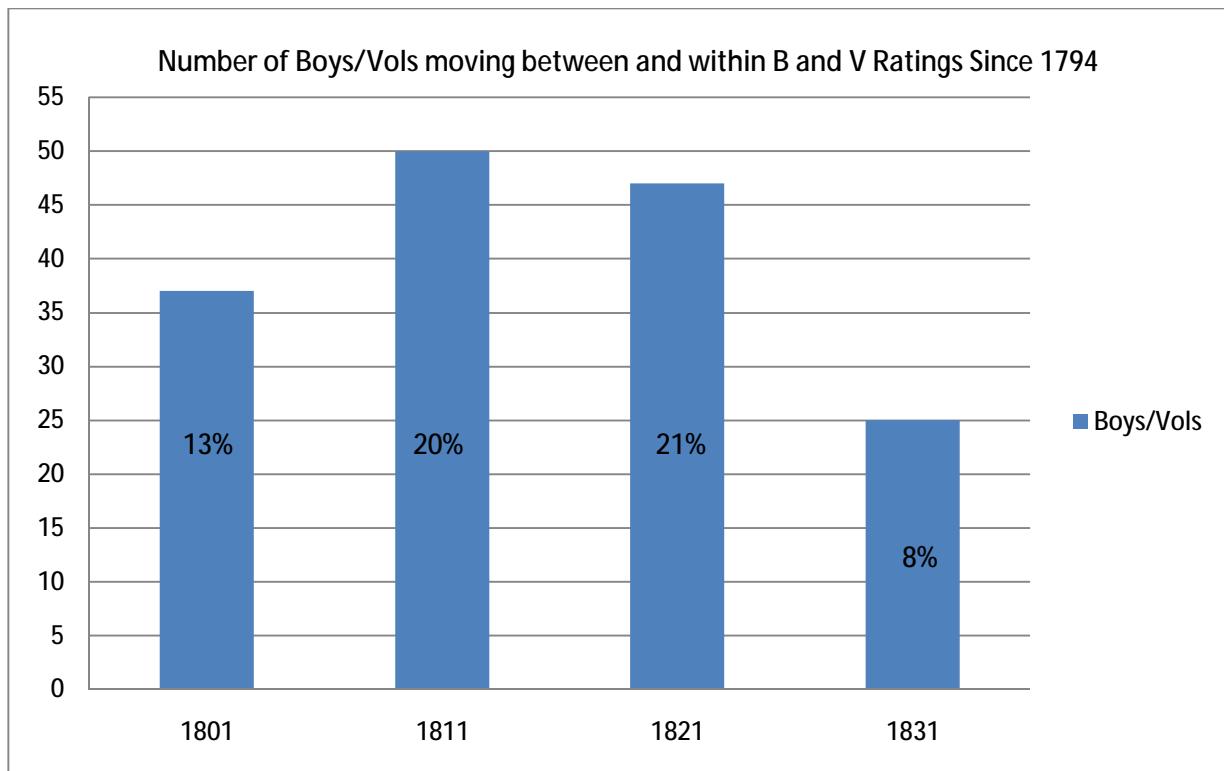
retained control over who came aboard as a volunteer or boy, some of the power with which he wielded his privilege had been drained, first by the Admiralty reducing the number of appointments and second, by their dictating how appointments could be given based on a boy's social background. It is interesting to note that these infringements upon a captain's powers of patronage were worded in such a way as to appear, first and foremost, an aid to officers who were suffering under a system that only compensated them for the number of servants borne. The Order of 1794 stated that its purpose was "to remove the Hardships and Difficulties"¹² facing captains and officers while it implicitly laid down the first set of official guidelines for recruitment which represented the Admiralty's most decisive step yet towards centralizing the officer-entry process.

The financial benefits of this arrangement for captains and officers may explain why such fundamental changes caused no audible shock waves within the naval community. It appeared that captains remained largely silent on the issue,¹³ despite the clear intentions of the Admiralty to tread, however lightly, on their prerogatives. It is also possible that the majority of captains held their tongues because they had no intention of complying with the new regulations. As ships ranged far from Whitehall, who would be there to monitor selection and perform background checks on the boys captains chose to appoint? Essentially, the Order was unenforceable and data taken from musters sampled in the years after 1794 confirms the ineffectiveness of the class delineations as hard and fast rules of socially pigeon-holing prospective officers.

¹² HC 1794 XXXII, pp. 536-37.

¹³ Surveys of Admiralty out-letter books for the summer and fall of 1794, reveal no notable reactions on either side of the argument. See TNA: PRO, ADM 2/272-3, "Lords' Letters," February - June, 1794 and July- October 1794; and ADM 2/772-3, "Secretary's Letters," February – May and June – August, 1794.

Figure 8.1 Movement between the Volunteer and Boy Classifications after 1794



Sources: Appendices F5-F8, “Quarterdeck Boys 1801-1831: Change of Status.”

This graph shows the number of 2nd and 3rd class boys who moved between the classifications (percentages reflect the proportion of boys who changed status out of the *total sample* for each year). In 1811 the data shows that 20 percent of the 245 volunteers and boys sampled for that year transferred from 3rd to 2nd, 2nd to 1st, or even 3rd to 1st class volunteer. In 1821 the rate of movement increased slightly to 21 percent of the total sample. By the standards of the Order, the ratio of 1st class volunteers, to 2nd and 3rd class boys was approximately 2 : 3 : 5, meaning that there were significantly more 2nd and 3rd class boys allotted to any given ship.¹⁴ The evidence suggests that captains entered boys in whatever positions were available and moved them up as openings occurred. This meant

¹⁴ HC 1794 XXXII, p. 537 gives the allocations for a 74 gun ship, with a complement of 600 men, as (6) 1st class volunteers, (10) 2nd class boys, and (14) 3rd class boys. This translates to a ratio of 3:5:7. For later indications of the ratio of volunteers and boys see HC 1806 LXIV, pp. 622-23.

that even if the 1st class volunteer allocations were full, captains could satisfy requests to take on additional young gentlemen by simply placing them in the lesser “boy” ratings. The high degree of fluidity between the classifications, particularly during the French Wars, tends to confirm suspicions that the Admiralty’s attempt to socially organize recruitment was largely unsuccessful. Recruiting captains made the new system work to their advantage and preserved their powers of patronage by bending the new rules to replicate the old system of nomination and appointment.

Nevertheless, the long-term goal of the Order was to create a more socially-elite corps of commissioned officers and the commentary presented in Chapter One of this study provides evidence that contemporaries certainly noticed a change in the social make-up of the midshipman’s berth after 1794. The extent to which these perceptions were based on a real increase in the presence of noble and gentry sons is examined in this chapter.

2. Overview of the period

The outbreak of war with revolutionary France in February 1793 saw the worst predictions for Britain’s relationship with the new republic realized. Edmund Burke’s warnings¹⁵ resounded with new urgency and the Pitt ministry was forced out of its post-Ochakov isolationism¹⁶ into a more belligerent stance as France made clear her intentions to invade the Low Countries (and their shipping lanes), and to declare any state hostile to the principles of revolution an enemy.¹⁷ From the navy’s point of view the war got off to an impressive start with Hood’s occupation of Toulon. In the West Indies a large fleet

¹⁵ Mitchell notes that Burke’s *Reflections* were initially “rejected right across the political spectrum” from Pitt to Fox, as being an inaccurate, overblown, caricature of the French situation. Yet Burke’s political argument, which rested on issues of stability and the proven efficacy of the old order which adopted change slowly, became clearer as the Revolution progressed. Introduction to Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. L. G. Mitchel (Oxford, 1999), pp. viii, xv-xviii.

¹⁶ Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, p. 178; Hague, *Pitt*, p. 289.

¹⁷ Eric Evans, *William Pitt the Younger* (London, 1999), p. 45; Hague, *Pitt*, p. 325.

under Jervis wreaked havoc on French colonies¹⁸ and operations in the East saw success at Trincomalee. Admiral Lord Howe's victory over the French on June 1, 1794¹⁹ raised spirits at home and hopes for a rapid end to the war. The pro-government newspaper, the *Oracle*, touted: “[Howe's] refutation is a TOTAL DEFEAT of the French fleet . . . that the NAVAL POWER of our ENEMY is most probably ANNIHILATED FOR EVER.”²⁰ Political unity was forming under the banner of patriotism and Portland's defection to Pitt's government in July of that year signaled a new solidarity, with only Foxite radicals remaining in opposition. Such optimism was, however, short lived. Hood's inability to hold Toulon against the onslaught of the republican army heralded the start of Britain's slow retreat from the Mediterranean which concluded when Spain aligned with France and declared war on Britain in October 1796. The impolitic handling of captured French colonies in the Caribbean only strengthened local support for the Republican cause.

Pitt's pragmatism was evident in naval matters; specifically in the removal of his indolent brother who “lacked the drive and intellectual grasp to run the navy at the height of a global war,”²¹ from the Admiralty. Chatham's successor, the 2nd Earl Spencer, brought no administrative or operational experience to the position although senior naval lords like Hood and Middleton soon learned that the new First Lord was no cipher.²² His handling of the Christian-Laforey controversy and the subsequent “Admirals' Mutiny”²³ showed

¹⁸ The Jervis-Grey combined expedition was the embodiment of Henry Dundas's blue-water strategy designed to rob France of her most valuable colonies, namely Martinique and San Domingue.

¹⁹ R. J. B. Knight, “Richard Earl Howe, 1726-1799,” in *Precursors*, p. 278-99.

²⁰ *Oracle* of June 12, 1794 quoted in Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, p. 30. (*Oracle*'s emphases).

²¹ Hague, *Pitt*, pp. 307-08.

²² S.v. “George John Spencer, 2nd Earl of Chatham,” in *ODNB* (2004); Rodger, *Command*, p. 431.

²³ By 1795 the situation in the West Indies had deteriorated. A number of revolts emphasized the need for a new naval/military offensive. The army, headed by General Abercrombie, was to be transported by a fleet commanded by Rear-Admiral Hugh Christian, a man who was capable of working with the notoriously difficult general. Problems arose when Henry Dundas, Secretary for War, demanded that Admiral John Laforey, C in C of the Leeward Islands, be replaced by Christian. Middleton was outraged by the call for removal of a senior admiral and by what he saw as a dangerous precedent in which the army effectively determined the appointment of admirals. Consequently, he refused to sign the order. This inspired Admiral

Spencer to be tough, fair, and careful when it came to operational and personnel matters. It also demonstrated his willingness to champion naval concerns in the political arena and won him the respect of many senior officers.

By the end of 1796 the French threat had surfaced closer to home. A hostile fleet in Bantry Bay and the subsequent landing of French troops in Pembrokeshire, Wales,²⁴ only emphasized the need for reinforcement of the Channel Fleet. Manning efforts increased rapidly with numbers roughly doubling between 1793 and 1797.²⁵ William Dillon noted the opportunities that were becoming available for passed midshipmen and mates at this time: “As vacancies for lieutenants were constantly occurring, [and] several of my messmates received promotion.”²⁶ Jervis’s victory over the Spanish at Cape St. Vincent in February 1797, for which he received his eponymous earldom, only raised the public profile of the navy and the appeal of a naval career, particularly for boys who followed the heroic exploits of Commodore Nelson. As a seventeen-year old midshipman, William Hoste, who served aboard the *Captain* with Nelson during the engagement, wrote home with breathless excitement: “Never, I believe, was there such an action fought.”²⁷ This prompted his father to respond that Nelson’s “Character is declared unparalleled in History.”²⁸ Nelson’s skilful public relations efforts²⁹ brought him personal fame and

Cornwallis to lead the flag officers and captains of the Channel Fleet in lodging a formal protest with Spencer. Spencer’s response to the “admirals’ mutiny” was compromise. He removed Middleton from the Admiralty board and allowed Christian to take charge of the Leeward Islands station, then named Laforey C in C of the Jamaica Station as a consolation. See Rodger, *Command*, pp. 435-35.

²⁴ The Fishguard landing posed no real threat as French “troops,” composed of criminals or “*banditti*,” were highly disorganized and surrendered quickly to the local militia. The landing did, however, cause a panic in the City which helped to drive Britain off the gold standard for the next twenty-five years. See Hague, *Pitt*, p. 397; Rodger, *Command*, p. 438.

²⁵ 1793 saw estimates on naval manning between 59,000 and 69,000. By 1797 the numbers had increased to approximately 120,000. See Rodger, *Command*, p. 639.

²⁶ From entries for May 1796, Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 234.

²⁷ William Hoste to his father, Dixon Hoste, February 16, 1797 in Harriet Walpole Hoste, *Memoirs and Letters of Captain Sir William Hoste, Bart.*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London, 1833), p. 66.

²⁸ Dixon Hoste to Nelson quoted in Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 231.

simultaneously polished the image of the sea officer to a state of brilliance never before seen. In September 1797 the *Bath Herald* published a poem “*Addressed to that intrepid Admiral Sir Horatio Nelson on his arrival from scenes of Danger and Glory . . .*,” which extolled him as the “*subject of our praise while conscious Worth shall gild thy future days . . .*”³⁰ The victory at Cape St. Vincent also solidified the public image of the navy as a symbol of national identity. As a metaphor for society and the hierarchical “ship of state,” portrayals of the heroic Gentleman Officer and the loyal Jack Tar working harmoniously in pursuit of a common national goal resonated with Britons in the grip of war. They also served the purposes of a government anxious to justify its social conservatism and belligerent policies.³¹ The victory at Cape St. Vincent, along with the Glorious First of June (1794), also cemented the navy as the nation’s preeminent fighting force and fed the belief that “British victories at sea were not the result of random factors or good luck, but were the product of a clear superiority in naval warfare.”³²

The glow of victory did not last long, at least not for the sailors of the Royal Navy who, despite being the foundation of Britain’s sea power, felt themselves thoroughly neglected.³³ On April 16, 1797 fleet-wide mutiny broke out in Spithead and quickly spread to ships stationed at Yarmouth and the Nore. Such universal discontent compounded naval, civil, and political concerns for the infectious spirit of revolution raging across the Channel, concerns that only escalated in May of the following year when the United

²⁹ Nelson produced an account of the battle which was widely published, as did Colonel John Drinkwater, an observer of the action, *ibid.*, pp. 228-30.

³⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 255.

³¹ For the political uses of naval imagery and “victory culture” during the French Wars see Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 2-3. According to Nairn, Britain’s war with France was a “patriotic war of counter-revolution which reinforced the conservative social structure . . . ,” in Tom Nairn, *The Breakup of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (Altona, Victoria, Aust., 2003), p. 261. Also see Colley, “Whose Nation?” p. 117.

³² Hague, *Pitt*, p. 396.

³³ The Spithead mutiny erupted over issues of wages, which had not increased since 1652; “the quality and quantity of victuals and the treatment of wounded;” and the inequities of the bounty system. See Rodger, *Command*, p. 446.

Irishmen launched a full-scale rebellion. Social unrest at home³⁴ was kept in check with the patriotic pride generated by spectacular victories at sea. Admiral Duncan's success against the Dutch at Camperdown (1797), Nelson's destruction of the French fleet at Aboukir Bay (1798), and the combined operation to capture Minorca (1798) helped offset losses in the West Indies (San Domingue was evacuated in September 1798), and the apparently unstoppable force of Bonaparte's army on the Continent and in Egypt.

By 1801 Britain faced crisis on multiple fronts. The Act of Union with Ireland on January 1 brought Pitt's resignation as the king vetoed the Catholic Emancipation Act upon which the union was based. Spencer showed his support by resigning from the Admiralty. The new Addington ministry, with St. Vincent as First Lord, inherited a situation in which Britain's ally, Austria had been forced out of the war, armed neutrality had been declared with Russia and Denmark, and Britain's army was entrenched in Egypt. Despite martial victories at Alexandria in March, and naval successes at Copenhagen in April, and the Straits of Gibraltar in July, "financial, political and strategic exhaustion"³⁵ necessitated peace which was signed in October 1801.

At the Admiralty, St. Vincent's "violent and bigoted"³⁶ approach to naval management, and particularly to economic reform, devolved into a witch-hunt bent on proving that "the civil branch of the Navy is rotten to the very core."³⁷ Massive cut backs in spending on wages for dockyard employees, the elimination of apprentices, and the

³⁴ Since the declaration of war in 1793, a series of poor harvests fueled social unrest and concerns for the contagious possibilities of revolution. Pitt suspend *habeas corpus* in 1794, passed two new acts against treasonable practices after an attack on the king in 1795, faced a run on the banks in 1797, and a renewed invasion threat from France in 1798. Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, pp. 121, 149, 151, 123, 178-82.

³⁵ Rodger, *Command*, p. 472.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

³⁷ St. Vincent to Lord Spencer, August 27, 1797 quoted in R. Vesey Hamilton, *Naval Administration: The Constitution, Character, and Functions of the Board of Admiralty and of the Civil Departments it Directs* (London, 1896), p. 12.

targeting of “mutineers” who protested for wages in 1801³⁸ effectively destroyed the efficiency of the yards and the morale of the men, so that the navy which faced a new war in May 1803 was a shadow of its former self.³⁹

With a new French invasion force gathering at Boulogne, Spain aligned with her old ally and Britain’s prospects seemed dire. The return of Pitt in 1804 brought new vigor to the war effort,⁴⁰ although the Whig/Tory alliance had been weakened, thanks in part to St. Vincent’s politically-charged reforms. Henry Dundas, now Viscount Melville,⁴¹ became First Lord and with the help of a reinstated Charles Middleton began earnest efforts to rebuild naval strength.⁴² Melville’s tenure was brief as he soon became the victim of Whig reciprocity and faced impeachment for misappropriation of public funds.⁴³ As his successor, Middleton, now Lord Barham,⁴⁴ administered a massive operational force that was Britain’s primary defensive weapon against the Napoleonic threat. In 1805 the Battle of Trafalgar ended, for a time, Bonaparte’s invasion ambitions⁴⁵ and simultaneously gave Britain a hero for the ages in the form of Lord Nelson.

³⁸ Morriss cites Samuel Bentham’s philosophy of reform as one of St. Vincent’s inspirations for change, Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, p. 160; also see “Labor Relations in Royal Dockyards, 1801-05,” in *Mariner’s Mirror*, 62 (1796): pp. 337-46.

³⁹ Tucker, *St. Vincent*, Vol. 2, pp. 133-35; also see Roger Morriss, “St. Vincent and Reform, 1801-04,” in *Mariner’s Mirror*, 69 (1983): pp. 269-71.

⁴⁰ Duffy, *The Younger Pitt*, pp. 220-22.

⁴¹ Duffy notes that Pitt’s “Relations with Dundas, cooler since his peerage from Addington, had deteriorated to the point that Wilberforce declared them as ‘scarcely on speaking terms’,” *ibid.*, p. 220.

⁴² In the spring of 1804 the navy had 81 ships of the line in service, by the summer of 1805 there were 105. S.v. “Henry Dundas, 1st Viscount Melville,” in *ODNB* (2004). Glete gives a total of 127 ships of the line in 1800 and 136 by 1805, *Glete, Navies and Nations*, p. 554.

⁴³ Morriss, *Naval Power*, pp. 183-85.

⁴⁴ Charles Middleton was created Lord Barham in 1805, Laughton, *Barham Papers*, Vol. 1, p. vii. Barham’s approach centered on eliminating “Benthamism in the civil departments of the navy” and adopting a more “conventional” approach to naval administration. His tenure at the Admiralty was marked by “innovations” and effective, long-term reforms, see Morriss, “Charles Middleton,” in *Precursors*, pp. 303-04.

⁴⁵ Glover notes that Bonaparte’s invasion ambitions revived in the post-Trafalgar years and included allied fleets from Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Spain, and Portugal. The assets of these allies were, over time, neutralized or destroyed. See Richard Glover, *Britain at Bay: Defence against Bonaparte, 1803-1814* (London, 1988).

As the Royal Navy triumphed at sea, its standing as a symbol of national strength and pride grew. In the wake of Trafalgar the navy became the undisputed hub of patriotic fervor and a more potent locus of British masculine identity.⁴⁶ In addition to gallantry and courage, sea officers embodied qualities of patriotism, doggedness, and coolness under fire.⁴⁷ In his address to the surviving Trafalgar fleet Collingwood captured the new spirit of duty which pitted the navy against insurmountable odds in defense of the nation. While praising the “valour and skill which were displayed by the Officers, the Seaman, and Marines,” Collingwood acknowledged, “The attack was irresistible, and the issue of it adds to the page of naval annals a brilliant instance of what Britons can do, when their King and Country need their service.”⁴⁸ Despite such praise of the collaborative effort Trafalgar, like other naval engagements of the French Wars, was all about individual heroes – at least in the public imagination. Invariably drawn from the officer classes, these heroes represented both particular examples of exceptional British manhood and stood proxy for the multitudes of seamen and officers who served under or alongside them.⁴⁹ Heroism, glory, and fame became synonymous with sea service and young men flocked to the noble calling. Frederick Watkins’s 1807 pamphlet *The Young Naval Hero; or, hints to Parents and Guardians on the Subject of Educating and Preparing Young Gentlemen for His Majesty’s Service*, explained the draw:

⁴⁶ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 226-28; Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity*, p. 7.

⁴⁷ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 90, 247.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Warner, *Life and Letters of Lord Collingwood*, p. 156.

⁴⁹ Jenks explores the idea of Nelson’s physical disfigurements as metaphor for the British polity during the French Wars and suggests that the contemporary obsession with his “nobly mutilated form,” which represented considerable suffering, was the ultimate symbol of self-sacrificing patriotism. From Lightfoot’s poem, “The Battle of Trafalgar or, Victory and Death” quoted in Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 197-200. Colley notes the official recognition given to officers: “the British state, indicatively, only gave medals to the flag officers and captains involved,” while recognition of the men was left to the private sector: “the manufacturer Matthew Boulton . . . paid for the medals to be given to every British man who fought at Trafalgar.” It is also noted that this “cult of the hero” did not outlast the war and that with peace the state’s need to promote the potentially democratizing values of nationalism faded: “Appeals to a united British citizenry could now be played down” thereby “stabilizing the influence of [the] ruling class.” See Colley, “Whose Nation?” pp. 111, 107, 117.

It is, therefore, natural, that our youth should burn with an ardent desire to enroll their names in the lists of fame, and to obtain a sprig of those laurels which overshadow the tomb of our illustrious and lamented Hero of Trafalgar.⁵⁰

Falconer's *Dictionary of the Marine* noted the outcome of the heightened popularity of a career at sea after Trafalgar: "The enterprising spirit and brilliant achievements of our gallant naval heroes . . . have inspired so many of our youths with an ardent desire to embark in the profession . . ."⁵¹ Such popularity and "the circumstance of there being so many candidates for promotion"⁵² waiting in the pre-commission wings, meant that competition for limited entry-level places dramatically increased.

The choke-hold on promotions in the months following Trafalgar was the source of much consternation among junior officers and lieutenants.⁵³ While captains and admirals could be rewarded with knighthoods, peerages, or monetary tokens of government esteem, promotion was the only form of recognition for midshipmen, mates, and lieutenants. Despite continued increases in the size of the fleet and consequently in manning,⁵⁴ the number of positions for commissioned officers increased at only a fraction of the pace, insufficient to deal with the mass of unemployed officers who had been beached during the Peace of Amiens and the slew of new officers created since. The Napoleonic Wars, in fact, saw a real crisis of oversupply in the navy's command structure. At the top, a surplus of captains, commanders, and lieutenants meant that fewer entry-level positions opened up due to promotion. At the bottom, decades of unregulated recruitment and advancement to the pre-commission ratings was compounded by the absence of limitations on the number

⁵⁰ Frederick Watkins, *The Young Naval Hero; or, Hints to Parents and Guardians, on the Subject of Educating and Preparing Young Gentlemen for His Majesty's Sea Service* (London, 1807), p. 7.

⁵¹ Burney, *Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine*, p. 227.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Collingwood's post-Trafalgar letters are filled with dire requests for promotion confirmations, see Newnham Collingwood, *Correspondence*, pp. 153, 157-58, 163-64.

⁵⁴ Manning rose from approximately 110,000 men in 1805 to roughly 140,000 by 1808. See Rodger, *Command*, p. 639.

of applicants qualifying for the lieutenants' examination.⁵⁵ Examining boards were not reined in by quotas or restrictions on the numbers of junior officers they could pass and as a result, more passed midshipmen and mates were vying for fewer lieutenancies.

Melville attempted to deal with the problem at the lower levels by creating the position of sub-lieutenant in 1804; "an additional officer" who would be assigned to brigs, sloops, bomb vessels, and fireships (all vessels under the command of a lieutenant) who would be "taken from the list of young men who have passed an examination and are qualified to serve as Lieutenants."⁵⁶ A sub-lieutenant's rating was, however, a mixed blessing. While it provided some relief for those awaiting their commission, the stigma attached to brig, bomb, and fireship duty – dead-end commands given to the least promising officers – tarred sub-lieutenants with the same brush making the position unpopular with ambitious young gentlemen. As a temporary rating, purpose built to alleviate wartime pressures on the commissioned ranks, the sub-lieutenant vanished with the close of the war in 1815.⁵⁷

The shortage of opportunities for young gentlemen meant that those with powerful connections fared better when it came to appointments, particularly in the more popular ships. The prestige of serving aboard a "crack" frigate meant that the sons of noblemen and prominent gentlemen often found their way into these coveted positions. Thomas Byam Martin recalled the presence of a frigate on the West Indies station during the early 1790s that was "so crowded with the bantlings of the aristocracy" that one of the ship's lieutenants was prompted to deliver an order "to the young gentlemen and honourables

⁵⁵ By 1806 the qualifying age for the lieutenant's examination was also lowered to nineteen, adding to the pool of hopefuls who were eligible for a commission and further compound the problem of oversupply. Lewis, *Social History*, p. 195.

⁵⁶ Order in Council, December 5, 1804 quoted in Lewis, *Social History*, p. 198; also see TNA: PRO, ADM 1/5215, July 4, 1805 "Additions to Regulations and Instructions, Chapter 2."

⁵⁷ In 1861 the sub-lieutenant was resurrected. This new incarnation was, however, a commissioned rank that replaced the rating of "mate." Lewis, *Transition*, p. 109.

stationed at the different ropes: 'My Lords and gentlemen, shiver the main topsail'."⁵⁸ The four frigates present during the Trafalgar action shipped approximately one quarter of the aristocratic young gentlemen out of a fleet of thirty-three vessels.⁵⁹ Of the junior officers sampled in 1801 who possessed connections to the gentry and the peerage, there was a virtually equal concentration in 1st/2nd rates and frigates, ships which offered both prestige and the opportunity for substantial prize money respectively.⁶⁰

As a result the broad public appeal of the navy as an institution "cognizant of merit" began to falter as the war progressed and Old Corruption was seen to infect naval standards of deservedness and fair play.⁶¹ In 1806 Collingwood appeared frustrated by the influx of well-connected but unsuitable boys into the service. To his sister he wrote of one young candidate:

Stanhope has sent his little son out . . . the poorest, puny thing I am told that was ever seen, and excites the pity of every body, for the child has been ruptured three years. Of course [he] can never be a sailor and is even without a truss or bandage for his relief. Is it not astonishing that people should be so inattentive to the circumstances of their children?⁶²

Collingwood was not the only admiral conscious of the prevalence of unsuitable well-borns and their injurious effects on the service. St. Vincent, who returned to active duty after his stint at the Admiralty, registered his complaint with George III:

⁵⁸ R. Vesey Hamilton, ed., *The Letters and Papers of Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Thomas Byam Martin*, 3 vols., vol. 1, Navy Records Society, vol. 12 (London, 1903), p. 28

⁵⁹ See Appendix B in S. A. Cavell, "Playing at Command: Midshipmen and Quarterdeck Boys in the Royal Navy, 1793-1815," unpublished MA thesis (Baton Rouge, 2006).

⁶⁰ Appendices G5 – G6. In 1801, there were fifteen junior officers with elite connections serving in 1st/2nd rates, fourteen serving in 5th/6th rates, and eight serving in 3rd rates. By 1811 the dynamics had changed with 3rd rates showing fifteen elite junior officers, 1st/2nd rates showing eleven, and frigates showing only nine. It is likely that this shift in popularity was a product of the changing nature of the war in the later years and may have reflected the prevalence of sentiments like the ones expressed by George Perceval who preferred the comforts of a line of battle ship to the Spartan conditions and heavier work-load associated with smaller vessels. See PER/1/2, 23; also see Chapter One, Section 3b.

⁶¹ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 4, 192.

⁶² Collingwood to his sister, Mary, April 17, 1806 in Hughes, *Collingwood Private Correspondence*, pp. 179-80. The letter refers to the son of Walter Spencer Stanhope, MP for Carlisle, who suffered from a hiatus hernia.

I have always thought that a sprinkling of nobility was very desirable in the Navy, as it gives some sort of consequence to the service; but at present the Navy is so overrun by the younger branches of nobility, and the sons of Members of Parliament, and they swallow up all the patronage, and so choke the channel to promotion, that the son of an old Officer, however meritorious *both* their services may have been, has little or no chance of getting on.⁶³

St. Vincent's perception of a threat to the old system of naval patronage, in which recruiting captains selected deserving boys from within the naval "family," was seen as an attack on the most fundamental and universally-accepted naval precept: that the sons of sea officers should be favored when it came to appointments.⁶⁴ Nelson too had operated on the principle that "the near relations of brother officers, as legacies to the Service"⁶⁵ must be accommodated, particularly "the children of departed officers [who] are a natural Legacy to the survivors."⁶⁶ In the more competitive post-Trafalgar climate, however, deservedness faced a real challenge from "vested interest."

The death of Pitt in early 1806 saw the rise of the Whigs and a tenuous alliance between two Whig factions headed by Grenville and Fox which resulted in the ironically named, Ministry of all the Talents. Short-lived First Lords, Charles Grey and Thomas Grenville, continued to espouse Vincentine beliefs in the merits of naval reform, although little was achieved during their brief tenures at the Admiralty.⁶⁷ In 1807 the Duke of Portland became Prime Minister, this time as a Tory, although his age and infirmity meant that Spencer Perceval, Chancellor of the Exchequer, assumed a *de facto* leadership role.⁶⁸ Lord Mulgrave's installation at the Admiralty proved to be a relatively long-lasting

⁶³ The Earl St. Vincent's audience with King George III, 1807 in Tucker, *St. Vincent*, Vol. 2, p. 267.

⁶⁴ Rodger, *Command*, p. 512.

⁶⁵ Nelson to Lord St. Vincent, January 11, 1804 (regarding Admiral Duncan's son) in Nicolas, *Dispatches*, Vol. 5, p. 364.

⁶⁶ Colin White, ed., *Nelson: The New Letters* (Woodbridge, 2005), p. 79. Nelson also assured William Radstock that "the sons of Brother Officers have an undoubted claim to our protection," Nelson to Radstock, August 22, 1803 quoted in Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 676.

⁶⁷ Morriss, *Naval Power*, pp. 188-89.

⁶⁸ S.v. "Spencer Perceval" in *ODNB* (2004).

engagement. In the three years under his direction the navy succeeded in capturing the Danish fleet at Copenhagen (1807), destroying the French in the Basque Roads (1809), and securing power in the Mediterranean, thanks largely to the efforts of the exhausted and ailing Admiral Collingwood. There were equivalent disasters too, including the Walcheren expedition (1809), and the loss of an entire British convoy to the Norwegian navy in the same year. By 1810 Sweden too had declared of war on Britain.

Mulgrave's amendments to the system of naval punishment also reflected more enlightened approaches to authority and discipline. In 1809 the Admiralty forbade "starting," the practice of striking crewmen for minor offences, or to speed their work. As junior officers typically administered such "motivations" the regulation was aimed, in large part, at officer aspirants and spoke volumes to the changing dynamics of shipboard life. The fact that "the men particularly resented being struck by midshipmen"⁶⁹ saw new approaches to the management of sailors, inspired by the upheavals of 1797 and the influx of new evangelical attitudes towards the treatment of subordinates which paralleled the arguments of Abolitionists and the anti-slavery movement.⁷⁰

In October 1809 Spencer Perceval officially assumed the leadership role he had fulfilled for the previous two years although his selection was not without opposition from George Canning, Portland's Foreign Secretary, whose support for the Peninsular War further alienated Whig factions. Perceval also faced a crisis with the accession of the Prince of Wales as Regent in February 1811 and the likelihood that the prince's Whig political sympathies would result in a change of government. George, however, abandoned

⁶⁹ Rodger, *Command*, p. 403.

⁷⁰ Brown notes that Wilberforce, as the figurehead of the Abolitionist Movement, became a focus for every "worthy scheme for the reform of any abuse." Wilberforce was the recognized "champion of the unfortunate, the mistreated and the oppressed," see Ford K. Brown, *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 373-74.

the Whigs and supported Perceval instead. Under First Lord Charles Philip Yorke, there were naval successes in the East Indies and disasters closer to home. The largest naval loss of life since the start of the Seven Years' War occurred in December 1811 when 1337 men perished along with two line of battle ships that wrecked off the Jutland peninsula.⁷¹

The assassination of Perceval in 1812 saw the rise of one of the longest lived ministries since Pitt the Younger. Lord Liverpool's appointment as Prime Minister got off to a rocky start as the United States declared war on Britain in June. As First Lord, Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville whom his friend, Sir Walter Scott, described as "judicious, clairvoyant and uncommonly sound-headed . . .,"⁷² oversaw alarming naval defeats at the hands of the American super-frigates. Both "the Navy and the [British] public were shocked to discover that they were not invincible,"⁷³ and confidence in Britain's wooden walls weakened. The possibility that France might rebuild her navy, stronger than ever, with all the Continental resources at her disposal did not materialize and by the close of 1814 Napoleon had been imprisoned on Elba and peace was reached with America. Bonaparte's return to power was short-lived. Within a year his defeat was made absolute at the Battle of Waterloo and Britain's twenty-two years of almost continuous warfare was at an end.

a. *Social change and the effect on the young gentlemen*

During the course of the French Wars, British society appeared to undergo a transition from a state of social instability and dynamism to one of relative solidity molded

⁷¹ According to Evans, a child who witnessed the wreck of the *St. George* and the *Defense* near Sonder Nissum on Christmas Eve, 1811 grew up to become the founder of the Danish Lifesaving Service, see Clayton Evans, *Rescue at Sea: an International History of Lifesaving, Coastal Rescue Craft and Organizations* (London, 2003), p. 215; also see Rodger, *Command*, p. 604.

⁷² Quoted in "Robert Saunders Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville," in *ODNB* (2004).

⁷³ Rodger, *Command*, p. 567.

by old-order principles.⁷⁴ In the previous chapters it has been argued that political crises and various social upheavals, influenced by the American War and the French Revolution worked in conjunction with economic and commercial expansion to restructure the social order in England. Social mobility, particularly among the merchant and professional classes,⁷⁵ was enabled by the acquisition of wealth and hence property – a factor that challenged the strict observance of birth and pedigree as the qualities that defined a gentleman. The late-eighteenth century emphasis on manners further opened the door to the ranks of gentility, allowing access to anyone whose dress, deportment, erudition, and conduct measured up to polite standards. The limitations of this “open elite”⁷⁶ would, however, become increasingly clear as the French Wars progressed.

Despite the emergence of “duty” as an essential quality for aspiring officers, the Napoleonic Wars reinvigorated traditional codes of aristocratic honor which focused on heroic individualism and the pursuit of personal accolades.⁷⁷ The desire for fame and glory, exemplified by Nelson, Duncan, Cochrane, and others, only reasserted the principles of the aristocratic ideal within the institution of the Royal Navy. The distribution of knighthoods and peerages as rewards for outstanding service demonstrated that social mobility was possible, although as Linda Colley notes:

the official intention was not to make the upper ranks of the British polity easily accessible to talent, as to admit in a controlled fashion a number of truly

⁷⁴ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 237-241; Porter, *Society*, pp. 350-52, 354.

⁷⁵ Recent work on the social mobility of medical professionals in both the navy and the army suggests that considerable economic and social mobility was possible for these specialist professionals through a combination of service “rewards” such as promotion and, in the navy, prize money, and through the establishment of a civilian practice after their service was complete. See Marcus Ackroyd, Laurence Brockliss, Michael Moss, Kate Retford, and John Stevenson, *Advancing with the Army: Medicine, the Professions, and Social Mobility in the British Isles, 1790-1850* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 8-10, 19-20, 340. Also see Laurence Brockliss, M. John Cardwell, and Michael Moss, *Nelson’s Surgeon: William Beatty, Naval Medicine, and the Battle of Trafalgar* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 57, 75, 199.

⁷⁶ Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 4-6.

⁷⁷ For more on aristocratic codes of honor see Nye, *Masculinity*, p. 16

exceptional men for the sake of efficiency and for the sake, too, of preserving the existing order.⁷⁸

Civil society applauded the elevation of humble-born heroes to the ranks of the titled elite, although their example simultaneously reinforced the desirability of the established patrician order. The ongoing strains of war also heightened the cultural yen for traditional social values and the stability they represented.⁷⁹ Even so, the old-order principles of “property and patronage,”⁸⁰ continued to face challenges from mercantilism, moral reform, and the French social experiment. In terms of the Royal Navy, these strains manifested in events great and small. From the Mutinies of 1797, and the threat posed by the Irish rebellion to a navy populated by large numbers of Irish sailors,⁸¹ to the subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways in which more traditional social networks influenced the deployment of patronage, the effect on young gentlemen of the new century was profound.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the French Wars saw aspiring officers face greater competition for increasingly limited places, an obstacle that had typically arisen only in peacetime. Young gentlemen also faced a changing social equation within the shipboard society which involved them on three distinct levels. The first dealt with quarterdeck authority as it related to a ship’s people and the care with which it had to be administered in the aftermath of fleet-wide mutiny. The need for young gentlemen to be sensible of the delicate nature of their authority demanded a degree of personal and

⁷⁸ Colley, *Britons*, p. 191; Rodger, *Command*, p. 513. Also see McCahill for an assessment of the rate of “service” creations. According to the data, seventeen peers were created from the armed services (army and navy) between 1780 and 1801, and sixteen were created between 1802 and 1830. In both periods the “armed services” accounted for the majority of new elevations. When these numbers are considered in terms of the many thousands of officers who distinguished themselves during the American War and the later French Wars the limitations of social transcendence through the receipt of a peerage become clear. Michael McCahill, “Peerage Creations and the Changing Character of the British Nobility, 1750-1830,” in *The English Historical Review*, vol. 96, no. 379 (April, 1981): p. 271.

⁷⁹ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 58.

⁸⁰ Perkin, *Origins*, p. 38.

⁸¹ The preliminary findings of research being conducted by Jeremiah Dancy on the social make-up of the Royal Navy’s sailors during the French Wars, suggests that about 20% of mariners were Irishmen. My thanks to Jeremiah Dancy for permission to cite his work.

professional maturity that had, until then, been without obvious life or death consequences. The second involved the relationship between young gentlemen and their naval superiors who may or may not have been their social superiors. The influence of social rank in the operation of naval authority on the quarterdeck became a more pressing issue for young gentlemen and the officers who supervised them. The extent of these strains is addressed in Chapter Ten with a survey of crime and punishment in the navy of the French Wars and beyond. Thirdly, as the Admiralty attempted to exercise more control in the selection of officer recruits, young gentlemen found themselves at the centre of an escalating struggle between captains and the Lords Commissioners over traditional prerogatives and the looming crisis of oversupply and unemployment within the officer corps.

i. Mutiny, paternalism, and evangelical reform

In the early years of the Revolutionary Wars, Pitt shed the remnants of his liberal-reformist cloak and assumed the mantle of an arch conservative. As the hammer of English Jacobinism, Pitt suspended *habeas corpus* in 1794, and instituted a series of “gagging bills” which “represented a significant ratcheting-up of his repressive responses to discontent.”⁸² When it came to the navy in 1797, such policies appeared justified as many saw the devastating potential of a rebellious solidarity among Britain’s sailors.

Commentators sought to explain the Great Mutinies as the work of Dissenting religious sects, corresponding societies, and/or political subversives such as Foxite Whigs, Jacobins, or Irish rebels. Despite the lack of evidence connecting any of these groups to the mutinies,⁸³ many were anxious to lay blame on the nearest manifestations of political, social, or religious heterodoxy. The government, for the most part, chose not to point

⁸² Hague, *Pitt*, p. 319.

⁸³Rodger, *Command*, p. 448.

fingers and downplayed the radical nature of the mutinies in an effort to preserve the unifying political and social value of the image of the loyal Jack Tar.⁸⁴

While the Great Mutinies may be seen as an expression of communal change in the character of British sailors, Clark's social model provides an explanation for the uprising in terms of a breakdown of old-order paternalistic duty. Admiralty neglect for the welfare of its seamen constituted a forfeiture of the contract between those who commanded and those who obeyed.⁸⁵ From the lower-deck point of view, Admiralty concessions restored the utility of the relationship and resurrected a functional, paternalistic system. The imbalance within the naval hierarchy was corrected; but within the framework of an old-order social structure. The *True Briton* of April 19, 1797 emphasized loyalty to King and Country: "During the whole transaction, the Sailors [of Spithead] expressed, in the strongest manner, their heartfelt attachment to their Sovereign, and the cause of their country . . ."⁸⁶ Another Tory newspaper, the *St. James' Chronicle*, touted that the Spithead mutineers "have preserved unsullied, that Loyalty to their King, and that Love to their country, which have ever been the peculiar charactisticks of British Seamen."⁸⁷ While these partisan interpretations were intended to support the government's political and social agenda, the observations of first-hand witnesses produced similar accounts. Lieutenant William Hotham noted of the Yarmouth mutineers that that they had behaved with "marked civility and deference." Hotham also reported the delegates' insistence that: "[they] are not to be understood as ringleaders of a mutinous assembly, but as men appointed by the majority of each ship's company, in order to prevent confusion and obtain

⁸⁴ Jenks shows the various positions taken by the partisan newspapers of the day, from the Jack Tar as loyalist offered by *The St. James' Chronicle*, *The Star*, *The Oracle*, and the *True Briton* to the Jack Tar as political subversive offered by *The Morning Post* and the *Morning Herald*, see Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 91-95.

⁸⁵ Clark, *Society*, pp. 154-55.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, p. 90.

⁸⁷ *St. James' Chronicle*, April 22, 1797 quoted in *ibid*.

as speedy a regularity of affairs as possible.”⁸⁸ Such a position emphasized the apologetic quality of the mutiny despite the legitimacy of its grievances. The Great Mutinies did little to further causes such as “the rights of man,” the ascendancy of the individual, or freedom of thought or action within the service, while the apolitical demands of the mutineers at Portsmouth suggested only a tepid challenge to the old order. As such, parties on both sides of the Spithead mutiny tacitly worked to preserve traditional social hierarchies, displaying an unspoken “solidarity” in English conceptions of the social order.⁸⁹ The bloodless success of the Spithead mutiny arose from the moderation of the seamen involved, their deference to the authority of both the crown and the Admiralty, and a renunciation of political motives. Conversely, during the Nore mutiny “Parker’s Floating Republic,” as the HMS *Sandwich* came to be known while under the nominal control of Richard Parker, a disgraced midshipman, failed utterly and ended with Parker and twenty-seven of his collaborators being hanged from the yardarm.⁹⁰ Despite the massive upheavals of 1797, the Royal Navy remained an hierarchical oligarchy based on unquestioned obedience to superiors, backed up by repressive judicial policies that meted out capital punishment as a solution to most forms of dissent. In short, the institution of the Royal Navy mirrored precisely the characteristics of Pitt’s political state.

The spirit of such policies also permeated wider society, strengthening the “reign of ‘politeness’, of the elegant, rational, patrician order.”⁹¹ Anti-establishment movements existed, but were generally the preserve of elite or upper-middle class groups including the

⁸⁸ Lt. William Hotham, quoted in Rodger, *Command*, p. 449.

⁸⁹ Clark, *Society*, p. 225.

⁹⁰ It is unlikely that Parker was the instigator of the Nore mutiny, although he allowed himself to be used as a spokesman and figurehead, a decision that proved fatal. See Rodger, *Command*, p. 449; and Woodman, *Mutiny*, p. 116.

⁹¹ Clark, *Society*, p. 21.

Foxite Whigs and not-so-radical urban evangelicals.⁹² Even dissenting religious groups such as Methodists, Quakers, and Unitarians generally represented members of society who “both wished and could afford to be somewhat independent of the paternal hierarchy” – those who, according to Perkin, were not financially dependent upon the landed elite “for employment, tenancies, or patronage . . .”⁹³ While it is questionable whether any members of the middling and upper-middling orders were ever so independent of the pervasive social framework, wealth did provide a certain amount of freedom with which to challenge the *status quo*. The new piety also supported ideas that questioned the establishment on issues ranging from religious toleration, to the abolition of slavery, to “concerns for bodily and mental health, and dislike for all persecution and violence”⁹⁴ – issues that challenged many of the tenets of a traditional authoritarian society.⁹⁵

As an agency of that society, the navy found itself at odds with many of the principles of evangelical reform. Naval standards of corporal punishment, the strict administration of naval law, and questions over the day-to-day treatment of lower-deck men provided points of contention for reformers. St. Vincent’s characteristically ruthless response to indiscipline of any kind⁹⁶ represented an old-school approach that was

⁹² The “Clapham Sect” and other movements of the Evangelical Revival were “galvanized above all by a plutocratic elite in London,” Porter, *Society*, p. 308; also see Richard Brown, *The Church and the State in Modern Britain, 1700-1850* (New York, 1991), p. 104. On the other hand, the London Corresponding Society and others like it were made up of “artisans, mechanics, and small shopkeepers” who “saw themselves as ‘the people’ to be contrasted with ‘the aristocrats’.” See Mary Thale, ed., *Selections from the Papers of the London Corresponding Society, 1792-1799* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. xv-xvi. It is likely that the social differences between these two groups had much to do with how the government dealt with the threat they posed to civil order.

⁹³ Perkin, *Origins*, p. 34.

⁹⁴ David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, 2006), p. 41.

⁹⁵ Brown notes that the “position of Evangelicals in politics was contradictory. They contracted the concerns of politics to a moral imperative but widened the whole sphere of politics through their techniques of mass agitation,” Brown, *Church and the State*, p. 105.

⁹⁶ St. Vincent’s belief that “no character, however good, shall save a man who is guilty of mutiny,” exemplified the severest of naval doctrines when it came to subordination and discipline. St. Vincent to Captain Sir Edward Pellew in the wake of the *Impetueux* mutiny of 1799 in Tucker, *St. Vincent*, Vol. 1, p. 316.

increasingly being questioned by officers (and civilians) caught up in a maturing Sentimental Revolution.⁹⁷

In the first years of the new century the influence of sentiment was evident in the way a number of commanders adopted a more thoughtful approach to their subordinates. The severity of corporal punishment and old methods of maintaining naval order did not suit captains and admirals who were either influenced by religious or moral reforms, or who simply recognized that there were more effective ways to manage a ship's company. Many noted that the humane treatment of seamen and a heightened consideration for their comfort often delivered more immediate and more enduring results. Captain Pamplin of the *Gibraltar* was averse to flogging and "never disgraced [men] at the gangway but for some willful fault."⁹⁸ Collingwood was an early proponent of the theory that corporal punishment did little for a crew's morale. One biographer noted that, "more than a year has often passed away without his having resorted to [flogging] even once."⁹⁹ The force of the admiral's personality was enough to keep subordinates in check: ". . . a look of displeasure from him was as bad as a dozen at the gangway from another man."¹⁰⁰ Captain Frederick Watkins warned young aspirants of the moral dangers of striking sailors, a situation "which has placed many a young gentlemen in a very contemptible light; for it is beneath a man to wound the feelings of another, by offering a blow to him, who he knows dares not return it."¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Langford locates the start of the "Sentimental Revolution" in the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It involved a heightened awareness of feelings and emotions, with an emphasis on humanity and humanitarianism. "Sentiment," he suggests, ". . . had a special appeal to middle-class England at a time of economic growth and rising standards of living," see Langford, *Polite*, pp. 463-65.

⁹⁸ NMM, JOD/148, "Diary of a Midshipman Pysent," HMS *Gibraltar*, 1811; and in Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 463. Throughout most of the war it appeared, however, that the main concern over corporal punishment related to starting rather than flogging, see Rodger, *Command*, p. 492.

⁹⁹ Newnham Collingwood, *Correspondence*, Vol. 1, p. 70.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Hay, quoted in Rodger, *Command*, p. 491.

¹⁰¹ Watkins, *Young Naval Hero*, p. 36.

Beyond punishment, there also appeared to be a heightened concern for matters of professional and personal courtesy. Captain Riou of the *Amazon* was particularly attentive to the comfort of sailors at dinner time and directed that “The ship’s company are never to be interrupted at the meals but on the most pressing occasions . . .”¹⁰² When it came to the issue of men being called on deck unnecessarily, Captain Keats of the *Superb* ordered that “the commanding officer is directed to avoid so much as possible the calling of all hands but when the service to be performed cannot be executed by the watch and idlers . . .”¹⁰³ By 1811 the importance of respectful treatment for sailors inspired Captain Anselm Griffiths to publish his *Observations on Some Points of Seamanship*:

Another thing which annoys the ship’s company is the calling of all hands for what the watch can do. They know as well as you do when there is a necessity and they come cheerfully when they see that necessity, but it is natural they should feel annoyed at being taken from their amusements or little private employments because an officer they ought to look up to either does not know what strength is requisite or is unmindful of their comfort.¹⁰⁴

Such opinions showed not only a heightened sensibility for the patience of lower-deck men but for the dangers of officers who appeared incompetent.

These examples may be seen as evidence of shifting attitudes towards the proper use of naval authority and could suggest a measure of a change *from above* in the social dynamics of shipboard life. They may also be evidence of the effects of commercialism and an expanding middle class, which forced the acceptance of more liberal attitudes towards the lower and middling orders; and of a moral reformation that encouraged more

¹⁰² Captain’s Orders HMS *Amazon*, 1799 in Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 151.

¹⁰³ NMM RUSI/110, “Captain’s Orders.” Captain Keats, HMS *Superb*, 1804, Art. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Captain Anselm Griffiths, “Observations on Some Points of Seamanship with Practical Hints on Naval Economy,” in Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 359.

magnanimous approaches towards subordinates. It is also possible, however, that the trend was the product not of a liberal reform, but of a paternalistic revival.¹⁰⁵

While Griffiths's opinions might be interpreted as heralding a new social standard within the service, his characterization of seamen as intelligent, skilled professionals also served another purpose, one that undermined notions of fundamental social reform. Griffiths used such observations to demand more of those who walked the quarterdeck, both in terms of their gentlemanly treatment of inferiors and their professionalism. His criticism of officers' conduct sought to push the standards of command higher, while his call for the fair treatment of seamen championed the concept of *noblesse oblige*. Both these positions supported a widening of the gap between lower deck and quarterdeck. Just as the principle of rule by consent remained firmly at the root of all naval authority, the need for officers to distance themselves from the men through genteel conduct, superior knowledge, and unquestionable skill reinforced the old-order paradigm and further justified the authority of the quarterdeck. The opening lines of Griffiths's opus summarized his position on the governance of a ship's people and the distinction between the ranks and ratings:

"I am not only a strenuous advocate for correct discipline, but a decided enemy to the littleness of character known by the appellation of courting popularity."¹⁰⁶ A well-defined hierarchy remained central to Griffiths's sense of "modern" command, while a heightened sense of formality in shipboard relationships supported notions of an increasingly rigid

¹⁰⁵ Wahrman argues that by 1800 "popular radicalism was largely defeated and demoralized," see Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, p. 160. This position echoes Thompson's assertion that a Pittite assault on radicalism during the mid to late 1790s quashed popular dissent, see E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1966), pp. 451-52. With regards to reforming religion, Thompson suggests that in "the counter-revolutionary years after 1795" Methodism, among other Dissenting religions, "acted most evidently as a stabilizing or regressive social force," *ibid.*, p. 46. Colley also deals with Evangelicalism as a force for national consciousness and old-order stability, see Colley, "Whose Nation?" pp. 107-08. For the theories on and enduring social and political stability see Ian Christie, "Conservatism and Stability in British Society," in *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, ed. Mark Philip (Cambridge, 1991); and *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth Century Britain: Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution* (Oxford, 1984).

¹⁰⁶ Griffiths in Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 345.

hierarchy. As Rodger notes, “the senior officers of a generation before had been accustomed to a sort of rough intimacy with their men which had disappeared by the end of the century . . .”¹⁰⁷

In this context, Griffiths’s theories can be seen less in terms of liberal innovation and more as call for the strict separation of officers and men. Judging by contemporary accounts such sentiments were widely accepted. From the lower end of the naval hierarchy, *A Mariner of England’s* William Richardson hinted at his preference for a tightly ordered shipboard society: “in all my experience at sea I have found seamen grateful for good usage, and yet they like to see subordination kept up as they know the duty could not be carried on without it.”¹⁰⁸ In 1810, John Boteler noted the reactions of the men who suddenly found themselves under a captain who adopted a more relaxed approach to shipboard order and allowed the “skulkers to lag behind.” Boteler related the sentiments of one sailor who summed up the general mood: “I wish Captain * * * was back: then all would have to do their duty. I would sooner sail with a rogue than a fool.”¹⁰⁹ As late as 1847, able seaman John Bechervaise wrote of his faith in order and a strict naval hierarchy:

I would always choose a ship in which every duty was attended to strictly, in preference to one in which a man did almost as he liked. Indeed, I’ve frequently heard old seamen say (when two ships were in commission and both wanting hands), “I’ll go with Captain _____: he’s a taut one, but he is Captain of his own ship.”¹¹⁰

Griffiths’s understanding of such feelings among the sailors of the new century was conveyed in his outline for reform in shipboard management. It suggested a process by which officers could, and should, distance themselves from a ship’s company as a means

¹⁰⁷ Rodger, *Command*, p. 491.

¹⁰⁸ Richardson, *A Mariner of England*, p. 106

¹⁰⁹ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ John Bechervaise, quoted in Lewis, *Social*, p. 276.

of providing a social and professional framework that suited both the character of an officer and the needs of the men. *Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine* charged young gentlemen to separate themselves, behaviorally and morally, from the crew as proximity to the men could, in the worst circumstances, foster “idleness and dissipation . . . sloth, diseases, and an utter profligacy of manners.”¹¹¹ Basil Hall remarked on the need for midshipmen to eschew the “lingo” and manners of the common sailor which many youngsters adopted, lest they “speedily lose caste even with the crew.”¹¹² Other apparently progressive social measures, such as Riou’s concern for his men at mealtimes, might just as easily be viewed from a traditional perspective; confirming the most fundamental concessions awarded to England’s mariners and reflecting an understanding that navies, as well as armies, fought on their stomachs. Reform within the naval hierarchy was visible in the new century – but mostly in terms of how it reasserted old-order systems of authority and brought greater stability to the navy of the new century.

ii. The rise of a class society? Rank and the entry-level officer

Clark’s argument for the continuation of patrician hegemony does not preclude the appearance of conflict or change, or the flexibility of the old-order system in which the pillars of land ownership and patronage were the foundations of society. It does, however, deny the emergence of a middle class during the last decades of the eighteenth century,¹¹³ a position that becomes problematic in explaining the impact of a thriving market economy, the accumulation of wealth, and the social mobility it afforded.¹¹⁴ Social rank, dependent on hereditary claims, enabled stratification in an old-order society whereas class “depended

¹¹¹ Falconer, *Dictionary of the Marine*, p. 868.

¹¹² Basil Hall, *Lieutenant and Commander: being autobiographical sketches of his own career from fragments of Voyage and Travels*, 1862 edition (New York, 2007), p. 18.

¹¹³ Clark, *Society*, p. 25.

¹¹⁴ Porter accepts Clark’s assessment of a continuing political *ancien régime*, but acknowledges the shortcomings of his theory as it relates to matters of social, economic, and cultural change. Porter, *Society*, pp. xiii-xiv.

on status determined largely by wealth.”¹¹⁵ Harold Perkin notes the emergence of “class” defined by “vertical antagonism and horizontal solidarity” which “transcend[s] the common source of income that supports them,” placing its emergence on a “national scale” between the outbreak of the French Revolution and the Great Reform Act of 1832.¹¹⁶

By this definition, the appearance of class identity within the Royal Navy was visible in the solidarity expressed by the young gentlemen of the Midshipmen’s Mutiny and the antagonism they displayed towards superiors who challenged their authority as officers-in-training and their honor as gentlemen. The Great Mutinies also demonstrated the cohesiveness of the lower-deck masses in their bid for fair consideration from the nation they served. The emergence of class was also visible in the social controls implemented by the Order in Council of 1794 which separated recruits according to their social status and hence their professional potential. Paul Langford acknowledges that: “Status was increasingly seen as a complicated mixture of wealth, education, occupation, and manners, not readily defined with precision.”¹¹⁷ The Admiralty, to a large extent, operated on these same ambiguous standards. The qualities that defined “young gentlemen” were unspecified within the wording of the Order, although the implication was that gentility depended on a combination of factors, from family and connections, to wealth and education.

With the onset of the Napoleonic Wars standards for aspiring officers sharpened. Competition for places forced the question of who was most deserving of the professional opportunities that could lead to commissioned rank. This reignited questions as to whether the natural authority of society’s elite rendered them better leaders of men. It also raised

¹¹⁵ Langford, *Englishness*, pp. 259-60.

¹¹⁶ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 176-77.

¹¹⁷ Langford, *Polite*, p. 652.

issues of economic eligibility. For many young hopefuls the financial burden of entering the service was as much a determining factor as family or connections. Captain Watkins's advice to parents from 1807 included a lengthy explanation of the costs associated with "equipping a young gentleman" which "generally exceeds £100" plus a minimum of twenty-five guineas per annum for messing, contributions to the shipboard schoolmaster, and pocket money.¹¹⁸ *Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine* suggested an annual allowance of £30 to £50.¹¹⁹ In addition to the regular requirement for new uniforms, it was a sizable sum that excluded all those who were not moderately affluent.

It may be argued here that the alignment of wealth and social status – the emergence of "class" – and the resurgence of *ancien régime* paternalism are not mutually exclusive social models. Elements of both a "class society" and a "patrician hegemony" are visible in the general social and the particular naval examples. To a large degree, wealth had always defined the elite.¹²⁰ Those who were unable to afford the lifestyle of a lord, or even a gentleman, eventually disappeared from that society and were replaced by new families who could. As Dewald notes, "despite contemporary theory, nobility could not rest on lineage alone. It required substantial wealth."¹²¹ The resilience of aristocratic society was, in fact, dependent on its ability to evolve with the changing fortunes of its constituent members.¹²² Such flexibility saw aristocratic control of British political and social culture maintained until the early twentieth century¹²³ and allowed the admittance of certain cases of "new money," (where it was sufficient to buy property and wield

¹¹⁸ Watkins, *Young Naval Hero*, pp. 16-19.

¹¹⁹ Burney, *Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine*, p. 278.

¹²⁰ By the seventeenth century it was recognized that "poor nobles incarnated a disjunction between claims of status and economic position," see Dewald, *European Nobility*, pp. 46-47; also see Porter, *Society*, p. 59; Christie, "Conservatism and Stability," p. 169.

¹²¹ Dewald, *European Nobility*, p. 47.

¹²² Porter, *Society*, p. 4.

¹²³ Cannadine, *Decline and Fall*, p. 31.

patronage), to the ranks of the social elite.¹²⁴ Bound by the common denominators of wealth, land, and power a patrician class identity could develop. This is not to say that gentlemen and peers considered themselves equal.¹²⁵ Nor does it argue the case for an “open” aristocracy.¹²⁶ It does, however, suggest some degree of solidarity in political, economic, social, and cultural interests which, by Perkin’s definition, constitute social “class.”¹²⁷ In terms of the navy, the data for 1801 and 1811 shows a dramatic increase in the presence of elite sons from the expanding ranks of the “gentry;” many of whom had achieved their status through professional or commercial interests,¹²⁸ and all of whom possessed the social and financial prerequisites for entry. If patrician society can be defined as the moneyed and propertied elite of gentlemen and peers,¹²⁹ then the figures show a significant resurgence in patrician interest, particularly *gentry* interest, in the navy of the French Wars.

It is clear that prejudices lingered over the profligate nature of the aristocracy in society at large: “it is a fact, that [rank and birth] have fallen and are daily falling into contempt,”¹³⁰ and within the service, where newcomers were warned to beware of young gentlemen “whose character might not bear the strict test of enquiry, and who, born,

¹²⁴ Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 15, 23, 135. The Stones’s analysis concluded that most “purchasers” of great estates were of the high professional classes while only a minority managed to ascend from the ranks of trade or commerce.

¹²⁵ According to McCahill even peers did not consider themselves as equals. The late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries saw even greater stratification taking place within the peerage and that the aristocracy’s reaction to the expansion of the peerage “was a heightened preoccupation with rank.” McCahill also notes that: “The Nobility in this period [1750-1830] was also beginning to sort itself into a hierarchy in which rank was dictated by the extent of an individual’s property.” See McCahill, “Peerage Creations,” pp. 259, 277.

¹²⁶ Perkin posits the concept of an “open aristocracy,” although he is largely concerned with the migration of the working classes to the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie to the gentry, see Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 56, 61, 63, 179-182; also see Christie, “Conservatism and Stability,” pp. 170-171.

¹²⁷ Perkin, *Origins*, p.177; also see Porter, *Society*, p. 116. *The Gentlemen’s Magazine* of 1819 noted the conjunction: “the manners of the nobility and gentry assimilate over the whole kingdom,” quoted in Colley, “Whose Nation?” p. 104.

¹²⁸ See Appendices F5-F6, “Quarterdeck Boys 1801-1811”; Appendices G5-G6, “Junior Officers 1801-1811.”

¹²⁹ Clark, *Society*, pp. 193, 225.

¹³⁰ William Cobbett, 1811 quoted in Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 167.

perhaps in the mansion of luxury, and early habituated to scenes of prodigality,”¹³¹ would lead others astray. Yet there is also evidence to show that British seamen, even at their most rebellious, subscribed to a belief in the legitimacy of patrician authority. Observations that the men preferred a smattering of gentility in their commanders echoed widespread lower-deck beliefs in the validity of the old hierarchy. During the Nore mutiny, one seaman decided to spare the life of young Lieutenant Nieven who had, the previous day, sentenced the man to a flogging. The seaman explained his reasoning: “You did, [flog me] Sir, *but I deserved it.*” The rest of his response spoke to wider social justifications: “You are a gentleman, and a good officer. You never punished men but when they were in fault, and you did it as an officer ought to do.” A flogging from a gentleman was clearly more acceptable than one from an officer such as the first lieutenant of the same ship who was “a *blackguard* and *no gentleman.*”¹³² The system of authority handed down from the highest levels of naval administration depended, to a large extent, on the elite status of the messenger. It was a situation that further confirmed the need for officers-in-training to be convincing as gentlemen – by deed and by appearance.

William Dillon recalled his experience as a midshipman in which lower-deck men carried him and his comrades across mud flats in order to reach a stranded tender. He also convinced the men to carry out two French civilian prisoners who were “almost entitled to the name of gentlemen.”¹³³ As Lewis notes, “[Dillon] evidently took it for granted that he and his messmates would avoid muddy feet by being carried . . . and he was not disappointed.” Gentility apparently also “transcended nationality, and even war,” and despite the initial protests of the crew at having to render service to their enemies, the fact

¹³¹ Watkins, *Young Naval Hero*, p. 38.

¹³² “Cullen’s Journal” in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, pp. 84-85. (Cullen’s italics).

¹³³ Dillion, *Adventures*, Vol. 1, p. 92.

that the men complied “only seems to show that, at heart, they also attached a great importance to the idea of gentility.” Dillon’s example revealed an early emergence of class identity within the service: “any regret that his subordinate’s feet should become muddy while his remained clean” was non-existent, while “the much more modern conception of sharing discomfort with his men – simply did not enter his head at all.”¹³⁴ In Dillon’s world the solidarity of class was enabled by the clear understanding of vertical differentiation by both his fellow midshipmen and the seamen who obliged them. In 1806 able seaman Robert Mercer Wilson of the *Unité* commented on the deference shown to social and service rank aboard his ship, where “The greatest respect [was] paid by all inferiors to their superiors.”¹³⁵

Perkin too acknowledges that the “paternal discipline of the old society” was alive and well during the first decades of the new century despite the emergence of “class.” In terms of the Royal Navy, the “syncopated process” of social change meant that varied, and sometimes contradictory, precepts existed side by side for periods of time.¹³⁶ The resurgence of an old-order mentality in which the landed elite were favored when it came to appointments is difficult to see in Lewis’s surveys of commissioned officers during the French Wars, while the persistence of naval conventions that allowed an officer to be a gentleman regardless of his social origins remained visible.¹³⁷ The data for young gentlemen also provides evidence of contradictory standards in recruitment, showing a strong resurgence of the gentle-born by the turn of the century alongside a large number of partially-traceable and untraceable boys who undoubtedly rose from middle or working-

¹³⁴ Michael Lewis’s introduction to Section II of Dillon, *Adventures, Vol. I*, p. 64.

¹³⁵ “Wilson’s Journal” in Thrusfield, *Five Naval Journals*, p. 145.

¹³⁶ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 33, 177; Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, pp. 6-7.

¹³⁷ Lewis, *Transition*, pp. 22-26.

class origins.¹³⁸ The influence of the prevailing social climate on the young gentlemen's condition was, however, generally visible in the importance ascribed to outward displays of gentility by messmates and superior officers. From correct manners and erudition, to presentation and deportment, the effort made by some officer aspirants to cultivate these characteristics showed marked improvement in the navy of the new century – although, like other things, the civilization of the midshipmen's berth also appeared to be a “syncopated process.”

Manners and Deportment

The memoirs and correspondence of young gentlemen and their commanding officers during the French Wars continued to chronicle behavior that fell decidedly short of polite. In 1801 Dillon, now a lieutenant, reported on a “refractory Mid” who returned to the ship after “lights out” in a state of intoxication and proceeded to “an act of mutiny” in which Dillon was violently attacked.¹³⁹ Intoxication was also evident in the deterioration of the handwriting in a letter, dated 1806, by the twelve-year old George Perceval. What begins in perfect script to “My Dear Papa and dear Mamma,” quickly devolves into an almost illegible scrawl in which he concedes: “I eat some Christmas pye [sic] and drunk all your health,” making it clear that George indeed came from a large family.¹⁴⁰ In 1811 Midshipmen Boteler and Lucas were caught stealing food from the infirmary and port wine from the lieutenants’ storeroom, and were punished accordingly.¹⁴¹ A year later, the Reverend Edward Mangin complained of the general “uproar” created by the *Gloucester*’s midshipmen “who were continually rambling and rioting in [the] Gun-room.”¹⁴²

¹³⁸ See data for Quarterdeck Boys and Junior Officers in Sections 3 and 4 of this chapter.

¹³⁹ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, pp. 411-12.

¹⁴⁰ PER1/21, George James Perceval to his parents, Lord and Lady Arden, December 25, 1806. George had five brothers and two sisters.

¹⁴¹ Boteler, *Recollections*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁴² “Mangin’s Journal” in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, p. 11.

Yet, despite the persistence of raucous (and occasionally criminal) behavior there was also evidence of greater civility being enforced within the cockpit. As a fifteen-year old midshipman, George Vernon Jackson described mealtimes aboard the *Lapwing* as a free-for-all – although his attempt to grab at the contents of the communal bowl using his bare hands brought instant censure. His messmates “declared such conduct unbecoming to the society of gentlemen, and they threatened to chalk my fingers if I repeated it.”¹⁴³ Soon after, Jackson acquired a spoon and fork. Basil Hall’s recollections of his experiences in the cockpit extended to the humiliation brought upon him by a lack of polish in his diction. Recalling that he spoke with “the hideous patois of Edinburgh, with the delectable accompaniment of the burr of Berwick,” Hall’s use of local slang brought the wrath of his colleagues and countrymen who chided: “‘none but Sawney from the North’ would use such a barbarous word, unknown in England.”¹⁴⁴ Hall was the second son of a baronet, although his pedigree did little to protect him from parochial prejudices and the constant taunting of his more cosmopolitan messmates. When it came to manners in the cockpit, Hall remarked on the establishment of regulations among the midshipmen which threatened a fine of “one dollar” if “any member of the larboard mess shall so far forget the manners of a gentleman”¹⁴⁵ Aboard the *Chatham* the bad behavior and poor manners of midshipman Augustus Boyd Grant saw him “excluded from the Society of Gentlemen” and forced to live with a foremast jack “whose habits he had contracted in a most shameful Manner.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ “George Vernon Jackson, 1801-04” in Jon Lewis, ed., *Life Before the Mast: Sailors’ Eyewitness accounts from the Age of Fighting Ships* (New York, 2001), p. 136.

¹⁴⁴ Anecdote c. 1802 in Basil Hall, *Fragments of Voyages and Travels: chiefly for the use of Young Persons*, 2nd edition, 3 vols., vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1832), pp. 80-82. Hall entered the navy at 1802 and was made a lieutenant in 1808.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

¹⁴⁶ From Captain Peter Puget’s journal, 1794-95 quoted in Lamb, *Vancouver’s Voyages*, Vol. 1, pp. 213-14.

The need to maintain the society of gentlemen was recognized by superior officers who distributed frequent invitations to young gentlemen to dine in the wardroom or at the captain's table. Aboard the *Gloucester* in 1812 the midshipmen of the watch took tea every day at six o'clock with the officers in the wardroom in an effort to polish their manners.¹⁴⁷ Some captains considered it their "duty to [a] boy's parents to show him how to behave on social occasions",¹⁴⁸ and while at sea, the captain's table provided the only "society" to be had. Hall noted the pomp and circumstance of the "formal dinner parties" served in the great cabin which often involved all the trappings of lavish dining ashore,¹⁴⁹ while Chamier praised the efforts of Captain Parker whose "table was elegant, and the dignity of the inferior officers was upheld by the constant invitations."¹⁵⁰

Many young gentlemen were also ascribing greater importance to their participation in good society. Peter Cullen noted the anxiety of the *Squirrel's* midshipmen when their captain refused an invitation to a ball given by the Earl of Kinsale. Some of the more enterprising (and disobedient) among them found a way ashore and "had the honour of dancing with the Ladies de Courcy."¹⁵¹ In 1807 able seaman Robert Wilson noted the elegance of several parties on board the *Unité* in which the officers and young gentlemen decorated the quarterdeck, arranged bands and entertainments, and organized refreshments in an effort to entertain local ladies and gentlemen with country dances.¹⁵² Young gentlemen who paid excessive attention to the pursuits of genteel society risked the ire of more seasoned officers. Towards the end of his career Admiral Sir Thomas Byam Martin was peeved enough to comment: "The rivalry with midshipmen is no longer [over]

¹⁴⁷ "Mangin's Journal" in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁸ Janet MacDonald, *Feeding Nelson's Navy: The True Story of Food at Sea in the Georgian Era* (Annapolis, 2006), p. 126.

¹⁴⁹ Hall, *Voyages and Travels for Young Persons*, p. 231.

¹⁵⁰ Chamier, *Life*, p. 122.

¹⁵¹ "Cullen's Journal" in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, p. 62.

¹⁵² "Wilson's Journal" in *ibid.*, pp. 140, 187.

smartness or professional duties, but in frivolous effeminacy, incompatible with what we wish and expect in the character of seamen.”¹⁵³ For most young gentlemen, however, the cultivation of an elegant manner in the company of polite society was essential to their personal and professional credit. Manners that were “simple, easy, and obliging, equally free from affectation and roughness – the natural expression of unfeigned goodness of heart,”¹⁵⁴ provided the key to professional success.

Such standards of presentation were not, however, easily achieved by young men raised in the confines the cockpit. Without the proper guidance, manners and deportment were left to evolve from a boy’s own interpretations and experiences – conditions that produced a variety of character traits that often bore little resemblance to the ideals of polite society. Haughtiness, snobbery, and even brutality were just some of the ways in which young gentlemen manifested their understanding of gentility. As an acting lieutenant at the age of sixteen, William Dillon took regular stock of the social standing of his fellow officers. Of the *Aimable*’s purser he noted: “There was nothing aristocratic about him, his manners were of the plainest, with a broad country accent.”¹⁵⁵ With his promotion, came a heightened sense of entitlement. In 1800 a freshly-minted Lieutenant Dillon voiced his frustrations over the introduction of a young relation of Lord Hugh Seymour into the officers’ mess. The boy’s appointment as an acting lieutenant and messmate in the gun room left Dillon indignant over the fact that the captain had made the decision “without even consulting me” and that it was “a slight to my position here and not very suitable to my feelings!”¹⁵⁶ Protests over the appointment of the son of a Lord might

¹⁵³ Hamilton, *Byam Martin*, Vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁵⁴ From an article in *The Oracle*, October 20, 1797 quoted in Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, p. 112.

¹⁵⁵ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 251.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

also be evidence of a failing confidence in Dillon's own dubious social rank.¹⁵⁷ For other young gentlemen, a sense of entitlement to the privileges of rank manifested in violent behavior towards superiors and inferiors alike. Samuel Leech was a thirteen-year old lower-deck boy aboard HMS *Macedonian* in 1810 and recalled the painful experience some twenty years later.

I felt the insults and tyranny of the midshipmen. These little minions of power ordered and drove me round like a dog, nor did I or the other boys dare interpose a word. They were officers; their word was our law, and woe betide the rebellious boy that dared refuse implicit obedience.¹⁵⁸

As a captain, Collingwood was not immune to the attacks of a defiant midshipman which prompted the complaint:

The conduct and behaviour of Mr. _____ has added very much to my vexation. A few days since upon the most trivial occasion, he broke out into such a fit of frenzy and rage, and behaved to me in so contemptuous and extraordinary a manner, that I desired the 1st Lieutenant to order him off the deck. The day following he wrote a letter, not excusing his conduct, but rather justifying it . . .¹⁵⁹

Brutality also manifested in scathing attacks on the social qualifications of other young officers. A heightened sense of class consciousness was visible on the quarterdeck – as was the perceived need to dissemble if social connections proved inferior. In 1808 Dillon reconnected with his old messmate and tormentor, George Sanders, who was then in command of the sloop *Bellete*. Unforgiving of the treatment he had received from Sanders during his first days afloat, Dillon unleashed a social assault:

At times he gave himself consequential airs, wishing to be understood that he possessed considerable influence . . . However not having much faith in this gentleman's assertions, I demanded explanations which proved him to be the son of a surgeon . . . Thereat Mr. Sanders did not rise much in my estimation. His

¹⁵⁷ Lewis concludes that William Henry Dillon was the illegitimate son of Sir John Talbot Dillon, Baron of the Holy Roman Empire, D.S.P. This hereditary title did not pass to William but to his cousin, John Joseph Dillon although William Henry assumed the title of "Sir" anyway. See *ibid.*, pp. x, xvi.

¹⁵⁸ Leech, *Thirty Years*, p. 21. See caveat regarding Leech's memoirs in the Introduction.

¹⁵⁹ Collingwood to J. E. Blackett, June 27, 1797 in Newnham Collingwood, *Correspondence*, pp. 63-64.

authoritative bearing, with other freaks, were not suited to his connections. I had supposed him, by his sayings and doings, to be a member of some high aristocratic family.¹⁶⁰

Aside from Dillon's overt antagonism, Sanders's behavior was crafted to create a persona which indicated high birth and austere professionalism; an image designed to deflect assaults leveled by polite society at his humble origins. Considering the apparent resurgence in the importance of pedigree, Sanders's efforts were not without justification. A letter to the editor of the *Gentlemen's Magazine* in 1814 addressed the lingering prejudices within the service over matters of birth; "not to have been born a gentleman was supposed to imply want of liberality of manners."¹⁶¹

Such attitudes also found expression in popular literature. As a clergyman's daughter with two brothers in the Royal Navy, Jane Austen was well placed to observe society's attitudes towards sea officers. In 1815 she captured one popular position in the voice of Sir Walter Elliot, Bart., who objected to the naval profession as being the means of bringing persons of obscure birth into undue distinction, and raising men to honours which their fathers and grandfathers never dreamt of . . . A man is in greater danger in the navy of being insulted by the rise of those whose father, his father might have disdained to speak to . . . than in any other line.¹⁶²

Such commentary reflected an elite opinion that favored greater separation of the social orders to guard against the threat posed by the navy as an enabler of inappropriate social mobility. The foil for the aristocratic, snobbish, and dandified Sir Walter was Captain Wentworth whose "superiority of appearance," self-assurance, and professional success were deemed more than a match for Anne Elliot's "superiority of rank."¹⁶³ It also helped

¹⁶⁰ Sir William Henry Dillon, *A Narrative of My Personal Adventures, 1790-1839*, ed. Michael Lewis, 2 vols., vol. 2, Navy Records Society, vol. 97 (London, 1956), p. 90.

¹⁶¹ John Walker, *A Selection of Curious Articles from the Gentlemen's Magazine*, 3rd edition, 4 vols., vol. 4 (London, 1814), no page ref.

¹⁶² Jane Austen, *Persuasion*, introduction by Susan Ostrov Weisser (New York, 1993), p. 19.

¹⁶³ Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (Boston, 1906), p. 323.

that Wentworth had “made not less than twenty thousand pounds by the war.”¹⁶⁴ In *Mansfield Park*, published in 1814, Austen reinforced the view of the inherently noble character of sea officers which made up for middle or working-class connections. The new, more-genteel Royal Navy of the Napoleonic Wars was embodied in the person of William Price whose character was a catalogue of polite society’s highest honors. William was “a young man of an open, pleasant countenance, and frank, unstudied, but feeling and respectful manners.”¹⁶⁵ Through him, Austen presented the epitome of early-nineteenth century standards of gentility and masculinity.

Deportment and the ability to convey the “superiority of appearance” necessary to be convincing as an officer and a gentleman could make all the difference when it came to professional success. In the worst circumstances, like those experienced by Mr. Smith, a midshipman of the *Orontes*, there was little that could be done. Smith was accused of grinning at his captain although, according to a fellow midshipman, “it was a natural way he had of baring his teeth.”¹⁶⁶ Interpreted as insolence, Smith’s appearance was deemed inappropriate and resulted in him being disgraced for three months. The bearing of this orthodontically-challenged young man caused him to suffer the consequences of failing to exhibit the right amount of *gravitas* and humility in interactions with superiors. For others, personal challenges were more serious; and could impact their ability to carry out the duties of an officer. In 1800 Midshipman John Phillimore failed his lieutenants’ examination – not for reasons of incompetence, but for the “great impediment in his speech” which, in the opinion of his examiners, “rendered him almost incompetent to give any order.” In addition to obtaining therapy for his condition, Phillimore’s captain

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁶⁵ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (London, 1910), p. 193.

¹⁶⁶ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 48.

provided a testimonial suggesting that the young man's stutter was worsened by examination-day nerves and that his conduct on board the *Achille* was exemplary. The board's decision was reversed and Phillimore passed in August of that year.¹⁶⁷

Even youngsters who did not suffer from conformational or physiological challenges found difficulty in striking the right balance when it came to assuming the deportment of an officer. For some the excitement of a situation caused youthful exuberance to triumph over decorum. Prior to the siege of St. Lucia in 1796 young Hood Christian "made himself so troublesome, that the Admiral chastised him summarily" which, in the presence of his boat crew, "was a most humiliating occurrence."¹⁶⁸ For other recruits excitement turned easily to fear. William Richardson recalled the case of Mr. King "a fine young man on his first trip to sea" who was so terrified of drowning when his ship collided with another that he demanded a pistol with which to shoot himself. Richardson explained the boy's reasoning: "he said he was afraid of drowning, but by shooting himself he would be out of pain in an instant."¹⁶⁹

While King's conduct was hardly a model of gentlemanly *sang froid* or officerlike fortitude, it captured the extent of the social and professional pressures acting upon young gentlemen. The need to assume a mantle of gentility, as both a source of authority and a justification of a boy's right to walk the quarterdeck, was all important in the navy of the French Wars. According to the diarist Joseph Farington, "in England . . . manners alone can preserve that subordination which is allowed to be necessary."¹⁷⁰ What was true of society in general was equally true of the service.

¹⁶⁷ TNA: PRO, ADM 107/24, "John Phillimore's examination details," ff. 545-50; and ADM 107/66, "Record of Phillimore's passing the examination."

¹⁶⁸ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 1, p. 237.

¹⁶⁹ Richardson, *A Mariner of England*, p. 126.

¹⁷⁰ Joseph Farington, 1810 quoted in Langford, *Englishness*, p. 262.

Education

The development of young officers, both as gentlemen and professionals, continued to present problems when it came to their education and the availability of quality schoolmasters at sea. There were also difficulties associated with striking the right balance between academic instruction and practical training. Throughout the French Wars schoolmasters were a rarity and most boys were forced to gain an education at schools ashore before they entered the service.

In 1804, at the age of eight, John Boteler attended Mr. Lancaster's school at Dover where "the living was abominable," only to transfer a year later to the Rochester School, where the master, Mr. Griffiths, "was an awful disciplinarian" and preached at his young charge until he "begged to be flogged instead."¹⁷¹ Boteler had very little to say regarding the quality of the academic standards at either school. Thomas Cochrane, who later became the 10th Earl Dundonald, devoted the first chapter of his autobiography to chronicling his education relative to the changing fortunes of his family. From private French tutors, to instruction in the military sciences by retired army sergeants, to a spell at Mr. Chauvet's "excellent school" in Kensington, Cochrane made clear the high value ascribed to education for those who aspired to a young gentleman's position in the navy of the nineteenth century.¹⁷²

For many young aspirants, however, instruction afloat remained the only option. Barham's *Regulations and Instructions* issued in 1806, began a series of small, long-overdue improvements in the situation of schoolmasters in terms of their "pay, conditions and status," all of which were designed to attract higher quality teachers in greater

¹⁷¹ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 6.

¹⁷² Cochrane, *Autobiography*, pp. 6-9.

numbers.¹⁷³ The *Regulations* also allowed chaplains to take on the role of schoolmaster if they were so inclined – an option that brought additional compensation.¹⁷⁴ For the Reverend Edward Mangin, even financial inducements could not convince him that pedagogical responsibilities were a worthwhile endeavor:

The Chaplain is further exhorted to qualify himself in mathematical studies, that he may become the instructor of the young gentlemen on board, in the science of Navigation. This, to every well-informed commander, must appear absurd; a Midshipman, not previously educated for his profession, is a burden to the Captain, who knows that the school is the place for theory; the ship, for practice.¹⁷⁵

Mangin may have had a point, although he offered little hope for boys who went to sea at such an early age that shipboard schooling was the only option. Captain Watkins's advice to the parents argued a different point of view. Watkins asserted that the only place to learn navigation was aboard a ship as “few minds are capable of imbibing theory without corresponding practice.”¹⁷⁶ In the absence of schoolmasters or chaplains, young gentlemen had to make do with instruction from captains, lieutenants, or private tutors. The author of the diary from HMS *Gibraltar* in 1811 appeared to be the tutor (and brother) of Frederick Gilly, a fifteen-year old midshipman. The tutor’s efforts represented the more haphazard type of education available to young gentlemen aboard most ships. His entry of May 20 noted:

Wrote out some mathematics for Frederick and at first endeavoured to instruct him in that branch of knowledge, but as I found he could make little [progress?] without the necessary books, I gave it up and substituted geography in its place . . . and found that he made every improvement I could wish . . .¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 25.

¹⁷⁴ ADM 7/971, *Regulations and Instructions*, 1808.

¹⁷⁵ “Mangin’s Journal” in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁶ Watkins, *Young Naval Hero*, p. 12.

¹⁷⁷ NMM, JOD/148, “Diary of a Midshipman Pysent.” The title of this manuscript is misleading as the author, though unnamed, reveals himself to be the brother and shipboard tutor of “Frederick.” Lavery concludes that the subject of the diary was Midshipman Frederick Gilly, see Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 459.

Certain captains were known for their vigilance when it came to the education of young gentlemen. Captain John Duckworth took great care to employ “a very scientific schoolmaster” in the *Orion* and was known by some as “the very best man in the Navy for training youth.”¹⁷⁸ Captain Foote of the *Niger* took young William Parker under his wing, making him read Shakespeare in order to compare the action to the historical record. A diligent lieutenant helped George Elliot who “could not write a correct line of English when I went to sea at nearly eleven years old . . . ,”¹⁷⁹ while Collingwood was known to treat “midshipmen with parental care, examining them himself once a week.”¹⁸⁰ To a friend he wrote of one student:

Young ____ appears to me a very good, mild-tempered boy, and I will leave nothing undone which is within my power to promote his knowledge . . . He is studying geometry with me, and I keep him close to his books.¹⁸¹

Collingwood had much to say on the issue of education and was concerned about the academic preparation of boys who wished to forge a career in the service. In 1799 he inquired of one young hopeful:

Has he been taught navigation? If his father intended him for the sea, he should have been put to a mathematical school when twelve years old. Boys make very little progress in a ship without being well practised in navigation; and fifteen is too old to begin, for very few take well to the sea at that age.¹⁸²

By 1806, however, the strains of commanding the Mediterranean Fleet were beginning to show, especially when it came to overseeing the education of youngsters: “It is a great mistake people wishing to send their sons to me. When I was captain of a frigate I took good care of them; now I cannot, and have not time to know anything about them.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁸ Admiral John Jervis to Mrs. M. Parker, February 22, 1793 quoted in Rodger, *Command*, 510.

¹⁷⁹ Elliot quoted in *ibid.*, p. 510.

¹⁸⁰ Newnham Collingwood, *Correspondence* (3rd ed.), p. 55.

¹⁸¹ Collingwood to J. E. Blackett, July 22, 1798 in Newnham Collingwood, *Correspondence* (1st American ed.), p. 63.

¹⁸² Collingwood to J. E. Blackett, November, 1799 in *ibid.*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁸³ Collingwood to his wife, April 27, 1806 in *ibid.*, p. 170.

For a select few the Naval Academy provided a source of both academic and professional training. Despite its poor reputation among sea officers, the Academy became a popular option for officer aspirants and gaining admission grew more difficult. in 1773 new provisions allowed fifteen of the forty places to go to the sons of sea officers who would be educated at the public expense¹⁸⁴ and from 1789 until it closed in 1806 the school operated at, or over, its maximum capacity.¹⁸⁵

Reopened as the Royal Naval College in 1808, amendments to the school's organization and curriculum helped to build on the Academy's success. Accommodations for seventy students nearly doubled previous enrollment and the sons of sea officers were now allocated forty of the new positions. The remaining thirty were to be "filled up indiscriminately by the sons of officers, noblemen, and gentlemen,"¹⁸⁶ a ratio that saw naval sons favored over and above the sons of the civilian elite. The extent to which actual enrollment reflected this redirection of Admiralty patronage is uncertain, although the administrative overhaul which placed the First Lord in the role of Governor of the College, emphasized the Admiralty's desire for more direct control over its principle means of influencing officer recruitment.

An entirely new faculty was brought in and placed under the direction of Professor James Inman, a Cambridge-educated mathematician and astronomer who was also an experienced sailor. The age requirements were amended to admit boys between the ages of thirteen and sixteen, giving prospective scholars more time to acquire the prerequisites which demanded significant progress in arithmetic and English. The curriculum was similar to the previous plan of learning, although greater emphasis was placed on

¹⁸⁴ TNA: PRO, ADM 1/3504, "Rules and orders Relating to the Royal Academy, 1773," Articles, I, VII, XI.

¹⁸⁵ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 39.

¹⁸⁶ HC 1806 LXII, pp. 270-71.

mathematics and the classics. The syllabus was designed to be followed for three years; and count for two years of sea-service out of the total of six required to sit the lieutenants' examination. One of the most significant changes brought by the new College establishment was the elimination of the attendance fee, a "great expense," which resulted in many parents "withdrawing their children before the plan of Education is ever finished."¹⁸⁷ Modeled on the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich, naval scholars, like military cadets, would now be paid an allowance of 2s 6d per day for the 330 days they attended the school. This amounted to £66 per year, from which nearly £54 would be allocated to pay for board, clothing, and housekeeping and provide the scholar with a small amount of pocket money. The balance of £12 would be used for the purchase of books, stationery, and instruments. The investment of public funds was safeguarded by a service guarantee; with a penalty of £200 visited on those who did not enter the navy upon completion of their studies.¹⁸⁸ The financial arrangements of the College did more than just relieve the burden on the families of prospective scholars. It also gave the Admiralty greater control of the students it selected and placed the navy on a more equal footing with the army when it came to training recruits. All scholars, regardless of their social or financial circumstances, were now beholden to the Admiralty board which effectively owned them for the duration of their studies and beyond. In this way, the Royal Naval College can be seen as yet another small victory in the Admiralty's quiet push for control of officer entry. Like the Order of 1794, the College establishment of 1806 made only a small dent in a captain's power of nomination and couched the changes in language that appealed to the best interests of the service.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 274.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 262-74.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 272.

From its inception the College proved to be a far greater success than the Academy. Between 1806 and 1832 only two years showed attendance at less than sixty students.¹⁹⁰ Much of its popularity stemmed from the rigorous academic standards set by Inman. In addition to naval subjects such as mathematics and geometry, Inman's emphasis on the gentlemanly arts of dancing, fencing, drawing, French, and Latin further impressed upon those graduates who entered the service as "College Volunteers" the importance of a strong naval education *and* fluency in the subjects that would qualify them as gentlemen. The *Naval Chronicle* of 1801 "advocate[d] strongly the literary elevation of prospective officers," and sang the praises of officer poets and writers like Captain Edward Thompson. The importance of education in subjects relevant to social proficiency as much as professional advancement was not lost on the editors of the *Chronicle* who suggested that the "current esteem in which the naval service was held was the result of officers being 'men of education and manners'."¹⁹¹

Unfortunately for students, and particularly for their parents, the opportunity to secure a College education at the public expense did not last long.¹⁹² Revisions made to the school's charter in January 1816 stipulated a fee of £72 per year for forty of the seventy scholars allowed by the peacetime establishment. The remaining thirty,¹⁹³ as the sons of sea officers, continued to receive a free education although they were contracted by a £200 bond to continue with a naval career after graduation, while boys who paid the fee required only a £100 bond.¹⁹⁴ In spite of the reforms, resistance to the idea of a College education

¹⁹⁰ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 51.

¹⁹¹ "Biography of Captain Edward Thompson," in *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 6 (1801), p. 437.

¹⁹² It is likely that the short lifespan of this program mirrored that of the Grenville ministry and reflected more liberal, Whig attitudes towards public education, R. L. Archer, *Secondary Education in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 147.

¹⁹³ Note the shift in the allocation of places and that naval sons were no longer in the majority by 1816.

¹⁹⁴ HC 1816 VI, p. 424. Also see "Return of the Number of Scholars Educated at the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth," HC 1821 XV, p. 277, which states that the fee was introduced in July 1816.

still flourished among sea officers. Admiral Sir Thomas Byam Martin summed up the more common complaints:

Keeping a boy at college until he is seventeen years old involves also a luxury of a visit home twice a year; thus a boy is too much pampered with the good things of the world to bear patiently with the rough fare of the cockpit, and perhaps too fine a gentleman to think the smell of a tar barrel fit for his lavendered nose.¹⁹⁵

Such prejudices would die hard and collegians continued to suffer from the stigma of a shore-based education.

Presentation

Along with higher standards of education many young gentlemen of the nineteenth-century, like their civilian counterparts, possessed a keen understanding of the precept that clothes made the man. By the turn of the century the influence of George “Beau” Brummel had been felt by all fashionable society, to the point that his example of “dress, manners, and physical carriage” had become the standard to which even the Prince of Wales aspired.¹⁹⁶ As the champion of sartorial reform, Brummell eschewed the Macaroni legacy of ruffles and lace for the “severest simplicity in dress”¹⁹⁷ defined by quality, cut, and fit. Simplicity became synonymous with gentility, and the masculine virtues of strength and self-assurance, to the extent that an early biographer of Brummell saw the state of his dress as complimenting “the manly, even dignified expression of his countenance . . .”¹⁹⁸ In 1803 one commentator noted the general change among society gentlemen: “The beaux indeed, are not altogether so effeminate as they appeared last winter . . .,” although he criticized the superficiality of the new “severity of look . . . which [young men of fashion]

¹⁹⁵ Hamilton, *Byam Martin*, Vol. 1, p. 24.

¹⁹⁶ Dewald, *European Nobility*, p. 54.

¹⁹⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1856 quoted in David Kutch, *The Three Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity* (Berkeley, 2002), p. 175.

¹⁹⁸ William Jesse, *The Life of George Brummell, Esq., commonly called Beau Brummell*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (London, 1844), p. 68.

assume in order to appear as men of spirit and consequence.”¹⁹⁹ Such a rebuke also spoke to the challenges of elite self-identification and the rising awareness of class within British society. David Kutch suggests that “it was competition for social distinction – fashion itself – that motivated the anti-fashion movement . . .”²⁰⁰ Elite understatement with an emphasis on “inconspicuous consumption” was, however, a short-lived means of class distinction for once “anti-fashion” became fashionable, the line of social demarcation blurred to an even greater extent.²⁰¹

Langford notes a growing emphasis on class identification and separation as a reaction to the increased mobility of the middling sorts during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Brummell himself hailed from humble origins and was not shy of flaunting them, often boasting of his father as a “very superior valet.”²⁰² The difficulty of determining, at a glance, a person’s social rank based on their attire further confused efforts to determine whether they should be treated as an inferior or a superior – a situation, Langford argues, that resulted in a more reserved approach to social situations: “Appraising each other accordingly became a complicated, nuanced task”²⁰³ and promoted avoidance as a means of *not* dealing with the problem of class and rank.

In the navy problems of social and service distinction were equally tricky. While it may have been easy to differentiate lower deck from quarterdeck, officers and aspirants posed a unique problem. Admiral Philip Patton’s lament, addressed in Chapter One, focused on problems of subordination and obedience that were the result of a “high degree

¹⁹⁹ John Corry, 1803 quoted in Kutch, *Three Piece Suit*, p. 175.

²⁰⁰ Kutch, *Three Piece Suit*, p. 174.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

²⁰² Brummell quoted in Dewald, *European Nobility*, p. 54; and in John Harvey, *Men in Black* (Chicago, 1995), p. 29. Billy Brummell began his career as a valet and through a close friendship with Richard Brinsley Sheridan, became Lord North’s private secretary. Kelly notes that “The Brummell family ascendancy through eighteenth century London had been fast and signal to the age,” Ian Kelly, *Beau Brummell: The Ultimate Man of Style* (New York, 2006), p. 23.

²⁰³ Langford, *Englishness*, p. 260.

of familiarity between the officers of different ranks under the pretence of the equality of gentlemen”²⁰⁴ As more young aspirants, who were also gentlemen by birth, appeared in the service of the new century the need to assert the superiority of naval rank over and above social status became more pressing and spurred efforts to further distinguish the commissioned ranks from the pre-commissioned ratings. As in the civilian world, the simplest means of achieving this distinction was through costume, or in this case, uniform.

During the Napoleonic Wars naval uniforms adjusted to some of the demands of Brummell-inspired fashion, becoming slimmer fitting with cut-away fronts and shorter, squared-off tails.²⁰⁵ Contrary to the dictates of less-is-more, they also became more elaborate, using lace as a means of achieving greater separation between officers and aspirants. The regulations of 1812 awarded an epaulette to lieutenants (to be worn on the left shoulder), two to commanders, and captains of less than three years seniority were given epaulettes distinguished by silver anchors.²⁰⁶ Senior captains displayed a silver crown above the anchor and the Admiral of the Fleet now wore a distinctive fifth row of gold lace on his cuffs.²⁰⁷ The result was a clearer separation between the ranks of commissioned officers and a more polished image for the navy ashore. Competition with military finery was emphasized, particularly for lieutenants. Their social standing as officers and gentlemen was now cemented by bullion which, according to one contemporary poet, mitigated the most pressing social concerns:

*No longer at the splendid ball,
Or party, or assembly, shall
The haughty fair-one scorn you;
For now, as well a soldier fine*

²⁰⁴ Admiral Philip Patton, “Strictures” in Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 622-23.

²⁰⁵ Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 45.

²⁰⁶ Previously commanders wore an epaulette on their left shoulder, captains of less than three years seniority on their right. Lieutenants wore no epaulettes at all.

²⁰⁷ “New Naval Uniform,” in *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 27 (1812), pp. 308-09.

*Or militia or the line,
Shall golden ‘swab’ adorn you . . .*²⁰⁸

The intention behind the new uniform was made clear by the fact that midshipmen received no embellishments. Their single-breasted coat with white collar patches, “nine buttons down the front, three on each cuff and pocket and three on the folds of the skirt” remained essentially unchanged until 1891.²⁰⁹ If the rising social quality of recruits was compounded by confusion over the proper ordering of social rank and service rank, then the simplest way of expressing the supremacy of the naval hierarchy was by keeping well-born midshipmen in a uniform that was devoid of distinction.

Not all young gentlemen (or ships’ captains) shared the Admiralty’s ambivalence towards matters of their elegance. As a midshipman in 1813, Boteler equated a fashionable presentation with professionalism and shipboard pride. While aboard the frigate *Orontes* he noted: “we were considered a crack ship, and the midshipmen dressed in cocked hats, tight white pantaloons and Hessian boots, with gilt twist edging and a bullion tassel!”²¹⁰ In the past only sartorial martinets, like Captain Prince William Henry, had demanded such presentation from the boys under their command. In 1788, a thirteen-year old Byam Martin was subjected to the Prince’s “imagination” when it came to uniform:

conceive a midshipman with white breeches so tight as to appear to be sewn upon the limb – yellow-topped hunting boots pulled close up and strapped with a buckle round the knee . . . a pigtail of huge dimensions dangling beneath an immense square gold lace cocked hat . . . Add to this a sword about two-thirds the length of the little body that wore it.²¹¹

Martin recalled the “pride and pomp” with which he wore the ensemble – until such time as he was forced to go aloft and perform duties that “could never have been accomplished

²⁰⁸ Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 54.

²⁰⁹ Jarrett, *British Naval Dress*, p. 74; Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, Color Plate 47. The only update for midshipmen was in the design of the buttons which now featured an anchor topped by a crown.

²¹⁰ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 43.

²¹¹ Hamilton, *Byam Martin*, Vol. 1, pp. 119-20.

but for the fortunate bursting of the breeches in divers places . . . which admitted more of the sharp north-west wind than was agreeable . . .”²¹²

Practicality was, for the majority of captains, the principal concern when it came to dressing young gentlemen. In 1790 Captain Drury of the *Squirrel*, excused his midshipman and mates from wearing the proper uniform on the quarterdeck “in consequence of their particular duties,” allowing them, but no one else, to “appear in uniform jacket and trowsers.”²¹³ In 1805 Captain Edward Codrington criticized “the putting of youngsters into perfect uniform with large cocked hats,” a folly he considered “improper and ridiculous.”²¹⁴ Even so, the financial pressures exerted by the demand for better presentation among young gentlemen continued to rise. In February 1806 an Order in Council increased the wages of 1st class volunteers and 2nd and 3rd class boys to £9, £8, and £7 per annum respectively in response to the Admiralty’s suggestions that their wages were “insufficient for the purpose of providing them with cloaths and such Necessaries as are absolutely necessary for their use.”²¹⁵ Later in the year midshipmen’s wages were also increased: to £2 15s 6d per month for those in 1st rates down to £2 6d for those in 6th rates and sloops.²¹⁶ Despite the raise, Boteler noted the hardships imposed on one young midshipman who lived on “nothing but his pay,” but who still managed to keep up appearances: “he was the neatest dressed midshipman in the ship, his ‘weekly account’ kept so white with pipe-clay.”²¹⁷ Throughout his early career Charles Shaw’s letters home were peppered with requests for money to address his sartorial shortcomings as, he argued,

²¹² Ibid., pp. 120-21.

²¹³ Cullen’s Journal in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, p. 57.

²¹⁴ Codrington to Charles George Perceval, 2nd Baron Arden, 1805 quoted in Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 44

²¹⁵ HC 1806 LXII, pp. 261-62.

²¹⁶ HC 1806 LXIV, pp. 620-24. A comparative table of wages and number of midshipmen and boys is included in Appendix E.

²¹⁷ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 26.

“I cannot appear as an officer.” To make his point, Charles let his parents know that he had been reprimanded for not having a cocked hat.²¹⁸

In 1807 Watkins proposed an inventory for outfitting volunteers which totaled more than £40. From the marginal notes written by the owner of an early copy of *The Young Naval Hero* it appeared, however, that Watkins’s estimates were short by about half.²¹⁹ Beyond the initial kitting out, standards of dress in the cockpit sometimes devolved into states of unkempt disaster. In 1809 Chamier was shocked to see the “slovenly attire of the midshipmen, dressed in shabby round jackets, glazed hats, no gloves, and some without shoes . . .”²²⁰ The lack of uniformity in the observance of young gentlemen’s attire suggested that standards of presentation were a direct reflection of the captain and his interest, or otherwise, in formality and the need for greater separation between the ranks and ratings.

By the start of the following decade there was, however, a noticeable crack down on the strict observance of correct attire for junior officers. As a passed midshipman eager to collect his new commission, Boteler was sent home from the Admiralty for “appearing in full dress except the breeches, having on white jean trousers instead, with silk stockings and buckled shoes.” He returned a week later, after his tailor had completed a new pair of breeches.²²¹ In spite of the fact that by 1812 breeches were no longer the height of civilian fashion, they remained part of the official navy uniform until 1825.

During the later years of the Napoleonic Wars more subtle distinctions also emerged regarding civilian fashion and its influence on naval uniforms – distinctions

²¹⁸ NMM, MSS/77/087, “Letters from Cmdr. Charles Shaw,” ff. 93, 92, 36, 83, 115, 112. Shaw went to sea as a volunteer in 1806.

²¹⁹ The anonymous marginal notes are taken from the New York Public Library’s copy of *The Young Naval Hero* and suggest that the author was off in his cost estimates by about £30 to £40. See Watkins, *Young Naval Hero*, p. 15.

²²⁰ Chamier, *Life*, p. 10.

²²¹ Boteler, *Recollections*, pp. 55-56.

which addressed social concerns stirred up during the last decades of the eighteenth century over issues of morality, manners, and social rank. These matters came to a head in 1814 when Admiral Prince William, the Duke of Clarence, attempted to replace breeches with white pantaloons, and buckled shoes with hessian boots. Melville's Admiralty strenuously opposed the measure, giving direction to one captain to "not permit anything of the sort without a regular order from this board."²²² Although the changes would have updated naval uniform to the height of fashion, the political implications and the association of high style "with the wrong type of élite society: both dandies and the high-living coterie of the Prince of Wales," was considered unsuitable for image of a sea officer.²²³ As a result uniforms continued to lag behind civilian styles. The Admiralty's own brand of "anti-fashion" also reinforced the image of the service as a respectable, hierarchical, old-order (and old-fashioned) institution.

b. *Professionalism versus patronage*

The increasing pressure on young aspirants to convey the appearance of a gentleman, which qualified them both personally and professionally as officer material, was offset by the increasing need to also possess high-ranking social or naval connections. When it came to entry-level recruits the battle between the forces of traditional naval patronage, which represented the interests of officers and seamen, and centralized Admiralty patronage, which represented the interest of the socially and politically connected, escalated.

Until the late 1830s there was no entrance examination for recruits, and no means of assessing a boy's aptitude for a life at sea, yet old-school officers who valued indicators

²²² From the papers of Sir Thomas Foley quoted in Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 60.

²²³ Ibid. It did not help that the Prince of Wales was unabashedly Whig in his politics while Melville's Admiralty was a bastion of Toryism.

such as motivation, industry, and attentiveness to authority remained skeptical of officer hopefuls whose connections vastly outweighed their natural propensities and, in many cases, their enthusiasm for the profession. Of one young gentleman Collingwood complained to his sister:

Mrs Currel's son never can be a sailor: he has something very odd in his manner, or rather he has no manner at all, but saunters a melancholic for a week together, unnoticed and unnoticed, except when I give him a little rally to make his blood circulate . . . It is a pity [his mother] had not put him apprentice to Jno. Wilson, the apothecary . . . His gravity would have established his reputation as a learned doctor, and if he did poison an old woman now and then, better to do that than drown an entire ship's company at a dash by running on the rocks.²²⁴

Without the right spirit for a naval career, a boy's gentility and the virtues of his social rank mattered little to commanders like Collingwood. James Gardner recounted an instance of a fellow midshipman so terrified by the prospect of engagement that he "ran from his quarters and positively hid in the coppers! and had put on the drummer's jacket" as a means of disguise. The offending young gentleman "got well flogged" by the boatswain for his cowardice.²²⁵ The initiative exhibited by fifteen year-old Frederick Gilly of the *Gibraltar* in 1811 indicated a demeanor far more suitable to an officer. Determined to demonstrate his courage by participating in a potentially dangerous mission ashore, Frederick stowed away in one of the ship's boats after a senior officer refused to include him in the landing party. Frederick revealed himself only after it was too late to return to the ship and fought bravely in the ensuing action amidst heavy musket fire.²²⁶ As a "young mid" John Parker was put in charge of a small prize crew and soon found himself being run down by a much larger and better-manned French privateer. Realizing there was no hope of escape Parker initiated a ruse by which "all the stray caps and hats" were placed on

²²⁴ Lord Collingwood to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Stead, April 18, 1809 in Hughes, *Correspondence*, p. 274.

²²⁵ Gardner, *Recollections*, p. 42.

²²⁶ JOD/148.

handspikes just above the bulwarks “so as to make it supposed that she was well manned.” Parker then “hauled up directly to face his adversary,” an aggressive move that caused the Frenchman to turn tail and run with Parker in pursuit.²²⁷ The behavior of Gilly and Parker exemplified the kind of courageous and imaginative conduct expected of budding officers.²²⁸ A vigorous, oftentimes blind pursuit of distinction, regardless of the risks, became more necessary for young gentlemen who desired to rise in their profession, particularly if little interest could be called upon to boost their careers. While it would be unfair and inaccurate to generalize that aristocratic young gentlemen exhibited less of the “right stuff,” resting instead on the laurels of influence, it is safe to argue that for those without interest opportunities were diminishing.²²⁹

Some senior officers held firm to a belief that the navy needed to be purged of incompetents who advanced at an early age without the requisite leadership qualities or skills. In 1805 Collingwood declared of Mr. Haultaine, who was made a lieutenant in 1806, that: “he is 18 years old and as dull a lad as I ever saw . . . and now Capt. Lechmere tells me he is so entirely useless that he is afraid he must try him by a court martial to get rid of him.” The only option, according to the Admiral, was to clean house: “If the safety of the country is to depend on the navy it must be reformed and weeded, for a great deal of bad stuff has got into it and hangs dead weight where all should be activity.”²³⁰ Captain Lord Cochrane saw the potential for trouble when immature, privileged young men were placed in positions of authority aboard ship: “influence had enabled the first families in the

²²⁷ This event likely took place between 1805 and 1807 when Parker was approximately fifteen or sixteen years old. Boteler, *Recollections*, pp. 211-12 (Author’s italics); also see O’Byrne, *Naval Biographical Dictionary*, p. 858.

²²⁸ Frederick Gilly became a lieutenant in 1823 after passing his exam in 1815, while John Parker was made post in 1838. Neither appear to have had any notable social or naval connections. See Marioné, *Complete Navy List*; O’Byrne, *Naval Biographical Dictionary*, p. 858.

²²⁹ Wareham, *Star Captains*, pp. 202-19.

²³⁰ Collingwood to his sister, May 15, 1805 in Hughes, *Collingwood Private Correspondence*, p. 185.

kingdom to force their children into the service, when too young to understand the nature of the authority entrusted to them.” According to Cochrane the “Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty” needed be informed of the general opinion among seamen that they “ought to be commanded by persons of experience, and not by young men appointed by Parliamentary or any other influence.”²³¹

Such comments spoke to the increasing pressure exerted by the Admiralty, and the political machinery that operated it, on recruitment decisions. In the early years of the war Earl Spencer, as First Lord, seized the opportunity to indulge prejudices that favored his relatives and friends. As Moira Bracknall points out, “It was inevitable that Spencer, as a Whig peer, should promote officers from noble and political families.”²³² Edward Fellowes, a protégé and close relation of Lady Spencer, “rose from midshipman to captain in twenty months,” and Lord Carnarvon’s son, Midshipman Lord Charles Herbert was made lieutenant at eighteen and post captain at twenty.²³³

Under St. Vincent, the public face of Admiralty patronage appeared to turn the tables on the superiority of aristocratic and political influence. St. Vincent flaunted his disdain for traditional forms of patronage famously passing over young gentlemen “from the first families in the kingdom” who were “silently relying on the efforts of [their] own aristocratic connexions.” Instead he preferred to be seen as a champion of deservedness, promoting one young midshipman who was “a friendless, retiring, but well-conducted son, of an old and poor but well-conducted lieutenant.”²³⁴ Such “democratic” ideals, however,

²³¹ Cochrane, *Autobiography*, pp. 252-53. It should be noted that Cochrane is a somewhat unreliable witness in matters of Parliamentary influence considering the amount of political leverage that was exercised on his own behalf.

²³² Bracknall, *Lord Spencer*, p. 251. Yet despite these instances of patronage that benefitted fellow peers, Bracknall suggests that Spencer did not abuse the privilege, at least not when it came to positioning young notables as 1st class volunteers.

²³³ Rodger, *Command*, pp. 515-16.

²³⁴ Tucker, *St. Vincent*, Vol. 1, p. 100.

proved untenable particularly in the face of political and familial pressures. Though he bragged of the impartiality shown towards his own nephew who, despite “uncommon merit and acquirements, stands as he did before I came to office,”²³⁵ St. Vincent eventually promoted the boy, ensuring him a post captaincy at age nineteen.²³⁶ During his tenure as First Lord, St. Vincent demonstrated much partisan handling of appointments across the spectrum of naval command, from midshipmen to post captains.

The extent to which the relative importance of political and social networks altered patronage and the process of recruitment can be seen in the data for quarterdeck boys and junior officers from 1801 and 1811.

3. Volunteers: boys at war, 1801-1811

a. *The isolated data: social challenges to the supremacy of naval connections*

Of the 288 1st class volunteers, and 2nd and 3rd class boys surveyed in 1801 only 35 (12 percent) turned up traceable social backgrounds to one or more of the socio-professional categories examined here. This represents a significant drop in the number of traceable backgrounds from 1781 and 1791 when 23 percent and 17 percent respectively could be traced by family connections. The data for 1811 shows a slight improvement with 41 (17 percent) of the 245 quarterdeck boys sampled revealing socio-professional backgrounds. Overall, the data for quarterdeck boys during the war years provides only a small pool from which to draw conclusions and therefore limits certainty.

What is significant in both sets of data, however, is the high number of candidates whose careers could be traced, but whose parentage or family connections were not known. In 1801 thirty-two quarterdeck boys (11 percent of the *total* sample) turned up

²³⁵ St. Vincent to Mrs. Montagu, April 6, 1801 quoted in Brenton, *St. Vincent*, Vol. 2, p. 62

²³⁶ Rodger, *Command*, p. 517.

career details but no information on their social origins – almost the same proportion again as were fully traceable. In 1811 another twenty-two boys (9 percent of the *total* sample) presented the same circumstances. These figures, combined with the high number of candidates who were untraceable at all, suggests that during the French Wars of the early-nineteenth century, the presence of recruits hailing from middle and working class origins remained high. It should be noted that the inclusion of 2nd and 3rd class boys in the survey (where there were insufficient 1st class volunteers to make up the sample) makes it possible that a good portion of the candidates were not intended for commissioned rank and therefore were not young gentlemen – although, as it will be shown, the classifications of “boy” were not always reliable indicators of professional ambition. The arbitrary use of the 1794 classifications by captains makes it difficult, if not impossible, to know which of the boys were seamen-in-training and which were officers-in-training. For this reason all have been included, although the possibility that the data is skewed because of it must be considered in the overall analysis.

The 1801 data shows that 37 of the 288 recruits (13 percent) moved between the ratings of 1st class volunteer and 2nd and/or 3rd class boy.²³⁷ In 1811, 50 of 245 recruits (20 percent) transferred, with eleven of these moving directly from 3rd class boy to 1st class volunteer. While the Order of 1794 sought to socially stratify the entry ratings there are numerous examples of boys who were clearly “mis-rated” by the standards of the new regulations, both in terms of their social rank and professional potential. In 1801 a total of fifteen recruits who were either connected to the landed gentry or the navy (or both) were rated as boys of the 2nd or 3rd class. Fourteen-year old Jonathan Hamilton was the son of Walter Hamilton of Glenfur and Grizell, while his mother was heiress to the estate of

²³⁷ Appendix K, “Quarterdeck Boys: Change of Status, 1801-1831.”

Westport in Linlithgow. Undoubtedly a gentleman by birth who aspired to commissioned rank, Jonathan nevertheless entered the sloop *Echo* in 1801 as a 2nd class boy.²³⁸ Richard Plummer Davies, who was mustered as a 2nd class boy aboard the *Leviathan* in 1801, was the son of Rowland Hamilton Davies, a descendant of the Dean of Cork. Judging by the speed with which his career progressed, Richard had entered the service with the singular ambition of reaching commissioned rank. He passed the exam in 1805 at the age of seventeen, received his commission in December of that year, was made a commander in 1809, and a post captain in 1812.²³⁹ Both William Salter and James Clarke were the relatives of commissioned officers and served aboard the same ships as their older relations. There is little doubt that both wished to follow in the footsteps of their mentors yet both entered their respective ships in the rating of 3rd class boy.²⁴⁰

In 1811 the same patterns were visible, with sixteen of the fifty boys who transitioned between the entry-level ratings claiming naval, gentry, and/or peerage connections. Thirteen-year old Robert Gordon, the third son of David Gordon of Abergeldie, and a direct descendant of the Earl of Huntly, began his career as a 2nd class boy and ended it as an admiral.²⁴¹ Drury Wake was the great grandson of Sir William Wake, Bart., but joined the *Antelope* as a 2nd class boy.²⁴² Jonathan Copinger was the son of a gentleman of Cork and claimed a brother in the service, although he joined the *Defiance* as a 3rd class boy.²⁴³

The appearance of socially and professionally-connected candidates in the lesser ratings of 2nd and 3rd class boy suggests that there were many more officer aspirants than

²³⁸ See Appendix F5, “Quarterdeck Boys 1801,” Q01-SL-11.

²³⁹ See Appendix F5, Q01-3-59.

²⁴⁰ See Appendix F5, Q01-4-12, Q01-4-42.

²⁴¹ See Appendix F6, “Quarterdeck Boys 1811,” Q11-5-66.

²⁴² See Appendix F6, Q11-4-10.

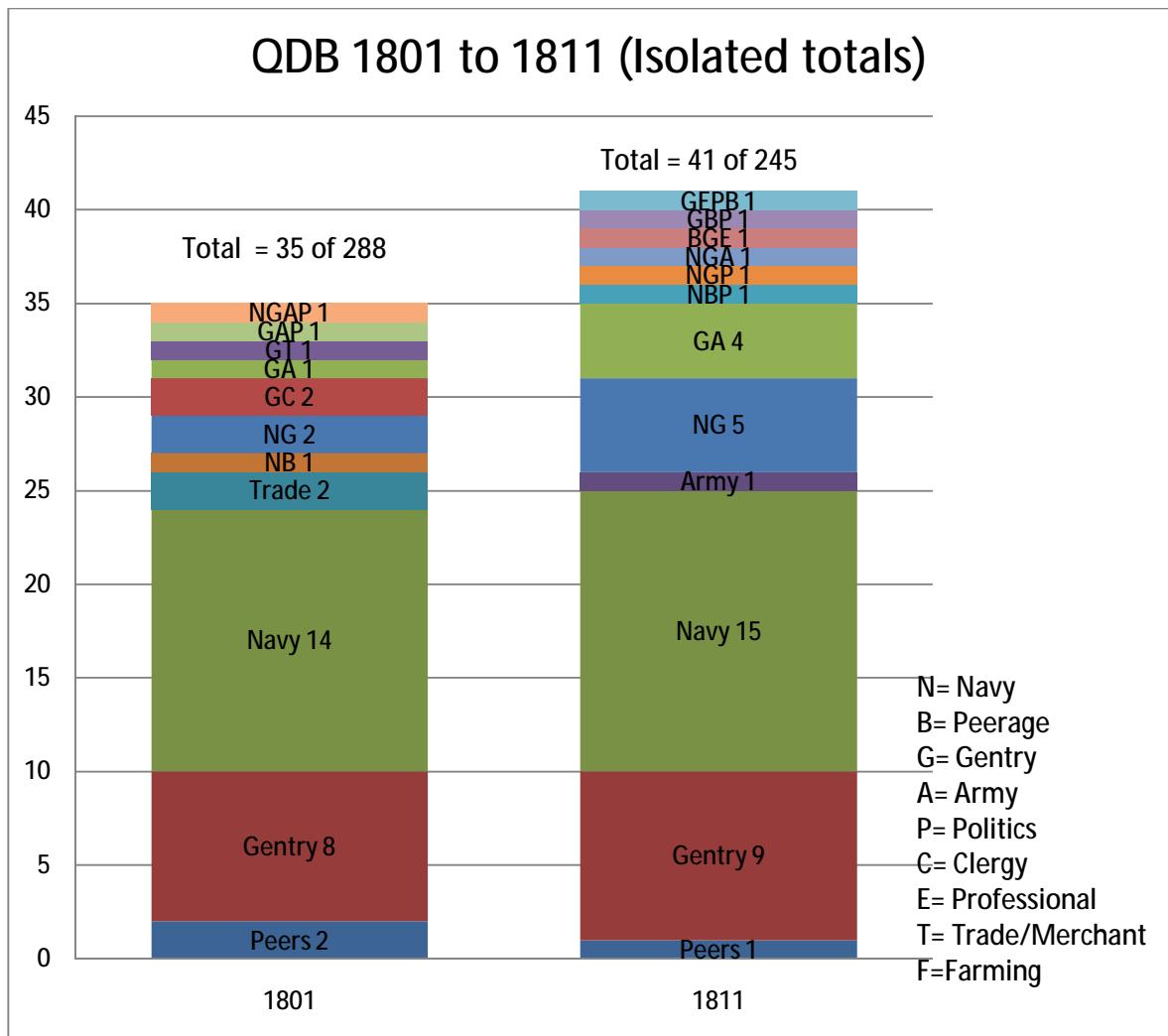
²⁴³ See Appendix F6, Q11-3-21.

there were 1st class volunteer openings. By 1811 the lack of movement in the lower commissioned ranks was raising serious concerns at the Admiralty. As Michael Lewis notes: “There were not . . . nearly enough Lieutenants’ posts to go round, since no one had attempted to regulate the number of aspirants for them: and they could by no means keep pace with the push of Midshipmen and Master’s Mates awaiting their turn.”²⁴⁴ The clog at the top of the young gentleman’s promotional ladder trickled down to further limit openings in the entry-level ratings as fewer quarterdeck boys were able to move up and make way for new recruits.

It would be expected that the shortage of entry-level positions should translate into the appearance of a greater number of socially and politically connected recruits – those who were able to leverage greater interest in securing a position. The data, however, suggests that only some of these expectations actually materialized in the recruiting decisions of captains. Most noticeable among them was the strong showing of gentry influence in both 1801 and 1811.

²⁴⁴ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 197.

Figure 8.2 Quarterdeck Boys, 1801 and 1811 (Isolated Totals)



In the isolated data, roughly half of the traceable candidates from 1801 and 1811 revealed gentry connections, alone and combined with other influences. Conversely, the influence of the peerage was low – no more than 9 percent of the traceable sample in either year. The data also suggests that the social networks influencing naval recruitment became less complex. Only eleven categories or combinations of categories appeared in 1801, as opposed to seventeen in 1781. The high proportion of traceable candidates, 63 percent in 1801 and 60 percent in 1811, who claimed *only* naval or *only* gentry connections may help explain these results. It is possible that the change was indicative of more socially-

exclusive attitudes among recruiting captains towards the desirability of gentle-born boys being groomed for command. It must be remembered however that in 1801, 88 percent of the sample remained untraceable, as did 83 percent in 1811. As in previous years, this suggests that the majority of boys sampled did not possess obvious social or professional connections and/or were not aspiring officers.

Of the thirty-nine boys whose service careers could be traced in 1801, and who reached commissioned rank, nearly half began their careers as 2nd or 3rd class boys.²⁴⁵ To further complicate matters, the sample from 1801 shows that one “prest” boy, William Wrangham of the sloop *Snake*, and one boy from the Marine Society, Edward Miller of the *Ville de Paris*, were listed as 1st class volunteers, despite the fact that they were certainly not the sons of gentlemen who had entered the service with pretensions to command.²⁴⁶ Miller had obviously shown an aptitude for seamanship and impressed his captain sufficiently to earn a “promotion” from 3rd class boy to 1st class volunteer. Less is known about Wrangham, although he appears to have *begun* his career under Captain William Roberts as a young gentleman. These isolated cases clearly represent the idiosyncratic choices of individual captains and highlight the continued autonomy of captains to do as they pleased when it came to appointments.

From the 1811 sample, thirty-seven quarterdeck boys revealed career paths that reached commissioned rank and of these roughly one third began their careers as 2nd or 3rd class boys.²⁴⁷ There were however, no glaring anomalies in the ratings sampled; no pressed boys were rated 1st class volunteers, and Marine Society recruits appeared only in the rating of 3rd class boy. In fact the musters show that of the thirty-two ships sampled only

²⁴⁵ Appendix F5, “Quarterdeck Boys 1801: High Rank.”

²⁴⁶ Appendix F5, Quarterdeck Boys 1801,” Q01-SL-30, Q01-1-53.

²⁴⁷ Appendix F6, “Quarterdeck Boys 1811: High Rank.”

thirteen boys total, from three ships, were listed as Marine Society entrants.²⁴⁸ While it is possible that other Marine Society boys were present but not recorded as such in the musters,²⁴⁹ the available data suggests that by 1811 the contribution of the society was not as great as it had been in earlier years when Boscawen is said to have remarked that: “no scheme for manning the navy . . . has ever had the success as the Marine Society’s.”²⁵⁰ Despite estimates which suggest that more than 10,000 men and boys²⁵¹ were sent to sea by the Society during the Seven Years’ War alone, the low numbers for 1801 and 1811 tend to support Roland Pietsch’s assertion that “in terms of sheer numbers of recruits the impact of the Marine Society has been overestimated . . .”²⁵² The clearer separation of the entry-level ratings in 1811 indicates that, as the Napoleonic Wars progressed, the Admiralty’s instructions outlined by the Order of 1794, were more diligently observed. Whether this was the result of increasing pressure from the Lords Commissioners which forced captains to toe the line, or the result of greater competition for fewer places, or a combination of both, is unclear. It is possible, however, to assess the influence of competition as a variable factor using the proportional data.

b. *The proportional data: the rise of the gentry*

The great change that took place in the relative importance of the various socio-professional networks in 1801 was the sharp rise in the presence of boys with connections to the landed gentry and the synchronous decline in naval interest.

²⁴⁸ Appendix F6, “Quarterdeck Boys 1811.”

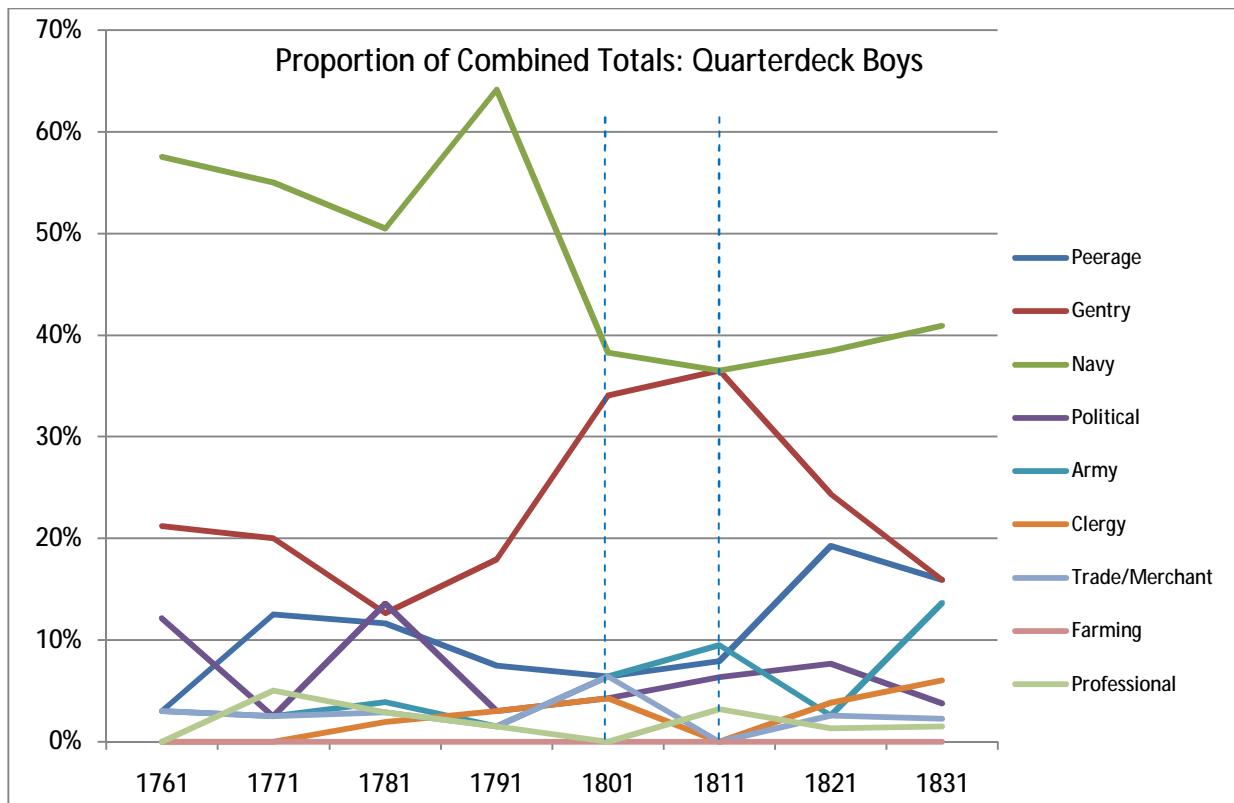
²⁴⁹ Many boys appear with the designation of “Former Books” meaning that their details have been carried over from previous musters. If the musters that recorded the first entry of these boys were to be traced, more information might become available. See Appendix F6.

²⁵⁰ The quote is generally attributed to Admiral Boscawen. The Marine Society, *The Bye-Laws and Regulations of the Marine Society* (London, 1792), p. 5.

²⁵¹ Taylor, *Jonas Hanway*, pp. 67-102.

²⁵² Pietsch suggests that the 10,000 estimate may relate to the total number the Society clothed, many of whom were not its own recruits, see Roland Pietsch, “Urchins for the Sea,” in *Journal of Maritime History, online journal* (December, 2000): p. 1.

Figure 8.3 Proportion of Combined Totals, Quarterdeck Boys, 1801 to 1811



As the appearance of naval connections dropped almost by half, falling from 64 percent to 38 percent, gentry influence almost doubled, rising from 18 percent to 34 percent of the combined traceable total. Such a significant change in the balance between these two influences provides the best statistical evidence of a general shift in the decision-making processes of captains and admirals – a shift which saw the sons and relatives of the gentry favored in the recruiting process to the detriment of naval sons and relatives.²⁵³ The opposite but equal trends suggest that the importance of naval connections declined, at least to some degree, as a result of the increase in gentry presence. Until 1801 naval influence had maintained a clear superiority over all other social and professional

²⁵³ It is also possible that the fall-off in naval connections was symptomatic of the crisis in naval promotion during the later years of the war which may have prompted captains to discourage their friends and relatives from entering the service. Conversely, the gentry may have been dazzled by the navy's prestige, but less alert to the collapsing state of promotion.

influences in matters of entry-level appointments. Samples from the previous four decades show that naval interest never fell below 50 percent of the combined traceable total. In 1801, however, it amounted to less than 40 percent, a trend that continued downward in the 1811 sample. The inverse relationship between naval and gentry influence may also be symptomatic of a reduction in the amount of freedom recruiting captains exercised in the appointment process as they bowed to greater pressure from internal Admiralty regulations and external social and/or political interest. It is also possible that the virtual equality of naval and gentry influence in the combined data reflects greater numbers of recruits with naval *and* gentry influence, the product of more sea officers also being gentlemen by birth. Any of these explanations would seem to justify the resentment voiced by St. Vincent, Nelson, Collingwood, Patton and other naval luminaries for the influx of high-born, well-connected aspirants on naval quarterdecks.

It is, however, more difficult to justify the specific complaints of the admirals which directly addressed the influx of young “honorable” or boys with peerage connections. The proportional data suggests that peerage influence remained virtually unchanged between 1791 and 1811 fluctuating between 6 and 9 percent of the combined traceable total. There was certainly no increase in either their real numbers or their proportional representations that would justify St. Vincent’s petition to the king, or comments regarding the “vast overflow of young nobility in the service,”²⁵⁴ at least within the *official* entry-level ratings.

Also apparent in the 1801 data is the increasing importance of army connections. The rise in army influence may be seen as complementary to the rise in gentry influence as

²⁵⁴ As discussed in the Introduction, St. Vincent’s opinions were often characterized by overstatement. It can be argued, however, that the body of complaints by senior officers regarding a perceptible rise in the social quality of officer candidates provides some justification for St. Vincent’s remarks.

“the most gentlemanly occupation of all was . . . fighting, particularly on land.”²⁵⁵ By the start of the new century army commissions were becoming more expensive as a scarcity of openings pushed the purchase prices higher.²⁵⁶ This meant that young gentlemen with high-ranking army connections were almost certainly young men of fortune and family. The biographical data shows that all of the candidates who claimed an army connection were the sons or relatives of high-ranking officers, and therefore gentlemen, a factor that further demonstrated the socio-professional connection between the gentry and the army.²⁵⁷ In terms of the social implications for the navy, these parallel trends reinforced the most time-honored attitudes towards the equivalency of social rank and service rank and the old-order belief in the natural leadership qualities of gentlemen.

At the same time the emergence of class – and the influence of wealth – was also visible in the data with the increase in the appearance of trade/merchant connections. While the numbers involved in this sample are too small to sustain definitive conclusions about a real increase in the relative importance of trade/merchant influence, the fluctuations that occurred within the scope of the data between 1791 and 1811 suggest a variety of possibilities. The assessment that trade/merchant connections were four times more prevalent in 1801 than in 1791 might reflect the social effects of the accumulation of wealth through commerce. The combination of wealth, education, lifestyle, and manners

²⁵⁵ Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 8. This was true of the horse and foot branches of the Army but less so of the Ordnance Corps of artillery and engineers which were more middle-class technical branches, not unlike the navy, see Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 427. Also see Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, p. 95; and P. E. Razzell, “Social Origins of Officers in the Indian Army,” in *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 14, no. 3 (Sept., 1963): pp. 252-54; and Wood, *The Limits of Social Mobility*, personal notes.

²⁵⁶ The standard for purchasing commissions had been set early in the eighteenth century and suggested that cornets or ensigns (the lowest ranks available for purchase) could buy a commission for £450. Lieutenant-colonelcies cost £4500. By the turn of the century the cost of an ensign’s position had nearly doubled due to heightened demand. Anthony Bruce quoted in Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 119; “The Purchase System,” in *Columbian Cyclopedias* (1897), no page ref.

²⁵⁷ Appendix F5, Henry Forbes (Q01-5-14) was a younger son of General Gordon Forbes of Hamm Common, Surrey; John Powney (Q01-5-17) was the younger son of Lt. Col. Pennyston Portlock Powney, who was also an MP for New Windsor; and Benjamin Roberts (Q01-4-35) was the son of an army officer who also possessed strong naval connections.

were signifiers of a new “class” of gentility, one which was open to a select group of successful businessmen and merchants. One reader of the *Gentleman’s Magazine* took exception to the suggestion that trade tainted the social quality of any man, regardless of his birth. A letter to the editor made his position clear: “the business of the merchant, the manufacturer, or the banker . . . [is] certainly no abatement of Gentility.”²⁵⁸ The fact that the original title of the publication was *The Gentleman’s Magazine or Trader’s Monthly Intelligencer*²⁵⁹ suggests that it was intended as “an instrument in the identification and education of a new class of gentlemen in Britain;”²⁶⁰ one which also included those who *wished* to be taken for gentlemen.

Despite such observations it is clear that the upward trend did not continue for trade/merchant connections in 1811 as it did for army influence. Whether the data reflects a real drop in the presence of trade connections and/or a shift in perceptions, which made sea officers less willing to acknowledge their commercial associations in official surveys or other sources used here, is uncertain. What is clear, however, is that army connections continued to increase, almost doubling between 1801 and 1811, a factor that suggests a continuing solidarity between the military and naval services during a time of intense warfare.²⁶¹ The alignment may also reflect the rising social cachet of a naval career, which made it more appealing to the gentle-born, and a more respectable option for army-officer fathers who could encourage their sons to pursue the navy without any threat of social disgrace.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ John Nichols, “Letter to the Editor,” in *The Gentleman’s Magazine* (January - June, 1826), p. 128.

²⁵⁹ *The Gentleman’s Magazine or Trader’s Monthly Intelligencer* began publication in 1731.

²⁶⁰ Larkin, *Paine*, p. 30.

²⁶¹ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, p. 289.

²⁶² It must have helped too that the navy required a much smaller financial outlay.

Outside the navy and army the professions, including the clergy, made negligible showings in 1801 and 1811, despite the rising prestige of professionals and their assumed, if not actual, proximity to the gentry classes.²⁶³ Again, a problem arises with the small amount of available data which limits a more detailed assessment. Overall, the dramatic proportional increase in the presence of boys with connections to the landed gentry, and its apparently deleterious effects on naval influence, is the single most significant change to take place within the scope of this study.

4. Junior officers, 1801-1811

a. *Discussion of the data: a more transparent sample*

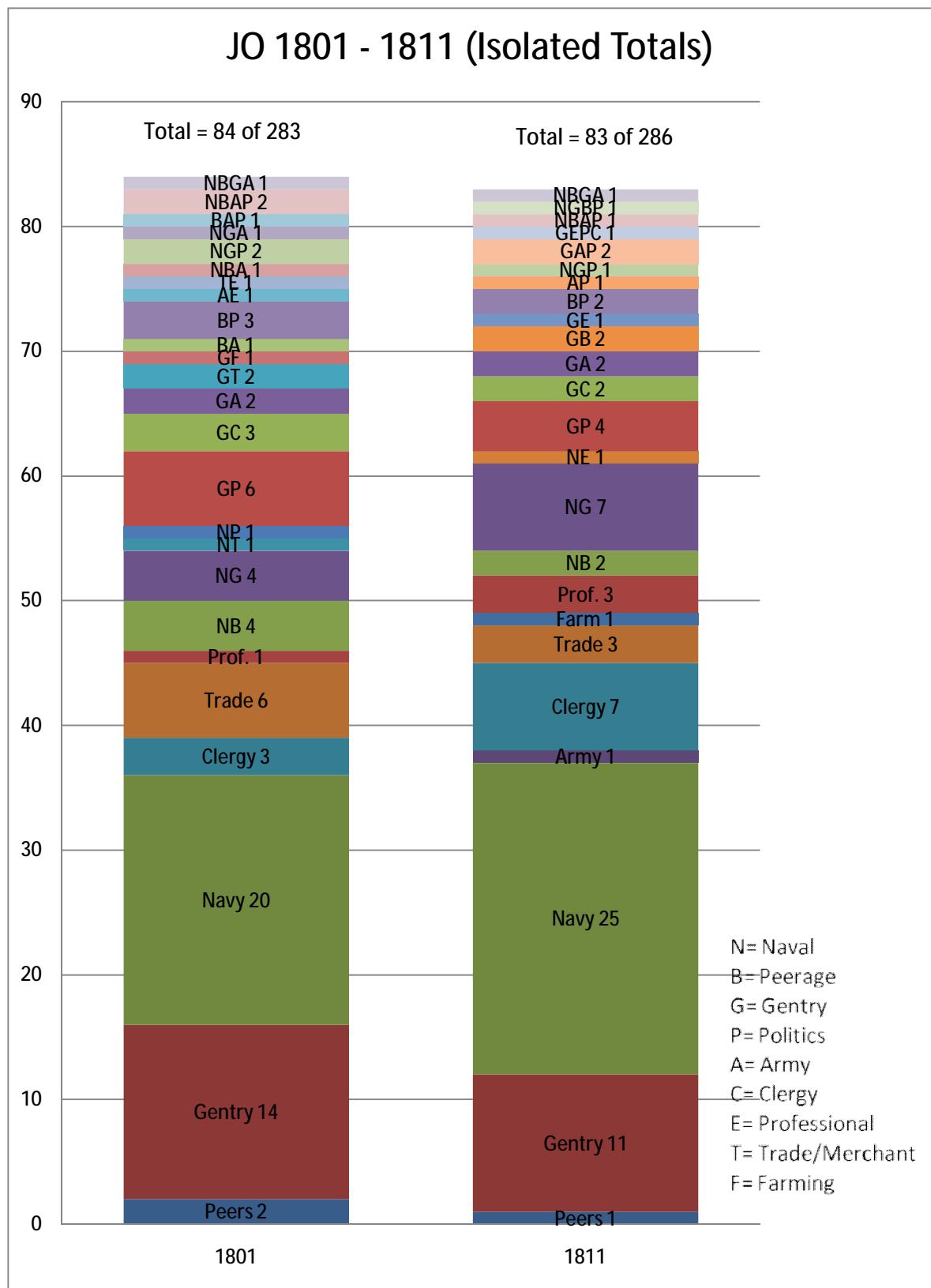
The traceability of junior officers from 1801 and 1811 showed marked improvement over the quarterdeck boys' sample for the same years. In 1801 a total of 84 out of 283 midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants (30 percent) could be traced in terms of their social background. Another fifty-five junior officers turned up career information but yielded no details of family connections. Overall, 50 percent of the sample could be traced to some extent.

The data for 1811 provided remarkably similar results with 83 of the 286 junior officers sampled (29 percent) showing traceable backgrounds. An additional 89 candidates turned up career histories, but without family backgrounds. Altogether, 60 percent of the total sample was at least partially visible. Along with the data available for junior officers in 1791, this provides the largest proportion of traceable candidates in the sample so far.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Stone, *Open Elite?*, pp. 402-03; Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, p. 74

²⁶⁴ See Appendix H, "Collated Data and Charts, 1761 – 1831: Summary," or p. 47 for a comparative table.

Figure 8.4 Junior Officers, 1801 and 1811 (Isolated Totals)



The isolated data for traceable candidates, who make up roughly a third of the sample in both years, shows a wide diversity of socio-professional networks, with twenty-five categories appearing in 1801, and twenty-four appearing in 1811. In 1801 out of the 84 traceables roughly half showed more than one socio-professional connection. While there may have been fewer variations among the social networks operating in these years than in 1791,²⁶⁵ a higher proportion of the candidates for 1801 and 1811 belonged to categories showing multiple connections. This increase in the complexity of the visible social networks may be indicative of conditions in which multiple socio-professional connections were becoming increasingly important in securing a junior officers' appointment. It is also possible that the more intricate view of the social and professional connections at work is the result of more detailed biographical resources being available for candidates who were active during the French Wars; a factor that might also explain the increased traceability of the samples.

The most significant aspect of the isolated data for 1801 is that it shows a noticeably smaller proportion of junior officers with *only* naval interest (24 percent), particularly compared to 1791 when naval-only connections represented 36 percent of the traceable sample. By 1811 the proportion of naval-only interest had risen, although it still remained lower than in 1791.

Table 8.3 Naval Only Interest (as a percentage of the traceable total in each year)

	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>
Naval Only Interest	28%	18%	30%	36%	24%	30%

²⁶⁵ In 1791 thirty-two different categories were identified as opposed to twenty-five in 1801 and twenty-four in 1811.

The fall-off may be directly attributable to the high incidence of young gentlemen with naval *and* other connections. In 1801, 45 percent of traceable candidates claimed a naval connection, while nearly half of these revealed other connections – social, political, and professional. In 1811 the results were similar, with 48 percent of traceables claiming naval connections and of these more than one third showed other social and professional influences.

Among these other influences the presence of the landed gentry was most significant. In 1801, 43 percent of the traceable candidates (36 of 84) claimed connections to the landed gentry. In 1811 the situation was repeated in almost the same proportion. The results of the combined naval and gentry data also highlight the remarkable similarity between the sample years covering the French Wars. This similarity was also visible in the data for quarterdeck boys, suggesting that the need for multiple influences, and particularly a combination of naval and gentry influences, was an important factor in securing an appointment. These results also indicate that the junior officer corps saw an increase in the number of young gentlemen who were actually “gentlemen” by birth and may be seen as evidence of the adoption of the standards for recruitment outlined in the Order of 1794.

This trend was further reinforced by an increase in the appearance of high-ranking naval influence. Of the thirty-six junior officers from 1801, for whom the source of naval interest is known, thirty (83 percent) were connected to sea officers of commander’s rank or higher while one was the son of a judge of Admiralty Court. Only one surgeon’s son, Thomas Martin, appeared in the list, although his father was also a propertied gentleman with connections to the peerage.²⁶⁶ James Edgar Prowse was the son of a master attendant at Woolwich Dockyard and was the only candidate from sample, whose naval connections

²⁶⁶ Appendix G5, “Junior Officers 1801,” J01-1-67.

could be identified, who did not also claim association with either a commissioned officer or a landed gentleman.²⁶⁷ In 1811, thirty-six (72 percent) of the candidates who revealed the details of their naval interest were connected to officers of commander's rank or higher. Only three claimed naval interest from non-commissioned officers – Francis Harris was the son of a “warrant officer,” John Wollcock was the son of HMS *Tribune*'s surgeon, and James Richard Booth was the son of a purser.²⁶⁸

This represents a slight increase from 1791 when 68 percent of junior officers and 65 percent of quarterdeck boys, claimed naval connections to an officer of commanders' rank or higher and suggests that during the French Wars getting a start on a naval career required more powerful naval connections than had been necessary before the start of the war. Increased demand for limited opportunities saw a higher portion of junior officer positions going to young men who could obtain the patronage of higher-ranking officers.²⁶⁹ Like the data for quarterdeck boys, these figures show statistical support for contemporary impressions of a rising social status among the inhabitants of the cockpit.

The data on peerage connections provides additional support for these impressions. Unlike the results for quarterdeck boys, junior officers showed a spike in the appearance of peerage connections in 1801, lending credence to the specific complaints regarding the surge of young nobility into the service. In this year, 20 percent of the traceable sample (17 of 84) showed family affiliations to the peerage. All but two of these revealed multiple connections, many of which also involved naval interest. The Hon. Anthony Maitland, midshipman of the *Ville de Paris* exemplified the scope of this multi-level patronage. Anthony was the second son of the 8th Earl of Lauderdale, the cousin of Captain John

²⁶⁷ Appendix G5, J01-3-40. Note: James Edgar Prowse does not appear to be related to Captain (later RA) William Prowse who was born in Devon in 1752 and died in 1826.

²⁶⁸ Appendix G6, “Junior Officers 1811,” J11-1-35, J11-3-05, J11-SL-24.

²⁶⁹ Also see Rodger, *Command*, p. 499.

Maitland, and of Commander Frederick Maitland, who was later knighted and became a rear-admiral. Young Maitland also claimed political connections through his father, and both army and political connections through his uncle, Lieutenant General Sir Thomas Maitland.²⁷⁰ Others including Henry Lorraine Baker, who was the second son of a baronet, the grandson of an alderman of London and an MP; and John Dilkes Byng who was the fourth son of Colonel John Byng, the 5th Viscount Torrington, Commissioner of the Stamp Office, brought multiple forms of interest to bear on their early careers.²⁷¹

These examples are indicative of the high-level, multi-faceted social and professional networks visible in the junior officers' sample for 1801. The higher incidence of noble midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants was not reflected in the sample of quarterdeck boys for the same year, suggesting that elite interest was more important for young gentlemen taking the next step towards commissioned rank. These conclusions must be tempered, however, by the large portion of junior officers whose career histories were visible but whose social backgrounds could not be traced (roughly 20 percent of the total sample in 1801 and 30 percent in 1811). The likelihood that these unknowns descended from middle or working class origins is high and suggests a continuing social diversity in the junior officer ratings. The remaining 50 percent in 1801 and 40 percent in 1811 who were completely unaccounted for were, for the most part, 2nd and 3rd class boys who likely possessed no tenable prospects for the quarterdeck.²⁷²

While the appearance of midshipmen or mates who had been raised from the lower deck was diminishing in the later years of the war there is evidence to suggest that such practices continued, on a limited scale, into the new century. The musters for 1801 and

²⁷⁰ See Appendix G5, J01-1-57.

²⁷¹ See Appendix G5, J01-3-57, J01-4-35.

²⁷² See Appendices G5-G6.

1811 show the presence of five midshipmen who were listed as “run” and were therefore, likely to be prest men.²⁷³ Another thirty-four junior officers from both years (thirty in 1801 and four in 1811) were aged thirty or over – an indication that they may have been raised from the lower deck, a transition that if it did occur, was bound to happen later in a sailor’s career. These “oldsters” were, in all likelihood, bound for a master’s rating or another warrant officer’s position. Jonathan Pristoff of the *Diomede* was forty-nine in 1811 and left no record of a career that advanced beyond that of midshipman.²⁷⁴ Likewise, John Woolcock, a thirty-three-year old midshipman of the *Colossus*, left no clues as to his professional progress. John Jenkins of the *Warspite* was thirty-eight when he passed the examination for lieutenant, although he did not receive a commission until March 1815, a promotion that was undoubtedly conditional upon his “retirement.”²⁷⁵

b. *The proportional data*

The most notable feature of the combined data is that by 1811 there was a distinct decline in the presence of noble sons while gentry presence continued to rise. The noble fall-off was also accompanied by a rise in the relative importance of the professions. Though the increase in strictly “professional” influence was slight, when combined with the other professional callings including the navy, army, and clergy, the “professions” may be seen to account for more than half of the traceable sample in 1811. This represents an increase of nearly 10 percent over the showing of all professions in 1801. These results may be evidence of an increasing solidarity among the professional classes under the

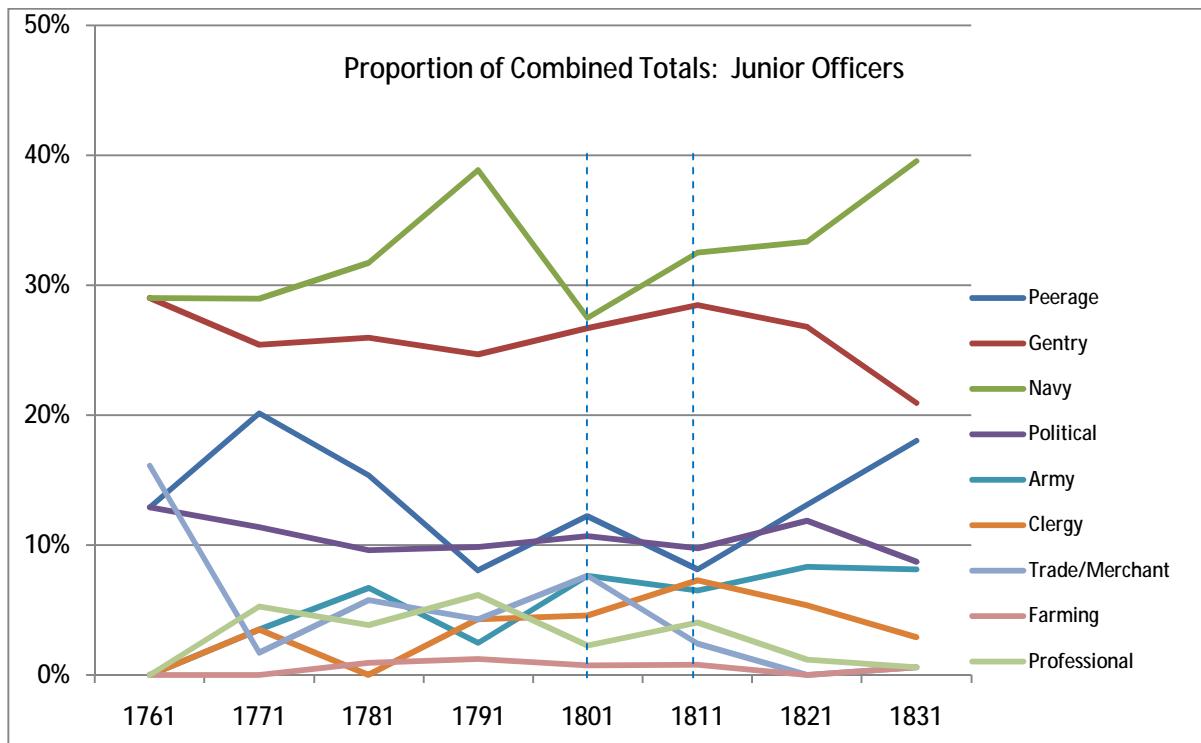
²⁷³ See Edward Carey and George Mullen, Appendix G5, J01-SL-18, J01-4-12; Thomas Steadman, Richard Boulder, and Jonathan Leader, Appendix G6, J11-3-12, J11-5-06, J11-SL-31. There were, however, a few isolated cases of well-born young gentlemen (and officers) who ran because of “falling in love.”

²⁷⁴ See Appendix G6, J11-4-15.

²⁷⁵ See Appendix G6, J11-3-05, J11-3-65. See Chapter Nine, Section 3 for a full discussion of post-war promotions “in lieu of retirement.”

umbrella of “professional gentlemen,”²⁷⁶ and presents a variation on Gerke Teitler’s thesis that a social cohesiveness among the officer classes of the Stuart navy was responsible for the high degree of professional development and operational success seen in the late seventeenth century.²⁷⁷

Figure 8.5 Proportion of Combined Totals, Junior Officers, 1801-1811



It may also be evidence of the increasing popularity of a naval career for the sons of the professional classes. As the “cultural importance” of the Royal Navy rose during the French Wars it became an even “more potent national symbol,” at the forefront of the national consciousness and the focus of middle and upper-middle class patriotism.²⁷⁸ The

²⁷⁶ Reader, *Professional Men*, p.162 .

²⁷⁷ Teitler cites social uniformity as one of three prerequisites necessary for the creation of a professional officer corps: “The increased homogeneity resulted in a beginning of esprit de corps and of occupational pride.” Gerke Teitler, *The Genesis of the Professional Officers’ Corps*, trans. C. N. Ter Heide-Lopy (Beverly Hills, 1977), pp. 130-32.

²⁷⁸ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 196-97; also see Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, pp. 161, 178; Colley, “Apotheosis,” pp. 102, 125.

continued decline in the presence of junior officers with connections to the peerage in 1811 adds weight to the argument for a strengthening middle class/professional solidarity.

i. Admiralty influence against captains' prerogative

Most noticeable in the trends visible from 1761 to 1811 is that peerage influence appeared to rise and fall in inverse relation to naval influence. As peerage connections became more apparent, naval influence declined, and vice versa, resulting in a virtually equal-but-opposite reaction in each. There are several possible explanations for the appearance of such trends. The first deals with the issue of opportunity and *opportunity cost*. In situations where the sons of the aristocracy demanded a greater number of the limited junior officer positions, fewer openings remained to be filled by boys with naval influence. Conversely, when a career at sea seemed less appealing to noble sons, naval influence gained. Such a situation may well have been the case in 1811. As peers noticed that promotion had all but stopped in the navy, the opportunities afforded by Wellington's successes on the Peninsula may have lent the army greater appeal for noble sons.²⁷⁹

While it is possible that boys could possess both peerage and naval connections, it appears that the rising importance of one factor adversely affected the other. Political factors which involved the presence of a Tory First Lord (Yorke)²⁸⁰ may have reduced the appeal of a naval career for the sons of Whig nobility in 1811, particularly in comparison to 1801 when St. Vincent, a staunch Whig, controlled the Admiralty.

The second, and more speculative possibility, is that noble fall-off was the product of a backlash against Admiralty influence on appointments and promotions. The concerns of the admirals, noted earlier in this chapter, for the lack of autonomy they possessed when

²⁷⁹ Morriss notes that: "Since Trafalgar and the death of Nelson, the navy had lost ground in public popularity compared to the army and the Duke of Wellington . . .," Morriss, *Cockburn*, p. 146.

²⁸⁰ Yorke was no stranger to the navy and had a brother in the service who later served with him on the Admiralty Board.

it came to the promotion of young gentlemen and young officers, spoke to perceptions of increasing Admiralty power which cannibalized the patronage of individual captains and admirals.²⁸¹ The political nature of Admiralty appointments and the proximity of the Lords Commissioners to government meant that the “Admiralty list” of those awaiting promotion sagged with social and political weight. As a passed midshipman Basil Hall struggled to get a look at the list which was “well known to be formidably intricate in its arrangements, and very slippery in its promises; indeed, from circumstance of its depending on the fluctuating interests of party politics, it must essentially be pie crust in its texture.”²⁸² A few years earlier the newly passed midshipman, William Parker, was prepared to call in all his social and service connections²⁸³ to ensure that he was placed high on the list, if possible, above a peer.²⁸⁴

The actions of captains and admirals when it came to appointments may have represented a protest against the encroachment of centralized control. Collingwood’s “queer” attitude towards promotion and the advancement of those “who have not a friend to speak for them,”²⁸⁵ might exemplify the rebelliousness of senior officers who sought to assert their independence when it came to wielding patronage. St. Vincent’s opinion that “I would rather promote the son of an old deserving Officer than any Noble in the land,” demonstrated a rejection of the prevailing tendency to advance the “younger branches of

²⁸¹ Rodger notes the professional jealousies of “unlucky officers” who blamed their failure to secure promotion on “honorable” who could bring social interest to bear on their career progress, Rodger, *Command*, p. 521.

²⁸² Hall, *Lieutenant and Commander*, p. 40.

²⁸³ William’s father was a gentleman from Almington, Staffordshire and his grandfather was the Rt. Hon. Sir Thomas Parker, Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer. His aunt, Martha Parker was married to Admiral John Jervis the Earl St. Vincent. See Marioné, *Complete Navy List*; s.v. “Sir William Parker, 1st Bart.,” in *ODNB* (2004).

²⁸⁴ NMM, PAR/182, f.3, William Parker to his brother, April 28, 1799. William asks his brother to “push everything till you get me on the list,” and explains that “there were two or three other Gents who passed the same day” including the Hon. John Ashley Bennett.

²⁸⁵ Hughes, *Collingwood Private Correspondence*, p. 274. Also see Max Adams, *Trafalgar’s Lost Hero: Admiral Lord Collingwood and the Defeat of Napoleon* (Hoboken, 2005), pp. 21-22.

nobility, and the sons of Members of Parliament.”²⁸⁶ The 1811 decline in the appearance of peerage influence and the synchronous rise in naval influence may therefore, be evidence of a push-back by recruiting captains and admirals who sought to regain a measure of control and reassert their traditional powers of nomination.

The *Regulations and Instructions*, revised in 1806 and amended slightly again in 1808, only emphasized the efforts of the Admiralty to assume a greater degree of control over junior officers. The regulations specified Admiralty management of the appointment of sub-lieutenants, supervision of the list of candidates for the lieutenants’ examination, and a codification of the official daily duties and responsibilities for midshipmen and mates.²⁸⁷ While the wording of the *Regulations* targeted procedural conformity, it also represented another subtle push towards centralized management of the junior officer corps. In 1812 a circular letter from the Admiralty directed captains to increase the number of 2nd and 3rd class boys according to a ship’s complement as a means of ensuring the supply of future generations of mariners. The order also reinforced the designation of these boys as trainee sailors, *not* trainee officers, restating that they were to be placed “under the immediate care of some discreet and deserving Seaman” who would instruct each boy “to teach him his duty as a Seaman.” The Admiralty’s awareness of the popular practice of rating young gentlemen as 2nd and 3rd class boys was evident in their Lordships’ requests for reports, to be submitted every three months, on the progress of these trainee sailors and their advancement to the ratings of ordinary and able seamen.²⁸⁸

The revisions to the entry-rating system instituted in 1794 had, by the turn of the century, begun to take effect, at least in the sense that the rating of midshipman was being

²⁸⁶ Tucker, *St. Vincent*, Vol. I, pp. 266-67.

²⁸⁷ ADM 7/971, “Regulations and Instructions, 1808,” Chapter I, Sections IX, XX, XXV; Chapter IV, Sections VIII, XI.

²⁸⁸ TNA: PRO, ADM 1/5122/2, “Circular Letters,” March 7, 1812, f. 18.

used less frequently as an entry-level designation, even among the social elites.²⁸⁹ The average age of junior officers in 1811 was 18.9 years, while the average age of those with connections to the peerage and the landed gentry was only slightly lower at 17.3 years. Unlike surveys for the early years of this study, and particularly for 1781, when the average age for elite junior officers was 14.7 years, it appears that the old practice of rating well-born young gentlemen as midshipmen upon entry had waned by the later years of the Napoleonic Wars. Despite the deviation from this trend in 1801, the proximity of the average ages in 1811 suggests that slowly but surely, the Admiralty was tightening its grip on policies regarding appointments.

Table 8.4 Average Ages of all Junior Officers compared to elite Junior Officers, 1771-1811.

	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>
Ave. Age of all JOs	21.2	19.0	22.0	22.2	18.9
Ave. Age of elite JOs	18.9	14.7	19.9	18.4	17.3
Difference in Averages	2.3	4.3	2.1	3.8	1.6

Sources: Appendix D, “Ages and Passing Times of Junior Officers and Quarterdeck Boys, 1761-1831.”

In 1812 the Admiralty took yet another step towards centralization of young gentlemen’s appointments when it directed that all captains must submit a survey of the names, ages, and ratings of every midshipman, mate, 1st class volunteer, and Admiralty midshipman aboard their ships. This was to be accompanied by an accounting of each boy’s status as active, disrated, discharged, or dead.²⁹⁰ The results of this survey were compiled in an index which listed, by ship, a complete inventory of all young gentlemen who aspired to commissioned rank.²⁹¹ The efforts of Lord Melville represented the first attempt in the history of the modern Royal Navy to create a centralized record of officer aspirants and a

²⁸⁹ Appendices G5-G6, “Junior Officers 1801-1811.”

²⁹⁰ ADM 1/5122/2, “Circular Letters,” May 18, 1814, f. 34

²⁹¹ TNA: PRO, ADM 11/23, “Index of Midshipmen, 1815.”

means of tracking their career progress. The creation of this index would allow Melville to take the next step toward the Admiralty's first decisive intervention in the appointment process and their next major advance in wresting control from individual captains and admirals.

5. Summary

Commentary from senior officers during the French Wars suggested that two distinct changes were underway when it came to recruiting young gentlemen and appointing junior officers. The first involved a growing centralization of power in the appointment process which gave the Admiralty greater control over decisions that had traditionally been the preserve of captains and admirals. The circular letters and orders issued between 1794 and 1814, suggest a trend in Admiralty policy-making that further eroded the independence of senior officers in matters of recruitment. The second involved an increase in the appearance of gentry sons on naval quarterdecks. This increase also saw a widening of the gap between peerage and gentry influence – with the peerage in shallow decline, a trend that was visible in both the quarterdeck boys' and junior officers' samples. Such a change was likely the product of several factors, not least the political climate, the state of the war, and the stasis in naval promotions which reduced the popularity of a naval career for noble sons by 1811. It may also have been evidence of a backlash from senior officers against the socially and politically weighted Admiralty list, and the First Lord's escalating incursions on their rights and privileges. Overall, however, these findings challenge Michael Lewis's theory of a "distinct process of democratization,"²⁹² taking place in the navy of the French Wars. The disproportionately high showing of boys with

²⁹² Lewis, *Social History*, p. 42; *Transition*, p. 21.

ties to the landed gentry instead provides evidence of a narrowing of opportunities for those who were not of the land-owning classes.

Chapter Nine: Eighteenth-Century Recruitment. A Lasting Change: Years of Peace, 1821 and 1831

1. Overview of the period

The French Wars officially ended with the Second Treaty of Paris in December 1815. Victory and a stable government under Lord Liverpool could not, however, alleviate the general malaise brought on by massive demobilization (both naval and military), and the fiscal crisis faced by a nation whose economy had, for almost a quarter of a century, been geared for war.¹ The *Annual Register* for 1815 noted “the widely diffused complaint . . . [that] the all triumphant sensations of national glory seem almost obliterated by general depression.”² A series of bad harvests fuelled concerns over unemployment and paved the way for protectionist Corn Laws which sparked riots and justified a heightened military presence ready to quash any signs of domestic unrest. The Peterloo Massacre of 1819 brought tensions between the government and the people to a head while escalating anxiety over Catholic emancipation and ever increasing concern for political corruption worked to destabilize British society. Liverpool’s failing health and his resignation in 1827 also destabilized government. At the Admiralty, the presence of HRH the Duke of Clarence as First Lord and his capricious distribution of promotions in the wake of a very controversial victory at the Battle of Navarino (1827) riled long-suffering administrators including Admiral Sir George Cockburn and Admiralty secretary, John Croker, creating new tensions within the naval administration that only the return of Melville would ease.³

¹ Michael Duffy, “The Foundations of British Naval Power,” in *The Military Revolution and the State, 1500-1800*, ed. M. Duffy (Exeter, 1980), p. 81. For an assessment of the degree to which the private sector was invested in the naval shipbuilding effort see R. J. B. Knight, “Devil bolts and Deception? wartime naval shipbuilding in private shipyards, 1793-1815,” in *Journal for Maritime Research*, online journal (April, 2003): pp. 1-6.

² Edmund Burke, ed., *The Annual Register: or a view of History, Politics, and Literature for the Year 1815* (London, 1816), p. vi.

³ Morriss, *Cockburn*, pp. 168-72.

A series of short-lived Tory ministries were followed by the appearance of the Duke of Wellington who, despite being a “supreme pillar of the establishment”⁴ and a paragon of the *ancien régime*, could not ignore the growing support for Catholic emancipation. The threat of another riotous public reaction in London paled in comparison to the threat of civil war in Ireland, and in 1829 Parliament passed the Emancipation Act. Wellington’s Whig successor, Earl Grey took policies of inclusiveness to the next level and saw the Reform Bill through the House of Lords in 1832, despite warnings of “Peers or Revolution” and the threat of widespread public violence.⁵

On a macro level Linda Colley sees a national identity crisis as one of the primary sources of tension. If “Waterloo finally slew the dragon” in terms of an overseas Other, Catholic emancipation removed yet another ancient signifier of what it meant to be British.⁶ The result was confusion and in many circles a more pronounced retreat towards old-order stability. Harold Perkin notes the “revival of the paternal aristocratic ideal” which reigned in the early years of the 1820s. It was a reaction against both “the betrayers of paternalism” and proponents of the “new entrepreneurial ideal,” which embraced middle-class values of industry, the pursuit of wealth, and upward social mobility.⁷ While the Royal Navy of the French Wars may have shown few tendencies towards an aristocratic ideal, the years after 1815 saw a flowering of patrician revivalism in the service.

⁴ Colley, *Britons*, p. 335.

⁵ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 367-69. Morris notes too that the Duke of Wellington “saw nothing but revolution in parliamentary reform, which he felt the election results encouraged the Whigs to pursue,” Morris, *Cockburn*, p. 197.

⁶ Colley, *Britons*, p. 322.

⁷ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 238, 241.

a. *The Admiralty takes charge: the regulations of 1815*

Lord Melville's Admiralty faced massive personnel problems with the close of the war and the need to retrench tens of thousands of officers and men.⁸ The surplus of officer aspirants, many of whom had passed the examination for lieutenant but were yet to receive a commission, further emphasized the need for stricter policing of the entry-level ratings.

Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine noted that as early as 1813 the wait-list for commissions had become unmanageable: "there were nearly 2000 young gentlemen in the service, who had not only served their time, but passed their examination for lieutenancies."⁹ This figure had, no doubt, increased by the time peace was declared.

Decades of unchecked recruitment and unlimited access to the lieutenants' examination resulted in a glut of officer aspirants for whom there would never be enough commissions to go around. Such circumstances justified a broadening of Admiralty control over the induction of 1st class volunteers and the creation of junior officers, and sanctioned the next major step towards centralization of the appointment process. Less than two months after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo in June, Melville rolled out a series of orders which took advantage of the new peacetime establishments for the navy and made good use of the survey returns for junior officers ordered in the previous year.

According to Michael Lewis, an Order in Council, issued in July 1815,¹⁰ saw control over the appointment of midshipmen taken away from individual captains and placed in the hands of the Admiralty. It must be noted that extensive archival searches turned up no evidence of an Order in Council in the post-war months of 1815 which

⁸ Morriss also notes that after the war the political power of the Admiralty was in decline. "Until 1823 economic recession, mass demobilization and unemployment created Cabinet preoccupations that, in the absence of hostilities, made naval matters secondary in importance," see Morriss, *Cockburn*, p. 154.

⁹ Burney, *Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine*, p. 277.

¹⁰ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 159.

required Admiralty approval for all midshipmen's appointments. What was found were rough minutes from a meeting of the Lords Commissioners dated August 16, 1815 and a reprinting of the subsequent circular letter, which appeared in the *Naval Chronicle* for July-December of the same year.¹¹

The circular presented five articles which targeted all levels of the appointment process from 1st class volunteers to mates and midshipmen. The first article demanded that captains comply with the stipulation that "previously to the *first entry* into the service of any young Gentleman, the approbation of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty shall be obtained on a statement by the Captain, of his age, family, and education."¹² Captains were free to appoint mates, midshipmen, and 1st class volunteers "of their own selection" in so far as these young gentlemen were transferring from another rating or another ship. This goes beyond the implications of the Order in Council noted by Michael Lewis who argued that "this new regulation in no way curtailed the captains' power to take on any lads they liked as First Class Volunteers,"¹³ a position that appears less convincing when the language of the circular is considered. The first article also demanded that no person should be rated mate who had not passed the examination. The only specification within the five articles which pertained to Admiralty approval of mates and midshipmen was Article 2 which related solely to supernumerary midshipmen who "are to be borne by their [Lordships'] order only." Article 3 forbade captains from discharging or disrating a mate or midshipman without approval from the Admiralty. Article 4 required captains to submit a

¹¹ No Order in Council regarding the appointment of midshipmen could be found in the Privy Council registers or in the Admiralty's register of out-letters to captains – neither was the Order gazetted in 1815. Lewis does not cite the document in the primary source bibliographies of either *A Social History* or *The Navy in Transition*.

¹² TNA: PRO, ADM 3/185, "Admiralty Rough Minutes," Vol. 56, June – August 1815; also see "Circular from the Naval History of the Present Year, 1815," in *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 34 (1815), p. 167. (My italics).

¹³ Lewis, *Transition*, p. 101; also see *Social History*, p. 159.

report of all the names of young gentlemen, including 1st class volunteers, as they joined the ship; and article 5 reinforced the rule that no young gentleman, as an aspirant to commissioned rank, was to be borne in any rating other than 1st class volunteer, midshipman, or mate.¹⁴

It is uncertain whether Lewis's Order in Council and the circular of August 16 are one and the same document. It is, however, unlikely that two orders issued within the space of a month would differ so much in essentials. The scope of Admiralty control, detailed in the circular, suggests a far greater infringement upon a captain's powers of nomination than the Order interpreted by Lewis. The requirement that *all* young gentlemen entering the service for the first time must pass Admiralty muster, and the ruling that captains could no longer disrate or discharge young gentlemen without prior approval, took a sizable bite out of a captain's powers of patronage and his authority to discipline the young gentlemen aboard his ship.

The circular of August 16 allowed the Admiralty to achieve three important goals. First, it enabled them to wrest control of all new appointments from individual captains and centralize the selection process. If all new entrants who aspired to commissioned rank had to first be approved by the Admiralty then much of a captain's power, which stemmed from his ability to wield patronage, was curtailed. The second goal achieved by the circular was that it centralized control over the *number* of aspirants who reached the pre-commission ratings. The problem of oversupply could best be managed through careful monitoring of how many boys entered the service with intentions of becoming commissioned officers. Power over the decision-making process also enabled a third goal to be realized – control over the *social quality* of officer aspirants. The Order in Council of

¹⁴ ADM 3/185.

1794 reiterated the Admiralty's old social agenda when it came to recruitment. The requirement that "only the sons of gentlemen" could be entered as 1st class volunteers, and therefore groomed for commissioned rank, made clear the intentions of the Lords Commissioners to socially engineer a more elite officer corps, one in which political relationships could best be served. While many captains ignored the classifications of 1794, in terms of both the social stratification and professional segregation of recruits, the controls instituted in 1815 made the old agenda enforceable.

Considering the strength of the blow delivered to a captain's traditional rights and privileges, the dearth of commentary on the appearance of these new controls is surprising. One of the few to comment on the changes was Captain William Dillon who, rather than railing at the infringement upon his powers of patronage, embraced the new directives as a means of keeping the riff-raff out of the officer corps. Dillon acknowledged the omnipotence of the Admiralty in the new order: "The youngsters could no longer be received into the Navy and entered on the Ship's Books without the sanction of the Admiralty," then praised the social motives that lay behind it: "I was glad to find that some kind of regulation was to be enforced in that direction as it was well known that many captains had placed improper youths on the Quarter Decks of the King's Ships."¹⁵ The extent of Dillon's prejudice has already been noted, so it is not surprising that he regarded the new orders as an antidote to the high level of social diversity among officer aspirants. The degree to which these attitudes were representative of other captains is unknown,¹⁶ although the prevalence of such feelings may provide one explanation as to why so few

¹⁵ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 2, p. 339.

¹⁶ Only one other commentator could be found. Like Dillon, Frederick Chamier, also noted a change for the better: "The Admiralty, with a very laudable resolution, has prohibited the entrance of any young man who has not its sanction for admittance," Chamier, *Life*, p. 15.

commanders thought to protest measures that severely limited their powers of patronage and their ability to wield authority over the young gentlemen in their charge.

Another possible explanation for the absence of visible reactions was that captains were simply too preoccupied with matters of their own employment, and that of their officers and men, to be concerned about policies affecting new recruits. With the possibility of retrenchment looming for all, the Admiralty could take advantage of the likelihood that officer entry was no longer a top priority for senior officers. Fear of being beached may also have gone a long way to keeping would-be critics of the plan silent.

While the Admiralty's push for control of officer entry remained somewhat ambiguous in 1794, the new directive left little doubt as to its desire to centralize the appointment process. Subtle attempts at intrusion upon a captain's privilege were abandoned and unlike the Order of 1794, the new instructions would be difficult to ignore. With a fleet one sixth the size of its wartime establishment¹⁷ and with many of the remaining ships stationed closer to home, the Admiralty was far more capable of monitoring the activities of its captains. According to Dillon the new orders were not only enforceable but effective. Later in 1815 he noted that, "The Navy has much improved in consequence of that arrangement, and now you are nearly certain of having young gentlemen in the profession, whereas formerly there were many of a very doubtful character in it."¹⁸ Chamier too noted that in the navy of 1809

the company [in the midshipman's berth] was not quite so select as at present; people of all sorts and all descriptions became midshipmen . . . the navy has certainly wonderfully improved since the peace: now a midshipman's berth may hear the sound of a champagne bottle; glass [as opposed to tin] is in general use; plate is requisite.¹⁹

¹⁷ Rodger, *Command*, p. 639.

¹⁸ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 2, p. 339.

¹⁹ Chamier, *Life*, pp. 15-16. Chamier also noted of the peacetime navy that midshipmen "live like and are gentlemen," and that "young midshipmen of the guardships in Plymouth and Portsmouth not unfrequently

The discriminatory value of the 1815 directive is, however, questioned by Michael Lewis who argues that the Admiralty exercised their new authority only sparingly.²⁰ For Lewis this at least partially explains why captains voiced little or no objection to the changes. It also partially explains the Admiralty's need to reissue the orders some fifteen years later. The specifics of the 1830 order are addressed below, although its primary purpose suggests a subtle expansion of the control assumed in 1815 rather than a direct repetition of it.

While the immediate success or failure of the 1815 order is difficult to gauge without further research, the data obtained from the post-war sample sheds light on the long-term effects and how it helped to alter the social and professional make-up of the aspiring officer corps for the century to come.

b. Other Admiralty measures

Beyond the numerical and social controls assumed by the Admiralty in 1815, a number of other changes were instituted to cope with a variety of problems that arose in the years following the peace. Unemployment was foremost among them. With a fleet reduced from 398 ships in 1810 to 248 by 1820, only 15 percent of the navy's 3730 commissioned lieutenants remained employed.²¹ It is unlikely that this figure included all those mates and midshipmen who were given "lieutenancies in lieu of pension,"²² that is, promoted on the understanding that they had little hope of employment. While unemployed lieutenants could claim half-pay, unemployed junior officers could not. A

cross the quarter-deck early in the morning, in top-boots and a piece of pink, on their way to join the hunt," *ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰ Lewis, *Transition*, p. 101.

²¹ Figures quoted are the total number of battleships, cruisers, and small vessels, see Glete, *Navies and Nations*, p. 554. For figures on unemployment see Brian Vale, *A Frigate of King George: Life and Duty on a British Man-of War, 1807-1829* (London, 2001), p. 45.

²² Lewis, *Social History*, p. 197.

mass of “retirement” promotions²³ aimed first, at alleviating the burden of thousands of passed mates and midshipmen all looking for a commission and second, sought to provide these veterans with a minimal maintenance as a reward for service.²⁴ A later parliamentary commission into the state of peacetime promotion sought to clarify the arrangement as it questioned Admiral Sir Edward Codrington on the matter of “promotions out:”

In 1815, 1000 midshipmen were promoted; of these 619 are still in existence; of the 619, only 149 since 1815 have served sufficiently to qualify them for promotion. Do you not conceive that the greater part of the remainder have looked up on their condition as lieutenant in light of a retirement, not having sought service from that time?²⁵

Codrington responded in the affirmative, but made it clear that his preference was for a revised system of employment that would award partial pay to passed mates and midshipmen.²⁶

In 1818 the Admiralty pushed further into the problem of placement for ratings who had passed the examination but failed to secure a commission before the peace. The institution of the “Admiralty midshipman” also represented another assault on a captain’s ability to appoint. Admiralty “nominees” were favored young gentlemen who were placed on the Admiralty’s promotion list and therefore received the benefits of priority treatment when it came to placements.²⁷ The Admiralty reserved the right to appoint these young gentlemen directly to any ship, thereby circumventing the captain. This proved especially beneficial to graduates of the Royal Naval College. The stigma of a shore-based

²³ There was no mechanism for retirement in the navy of the early-nineteenth century. A “promotion out” of the service was the best many midshipmen and mates could hope for. This could not (and did not) stop many of these new lieutenants from petitioning the Admiralty for employment in the years to come, Lewis, *Transition*, pp. 67-68.

²⁴ Lewis suggests that promotion as a form of institutional charity saw the government “hoist by its own petard” as it could not, or would not, retire commissioned officers outright, *ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁵ Question 2138 posed by the Commissioners to Admiral Sir Edward Codrington, MP on August 9, 1838, “Reports from Commissioners: Naval and Military Promotion and Retirement,” HC 1840 XXXII, p. 138, (C. 235).

²⁶ Questions 2139-2145, *ibid.*

²⁷ Lewis, *Transition*, pp. 102-03; Vale, *Frigate of King George*, p. 46.

“theoretical” education still resonated with many captains who rejected the whole philosophy of the college. Lewis suggests that the extent of service prejudice against collegians was so great that “the Admiralty had to interfere ‘by Order’, to obtain a fair deal for its own protégés.”²⁸ Implicit in the Admiralty’s support for collegians, was the message that those who possessed the social and political interest, *and* the financial resources to obtain a place at the college must also possess the raw materials to qualify them for commissioned rank.

Brian Vale notes, however, that many of those who populated the Admiralty list in the post-war years did not necessarily owe their position to social or political connections. His assessment of the South America squadron, under the command of Commodore Sir Thomas Hardy, shows that the majority of mates and midshipmen (21 of 26) appointed to lieutenancies between 1821 and 1823, achieved their position on the Admiralty list due to their status as French War veterans. Vale suggests that “the striking thing about the Admiralty nominees is that the great majority . . . had been selected in recognition of their war records.”²⁹ This would seem to fly in the face of Admiralty policies which clearly supported an elite social agenda. Vale concludes, however, that: “With the promotion of deserving veterans to lieutenancies and the security of half-pay, both Hardy and the Admiralty seem to have regarded their debt as having been paid.” As the majority of “veterans” left the service soon after their promotion, it would appear that this scenario was yet another example of “promotion out.” Of the twenty-six appointees, the few who remained and advanced in their careers “seemed to owe their . . . promotion to social status

²⁸ Lewis, *Transition*, p. 103.

²⁹ Brian Vale, “Appointment, Promotion and “Interest” in the British South America Squadron, 1821-1823,” in *Mariner’s Mirror*, 88 (2002): pp. 64-65. Morriss too, notes that Sir George Cockburn, as First Sea Lord, stressed the importance of war record in his requests for placement of officers: “to Melville he frequently stressed service qualifications.” See Morriss, *Cockburn*, p. 179.

rather than to any service record.”³⁰ In view of the overcrowding that occurred in the midshipmen’s berths of Hardy’s squadron, where all ships “carried complements of midshipmen well above their establishments,” it is not surprising that “enormous competition” for limited places meant that those with Admiralty backing fared better.³¹

Circumstances by which Admiralty influence or that of a powerful social or political benefactor increasingly became prerequisites for a naval career meant that the prospects of many thousands of midshipmen and masters’ mates stalled. As chances of ever reaching commissioned rank *and* being employed faded, many young gentlemen opted for a different career track. The creation of the “Master’s Assistant” in 1824³² allowed young gentlemen to surrender their ambitions for commissioned rank in lieu of becoming a master, the highest-ranking warrant officer. This was accompanied by a ruling that allowed boys who aspired to a master’s rating to enter the service as “volunteers of the second class;” that is young gentlemen who would fall under the direct supervision of the master.³³ Masters’ assistants could begin their service between the age of fourteen and sixteen and were to complete six years in that capacity before being eligible to pass for Second Master,³⁴ a rating that placed them above midshipmen in the quarterdeck hierarchy.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

³¹ Hardy’s flagship *Superb* (74) carried thirty-eight midshipmen despite the fact that regulations allowed only eighteen. Of these, thirteen were Admiralty nominees. See Vale, *Frigate of King George*, p. 117.

³² Lewis dates the establishment of the masters’ assistant in 1822, see Lewis, *Transition*, p. 275, although Secretary J. W. Croker’s circular letter of July 1, 1824 appears to announce both the masters’ assistants and 2nd class volunteers, as trainee masters, for the first time. See TNA: PRO, ADM 7/889, “Circulars and Memoranda, 1819-1842.”

³³ It appears that by 1826 abuses were rife when it came to the functions of 2nd class volunteers, masters’ assistants, and even second masters. On August 12, Melville released a circular condemning captains for “making them perform the immediate duty of Mates and Midshipmen, to the exclusion of the objects for which the former ranks of officers were instituted.” See ADM 7/889.

³⁴ The rating of Second Master appeared in the establishment of 1700, although they were usually confined to smaller ships. In 1797 they were included as part of the complement of ships of the line. See *Facts and Observations with Reference to Masters, R.N.*, 2nd edition (for Private Circulation) (London, 1858), p. 30.

Until that time, however, masters' assistants were considered below the authority of midshipmen and "mates,"³⁵ who continued to hold out for a shot at commissioned rank.

The plight of aging, post-war midshipmen and mates was documented by several contemporaries including William Dillon who noted that senior officers often took advantage of experienced mates who, "when deaths occurred, were ordered to act as Lieutenants in their places, [but] were deprived of the pay for which they did their duty."³⁶ Captain Montagu Burrows acknowledged another aspect of the problem and that, "being condemned to linger in the lower ranks as an 'old mate' . . . simply meant ruin."³⁷ Burrows laid the blame for the pitiful state of junior officers after 1815, squarely at the feet of the Admiralty: "Out of the numerous 'old mates' whom I remember only a small proportion escaped from gross deterioration under this shocking mismanagement of the young officers by the Admiralty of the day."³⁸

Culpability for the situation may not have originated with the Admiralty, who had little or no control over the recruitment and management of young gentlemen prior to 1815. It was, however, their problem to solve. One solution surfaced in 1829 when the Royal Naval College opened its doors to old mates and commissioned officers on half-pay who could now attend classes.³⁹ This measure provided support for the unemployed through continuing professional education and allowed officers and officer-hopefuls to remain under the noses of the naval bureaucracy. It also kept them within easy reach of the Admiralty whose authority over appointments, particularly for young gentlemen, continued to strengthen.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 29.

³⁶ Dillon, *Narrative*, Vol. 2, p. 488.

³⁷ Burrows quoted in Lewis, *Transition*, p. 107.

³⁸ Burrows quoted in Lewis, *Transition*, p. 107.

³⁹ Lewis, *Transition*, pp. 107-08.

Reorganization of the lesser entry ratings of 2nd and 3rd class boy, which were designed to raise solid lower-deck men, saw the line between commissioned officer/master trainees and seamen trainees drawn more distinctly by 1831. The introduction of the rating of “boy 1st class” was aimed at training youths, seventeen or older, as “expert seamen or mechanics” and was designed to substitute for a three-year apprenticeship. Boys of the 2nd class were not to be under the age of fourteen (or the height of four feet, nine inches) and were to be employed as officers’ servants until they were old enough to move into a 1st class boy rating. The old rating of 3rd class boy was eliminated altogether.⁴⁰ This streamlining also forced a separation between “boys,” who aspired to a lower deck rating, and “volunteers,” who aspired to a masters’ rating or to commissioned rank, making the boundaries more rigid and, as it will be shown, far more difficult to cross.

2. Volunteers: gentry interest plummets as the peerage revives

The effects of the Admiralty’s post-war policies as they related to quarterdeck boys are visible in the data for 1821 and 1831. Overall the picture is one of dramatic change from the war-time samples and reflects both the impact of official policy and the natural forces of patronage and self interest as they played out in the system of officer entry.

a. *Discussion of the data: naval influence returns to prominence*

Of the 227 quarterdeck boys sampled in 1821 a total of fifty-three (23 percent) turned up traceable social backgrounds. In 1831, background searches yielded 84 traceables from the 305 surveyed (28 percent), the highest traceable proportion overall in the quarterdeck boys’ samples. While the number of candidates who were found *without* social backgrounds was negligible in 1821, an additional fifteen boys were traceable in

⁴⁰ ADM 7/889, “Circular # 63, August 20, 1831.” This appears to be an amendment of an earlier order that could not be located.

terms of their careers in 1831, bringing the overall proportion of visible quarterdeck boys to 33 percent in that year.

It should be noted that the 1821 sample continues to show the use of the entry-level ratings of 1st class volunteer and 2nd and 3rd class boy, while the 1831 sample includes 1st and 2nd class volunteers (both of whom were considered young gentlemen), as well as some 1st class boys. The decision to include those who were, in theory, trainee seamen was based on the discovery that a number of 1st class boys listed in the musters, were in fact, the sons of sea officers who certainly aspired to commissioned rank. John Oldershaw Bathurst was rated boy 1st class aboard the *Britannia* in 1831, despite the fact that he was the son of a captain and an attendee of the Royal Naval College.⁴¹ George Absolon, Lionel Brake, and William Rideout were the relatives of naval commanders while I. Henry Ricketts was a relation of Captain William Henry Ricketts, a family connected by marriage to the late Earl St. Vincent. All appeared on the books of various ships in the rating of 1st class boy.⁴² These examples provide some evidence that the more rigid differentiation between the ratings of boy and volunteer was, on a few occasions, circumvented. It appears, however, that only those with connections to commissioned officers managed to gain entry as a “boy” with the distinct prospect of transferring to a volunteer rating.

Most significant in the isolated data for both years is the resurgence in naval and, by 1831, naval *only* interest. By the last year of this study, total naval interest represented 64 percent of the traceable sample, an increase of 10 percent over the data for 1821. Also visible in the isolated data was a distinct rise in the presence of peerage influence which was seen in more than a quarter of the traceable sample for both years (28 percent in 1821, and 26 percent in 1831). Compared to 1801 and 1811 when the proportion of

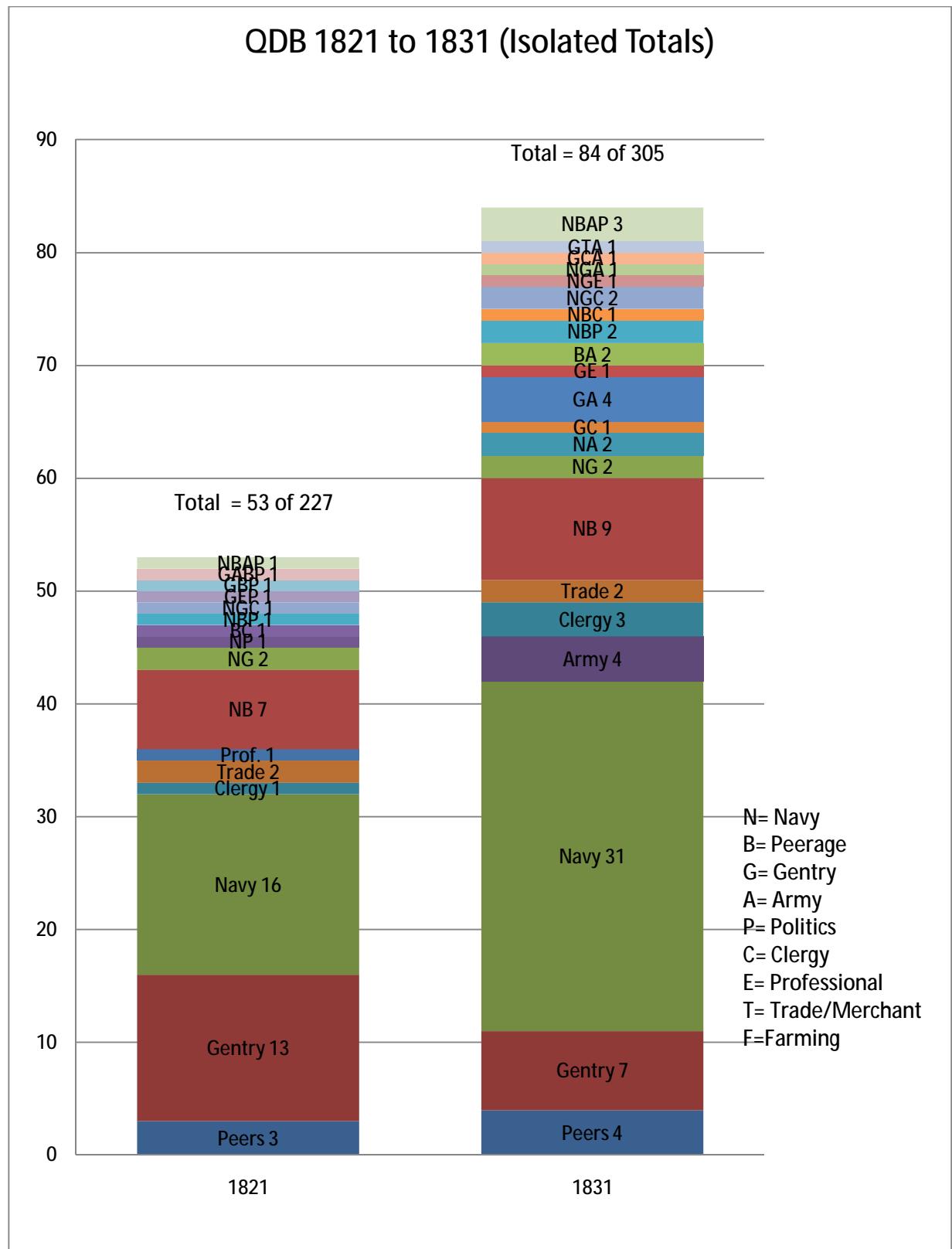
⁴¹ See Appendix F8, “Quarterdeck Boys 1831,” Q31-1-14.

⁴² Appendix F8, Q31-1-18, Q31-1-29, Q31-1-31, Q31-4-24.

traceable boys with peerage connections was 8 percent and 12 percent respectively, the isolated data shows a real increase in the appearance of noble sons after the close of the war. That the vast majority of these peerage connections in 1831 were peerage only and peerage/navy connections reflects a substantial change in recruitment patterns for the entry-level ratings.⁴³

⁴³ These findings agree with Lewis's view of the post 1815 navy in which "the social status of the executive commissioned officer has appreciably rise," Lewis, *Transition*, p. 21.

Figure 9.1 Quarterdeck Boys, 1821 and 1831 (Isolated Totals)



Also noteworthy in the data for 1831 is the decline in the presence of boys with connections to the landed gentry. In that year only 25 percent of traceables revealed gentry influence, down from 36 percent in 1821, and 56 percent in 1811. It is likely that the fall-off was directly related to the increase in the presence of young nobles, who took a greater share of a finite (and diminishing) number of opportunities. Of the gentry influence that was visible, most cases were bolstered by other interest such as naval, military, or professional ties. Army connections, in fact, made their greatest showing in 1831⁴⁴ when they represented 21 percent of the traceable sample, almost double the next largest showing which occurred in 1811.

It should be noted here that while 70 to 75 percent of the samples for both post-war years remained untraceable, the vast majority of these unknowns were “boys” of various classes. In 1821 of the 174 untraceables, 123 (71 percent) were rated 2nd or 3rd class boy, the majority of which were trainee seamen or domestics and therefore not “young gentlemen.” While the practice of rating officer aspirants as 2nd or 3rd class boys was still visible in 1821, there was a significant reduction in cases which showed transitions between the ratings of boy and volunteer. Seventeen candidates transitioned from boy to 1st class volunteer in 1811, yet only seven managed to do so in 1821. There were however a significant number, forty in all, who made the move from 3rd to 2nd class boy. While the vast majority of these transitions (thirty-seven) took place among untraceable boys there were exceptions. Notable among them was Thomas William King, whose connection to Vice-Admiral Sir Richard King, Bart., Commander in Chief of the East Indies station (to

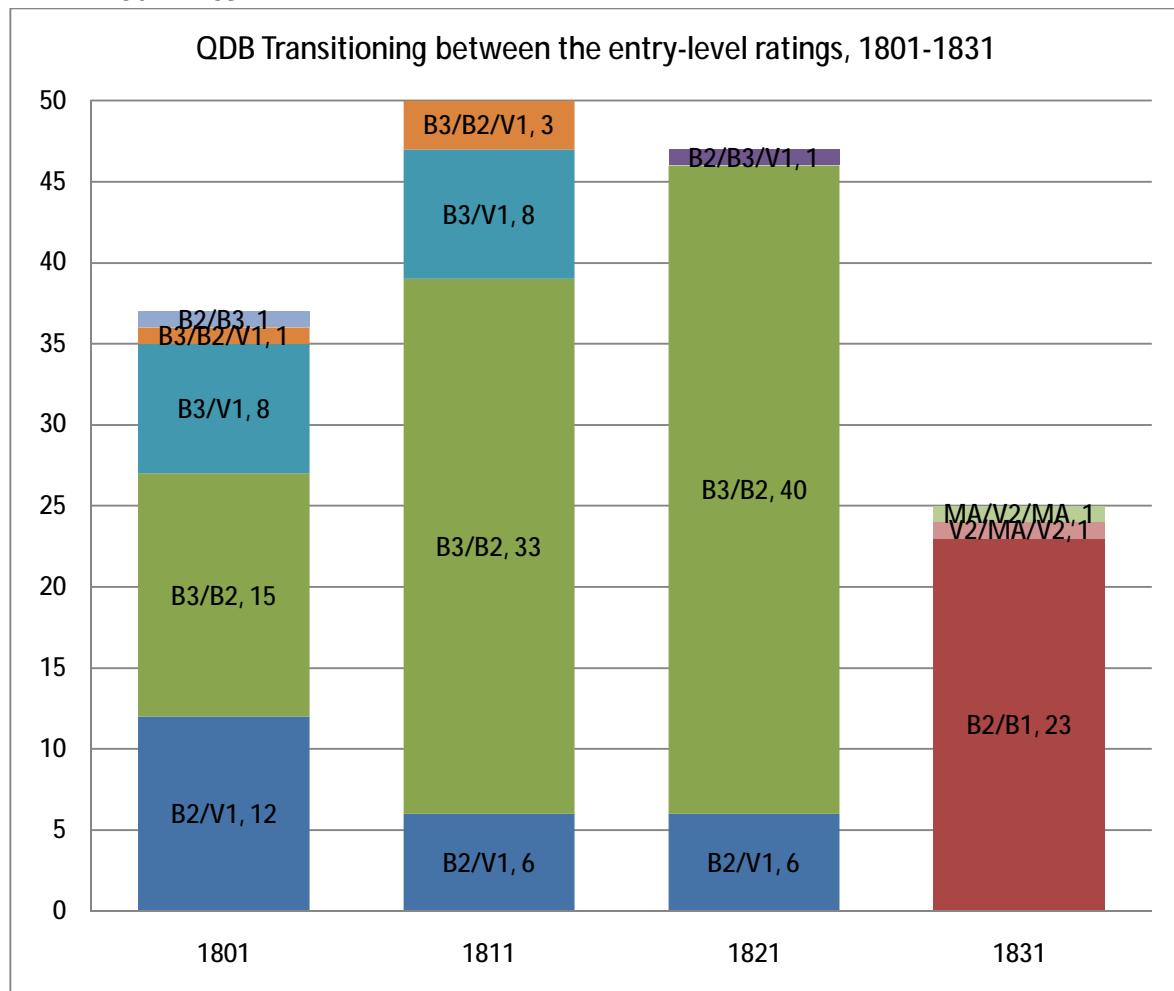
⁴⁴ The appearance of a large proportion of army connections is also reflective of the increased presence of aristocratic connections. Razzell’s data on the social rank of army officers on the Home Station shows that 21% of officers in 1830 claimed aristocratic birth. The nobility dominated the upper ranks of the domestic military accounting for 70% of generals and 57% of all officers ranked major-general or higher, see Razzell, “Social Origins,” p. 253.

which Thomas was assigned in 1821) did not prevent him from being entered as a 2nd class boy, transitioning to 3rd class and finally being raised to the status of 1st class volunteer.⁴⁵

Overall, however, the data for 1821 shows a clearer distinction between 1st class volunteers and 2nd and 3rd class boys (ratings that remained largely interchangeable). The distinction was, in large part, drawn along social/naval lines with the sons of sea officers and those with connections to the peerage securing a larger portion of the volunteer ratings than during the war years. Out of the 81 candidates who were 1st class volunteers in 1821, thirty-four were traceable in terms of their socio-professional backgrounds. Of these more than a third claimed naval connections, roughly a quarter claimed peerage connections, and a quarter claimed links to the gentry.

⁴⁵ See Appendix F7, “Quarterdeck Boys 1821,” Q21-4-04.

Figure 9.2 Numbers of Quarterdeck Boys transitioning between the Entry-Level Ratings, 1801 - 1831



Key: V1 = 1st class volunteer

B2 = 2nd class boy

B3 = 3rd class boy

B1 = 1st class boy (1831 only)

MA = Masters' Assistant (1831 only)

V2 = 2nd class volunteer (1831 only)

The figure following the designation shows the number of boys who transitioned

More surprising is the change which took place in 1831 when the presence of candidates moving between the boy and volunteer ratings disappeared altogether. But for the few exceptions noted in the beginning of this section,⁴⁶ the separation between boy and volunteer ratings appeared to be set in stone. The data shows a high number of boys, twenty-three in all, transitioning between the 1st and 2nd class boy ratings, movements that

⁴⁶ See p. 352.

were consistent with the Admiralty's 1831 orders regarding the rating of trainee seamen. This suggests that the controls imposed by the Lords Commissioners were largely effective in maintaining a separation between aspiring seamen and aspiring officers, and that the rules could only be bent by a few high-ranking officers who were able to operate within a small professional network to gain places for family members. Figure 8.1 in the previous chapter showed that the percentage of candidates who moved between the entry-level ratings dropped to 8 percent in 1831, down from 21 percent a decade earlier. Of these, all movements were within the parameters of the Admiralty-approved structure for advancement. This data provides one of the best indicators of the effectiveness of the new centralized controls and the realization of a goal more than thirty-seven years in the making.

b. *The order of 1830: a short-lived show of Admiralty force*

In 1830 Melville's Admiralty took further steps toward cementing its position as the ultimate authority when it came to the selection of officer candidates. On February 27 a new regulation expanded the Admiralty's jurisdiction set forth in the 1815 circular by demanding that: "No person is hereafter to be entered *or rated* as Volunteer of the First Class but by special order of the Lords Commissioner of the Admiralty."⁴⁷ The alteration to the wording of the earlier order was subtle, but clearly expanded the authority of the Admiralty Board to control the number, the rate of advancement, and the social quality of potential officers. The order now demanded approval of *all 1st* class volunteer appointments, not just first entries. The order also required captains to gain Admiralty approval for all young gentlemen's appointments including mates, midshipmen, masters' assistants, 2nd class volunteers, and Admiralty midshipmen. Additional requirements

⁴⁷ ADM 7/889, Circular No. 55, February 27, 1830. (My italics).

ensured that the Admiralty was apprised of all changes or additions to a ship's complement of young gentlemen, including details on rating changes which should, whenever possible, be approved in advance.⁴⁸

The order also reiterated the need for captains be "very particular" in seeing that no young gentlemen were rated in any capacity other than those stated above and that all disratings must first be approved by the Lords Commissioners. The repetition of the articles contained in the 1815 order suggests the Admiralty recognized that at least some of its directives were being ignored. A solution to the problem was tighter supervision, achieved through quarterly returns, on the names, ages, ratings, and service histories of all quarterdeck boys and junior officers.⁴⁹ This high-level monitoring of young gentlemen no doubt contributed to the overall drop in the amount of movement that took place between the volunteer and boy ratings in the 1831 sample. The order of 1830 presented captains with the strictest guidelines yet on the appointment and management of young gentlemen and effectively stripped commanding officers of the last vestiges of independence when it came to exercising authority over their entry-level and junior officer ratings.

Evidence of the effectiveness of the 1830 order, at least in the short term, is visible in the register of applications completed by aspiring 1st class volunteers and submitted to the Admiralty. Application forms demanded personal information such as a boy's name, date and place of birth, the level of education he had achieved, as well as the name of the school and the length of his attendance. The need to provide background information such as father's name, place of residence, and "profession or rank" ensured that the Admiralty knew the social quality of each applicant's family, while another section allowed interested parties or the applicant himself to petition a case for appointment. It is worth noting,

⁴⁸ ADM 7/889, Articles 2, 3, 4, and 6.

⁴⁹ ADM 7/889, Article 5.

however, that a large number of applicants possessed no high-ranking social or professional interest. Of the 134 applicants represented in the register, nearly half possessed some form of naval interest yet, of these, approximately 40 percent were the sons of non-commissioned officers: pursers, masters, surgeons, clerks, and dockyard workers.⁵⁰ From the non-naval categories a sizable group of applicants (15 percent) hailed from trade/merchant and clergy backgrounds. According to the marginal notes, written by various Admiralty secretaries, the majority of these applicants were successful in gaining an appointment. Such evidence tends to contradict notions of an Admiralty bent on transforming the midshipmen's berth into a preserve for the social elite, although it is possible that the goal was political rather than social exclusivity. It is interesting to note that of the eight applicants who claimed connections to a peer, five were peers with strong Tory affiliations. Two were also Scots peers with unequivocal ties to the Wellington ministry and to Melville himself.⁵¹

Aside from these high-ranking candidates, the applications generally show a high degree of social diversity, with the lower socio-economic orders well represented at the entry level.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Appendix L, "V1 Applicants, 1830-31."

⁵¹ The Tory/Scots peerage connections applied to: Alexander, the son of Lord Kennedy; and William Grierson, a follower of the Marquess of Queensbury. For references: s.v. "David Kennedy, 10th Earl of Cassillis," in *ODNB* (2004); and Clyve Jones and David Lewis Jones, eds., *Peers, Politics, and Power: The House of Lords, 1603-1911* (London, 1989), pp. 242-43. The remaining three with connections to Tory peers included: Thomas Coote, the nephew of Sir Robert Shaw, Bart., a Tory MP for Dublin; Amelius Beauclerk, nephew of Admiral Lord Amelius Beauclerk, and the son of the 8th Duke of St. Albans; and Henry Pelham Clinton, son of the Duke of Newcastle. For references to Shaw see B. M. Walker, *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801-1922* (Dublin, 1978). For Beauclerk and Clinton: s.v. "Lord Amelius Beauclerk," and "Henry Pelham Clinton, 4th Duke of Newcastle," in *ODNB* (2004). It is worth noting that Kennedy was approved on November 25, 1830, the last day of Melville's Admiralty. The remaining three applicants with peerage connections were: William Butler, nephew of the Earl of Kilkenny; Spencer, the son of Lord Lyttleton; and Ralph Thomas Gore, nephew of Sir Ralph Gore. William Henry, 3rd Baron Lyttleton was an Irish peer and a Whig, see Bernard Burke, *Genealogical and Heraldic Dictionary or the Peerage and Baronetage etc.*, 50th edition (London, 1888), p. 894. The political affiliations of Kilkenny and Gore could not be traced in the sources consulted.

⁵² See Appendix L, taken from ADM 6/198. This data differs substantially from Lewis's figures on the social composition of the commissioned officer corps. Lewis's data shows that in the post-war decades the presence

Table 9.1 Proportion of Applications by Socio/Professional Category (Combined Totals)

<u>Socio/Professional Connections</u>	<u>%</u>
N = Navy	43%
A = Army	16%
G = Gentry	14%
C = Clergy	8%
T = Trade/Merchant	7%
B = Peerage	5%
E = Professional	5%
P = Politics	2%

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM6/198, “1st Class Volunteer Applications, 1830-1831.”

Here, as in the main samples, the percentage shown is of the combined total which counts all affiliations in each category.

Another indicator of the Admiralty’s relatively inclusive attitudes towards recruitment was the fact that approximately 20 percent of all applicants claimed some form of financial hardship. Many situations involved the death of the father who had served in either the navy or the army during the wars and the plight of his widow and children. Only one hardship application received a summary dismissal – on grounds which related specifically to the stipulations included at the bottom of the application forms. The caveat specified that: “Parents or other persons applying for Young Gentlemen . . . should understand that about £40. or £50. a year must be provided for them by their Families, until they shall attain the rank of Commissioned Officer.”⁵³

This requirement suggests that the litmus test for aspiring officers (apart from political concerns) was economic rather than social. So long as a volunteer could afford to maintain the appearance of a gentleman, something that even the Admiralty understood could not be achieved on salary alone, he was eligible for consideration. Unfortunately for fourteen-year old William Sheere Panchen, his late father’s service as a master did not mitigate the problem of his mother’s insolvency. She noted on the application:

of commissioned officers with family ties to “business or commerce” fell to virtually nil, while the appearance of officers with clergy backgrounds dropped dramatically. Lewis, *Transition*, p. 22.

⁵³ ADM 6/198.

With respect to the 40£ per annum it is quite out of my power being a widow with 7 children, having no income but my pension and an allowance of 5£ pr. annum for 5 of them from the Compassionate Fund.

Such candor was of little help to William or his mother. The overleaf notation made by second Secretary, John Barrow was terse: “Acquaint her as she cannot comply with the note, at the foot of this paper, her son cannot be admitted into H. M. Service.”⁵⁴ While the Admiralty was not averse to entering the sons of booksellers, brewers, or “merchants”⁵⁵ as 1st class volunteers, the most obvious prerequisite for all was an ability to furnish the necessary allowance. In the case of James Edward Hibbert, son of a merchant, a hardship petition was qualified by the family’s willingness to pay:

Mrs. Hibbert is a widow, left with nine children which she hopes will plead as an excuse for troubling Their Lordships - is perfectly ready to allow everything proper and necessary to enable [James] to support the character of a young gentleman in his Majesty’s Fleet.⁵⁶

Needless to say, James received an appointment. Of the twenty-three applicants who claimed gentry status⁵⁷ a desire to convey their financial security was, for many, of paramount importance. James John Hamilton Esq. of Ballymacoll, County Meath responded to the question of “Father’s Profession, or Rank” with the declaration: “None whatever, being a Gentleman of fortune.” Hamilton then proceeded to catalog his son’s pedigree for two generations on either side of the family. For other gentry sons social and political connections were of greater importance. Thomas Charles Coote, the son of a “private gentleman” was also the grandson of the late Earl Bellemont, the nephew of the late Lord Cremorne, and the nephew of the Sir Robert Shaw, MP. For the sons of peers the

⁵⁴ ADM 6/198, Application for William Sheere Panchen.

⁵⁵ Two applicants were the sons of newspaper merchants and booksellers (Nettelton and Motley), three were the sons of brewers (Perkins, Lambert, and Scott), four were the sons of merchants (Hibbert, Surtees, Parish, and Hooper), and one was the son a man with “manufacturing concerns in London,” (Douglas). See ADM 6/198 and Appendix L.

⁵⁶ ADM 6/198, Application for James Edward Hibbert.

⁵⁷ This included gentry status alone or combined with other connections.

need to explain anything beyond father's name was, in most cases, considered moot.

Edward Pelham Clinton, son of the Duke of Newcastle was qualified by "one year at Eton" and nothing else. The sons of Lords Lyttelton and Kennedy apparently required no justification for entry beyond their fathers' rank. Vice-Admiral Lord Amelius Beauclerk signed the application for his nephew, son of the 8th Duke of St. Albans, in a heavy hand which may have conveyed some irritation at the new regulations which all but erased his powers of patronage independent of the Admiralty Board.⁵⁸ If a peer of the realm who was also an admiral could not directly appoint a family member, then the old system of recruitment was effectively dead.

Only one application voiced overt frustration at the sudden change in the entry process. Commander Richard Bluett noted that his son William had been

Brought up under the impression that he was to enter the service when educated and had not the new regulations interfered [he?] would have been received into the Royal Naval College, having been a candidate in January 1828.⁵⁹

Two other applicants took the opportunity to remind the Lords Commissioners of their unfulfilled promises. Lt. Thomas Tildesley included a long history of his son's having entered as a 2nd class volunteer and his service at the Battle of Navarino, after which he was beached for two years with the "understanding that the Admiralty should permit him to enter as 1st class if any Captain would apply for him."⁶⁰ James George Lyon's father, a clergyman from Pulford, maintained only a thin veil of civility, noting that after two years at the Royal Naval College his son was still serving aboard a hulk despite the Lords

⁵⁸ ADM 6/198, Application for Amelius Beauclerk.

⁵⁹ ADM 6/198, Application for William Rowley Bluett.

⁶⁰ ADM 6/198, Application for Thomas Edward Tildesley.

Commissioners having “signified their intention of appointing him to the Rainbow as soon as he was discharged from the college.”⁶¹

In general the tone of the applications was less contentious – perhaps because roughly 60 percent of all applicants were the sons, grandsons, or nephews of naval personnel or army officers, most of whom understood the need to defer to the omnipotence of the naval and military bureaucracies. From this group nearly one quarter of the applicants claimed entitlement as the relatives of French War veterans, naval or military, and of these roughly half also claimed hardship as a consequence of losses during the conflict.⁶² Lt. Jonathan Nicolls used the application to plead a case for himself as well as his son.

I would be better qualified to allow my son 40 or £50 per an. were I superannuated, being a disabled officer, in consequence of wounds and having only my half pay to support myself and family however, I shall endeavour to comply with your Lordship’s regulations (as below) [regarding the allowance] as far as in my power.⁶³

A large portion of the applicants, approximately 20 percent, cited a boy’s skills in seamanship, mathematics and trigonometry, and/or foreign languages as justification for an appointment. The guardian of Charles Otway, however, thought it valuable to stress more gentlemanly skills stating that the boy “Has been taught Drawing, Fencing, Dancing . . .” as well as “reading Virgil and Caesar.”⁶⁴ Other applicants cited a boy’s inclination for the service⁶⁵ or a constitution well suited to a life at sea.⁶⁶

⁶¹ ADM 6/198, Application for James George Lyons.

⁶² For example, Robert Anthony Edwards Scott’s father had served as a purser in “three severe actions two of which were general ones,” while Henry Warburton’s father had been an army major who served in the Peninsular War. He died leaving a widow with seven children, ADM 6/198.

⁶³ ADM 6/198, Application for Hugh Montgomery Nicolls.

⁶⁴ ADM 6/198, Application for Charles William Otway.

⁶⁵ Sixteen-year old David Kennedy, the son of an army captain, had “a decided objection to every other profession but the navy,” while Charles Rainier’s father noted that the “naval service has been his choice from infancy.” ADM 6/198, Applications for David William Henry Kennedy and Charles Rainier.

Table 9.2 Breakdown of Petitions for 1st Class Volunteers, 1830-31.

Cited reasons for Appointment as a 1st Class Volunteer	
Veteran connection	24%
Skills: naval or educational	20%
Hardship	15%
Worthy naval connections	11%
Inclination for the sea/naval career	9%
Good Social connections	8%
Good character	8%
Good health/constitution	4%

Source: ADM 6/198.

Note: Counts only those applications who included an entry in the “Other Notes” section.

Overall these applications provide evidence of a persistent, if diminishing, social diversity among prospective sea officers. The dominance of naval and military connections among applicants echoes Brian Vale’s observation of a continued Admiralty support for veterans – at least when it came to providing entry-level opportunities for their offspring. There was, however, some degree of economic homogeneity among candidates as all serious contenders had to comply with the allowance requirements. This stipulation alone weeded out boys whose parents could not afford to support them as gentlemen, and testified to the increasing importance of wealth as an indicator of suitability, even when it came from trade or manufacturing.

The register for 1830 is an invaluable resource for entry-level recruits and it is unfortunate, from the research point of view, that the practice of submitting applications to the Admiralty was so short lived.⁶⁷ An Order in Council of January 7, 1831⁶⁸ abolished the application process, possibly in response to its unpopularity among senior officers who

⁶⁶ At fifteen, William Mooney possessed a “robust constitution” and was “remarkably strong for his age.” William Butler’s father thought it necessary to apprise the Admiralty of his son’s physical fortitude which was “not likely to be affected by the hardships incidental to a seafaring life,” ADM 6/198, Applications for William Mooney and William Butler.

⁶⁷ From its inception, the U.S. Navy required prospective midshipmen to fill out applications. See McKee, *A Gentlemanly and Honorable Profession*, Chapter 4.

⁶⁸ Rodger, “Education,” p. 144.

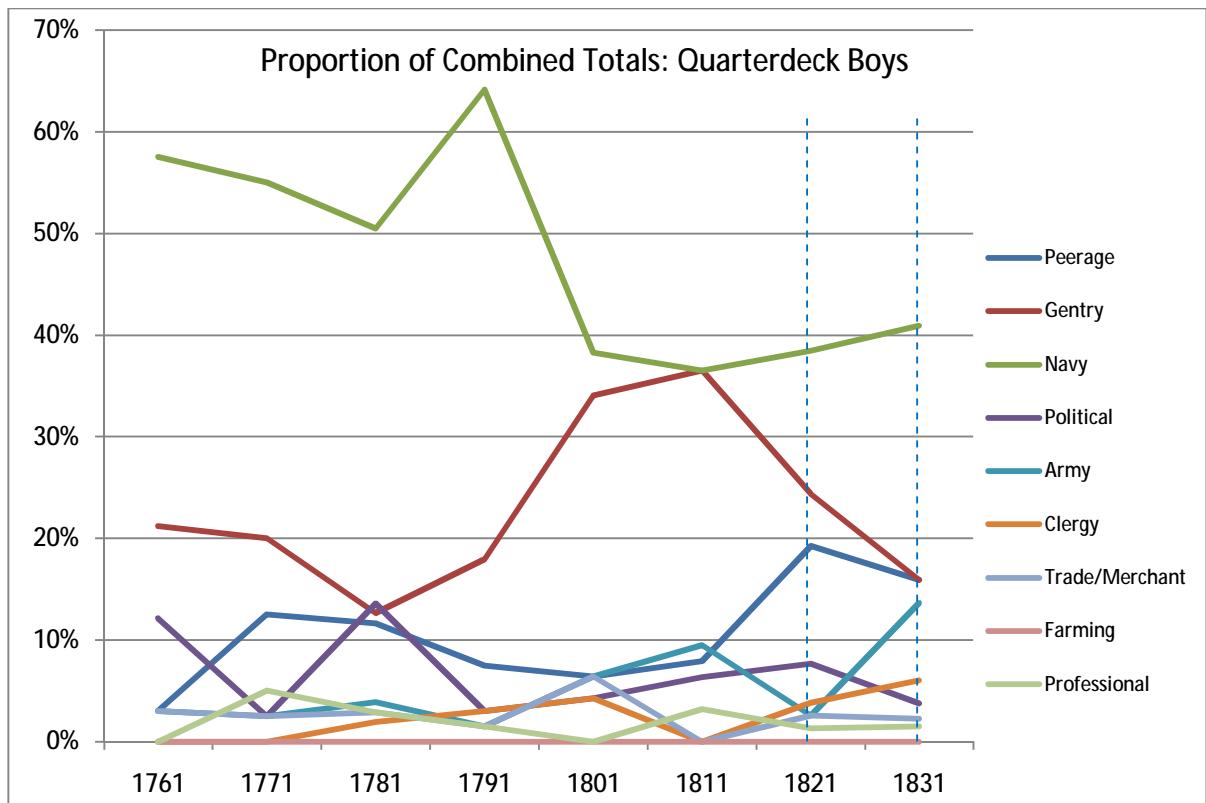
saw it for exactly what it was: the final nail in the coffin of captains' prerogative when it came to nominating volunteers.

c. *The proportional data*

The social background information detailed in the volunteer applications is, in many respects, consistent with the results shown in the combined data for quarterdeck boys in 1831. First, the proportional representation shows a slow rise in the importance of naval connections and a sharp rise in the appearance of army connections. In terms of percentages the two data sets marry with surprising accuracy for these particular categories. In the quarterdeck boys' (QDB) sample for 1831 naval connections accounted for 41 percent and army for 14 percent of the traceable candidates. The applications for 1st class volunteers (V1) showed 43 percent and 16 percent respectively. There was also a close match between the two sources when it came to gentry connections (16 percent QDB sample/13 percent V1 applications), clergy connections (6 percent QDB/8 percent V1), and political influence (4 percent QDB/3 percent V1).⁶⁹ Such similar results suggest a reasonable degree of accuracy in the quarterdeck boys' sample.

⁶⁹ While it must be noted that politics certainly played a larger role in the appointment of young gentlemen in the post war years, the sampling methods used were not able to distinguish a significant change in the importance of political connections.

Figure 9.3 Proportion of Combined Totals, Quarterdeck Boys, 1821-1831



The results diverged, however, when it came to the peerage. The primary databases shows that boys with connections to the nobility increased sharply in 1821 when their presence was more than double the showing in the 1811 sample. For the first time since the American War, the proportion of peerage connections appeared in the double-digits, and reached its highest point within the scope of the quarterdeck boys' survey. The numbers fell slightly in 1831, although the proportion of noble boys was still three times greater in the sample data than in the volunteer applications.⁷⁰

The slight fall-off in 1831 may indicate that peers were less willing to conform to regulations which demanded that they complete a formal application, placing themselves and their sons on an ostensibly equal footing with all other applicants. It is interesting to note that the abolition of the more “democratic” application process was overseen by Sir

⁷⁰ Peerage connections: 5% in the V1 applications, 16% in the QDB sample.

James Graham, First Lord under the new Whig ministry⁷¹ which supposedly championed socio-political reform and the entrepreneurial ideal. While the relatively high proportion of boys with trade/merchant or professional connections seen in the volunteer applications⁷² indicates that even Tories supported more inclusive approaches to recruitment, the overall increase in the presence of the elites suggests that old-order paternalism had its champions on both sides of the political aisle.⁷³ It is likely, however, that the application process was extremely unpopular with captains and admirals regardless of their politics, and that this unpopularity eventually forced a withdrawal of the policy.⁷⁴

While peerage influence remained high in the sample data for 1831 it is possible that the downward trend in the appearance of both groups of the social elite was a reaction to the political change and the uncertainty that accompanied the end of an era of Tory hegemony. It is also possible that Whig associations with the mercantile and professional classes also necessitated a visible rejection of the tools associated with old-order corruption and jobbery which had always favored the elite.⁷⁵ The depth of political sentiment as it related to naval advancement was described by John Boteler, a vocal Tory, whose career progressed rapidly to the rank of commander, then promptly stalled in 1831.

⁷¹ The change over in government relative to the navy occurred in November 1830, with the new First Lord taking office on November 25.

⁷² The proportion of trade/merchant and professional connections was significantly higher in the volunteer applications than in the sample data. Trade/merchant: 7% V1 applications, 2% QDB sample. Professional: 5% V1 applications, 2% QDB sample.

⁷³ Perkin cites variations on the theme: from the Whig perspective there was Malthus the “apologist of power without responsibility,” who saw a “dialogue between the aristocratic and entrepreneurial ideals” while Sadler, a High Tory, railed “as much against the betrayers of paternalism as against the new entrepreneurial ideal.” See Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 238-40. *Blackwood’s* magazine of 1829 attempted to clarify the principles of the “new” Tory conservatism: “As Tories we maintain it is the duty of the people to pay obedience to those over them: but it is also the duty of those set in authority to protect those who are placed below them.” See *Blackwood’s*, XXVI, 1829 quoted in Perkin, *Origins*, p. 250.

⁷⁴ Dandeker notes that: “While the interests of the Admiralty were to be deferred to, this did not mean for most officers that they would accept any efforts on its part to monopolize occupational rewards [patronage and promotion],” see Dandeker, “Patronage,” p. 308. If any internal uproar did occur it was kept very quiet as no direct evidence of a protest against the application process could be found.

⁷⁵ This, ironically, included the application process. *Ibid.*, p. 309; Perkin, *Origins*, p. 223.

Applying for a position in the coast guard, Boteler was grilled about his political affiliations by Admiral Sir Thomas Troubridge, a loyal Whig. Troubridge then announced: “If we have an appointment to dispose of, and A is for us, and B against us, we give it to A.” The position was given instead to Boteler’s brother, Henry, the “only Whig in the family.”⁷⁶

It should be restated that these statistics, like all those presented in this study, are snap shots of recruiting decisions at very particular, very narrow moments in time. The sample, which was taken in the first half of 1831, therefore reflects only short-term socio-political reactions to recruitment. As 1831 is the last year to be addressed here, it is difficult to determine how the trends progressed into the next decade and beyond. It is, however, reasonable to assert that the downward trend in the presence of the social and power elites among entry-level recruits bore no direct relationship to who actually got ahead in the junior officer and commissioned ranks in 1831. The data for junior officers, presented below, shows no similar pattern of decline among the elites while Michael Lewis’s data on commissioned officers shows a substantial increase in the presence of commissioned officers with powerful social and political connections after the war.⁷⁷

Such differences suggest that the socio-professional conditions of entry for 1st class volunteers did not necessarily apply to the more senior young gentlemen’s ratings and that it may have been easier for the middle classes to gain a start on a naval career than it was for them to advance.

⁷⁶ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 248.

⁷⁷ Lewis, *Transition*, p. 22.

3. Junior officers: a “desperate service”

Well before the peace an unnamed young lieutenant summed up the limitations for the unconnected: “a fellow has now no chance of promotion unless he jumps into the muzzle of a gun and crawls out of the touch hole.”⁷⁸ Such a lament suggested that those without powerful social and/or political interest had only one path open to them – that of uncommon valor. Yet in the years following Waterloo opportunities for such displays of “desperate service”⁷⁹ faded and the avenues to advancement by merit narrowed to a virtual impasse.⁸⁰

Obtaining a place on the coveted Admiralty list became all important as centralized control over junior officer appointments tightened. Even for the well-connected, the road was far from easy. Young Charles Drinkwater was a talented midshipman who passed the examination for lieutenant in 1822 at age nineteen while on station at the port of Callao in Peru. His father, a colonel in the army, had achieved fame with his account of Nelson’s heroism at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent,⁸¹ and went on to a position as “comptroller in charge of army accounts.”⁸² Despite Charles’s connections and his reputation as “the finest young man” aboard Hardy’s flagship, he found himself having to sit the lieutenants’ examination a second time, upon his return to England in 1826, so that he could be placed on the Admiralty list along with graduates from the Royal Naval College. Sir George

⁷⁸ Hamilton, *Byam Martin*, Vol. 1, p. 66. Also quoted in Joseph Conrad, “The Heroic Age,” in *The Mirror of the Sea* (Marlboro, VT, 1988), p. 165.

⁷⁹ Conrad, “Heroic Age,” p. 166.

⁸⁰ Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, *Steam, Politics and Patronage: The Transformation of the Royal Navy, 1815-1854* (London, 1994), pp. 74-75, 91. It should also be noted that the smaller wars and conflicts that erupted between 1840 and the end of the century allowed greater opportunities for displays of meritorious service, while the interest in Arctic exploration opened other paths to advancement.

⁸¹ Colonel Drinkwater’s book *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the British Fleet, Commanded by Admiral Sir John Jervis, in the late action with the Spanish Fleet on the 14th of February, 1797 etc.* was published immediately after the battle and helped propel Nelson’s reputation.

⁸² Vale, “Appointment, Promotion and ‘Interest’,” p. 62.

Cockburn's advice⁸³ in this matter proved sound and Drinkwater received his commission soon after.⁸⁴ Ultimately Drinkwater owed his advancement to powerful naval, social, and political connections – interests that summed up the character of most junior officer appointments after 1815.

a. *Discussion of the data: peace and the social polarization of the midshipmen's berth*

The most significant element of the data for junior officers in the post-war years was the marked improvement in the traceability of the sample. In 1821 a total of 103 out of 237 junior officers (44 percent) were traceable to one or more of the nine socio-professional categories. An additional fifty-nine candidates were found without traceable backgrounds bringing the overall known sample to 68 percent. The data for 1831 was similarly abundant. Of the 225 junior officers surveyed, 109 (48 percent) were traceable in terms of their social background while another forty-four turned up career histories only, also bringing the total known subjects to 68 percent. Overall, the last two sample years for junior officers yielded the highest proportion of junior officers who were, to some extent, traceable.

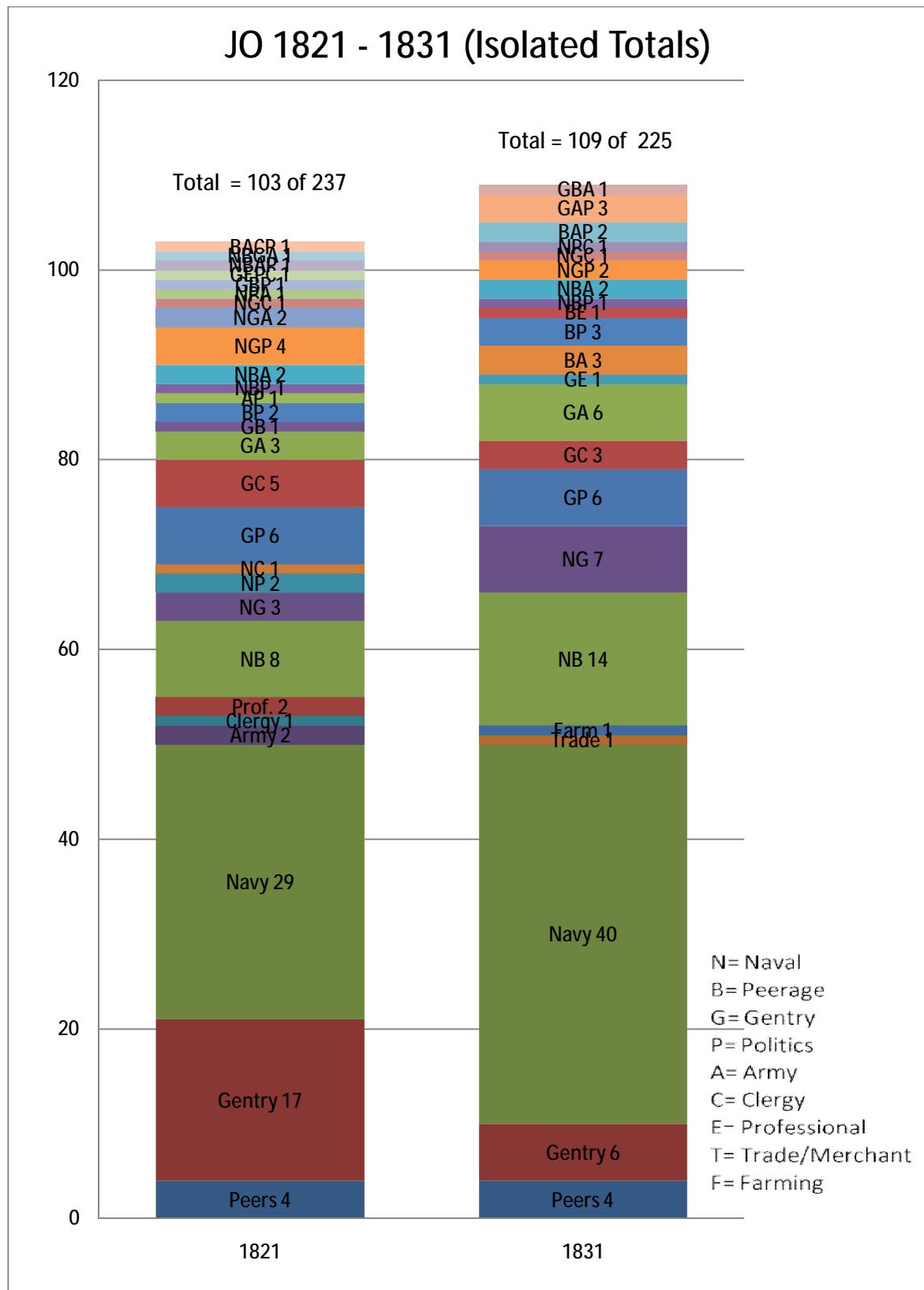
The most striking development in the isolated data is the significant increase in the appearance of candidates with *only* naval connections which accounted for 29 percent of the traceable sample in 1821, and 37 percent in 1831. When combined with figures from naval and other interest, the proportions jump to 55 percent and 62 percent respectively. Compared with both the wartime years of 1801 and 1811, when total naval presence accounted for roughly 44 percent of the traceable sample, the post-war years show a distinct increase in the importance of naval interest. Army connections also showed an

⁸³ Cockburn was captain of the *Minerve* at the battle of Cape St. Vincent (aboard which Col. Drinkwater was passenger). Accordingly, Cockburn featured heavily in the colonel's account. See Morriss, *Cockburn*, pp. 30-31.

⁸⁴ Vale, “"Appointment, Promotion and 'Interest',” pp. 63-64.

increase of 4 to 6 percent during the post-war years. These findings are consistent with those of the quarterdeck boys' sample which showed a distinct preference for the sons of naval and military veterans in the decade and a half after the peace.

Figure 9.4 Junior Officers 1821 and 1831 (Isolated Totals)

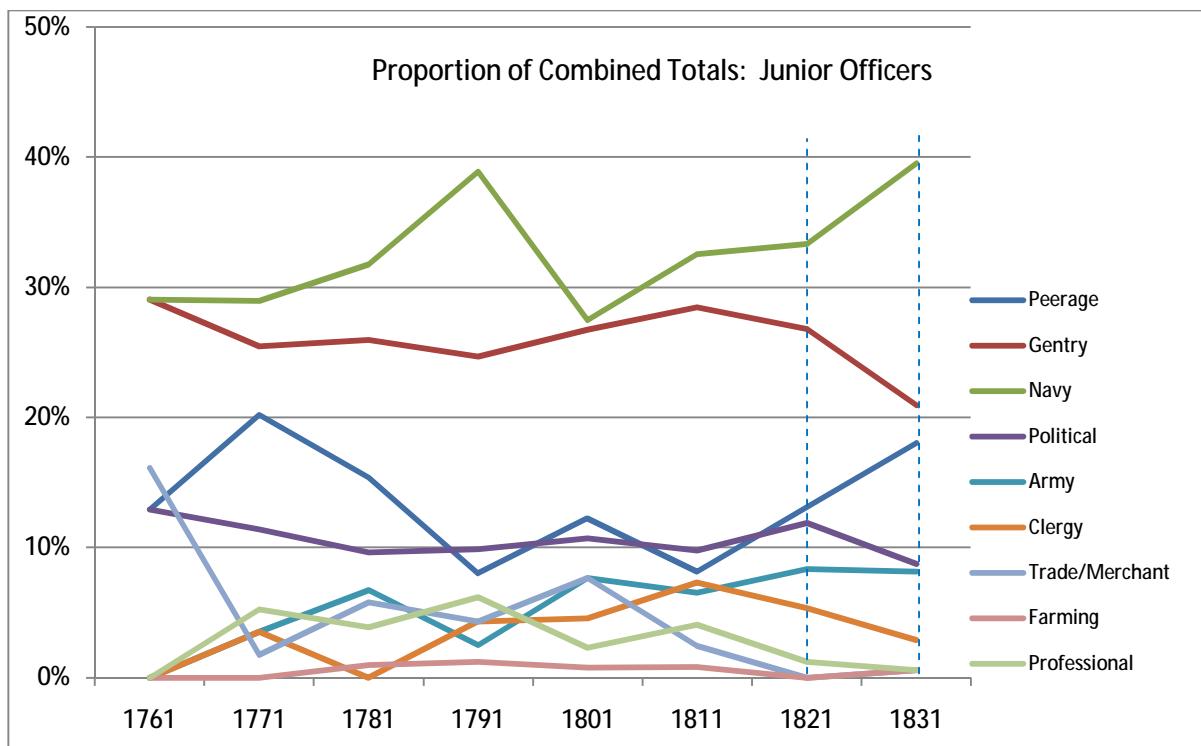


The data sets for junior officers and quarterdeck boys differ, however, in matters of social and political interest. Peerage connections, alone and combined with other interest, increased steadily in 1821 (22 of 103) and by 1831 represented nearly one third of the traceable sample (31 of 109), more than twice the proportion visible in the quarterdeck boys' sample for the same year. Among junior officers it should be noted, however, that peerage influence in 1831 still represented a smaller proportion of the traceable sample than in 1771, when aristocratic connections reached their highest point within the scope of this study.⁸⁵

Along with the rise in peerage interest, political influence was proportionally more visible in the data for junior officers in 1821 (20 percent) than during the war years (16 percent in 1811), although in all cases it appeared in tandem with other naval or social connections. By 1831, however, the proportion of political interest fell slightly below its wartime levels. It is possible that this drop was related to the change in government and that the January-to-June sample period for this study caught a slump in political maneuvering in naval matters, as the new government concentrated all efforts on the Reform Bill. It is also possible that the fall-off in political influence was related to the downward trend in the appearance of gentry sons whose father's were also engaged in politics at various levels. By 1831 gentry influence was roughly three quarters of what it had been in 1811, a change that becomes more visible in the combined data.

⁸⁵ It should be noted, however, that the number of traceable candidates in 1771 was substantially smaller than in 1831.

Figure 9.5 Proportion of Combined Totals, Junior Officers, 1821-1831



The steep climb in the importance of peerage influence is seen here in relation to the sharp decline in gentry influence and the shallow fall-off in political connections. This representation also makes clear the decline in the appearance of professional interest (outside of the naval and military spheres), and the almost complete disappearance of trade/merchant interest by 1831.

It is difficult to isolate a coherent explanation for the data patterns, which on the one hand reflect a resurgence of patrician dominance in the early months of the new Whig administration and on the other, show a significant decline in gentry influence and the importance of political connections. 1831 in fact, saw gentry influence at its lowest point within the scope of the junior officers' survey. Such a separation in the movements of peerage and gentry influence is, however, consistent with the results found in other sample years. Overall the data tends to support the theory that the two were considered

independent social entities within the framework of the patrician classes. The perceived characteristics of each group changed with movements in the political and cultural climate so that both groups were favored differently at different times when it came to naval recruitment. It must be noted that despite the opposing movements within each category, 1831 saw the combined representations of both peerage (18 percent) and gentry (21 percent) reach a point of virtual equality. Only the 1771 sample approached this level of parity with a difference of 5 percentage points separating the two elites.

Together the social elites matched the level of naval influence in 1831 (39 to 40 percent of the traceable sample respectively). It should be noted however, that the vast majority of peerage and gentry sons also possessed naval connections within the immediate family. While the combined data for quarterdeck boys, and particularly the volunteer applications for 1830-31, suggest a continuing social diversity among entry-level recruits, such diversity is significantly reduced in the junior officers' sample. A large proportion of midshipmen, mates, and even masters' assistants were, by 1831, drawn from the naval and aristocratic elites. As Rodger notes:

By the 1830s admission to the Royal Navy as a future officer had become extremely difficult for anyone who was not reasonably wealthy, well born, and preferably also well connected either with the party of government, or with senior officials afloat.⁸⁶

Of the 145 junior officers from 1821 who reached commissioned rank, 71 percent claimed naval, peerage, and/or gentry backgrounds. In 1831 that proportion rose to 77 percent – the decline in gentry influence being more than made up for in peerage connections.⁸⁷ If political influence is added to the mix, then the representation of the

⁸⁶ Rodger, "Officers, Gentlemen and their Education," p. 144.

⁸⁷ This is 77 percent of 112 junior officers who reached commissioned rank. See Appendices G7-G8, "Junior Officers 1821-1831: Calculations."

power elites (naval, social, and political) increases to 84 percent in 1821 and 86 percent of those with traceable career histories in 1831.⁸⁸

It is worth noting that the junior officers' samples for 1821 and 1831 presented the only times during the course of this study in which naval and peerage influences moved in parallel trends rather than in equal and opposite directions. This suggests a growing post-war alignment of the two groups, and is likely to be in some part reflective of the increased number of peers and baronets created as rewards for meritorious conduct during the French Wars. Five of the twenty-two junior officers with peerage connections from the 1821 sample were the sons, nephews, or grandsons of "service" peers.⁸⁹ In 1831 seven of thirty-one were the descendants of service creations.⁹⁰ For both years these figures represented nearly one quarter of all the candidates with peerage connections. The synchronous rise in naval and peerage influence is also remarkable for the fact that, after 1821, they represented the only groups increasing in relative importance while all others were in decline.

b. Ages and rates of promotion to commissioned rank

There is also evidence of an alignment between naval and social influence in the declining average ages of junior officers. As the sons of sea officers were permitted to begin their careers at an earlier age they were generally able to gain a firmer foothold on a career. The sons of the elite were also able to leverage social and political influence to gain an early start for their sons and relatives. As a result the average junior officer in 1831 was younger than any of his predecessors from this survey. On average, midshipmen, mates,

⁸⁸ Appendices G7-G8, "Calculations."

⁸⁹ In 1821 Richard Freedman Rowley, Alexander Mile, Henry Blackwood, Charles Napier, and Adam Camperdown Duncan were all connected by blood to "service" peers, Appendix G7.

⁹⁰ In 1831 John Borlase, Richard Hanmer Bunberry, George Pigot, Robert Waller Otway and Charles Cooke Otway, John Gore, and Graham Ogle were the sons, grandsons, or nephews of service peers, Appendix G8.

and masters' assistants from 1831 were 18.13 years old – a figure that was only approached in 1761 when the average age of the known sample was 18.76 years old.⁹¹ When the average ages of the total sample and of the social elites (peerage and gentry) are compared, a growing alignment between the two becomes visible over time.

Table 9.3 Comparison of Average Ages for Junior Officers, 1761 – 1831.

<u>Ave Ages in Yrs</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Ave Age JOs	18.76	21.23	19.02	22.00	22.17	18.96	20.82	18.13
Ave Age JO Social Elites	17.50*	18.92	14.70†	19.98	18.84	17.32	20.23	18.11
Ave Age JO Naval	18.00*	17.68	16.35	19.61	19.66	17.97	20.64	18.08

* Denotes averages based on very small amounts of data which do not assure a representative assessment of the averages. See Appendix D for a summary of all age calculations.

†This represents the lowest average age of any group of junior officers surveyed. It is possible that the large number of young midshipmen may reflect a significant number of "false muster" cases. The average age calculations shown here do, however, all conform to the same rules of calculation.

Sources: Appendices G1-G8, "Junior Officers 1761-1831: Ages"

While the elite junior officers became older, they also came to represent more of the total sample and therefore became more representative of the average age.

Of the 231 junior officers in 1831 who turned up information on their age, over half belonged to the naval/social categories. The remaining 46 percent, however, pose something of a problem.⁹² In the years up until 1815 it has been generally assumed that a good portion of the sample candidates who remained unaccounted for were lower-deck men or recruits who had been raised to the rating of midshipmen but had no real prospects of becoming commissioned officers. The fact that the average age of the unknowns tended to be older than the average age of the whole sample for any given year provides some support for this assumption.⁹³ In 1831 however, the unknowns showed an average age that was substantially lower than the average age for all junior officers – lower even than the

⁹¹ See Appendix D, "Ages and Passing Times of Junior Officers, 1761-1831." It must be noted that only a small number of junior officers turned up age information in 1761.

⁹² For age details on the various categories see Appendix G8, "Junior Officers 1831: Ave Ages."

⁹³ See Table 9.4 below and Appendix D for a full summary of the age differentials.

average ages of those with elite social and naval connections. The same was also true for unknowns in 1821, making it difficult to dismiss these subjects as “old mates” or aging French War veterans.

Table 9.4 Junior Officer Average Age Comparisons, 1801 -1831

	<u>Ave Age of Total Sample (in yrs)</u>	<u>Ave Age of Unknowns (in yrs)</u>	<u>Difference for Unknowns (in yrs)</u>
1801	22.14	23.17	+ 1.03
1811	18.97	19.44	+ 0.47
1821	20.82	20.41	- 0.41
1831	18.13	17.45	- 0.68

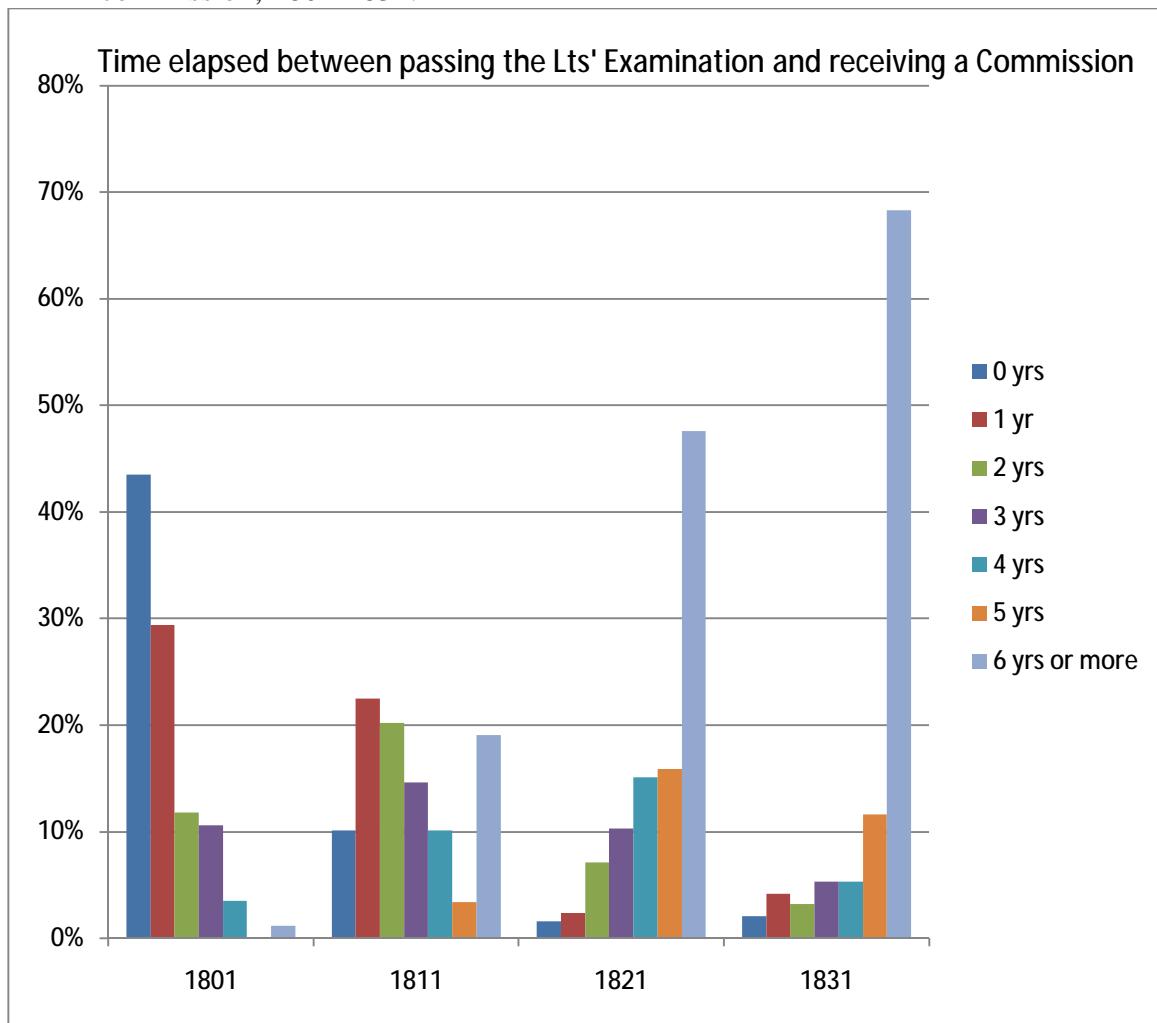
Sources: Appendices G5-G8, “Junior Officers 1801-1831: Ages.”

This suggests that a high proportion of the unaccounted junior officers in both the post-war sample years were, in fact, “young gentlemen” with hopes of one day becoming commissioned officers or masters. Explanations as to why they remained untraceable are elusive although it is fair to say that they possessed no obvious social, political, or naval connections visible in the reference sources used here. It is also likely that these young men did not pursue a naval career and that the vast majority did not sit the examination for lieutenant.⁹⁴

In terms of those who did sit the examination, the career progress a young gentleman could expect to make slowed dramatically between 1801 and 1831.

⁹⁴ Many do not appear in the index of Lieutenants’ Passing Certificates. See Pappalardo, *Passing Certificates, Vols. 1&2*.

Figure 9.6 Time Elapsed between passing the Lts' Examination and receiving a commission, 1801-1831.



Source: Appendices G5-G8, "Junior Officers 1801-1831: Ages and Ranks."⁹⁵

Note: The percentages shown are of the total for each year whose careers could be traced.

While the vast majority (73 percent of the known sample) of junior officers from 1801 who passed the examination received their commission within one year, the pressures of an overburdened officer corps were becoming clear by 1811. The proportion of passed midshipmen and mates who received their commission in the same year as passing fell

⁹⁵ The breakdown of the proportion of Junior Officers with traceable careers is as follows:

1801:	85 of 283	(30%) of the total sample
1811:	89 of 286	(31 %) of the total sample
1821:	126 of 237	(53 %) of the total sample
1831:	95 of 225	(42%) of the total sample

more than 30 percent from 1801, while 67 percent of candidates found themselves waiting two years or more to be promoted. In 1821 prospects were dire with 48 percent of passed junior officers waiting six years or more for a promotion. In 1831 that figure rose to 68 percent.

This also meant that the average age of new lieutenants increased after 1815.

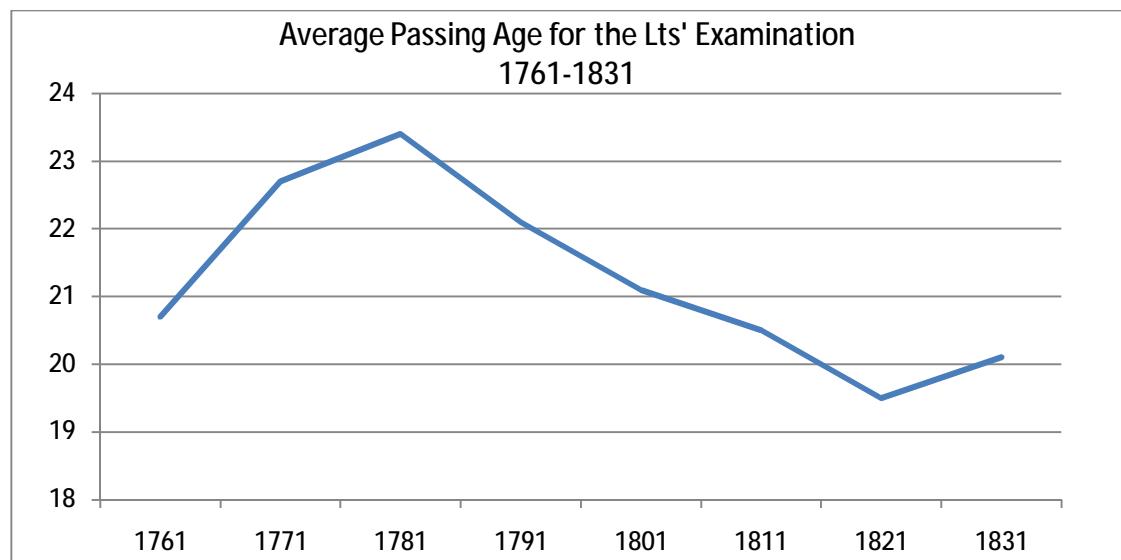
Table 9.5 Average Age of New Lieutenants, 1761 to 1831

<u>Age in Yrs</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Age of New Lts.	26.30	25.33	27.23	24.37	22.67	24.04	25.42	26.67

Source: Appendices G1-G8. Also see Appendix D for a summary.

It is interesting to note the highest average age for new lieutenants was in 1781 at the height of the American conflict. Like the data presented in Chapter Six, Section 4 which showed that in 1781 as many “young gentlemen” waited six years or more for promotion as received their commission in the same year as passing, one explanation can be found in the large number of junior officers who were hold-overs from the Seven Years’ War, and were therefore older at the time they passed the examination. The higher average age in 1781 may also be reflective of the presence of a greater number of midshipmen and mates who had been raised from the lower deck and were typically older. While some lieutenants in 1821 may also have been hold-overs from the French Wars they were not, according to the age and background data, oldsters raised from the lower deck.

Figure 9.7 Average Passing Age for the Lieutenants' Examination, 1761-1831



After 1815 it is clear that while the average age of those who passed the examination was lower, the wait for commissions grew substantially longer, resulting in an older corps of new lieutenants. The nineteenth-century data, which represents a large segment of the samples from 1801 to 1831,⁹⁶ clearly shows that despite the overall rise in the social quality of the junior officers' corps, the shrinking supply of positions required aspirants to reevaluate expectations of a naval career.

In summary, the need for high social or naval connections became the determining factor for success in obtaining a junior officer's rating by 1831. Young gentlemen fortunate enough to secure a midshipman's appointment were, however, not assured of a career in the service or even of progressing to commissioned rank. After passing the examination the majority of young gentlemen still faced a very long wait before they could become lieutenants. The situation fostered a post-war navy populated by two sorts of young gentlemen, those who were destined for success, and those who never had a chance. What separated them were factors of birth, wealth, political association, and the ability of

⁹⁶ The known passing/promotion data reflects between 30 and 53 percent of the total samples from 1801 to 1831.

their families to exploit connections to the service, without which a young gentleman was all but professionally doomed.

c. *Public perception in the post-war years: the two faces of the modern midshipman*

This dichotomy within the ranks of junior officers was well documented in popular culture during the post-war years. Captain Frederick Marryat's novels often presented a view of officer aspirants as privileged, coddled young men who were ill-prepared for the hardships of the service. Like Marryat himself, the character of Frank Mildmay came from comfortable circumstances: "my father was a gentleman, and a man of considerable means." This did not prevent Frank from courting expulsion at school so that he might enter the service where he would be free of the tyranny of schoolmasters and be entitled to "a pint of wine a day."⁹⁷ Another of Marryat's heroes, Peter Simple, was the son of a clergyman who, "as the youngest brother of a noble family, had a lucrative living." Such circumstances did little to prepare Peter for the midshipmen's mess where he would be "thrashed all day long, and fare very badly" as, he was told, "the weakest always go to the wall there."⁹⁸ Midshipman Jack Easy owed his appointment to his father's wealth which provided a loan of a £1000 to Captain Wilson who was duly obliged to take the boy to sea. Jack's opulent lifestyle, haughty disobedience, and ironic adherence to the principles of equality and the "rights of man" were soon tamed by the harsh realities of the midshipmen's berth. His request for an elegant breakfast was summarily denied: "Coffee we have none – muffins we never see, dry toast cannot be made as we have no soft

⁹⁷ Frederick Marryat, *Frank Mildmay*, (New York, 2007), pp. 1, 8. First published in 1829.

⁹⁸ Frederick Marryat, *Peter Simple*, introduction by R. Brimley Johnson (London, 1921), p. 25. First published in 1834.

bread . . .,” while his first efforts on deck saw him trampled by marines who “were pleased at the joke and continued to dance over those who were down.”⁹⁹ The first lieutenant of Easy’s ship expressed a sentiment common among officers who had been raised in the navy of the late-eighteenth century: “in proportion as midshipmen assumed a cleaner and more gentlemanly appearance, so did they become more useless.”¹⁰⁰ Captain Wilson’s approach to his new charge was, necessarily, more philosophical.

Michael Scott’s midshipman, Tom Cringle got his start in the navy by “tormenting” everyone he knew “to exert all their interest, direct and indirect . . . upon the head and heart of Sir Barnaby Blueblazes, vice-admiral of the red squadron, [and] a Lord of the Admiralty . . .”¹⁰¹ Edward Howard’s Ralph Rattlin began life in very different circumstances – as an abandoned infant fostered to a degenerate sawyer. Yet, a windfall of money saw Ralph into a good school where he acquired a classical education and eventually a place as a midshipman.¹⁰² While Marryat, Scott, and Howard may have set their novels amidst the more exciting backdrop of the French Wars, their peacetime perspectives on the nature of opportunity for officer recruits were universally based on the post-war preoccupation with wealth and high-ranking social connections.

The contrast between those *with* and those *without* was a noteworthy theme in the majority of these novels. One of Jack Easy’s less fortunate colleagues was Mr. Asper, a master’s mate, and the son of a bankrupt merchant who developed “a very high respect for birth, and particularly for money, of which he had very little.” Without money, Asper “felt that his consequence was gone,” and that his career prospects had dried up with the bank

⁹⁹ Frederick Marryat, *Mr. Midshipman Easy* (Gloucestershire, 2005), pp. 38-39. First published in 1836.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁰¹ Michael Scott, *Tom Cringle’s Log*, ed. Dean King (New York, 1999), p. 3. First published in novel form in 1834.

¹⁰² Edward Howard, *Rattlin the Reefer*, ed. Frederick Marryat (Whitefish, MT, 2004), chapters 1 & 2. First published in 1838. “Reefer” was the sea-term used for young gentlemen.

account.¹⁰³ Marryat also noted the dead-end prospects of a young gentleman whose only fault was to be the son of a warrant officer and who “had now been long in the service, with little or no chance of promotion. He had suffered from indigence, from reflections upon his humble birth, from sarcasms on his appearance.”¹⁰⁴

For other post-war authors, a lack of funds was synonymous with bad breeding and ill manners. Although Edward Trelawney’s hero served as a midshipman in the years after Trafalgar, the author’s perspective was skewed by the era of Reform.¹⁰⁵ Coming aboard a new ship, Trelawney’s midshipman found himself surrounded by young gentlemen who had no family or connections and were “without money and ill provided with necessities,” factors which led them to steal his belongings.¹⁰⁶ For aspirants to suffer the ignominy of a lack of funds, family, or connections, getting ahead in the service was an uphill battle.

Popular art illustrated the two distinct sets of circumstances expressed in literature. George Cruikshank’s rendering of *The Progress of a Midshipman*, which was based on sketches by Marryat, catalogued the experiences of Master Blockhead, from his preparations to enter the service as a midshipman, to his triumphant donning of a lieutenant’s epaulette.

¹⁰³ Marryat, *Midshipman Easy*, p. 43.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ Trelawney invokes Malthus in his assessment of the inverse relationship between the size of his family and his parent’s ability to provide for them. Edward John Trelawney, *Adventures of a Younger Son*, 3rd edition (London, 1890), p. 29.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

Plate 1. "Fitting Out," George Cruikshank, 1820. Plate 1 of 7 from *The Progress of a Midshipman*.



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Cruikshank completed the sequence of seven etchings in 1820 and while it has been argued that the series “neither points a moral nor treats famous persons”¹⁰⁷ the message conveyed in the characterization of Blockhead is clear: a successful young gentleman needed social rank, wealth, and above all, connections in the service.

Plate 1 in the series, “Fitting Out,” answers two of these prerequisites. The comfortable circumstances of the family are conveyed by the genteel appointments of the room, the attire of the family, and the presence of a servant. The expense of sending a boy to sea in the post-war years is detailed in the range of clothing and items that spill from the sea-chest while Blockhead’s father examines a lengthy bill. Plate 2 in the series shows the

¹⁰⁷ Robert Patten, *George Cruikshank's Life, Times, and Art*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New Brunswick, NJ, 1992), p. 198.

young man entering the cockpit for the first time. The contrast between his well-appointed home and the gloom of the midshipmen's mess registers in the boy's shocked expression.

Plate 2. “[Master B introduced to the Mess &] Finding things not exactly what he expected,” George Cruikshank, 1820. Plate 1 of 7 from *The Progress of a Midshipman*.



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After a series of trials and tribulations in which Master B finds himself freezing in the middle watch, mastheaded, engaged in a dangerous action at sea, and waiting for chance to sit the lieutenants' examination, he is lucky enough to receive a commission. Back in the family home Blockhead, now fully grown, assesses the cut of his new uniform while the family looks on with admiration. Notable among them is the ruddy-nosed relative who also

happens to be an admiral.¹⁰⁸ The very specific use of color draws attention to the one character who is of central importance in the scene.

Plate 3. “Mr. B Promoted to Lieutenant: & first putting on his Uniform,” George Cruikshank, 1820. Plate 7 of 7 from *The Progress of a Midshipman*.



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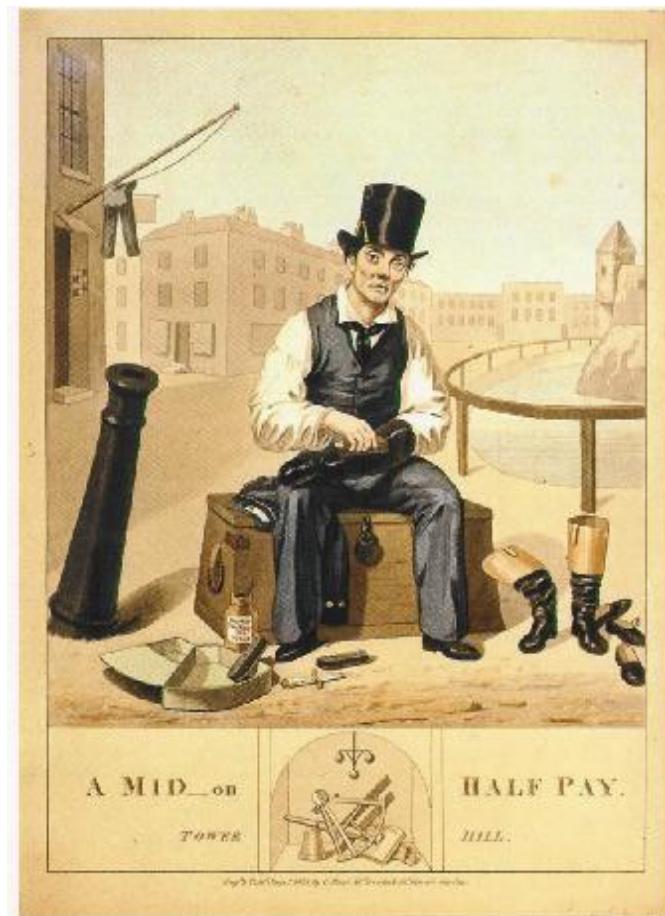
The presence of a high-ranking naval relative also provides an explanation for Blockhead's promotion despite his very unremarkable career.

The antithesis of Cruikshank's successful young hero is C. Hunt's “A Mid on Half Pay,” from 1825. The irony of the title is reflected in the desolate expression of the

¹⁰⁸ This version is a later color rendering which shows the red cuffs and collar instituted for commissioned officers and certain warrant officers by William IV in 1830. Midshipmen, mates, and volunteers continued to wear the same uniform described in Chapter 8, Section 2. Technically, Lieutenant Blockhead should also be sporting scarlet cuffs. See Miller, *Dressed to Kill*, p. 74. Other renderings of this sketch use different color palettes and do not always show the character at the far right as a sea officer although the lace, epaulettes, and unfashionable breeches imply a naval connection.

unemployed “oldster” who is forced to shine shoes on Tower Hill in order to scrape together a living. On the ground his sextant case now contains shoe brushes and a tin of Warren’s blacking. The window panel below the main illustration shows the fate of his instruments – telescope, sextant, sliding rule, and a copy of Hamilton Moore’s *New Practical Navigator* – all of which were pawned. One knee of his trousers is patched and despite attempts to keep up appearances, Hunt’s midshipman is a hollow-cheeked casualty of post-war retrenchment. He is also the victim of a system unwilling and unable to pension off junior officers with insufficient interest to obtain a “promotion out” and the security of a lieutenant’s half-pay.

Plate 4. “A Mid on Half Pay. Tower Hill,” by C. Hunt, 1825.



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This tragic character stands in stark contrast to Cruikshank's hero, whose concerns are less about survival and more about the cut of his new uniform. These artists captured two opposite, but equally powerful stereotypes of post-war recruitment. The popularity of both images, which were mass-produced for the print market, testified to the strength of public sentiment surrounding the plight of many young gentlemen after 1815. The euphoria of victory culture which motivated Britons throughout the wars quickly devolved into a tragic peacetime reality. As the cultural importance of the navy increased during the French Wars and the impact of naval victories became a defining characteristic of British identity,¹⁰⁹ the tribulations of veterans resonated with greater force. The social, moral, and operational concerns raised by mass demobilization and unemployment touched the vast majority of the population who were connected, by friends or relatives, to the service.¹¹⁰ The depth of concern was visible in the literary and artistic artifacts of popular culture for decades after the close of the war and was likely a contributing factor in the Admiralty's apparent willingness to accommodate its veterans with promotions out – or at the very least – with appointments for their sons.¹¹¹ Marryat, however, understood the true nature of the post-war appointment system:

Captain M_____’s character stood so high at the Admiralty, that the major part of the young *aspirants* who had been committed to his charge were of good family and connections. At that time very few of the aristocracy or gentry ventured to send their sons into the navy; whereas at present [1830] none but those classes can obtain admission.¹¹²

Back in 1800 *The Naval Chronicle* had published a biographical memoir of Nelson which stated that: “The life of Lord Nelson forcibly illustrates the remark, which he has often

¹⁰⁹ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, p. 197; Colley, “Whose Nation?” pp. 100-101.

¹¹⁰ Colley notes that “between 1800 and 1812 the number of adult males in Scotland, Wales and England involved in some form of military service was never less than one in six; in the crisis years of 1803-05 the proportion was often more than one in five,” Colley “Whose Nation?” p. 101.

¹¹¹ Vale, *A Frigate of King George*, pp. 64-67; also see Appendix L, “V1 Applicants, 1830-31.”

¹¹² Frederick Marryat, *The King’s Own* (London, 1873), p. 127. First published in 1830.

been heard to make, *that PERSEVERANCE in any Profession will most probably meet its rewards, without the influence of any contingent interest.*¹¹³ Twenty years later it was clear that the Nelsonian principle of “merit will out” was little more than a quaint anachronism. In the post-war years, it took more than just manners and the appearance of a gentleman to secure a real shot at commissioned rank. The resurgence of old-order paternalism meant that high-birth became increasingly important as a qualification for commissioned rank. Although it may have been a time of political Reform, there was little sense of reform within the old social order of the navy.

4. The geography of recruitment, 1801-1831

a. *A macro perspective*

While the socio-professional status of young gentlemen changed dramatically between the war years of 1801 and 1811 and the peacetime years of 1821 and 1831, the geographical distribution of recruits changed very little over time. First, it must be noted that the traceability of the sample in terms of geographical origins increased substantially from the eighteenth-century samples. An average of 14 percent of quarterdeck boys between 1761 and 1791 turned up geographical information while an average of 92 percent revealed geographical origins between 1801 and 1831. Similarly, junior officers showing geographical origins jumped from an average of 46 percent in the first four years of this study to an average of 91 percent in the last four years. Such massive increases are attributable to more consistent record-keeping practices that included “place of birth” in the musters. The averages are also helped by the increased traceability of the samples in the later survey years and the availability of more detailed biographical information.

¹¹³ "A Biographical Memoir of The Right Honourable Lord Nelson of the Nile," in *The Naval Chronicle*, vol. 3 (1800), p. 185.

Table 9.6 Geographical Traceability of Quarterdeck Boys and Junior Officers, 1761-1831

<u>Geographical Details</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Total QDB Sampled	314	322	302	305	288	245	227	305
QDB with Geographical Information	20	43	42	71	244	231	221	279
% of known Geographical Origins	6.4%	13.4%	13.9%	23.3%	84.7%	94.3%	97.4%	91.5%
Total JO Sampled	258	303	318	301	283	286	237	225
JO with Geographical Information	25	163	82	280	252	254	219	207
% of known Geographical Origins	9.7%	53.8%	25.8%	93.0%	89.0%	88.8%	92.4%	92.0%

Source: Appendix H, "Collated Data and Charts, 1761-1831."

Such high levels of tracability also allow a high level of certainty when it comes to assessing the geographical origins of candidates.

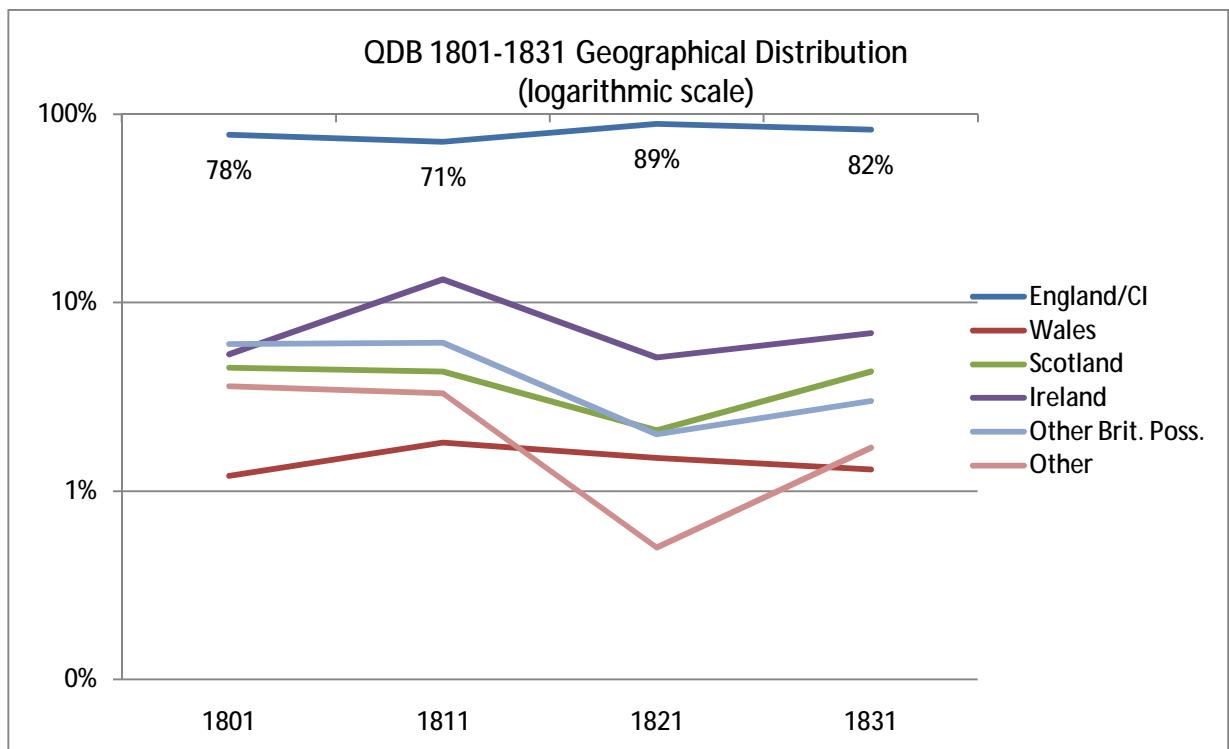
Most noticeable in the overall data is the significant increase in the presence of boys with English origins between 1801 and 1831 (71 to 89 percent of the known sample); a category that includes recruits from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.¹¹⁴ The need to alter the layout of the graph to one with a logarithmic scale emphasizes the great separation between volunteers and boys hailing from England and those from all other places. The spike in the presence of English boys in 1821 which, combined with boys of Welsh origin, represented 91 percent of the known sample, was accompanied by an equal and opposite decline in the presence of recruits from everywhere else. An emphasis on recruitment from home-grown English stock appears to be a manifestation of peacetime nationalism and a transference of the protectionist policies of Liverpool's government¹¹⁵ onto the naval example. By 1831 the trend appeared to reverse, although the overall representation of recruits from outside England remained low.

¹¹⁴ It is understood that both Channel Islanders and Manxmen considered themselves distinct from Englishmen. They are grouped here based on political jurisdictions and on their inclusion in the English dioceses of Winchester and York respectively, see Hereford George, *A Historical Geography of the British Empire*, 3rd edition (London, 1908), p. 108. Also see Porter, *Society*, p. 34.

¹¹⁵ Perkin, *Origins*, p. 183; Richard W. Davis, *A Political History of the House of Lords, 1811-1846, from the Regency to the Corn Law Repeal* (Stanford: 2007), p. 382.

Quarterdeck boys from Ireland represented the next largest category although their presence during the peacetime years of 1821 and 1831 remained below 10 percent of the traceable survey. The showing of boys from Scotland, Wales, and from British possessions, which included the West Indies, East Indies, the Cape of Good Hope, Malta, Minorca, and Canada together, on average, represented less than 10 percent of the total sample.

Figure 9.8 Geographical Distribution of Quarterdeck Boys, 1801-1831



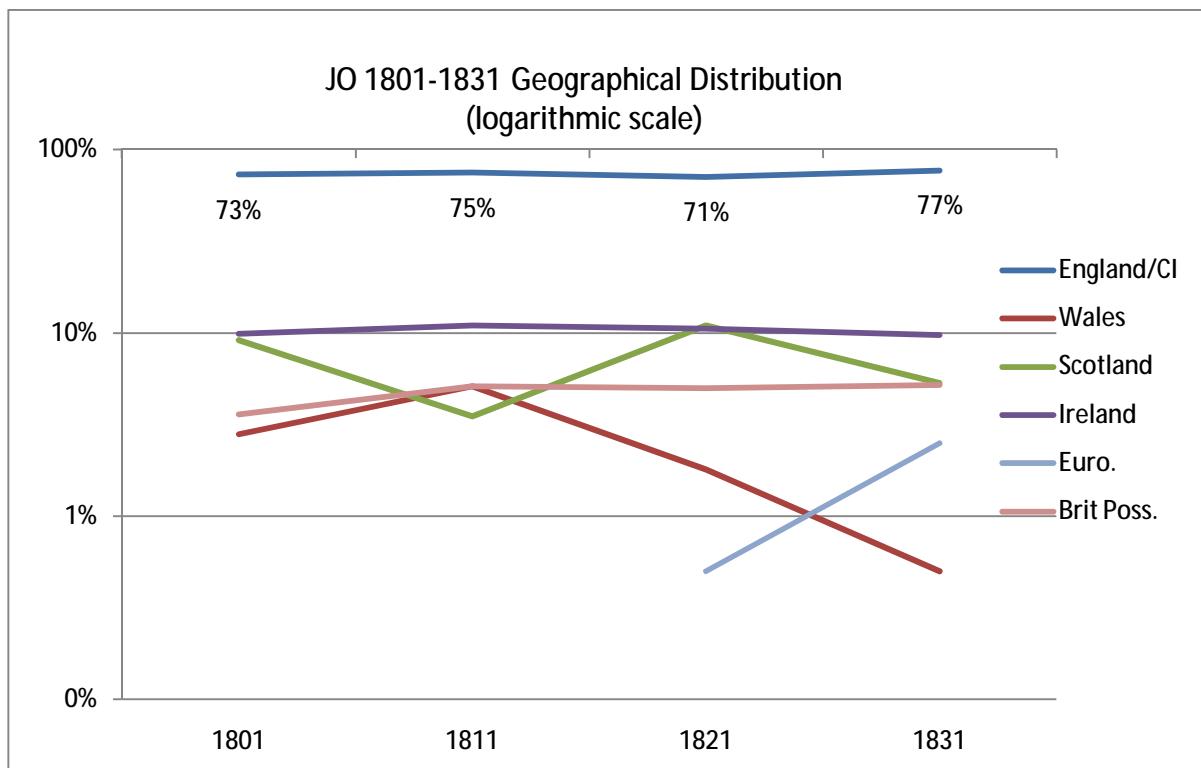
While the “other” category showed a negligible contribution overall, it is interesting to note that during the war years, recruits from European countries including Spain, Portugal, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands were visible on the books of various ships – typically those on foreign stations. Two candidates in 1801 even came from France, although one, John Plummer,¹¹⁶ was likely of Anglo descent while the other, John Ferau was from Gascony, a region known for its Basque sympathies and its Huguenot

¹¹⁶ See Appendix F5, Q01-1-58, Q01-3-26.

heritage. Such international diversity was, however, far less visible in the data for junior officers between 1801 and 1831.

Using the same logarithmic scale, the similarities between the overwhelming superiority of midshipmen, mates, and masters' assistants of English origin is clear although their proportions remained more consistent over the years than in the quarterdeck boys' sample.

Figure 9.9 Geographical Distribution of Junior Officers, 1801-1831

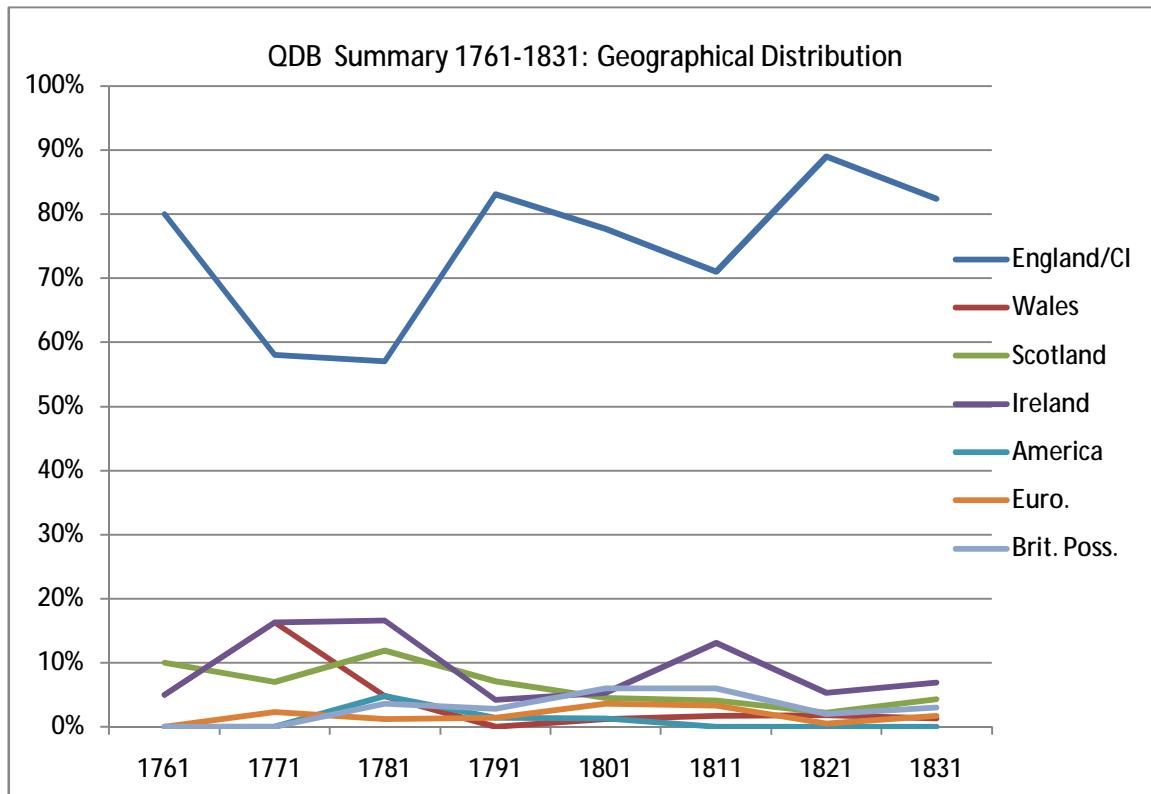


The presence of continental European junior officers was only visible during the peacetime years, and particularly in 1831, when several candidates from France, Italy, and Portugal were recorded. The consistency of the representation among Irishmen and those from British possessions only highlights the decline in the appearance of Welshmen by 1831.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ As with the earlier sample years, these figures echo those detailed by Rodger for 1816-1817. Overall his geographical distribution showed England/Ch. Islands/Isle of Man (75%), Ireland (11%), Scotland (9%), see Rodger, "Devon Men and the Navy," p. 211.

It is clear from both sets of data that English representation maintained a consistently high level between 1801 and 1831. Comparisons over the entire time-frame of this study show the extent of the separation between English recruits and those from all other places.

Figure 9.10 Quarterdeck Boys Summary: Geographical Distribution 1761-1831

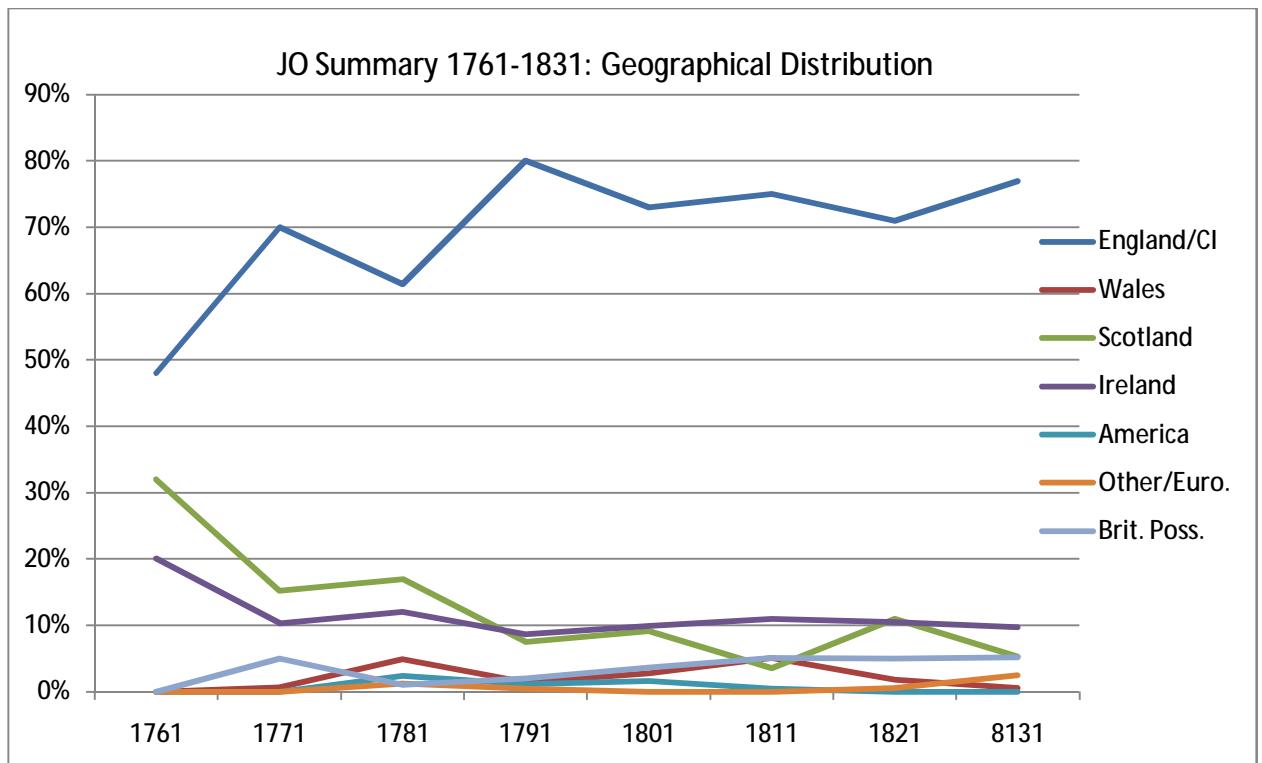


Over the seventy-year period of this study it is possible to see that the showing of quarterdeck boys from England was in fact, almost 10 percent lower in 1811 than it was in 1791, a factor that appears to be influenced by the increase in the presence of Irish recruits and boys from other parts of the British empire in that year. This phenomenon had clearly reversed by 1821, when recruits of English origin reached their highest point in the survey. This also coincided with the peak in the presence of quarterdeck boys with high social connections. Overall this summary suggests that the Royal Navy prior to 1791 was more

apt to draw its recruits from a wider geographical field than it was after the Nootka Sound and Ochakov crises. While the data also suggests that Irish representation was, on average, greater in the eighteenth century than it was after the Act of Union, the figures for the early years must be treated with caution as the number of candidates revealing geographical origins was significantly lower. It is safe, however, to argue that Irish representation among quarterdeck recruits peaked in 1811, at the height of wartime manning. Overall, the geographical data shows a clear relationship between narrowing employment opportunities during and after the French Wars, and a preference for English recruits.

In terms of the summary data for junior officers a slight variation in this relationship is visible, particularly in 1821 when English representation fell slightly against an increase in the presence of Scottish junior officers. It is relevant that the majority of these Scotsmen were also connected to peers, both representative and non-representative. It should also be noted that this trend may reflect the patronage preferences of a Scottish First Lord, Robert Dundas, and thereby indicate a greater degree of centralized control being exercised by the Admiralty of the post-war years. Overall, however, the two sets of data are consistent in their suggestion of greater diversity in the geographical origins of young gentlemen in the years before 1791.

Figure 9.11 Junior Officer Summary: Geographical Distribution, 1761-1831

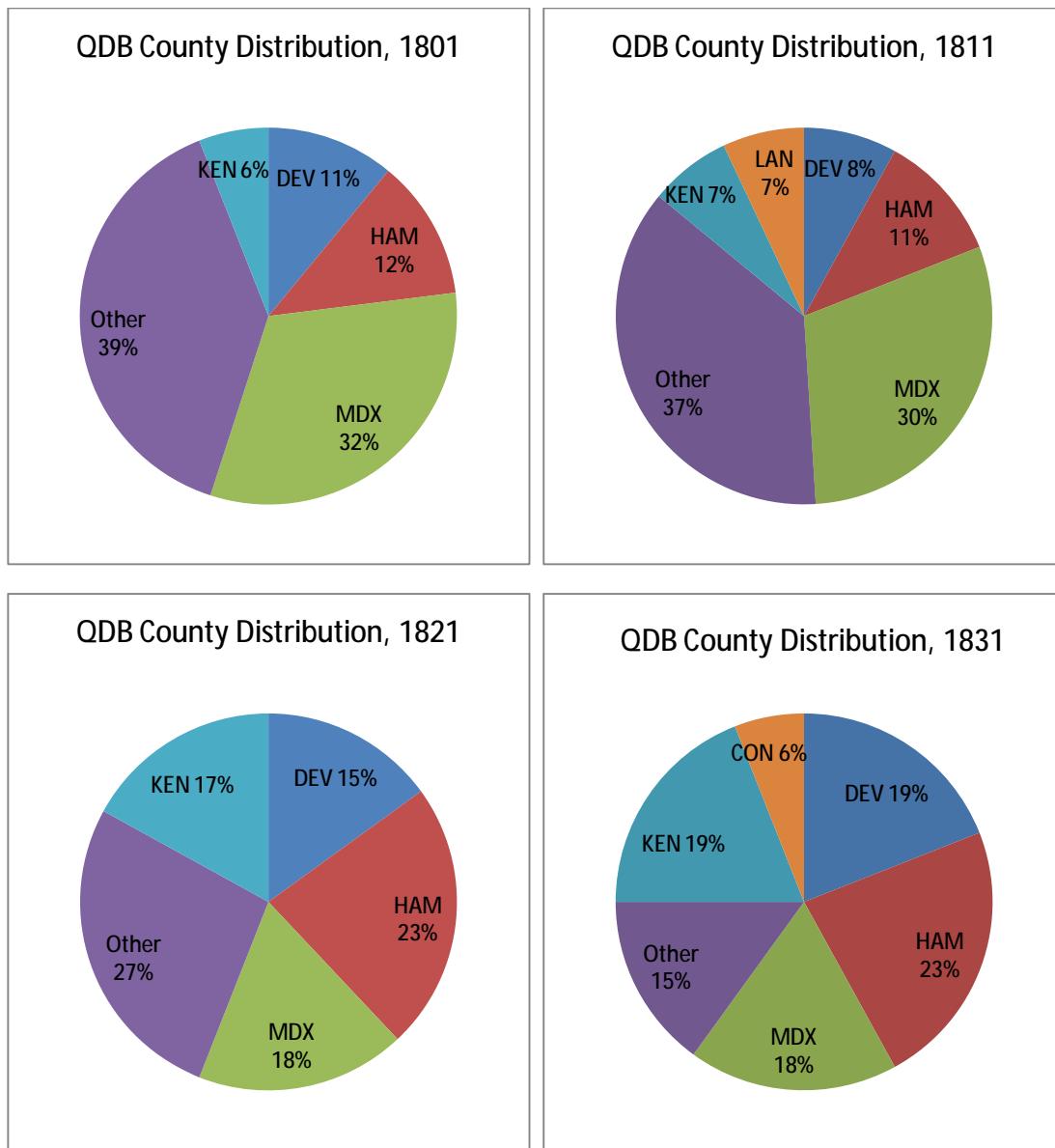


While this may largely be the product of a low number of candidates with traceable geographical origins in the early years, the trend which saw English representation consistently 60 -70 percent higher than any other place of origin during the nineteenth century is indicative of a tightening of the social and geographical parameters in the selection and appointment of young gentlemen.

b. *A county-by-county perspective*

Of the English-born majority a breakdown of recruitment by county also reveals changes in the geographical make-up of the corps of young gentlemen.

Figure 9.12 Quarterdeck Boys: Geographical Distribution within England, 1801-1831



Note: Percentages shown are proportions of the tracebale sample for each year.

Most notable among the changes is the declining importance of Middlesex (MDX) as a contributor of quarterdeck boys. In 1801 London and its environs contributed nearly one third of *all* entry-level recruits known for that year.¹¹⁸ By 1821, that proportion had fallen to 18 percent. This result is surprising; as the social rank of recruits increased it might be expected that the share of boys hailing from London would also increase due to

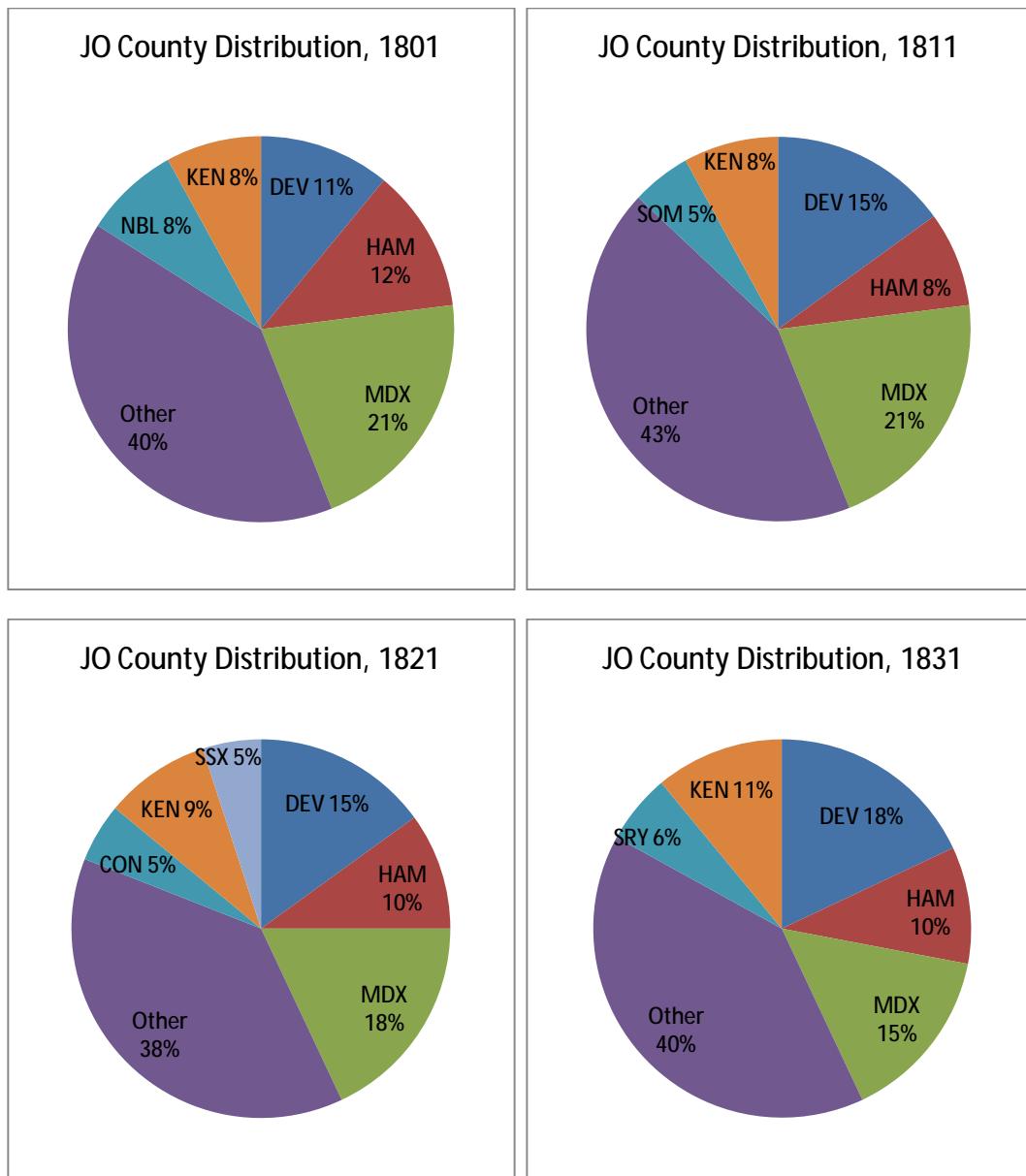
¹¹⁸ 89 percent of the total sample provided geographical details in 1801.

the parliamentary and social connections with the capital. Instead, the most significant increases were seen in the coastal counties of Hampshire (HAM), Devon (DEV), and Kent (KEN) where peacetime recruitment more than doubled from the 1811 sample. By 1831, the contributions of the top four counties to the quarterdeck boys' sample were virtually equal, with Hampshire leading by a small margin. Recruitment from Cornwall (CON) also saw a small resurgence in 1831. These increases are consistent with the data which showed a resurgence of naval interest in the post-war years. Counties that were home to naval bases and ports became hubs for veterans looking to place their sons and relatives as officer recruits. The remaining counties that made up the top ten in overall representation saw very little change over time, although a small increase in the proportion of recruits from Somerset in 1831 (rising from 1 percent in 1811 to 3 percent in 1831) is consistent with the increased importance of political influence in the last year of this survey.¹¹⁹

The county-by-county data for junior officers differs in several important ways. First, the overall scope of representation among English counties is less in the junior officer sample than in the sample for quarterdeck boys. On average, the thirty-seven English counties that appeared in the survey contributed 82 percent of the total number of known quarterdeck boys and only 74 percent of the known junior officers.

¹¹⁹ See Appendix I, "Geographical Distribution, 1761-1831."

Figure 9.13 Junior Officers: Geographical Distribution within England, 1801-1831



Among junior officers, Middlesex showed a reduced proportional contribution in the years after 1815, while Devon's input in 1831 was significantly larger than in 1801. Smaller increases were also visible in the proportion of junior officers from Kent, Surrey, and Somerset (5 percent).

The second significant difference lies in the order in which the highest contributing counties ranked overall, with Devon taking the second spot behind Middlesex when it came to appointing midshipmen and mates.

<u>Quarterdeck Boys: Top 5 Counties</u>
1. Middlesex
2. Hampshire
3. Devon
4. Kent
5. Cornwall

<u>Junior Officers: Top 5 Counties</u>
1. Middlesex
2. Devon
3. Hampshire
4. Kent
5. Cornwall/Somerset

Note: The ranking relates to English recruitment between 1801 and 1831.

The increase in Devon's contribution is noteworthy in that Michael Lewis's surveys of commissioned officers from 1793-1815 and from 1814-1849 show that Devon was the largest provider of commissioned officers.¹²⁰ While the geography of entry-level recruitment varied considerably from Lewis's results, there is a visible movement towards his conclusions in the data for junior officers, who stood one step closer to commisioned rank. Lewis's data also ranks London/Middlesex in fourth place in the 1793-1815 survey and sixth place in the 1814-1849 survey, a far cry from the first-place ranking it held overall between 1801 and 1831 in both sets of data for young gentlemen. Rodger's survey of baptisimal records attached to lieutenants' passing certificates confirms the continued supremacy of London/Middlesex for junior officers in the early post-war years, with Hampshire and Devon roughly equal, in second and third place respectively.¹²¹

In terms of the post-war years, the socio-professional data shows a general upward trend in the importance of high-ranking social influence for both quarterdeck boys and junior officers. At the same time, the Middlesex contibution was in slow decline. This tends to dispel notions of a direct correlation between social rank and a London residence.

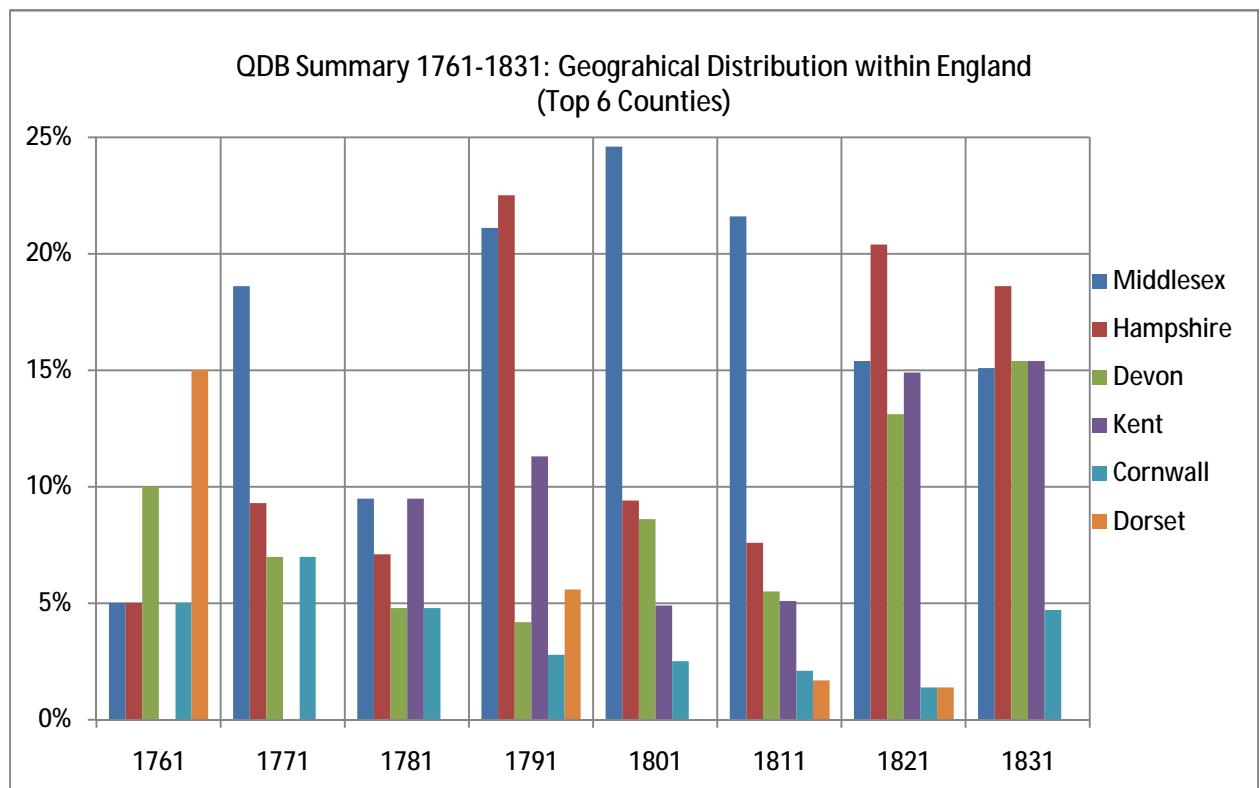
¹²⁰ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 38.

¹²¹ Rodger, "Devon Men and the Navy," p. 211.

Young gentlemen with peerage connections in 1821 and 1831 hailed from a variety of locations throughout the United Kingdom while the majority of Middlesex residents remained untracable in terms of their socio-professional connections.¹²²

An overview of the county-by county distribution from 1761 to 1831 for the six largest contributors overall illustrates the extent of the changes over time. In the quarterdeck boys' sample the decline in the presence of boys from Dorset was matched by the increases seen in Middlesex and Hampshire. At a macro level, the data suggests an evening-out over time of the contributions from Middlesex, Hampshire, Devon, and Kent. It is difficult to generalize that this was an essentially a peacetime phenomenon, as 1781 presents a comparatively even showing of these counties in addition to Cornwall.

Figure 9.14 Quarterdeck Boy Summary: England County Distribution, 1761-1831



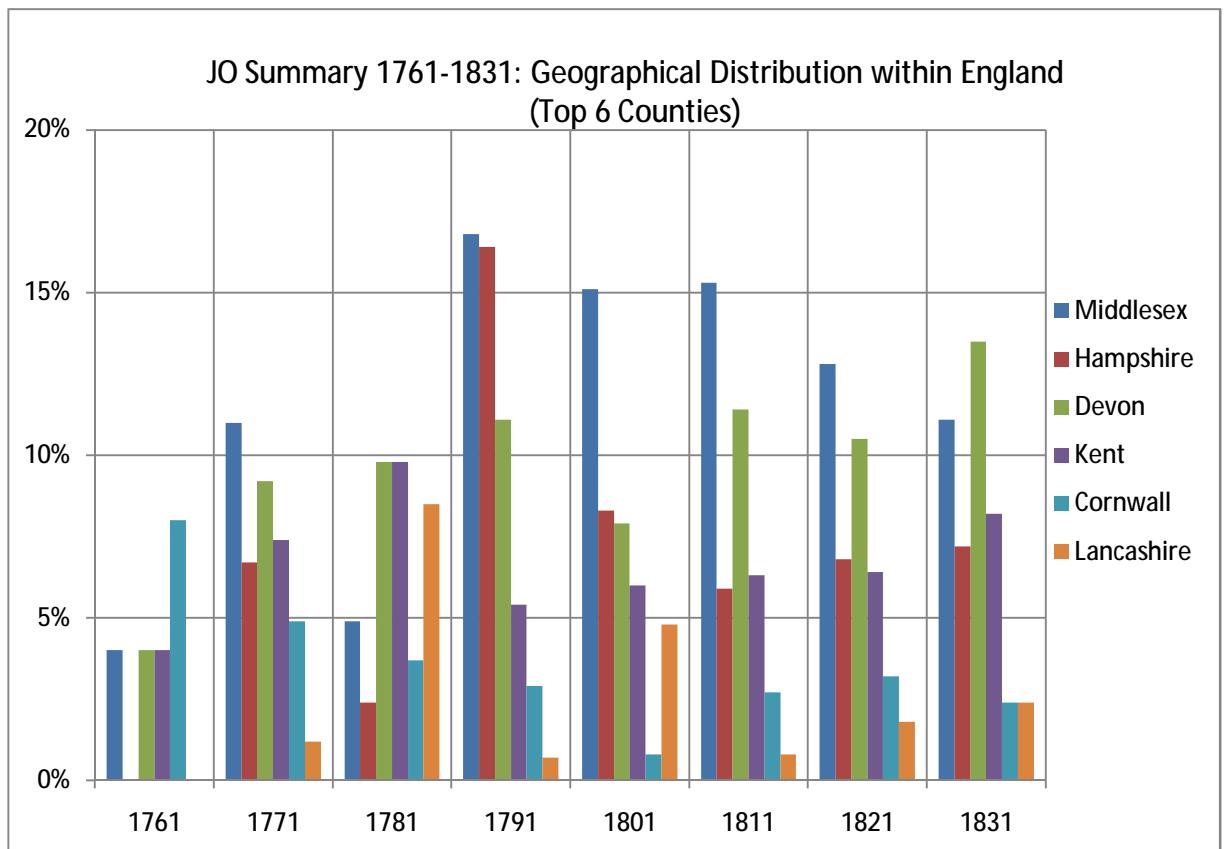
Note: Percentages shown are of total known recruitment for each year.

¹²² See Appendices F7-F8, "Quarterdeck Boys 1821-1831," and G7-G8, "Junior Officers 1821-1831."

It is safe to conclude, however, that 1791 and the years covering the French Wars showed the greatest discrepancies between the counties with Middlesex accounting for the lion's share of recruitment.

No similar trend was visible in the junior officer summary. A pattern in which one or two counties dominated the showing of mates and midshipmen continues throughout the sample. Beginning in 1791 Middlesex became the primary provider of midshipmen and mates, with Hampshire close behind. After 1815, however, both these counties were in decline against the rising importance of Devon as a source of junior officers.

Figure 9.15 Junior Officer Summary: England County Distribution, 1761-1831

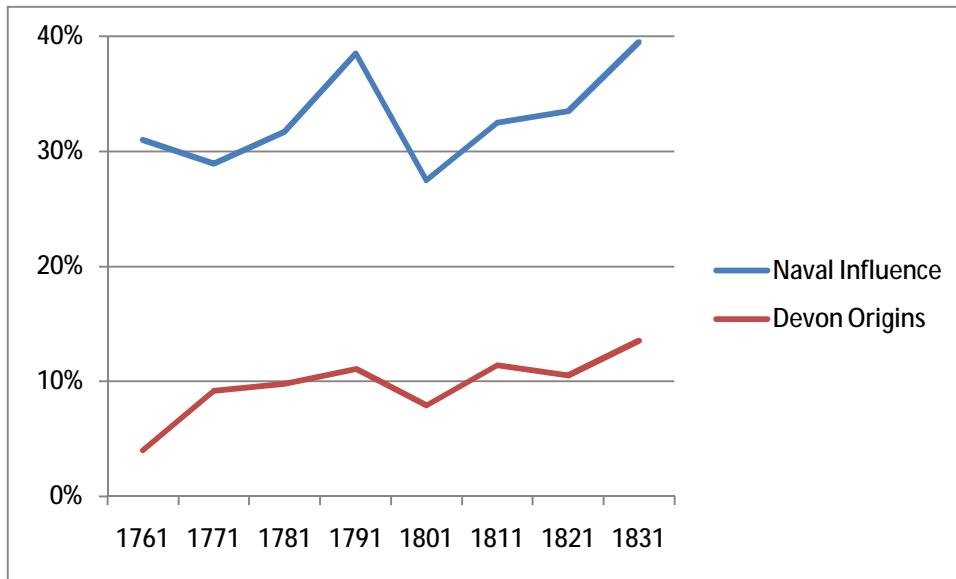


Note: Percentages shown are of total known recruitment for each year.

The relative stability of Devon's contribution throughout this study is noteworthy, as is the almost identical trend line between the geographical data for Devon and that of naval

influence for junior officers. The parallel trends provide evidence of a geographical/professional alignment that is unique to Devon.

Figure 9.16 Comparative Trend Lines for Junior Officers: Naval Influence/Devon Origins



While certain similarities are visible in the trends for Kent and Hampshire, the differences are just as great. The strength of the Devonian contribution is that it provides an accurate representation of the relative importance of naval influence in securing a junior officers' appointment. As more naval families settled in Devon (and more specifically, in Plymouth, Torbay, and Exmouth) during the last decades of the eighteenth century¹²³ they laid the foundations for future generations of sea officers. This migration offers some explanation for the general upward trend in Devon's contribution to the corps of midshipmen and masters' mates in the early-nineteenth century.

To summarize, the geographical data for quarterdeck boys and junior officers shows that regional contributions differed substantially, and that the data for both groups differed again from the geographical distribution of Lewis's commissioned officers. What is visible is a progression towards a distribution that favored Devon as the largest producer

¹²³ Rodger, "Devon Men and the Navy," pp. 209-10.

of commissioned officers in the nineteenth century.¹²⁴ It is a trend that is most visible in the junior officer data after 1801 and hints at the growing alignment of geographical and professional factors in the Admiralty's efforts to craft the ideal sea officer.

¹²⁴ Based on Lewis's estimates, Lewis, *Transition*, p. 38.

Chapter Ten: Outside the Law: Midshipman Misbehave

This chapter examines the courts martial records concerning junior officers from 1796 to 1831 in an effort to determine whether the nature and frequency of the charges brought against young gentlemen changed over time. The ways in which wider social and cultural developments affected the crimes and punishments of junior officers are examined alongside changes taking place in the selection and promotion of aspirants.

In Chapter Seven the changing nature of crimes committed by junior officers suggested a parallel between a heightened sensitivity to matters of gentlemanly honor and an increase in the number of charges for insubordination, disobedience, insolence, and mutiny as the eighteenth century progressed. The increase in the proportion of attacks, verbal and physical, on superior officers appeared to be directly linked to the broadening definition of a gentleman in society at large and the observation that aspirants increasingly identified themselves as “gentlemen,” regardless of their social origins. Evidence from the courts martial records, particularly those of the Midshipmen’s Mutiny, suggest that more aspirants also felt the need to defend their gentlemanly honor – even if it challenged the strict order of naval hierarchy and subordination.

The extent to which this phenomenon was visible during the last years of the eighteenth and first decades of the nineteenth centuries allows a comparison between periods of war and peace and enables parallels to be drawn between the types of charges brought against junior officers and the changing social make-up of the midshipmen’s berth.

1. Examination of courts martial records from 1796-1831

The courts martial cases from 1795 to 1831 are, like those of the earlier periods, taken from home-station records and are categorized, wherever possible, in accordance

with classifications and terminology used in the contemporary record. Of the 215 courts martial brought against junior officers between 1755 and 1831 over three-quarters (165 cases) occurred between 1796 and 1831. Of these, 139 cases were brought during the war, between 1796 and 1815. It is likely that the increase in the number of cases was the result of a combination of factors including a larger wartime service that saw more junior officers employed,¹ and better record-keeping practices. It is also likely that the navy's rapid expansion during the French Wars, which compounded the surplus of junior officers and saw fewer commissions awarded, also raised professional and personal tensions in the cockpit – tensions which boiled over into various forms of misbehavior and criminal activity.

a. *The crimes attributed to young gentlemen, 1796 -1815*

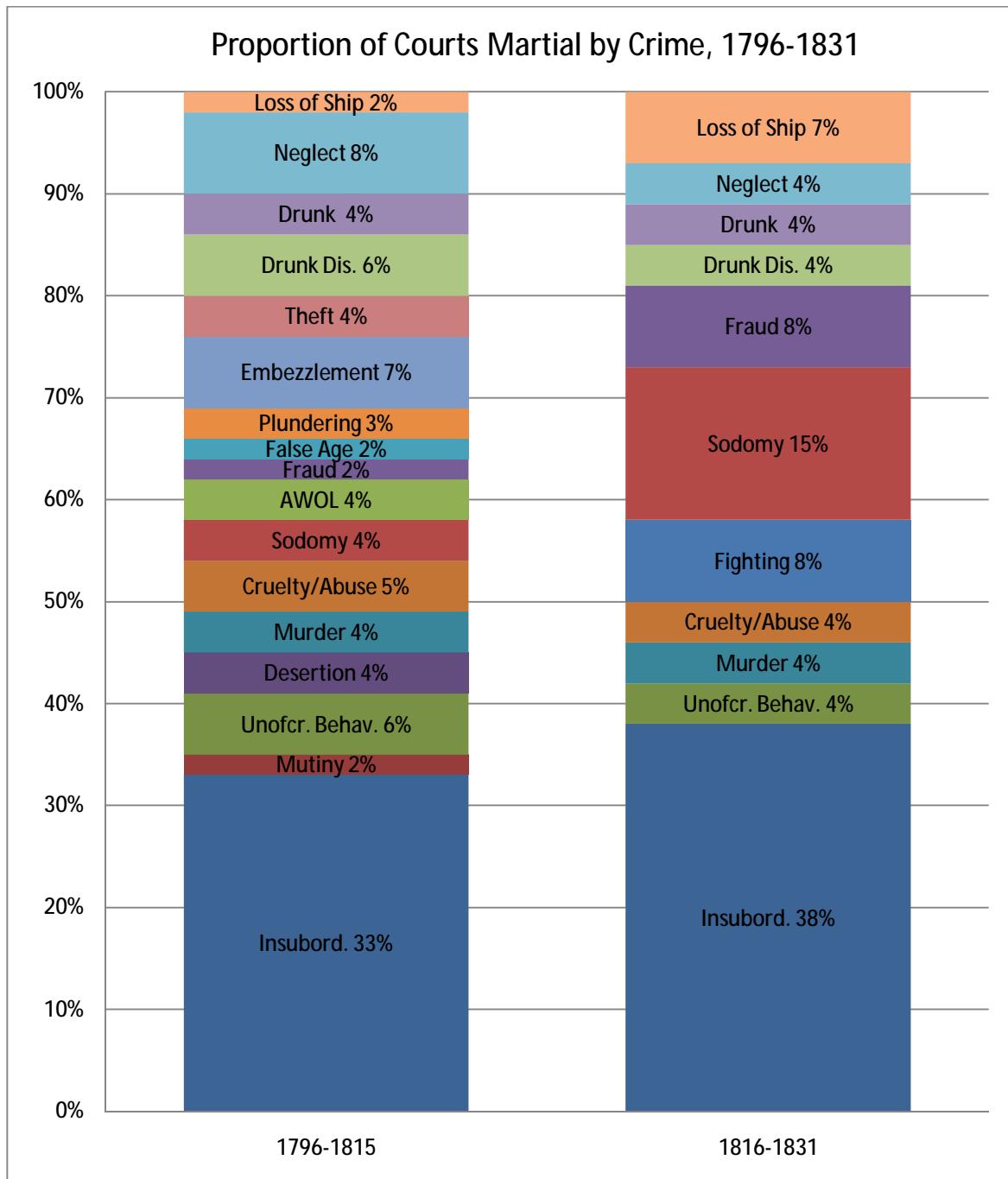
The single largest category of charges brought against junior officers during the French Wars was insubordination and disobedience. It is important to note, however, that courts martial for insubordination and mutiny represented only 35 percent of all charges between 1796 and 1815, down from 53 percent of all charges brought between 1776 and 1795. This reduction might reflect a successful crack down on insubordination in the later years of the French Wars. It might also be indicative of a greater solidarity among the officer and aspiring-officer corps in the wake of the Great Mutinies of 1797, exemplifying the “equality of gentlemen”² described by Admiral Patton. Another possibility was that during wartime the majority of junior officers were more preoccupied with day-to-day responsibilities than threats to their gentlemanly honor and it is worth noting that between

¹ See Appendix C for estimates of the numbers of midshipmen serving from 1761 to 1831.

² Admiral Phillip Patton, “Strictures,” in Lavery, *Shipboard*, p. 622.

1755 and 1795 the majority of charges for insubordination and mutiny (60 percent) occurred during years of peace.³

Figure 10.1 Proportion of Courts Martial by Crime, 1796-1831



³ Appendix M, "Courts Martial of Junior Officers, 1755 – 1831: Against Superiors." Of the twenty-one cases of mutiny and insubordination recorded between 1755 and 1795, nine occurred during wartime, while thirteen occurred during years of peace. This is striking considering how few ships were in commission during the peace.

Equally noteworthy is the appearance of charges classified in the records as “unofficerlike behavior.” Whereas in the past such accusations were used as secondary descriptors, to emphasize the dishonorable nature of various crimes, the indexes after 1796 use “unofficerlike behavior” as its own classification, often independent of charges of insubordination or disobedience. In 1800 acting lieutenant, William Willock of the *Diligence* was disgrated for “behaving unlike an officer on several occasions.”⁴ No further description of Willock’s crimes was given in the records. In 1811 a midshipman of the *Victorious* was dismissed from the service and rendered incapable of serving again for “behaving in a very improper and unofficerlike manner,” and in 1814 two acting lieutenants of the *Lion* were also dismissed from the service for “conduct unbecoming the characters of officers and gentlemen.”⁵ It is possible that such nonspecific charges served to protect the honor of the service, the ship, and possibly the lives of the perpetrators themselves by masking more serious offences. It is also possible that “unofficerlike behavior” could stand proxy for lesser (non-capital offences) such as theft, fighting, or drunkenness although it is impossible to know the exact circumstances of these crimes in most cases. The appearance of charges leveled directly at unofficerlike behavior, coupled with the fact that a significant number of the cases involving insolence, disobedience, and insubordination also included accusations of “unofficerlike” or “ungentlemanly” conduct, suggested a heightened awareness among senior officers of the need for aspirants to behave as honorable gentleman.⁶ This parallels the observations made in Chapter Nine,

⁴ ADM 12/27C, Court Martial of William Willock, 28/3/1800.

⁵ ADM 12/27D, Courts Martial of William L. Wrac?, 25/9/1811, and James A. Butler and John Hannan, 11/5/1814.

⁶ Perkin notes the class boundaries that informed the “gentlemanly code of honour” which required that a gentleman should “be honest and keep his word” – to other gentlemen; should pay “debts of honor” like gambling debts – but not necessarily his debts to tradesmen or shopkeepers;” and be mindful of insults and always ready for a duel – if the offender was a gentleman - while men of inferior birth deserved no more than

regarding a heightened awareness among aspirants themselves of the need to cultivate the appearance and manners of a gentleman as social and professional qualifiers.

It is somewhat surprising that among the remaining categories of charges there was little change in the proportional distribution of various crimes between 1776 and 1815. In terms of “naval crimes”⁷ which focused on professional issues, the proportion of charges for neglect, loss of ship, embezzlement (of stores and prize goods), and plundering showed only marginal percentage increases during the later war years while cases of desertion continued to decline. Being absent without leave also began to appear as grounds for a court martial during the first decade of the nineteenth century, although the number of overall cases remained low. During the war, charges of fraud expanded to incorporate falsification of the certificates needed to qualify for the lieutenants’ examination. In 1800 Midshipman Peter Wade of the *Speedwell* was charged with “having forged a certificate purporting to be from Mr. Minto, the late master of the said brig.”⁸ Edward Bayhen Cook forged a certificate of his age in 1805, as did George Sommerville, a midshipman of the *Monarch* in 1810.⁹ While these cases appear to have brought little in the way of formal censure, the mere fact that these young men faced consequences as severe as a court martial for their acts of fraud suggests that the Lords Commissioners were clamping down on crimes which, in the past, may have been dealt with more leniently. It also suggests that they were willing to make examples of a few young gentlemen who were unlucky enough to get caught. The Admiralty’s readiness to prosecute such crimes was no doubt influenced

a “thrashing,” Perkin, *Origins*, p. 274. Such sentiments only reinforced the class solidarity of quarterdeck gentlemen.

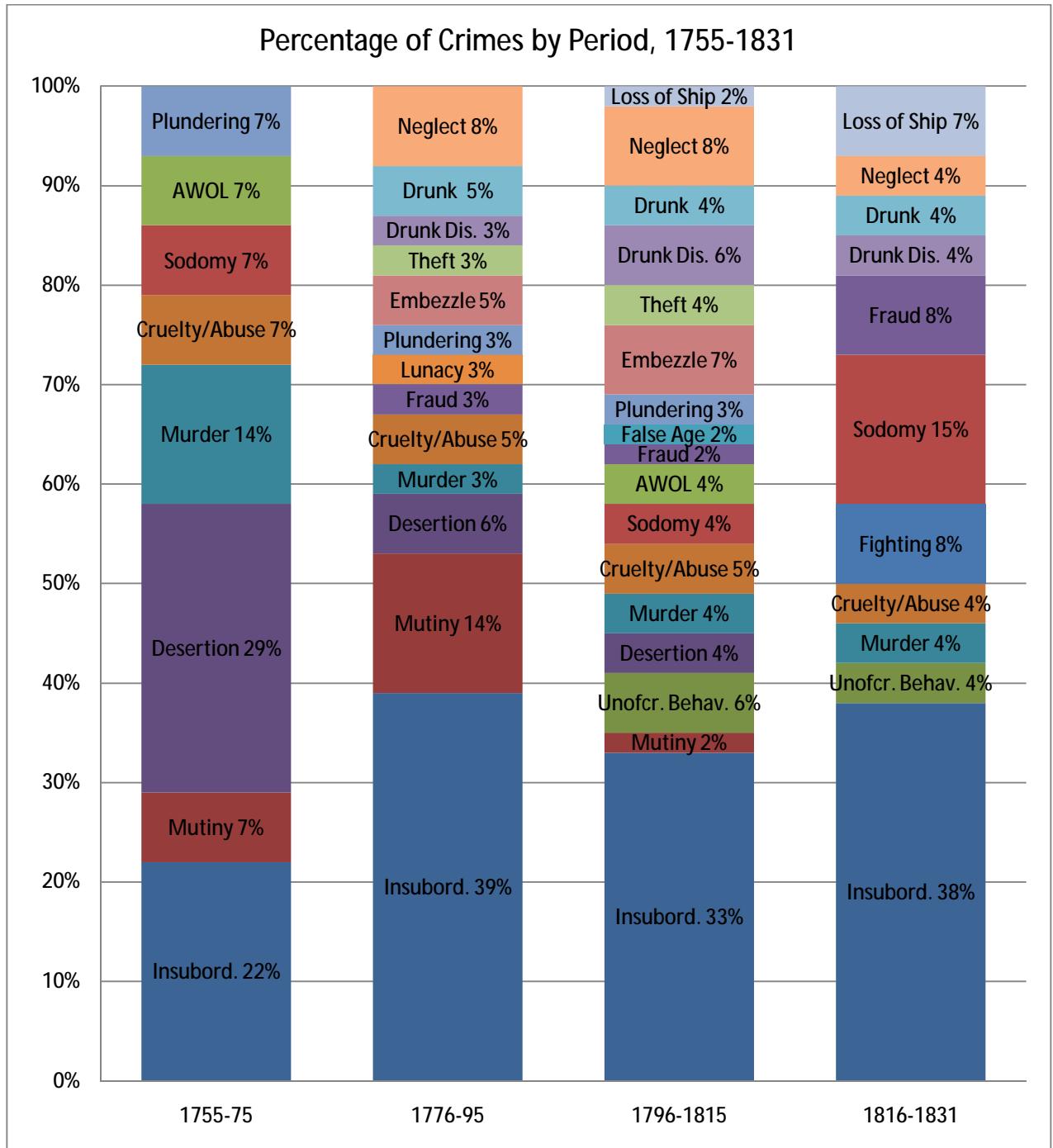
⁷ Byrn classifies naval courts martial as either “social crimes,” which represent “a transgression against either the conventions of morality or eighteenth-century society ashore,” or “naval crimes,” which were “offences that were illegal only in the context of a maritime fighting force.” John D. Byrn, ed., *Naval Courts Martial, 1793-1815*, Navy Records Society, vol. 155 (London, 2009), pp. 147, 347.

⁸ ADM 12/27B, Court Martial of Peter Wade, 24/2/1800.

⁹ ADM 12/27B, Courts Martial of George Sommerville, 3/24/1810, and Edward B. Cook, 21/8/1805.

by its concerns for the surplus of passed midshipmen and mates for whom there was little chance of obtaining a commission.

Figure 10.2 Overview of all Crimes by Period, 1755-1831



One way to alleviate the problem was to show would-be transgressors the severest consequences of any fraudulent practices relating to their premature advancement.

In the later years of the war, Collingwood offered a dire prediction for young gentlemen who committed fraud in their struggle to get ahead: “They must produce a certificate that they are 21 years of age, which they generally write out themselves, so that they begin with forgery, proceed with knavery and end with perjury.”¹⁰ Though there is little evidence to support accusations of widespread fraud when it came to certificates of age,¹¹ it was a salient warning and one which the Admiralty took seriously in its attempts to gain control of the system of promotion for future officers.

In terms of “social crimes,” which paralleled crimes recognized by civil society, there were also similarities in the data from 1776-1795 and 1796-1815, and very little change in the proportion of charges brought (25 to 29 percent respectively). Cases of drunkenness or “drunk and disorderly” behavior showed only a slight proportional increase during the later war years, while more serious charges of violence, cruelty, abuse, and murder (all of which were aimed at subordinates or fellow junior officers) remained low and virtually unchanged from the earlier period.

b. The crimes attributed to young gentlemen, 1816-1831

As expected, in the post-war years there is evidence of a significant decline in naval crimes. First, it appears that the Admiralty’s efforts succeeded in putting a stop to the falsification of certificates as the data from 1816 to 1831 shows no charges being brought for such crimes. While cases of young gentlemen sitting the examination before the age of nineteen certainly occurred,¹² it is likely that years of stagnant promotion prospects

¹⁰ Collingwood to his sister, Mary, May 15, 1806 in Hughes, *Collingwood Private Correspondence*, p. 185.
¹¹ Rodger, “Lieutenants’ Sea Time,” pp. 269-70.

¹² In 1821 a total of twenty-one junior officers passed their examination for lieutenant before the age of nineteen: (12) were aged eighteen, (2) aged seventeen, (4) aged sixteen, (2) aged fifteen, and (1), Nicholas Lefebvre, who was the son a high-ranking gentleman from Guernsey was aged fourteen. See Appendix G8, “Junior Officers 1831: Lieutenants’ Passing and High Rank.” In 1831 only nine young gentlemen passed their examination before the age of nineteen: (7) were eighteen years old, (1) was seventeen, and (1) was sixteen. See Appendix G8, “Junior Officers, 1831: Lieutenants’ Passing and High Rank.”

obviated the need for most young gentlemen to sit the examination early as their chances of actually receiving a commission were so slim as to make it not worth the risk. The seriousness with which the Admiralty asserted its position on forgeries was made clear in an Order in Council, which stated that any young gentleman shall forfeit his rank “whatever it may be in the service, should it appear, at any future period, that there was any deception used in this certificate.”¹³ The absence of any charges relating to certificates after 1816 may be evidence of a successful campaign against fraudulent practices during the Napoleonic Wars. It may also reflect more cautious approaches by captains (who nominated midshipmen and mates for the examination) as they became conscious of the Admiralty’s increased involvement in all matters relating to young gentlemen in the peacetime service.

The Admiralty’s assumption of greater control over disciplinary actions pertaining to young gentlemen may also be responsible for the slight increase in the proportion of cases of insubordination and disobedience being brought to trial in the post-war years. As captains were stripped of their authority to disrate junior officers without the Admiralty’s approval, recourse to a court martial became more necessary as a means of conflict resolution. In 1828 an admiralty mate, Justus Bartholomew Kooistra,¹⁴ was transferred from the schooner *Union* into another ship and reprimanded for disobedience and neglect of duty. Although the full circumstances of Kooistra’s crime are unknown, the sentence suggests that in other circumstances disciplinary action may have been within the

¹³ Burney, *Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine*, p. 277. The date of the Order in Council is not mentioned in Falconer.

¹⁴ Just a year earlier, in 1827, “Lt” Kooistra received a commendation for his invention of “an improved method of stopper-chaining cables in ships’ lower decks.” See *Transactions of the Society Instituted at London for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, etc.*, vol. 45 (London, 1827), p. 109. Kooistra entered the navy in 1812, passed his examination in 1819, but was not made a lieutenant until 1841, see O’Byrne, *Biographical Dictionary*, p. 623. Although his name suggests a Dutch origin, Kooistra appears in the 1850 edition of *Thom’s Irish Almanac*.

jurisdiction of the *Union*'s captain who could, in times past, dismiss or disrate a junior officer at his discretion.

It is noteworthy that charges of mutiny disappeared completely in the post-war period, although the overall proportion of charges for insubordination, disobedience, and unofficerlike behavior remained virtually unchanged from the period covering the war years (42 to 41 percent respectively). Such a result may be linked to the social changes taking place within the junior officer corps after 1815. The effects of a larger elite presence in the midshipmen's berth are discussed in Section 2 of this chapter. The situation might also reflect subtle changes in the use of the word "mutiny" as it became associated more with mass resistance, typically from the lower deck.¹⁵

In terms of other "naval" crimes, the post-war years showed a significant increase in the proportion of charges for "loss of a ship." Despite severe reductions in the fleet, the charges may be indicative of a higher proportion of junior officers assuming command positions aboard smaller vessels, from tenders, to gun boats and schooners. The disappearance altogether of "desertion" in the post-war years suggests the presence of a greater number of young gentlemen who entered the service willingly, with the express purpose of becoming commissioned officers. The rise of the "career" junior officer effectively signaled the end of the midshipman or mate who had been raised from the lower deck. The absence of deserters may also be indicative of the higher social quality of recruits whose connections helped ensure that boys did their duty and brought no dishonor to their families by running away.

¹⁵ According to Guttridge, the early-nineteenth century British view of mutiny was of "an aggregate offence" with lower deck overtones, a definition shaped by the mutinies aboard *Bounty* and *Hermione* and the Great Mutinies of 1797. Leonard Guttridge, *Mutiny: A History of Naval Insurrection* (Annapolis, 1992), pp. 286, 75-77.

Most significant among the “social” crimes were increases in the proportion of assaults on subordinates and fellow junior officers, and charges of sodomy. It is important to note, however, that of the four cases of cruelty, murder, and fighting only one involved the malicious beating of a petty officer. The other charges which concerned a midshipman and a mate brandishing pistols at each other on the forecastle of the *Conway*, and the accidental death of a seaman who was hit in the head with the lead as it was being cast by a 1st class volunteer, saw acquittals or reprimands with promotional delays.¹⁶ The increase in the proportion of buggery cases during the post-war years was essentially based on one incident from 1816 in which charges were brought against a master’s mate, two midshipmen, and a boy all belonging to the *Africane*. Although the court adjudged that the charges were not proved against any of the prisoners, the mate and both midshipmen were dismissed from the service after having their uniforms stripped from their backs on the quarterdeck. In addition, they each received sentences of two years solitary confinement in the Marshalsea, a judgment which suggests that the court was convinced of their guilt. The boy, George Parsons, was not dismissed and received a sentence of only six months in prison.¹⁷

Such a concentration of sodomy charges during the post-war period tends to distort the proportional representation of such crimes and the overall view of how criminal activity evolved among junior officers.¹⁸ While the data contradicts Arthur Gilbert’s

¹⁶ See ADM 12/27F, “Courts Martial Index, 1812 – 1855.”

¹⁷ ADM 12/27F. The difficulties of proving charges of buggery and the unwillingness of many courts martial boards to bring a conviction which necessitated the death penalty are discussed in Arthur Gilbert, “Buggery and the British Navy, 1700-1861,” in *Journal of Social History*, 10 (Autumn, 1976): pp. 73-74, 78. Byrn suggest that a number of cases of sodomy were actually dealt with aboard ship by the captain who meted out lashes as a punishment, thereby avoiding the complications of a court martial, Byrn, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 149-150.

¹⁸ It is worth restating here that the sample size for the post-war years was relatively small with 26 cases out of a total of 215 (12 percent) recorded between 1755 and 1831. Such small numbers would allow a single

assertion that between 1816 and 1829 “there were no sodomy trials at all,” and challenges his theory that there was a direct correlation between periods of war and the occurrence of courts martial for buggery,¹⁹ it should be noted that between 1755 and 1831 only eleven charges for “sodomitical practices” were brought against young gentlemen. This represented just 5 percent of all charges recorded for junior officers during that time and supports the assertion that very few officers, or officers-in-training, were charged with sex crimes.²⁰ Of the cases recorded only one from 1812, involving a 2nd class boy and two others, saw a death sentence handed down for all involved, although it is not known whether executions were actually carried out.²¹

In terms of the wider perspective, the proportion of moral or “social” crimes committed by young gentlemen grew progressively larger as time wore on, with charges for drunkenness, theft, fraud, cruelty/abuse, murder, fighting, and sodomy accounting for nearly half of all charges brought during the post-war years, a proportion nearly double that seen between 1755 and 1795. Conversely, the percentage of “naval” crimes declined over time.

Table 10.1 Proportion of Young Gentlemen charged with “Social” Crimes, 1755-1831

	<u>1755-1775</u>	<u>1776-1795</u>	<u>1796-1815</u>	<u>1816-1831</u>
% Social Crimes	28%	22%	31%	47%
% Naval Crimes	72%	78%	69%	53%

Sources: ADM 12/21-26, “Courts Martial by Crime, 1755-1806,” ADM 12/27 B-E, “Black Books, 1741-1793 and Index,” ADM 12/27F, “Courts Martial Index 1812-1855.” See. Appendix M, “Courts Martial Records, 1755-1831.”

instance to distort the overall outcome of the data, although the sample uses *all* of the recorded cases brought against young gentlemen available in the National Archives’ records for the years under consideration.

¹⁹ Gilbert, “Buggery and the British Navy,” p. 85.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

²¹ ADM 12/27F. Gilbert suggests that approximately 20 percent of all convictions for buggery between 1700 and 1861 were pardoned, see *ibid.*, p. 83.

One explanation for this general trend is that the reduction in naval crimes after 1815 coincided with the only period of sustained peace. The lack of operational activity meant fewer opportunities for professional indiscretions such as “neglect of duty,” while a smaller, more socially-exclusive and/or professionally-ambitious junior officer corps meant that problems of desertion and being absent without leave were minimized. Peacetime also meant a reduction in the formal duties and work-loads assigned to junior officers. As a result, young gentlemen found more opportunities to engage in social transgressions. From charges of fraud, to being “drunk and riotous,” a high proportion of the social crimes appeared to be the products of boredom and of young gentlemen having too much time on their hands. The fact that naval crimes of insubordination and disobedience remained dominant in the roster of offences committed by peacetime junior officers only emphasized the point, as contemptuous and “disgraceful behavior” towards superiors was, in many cases, the product of a failure to see the necessity or urgency of an order from a superior officer.²² The high incidence of insubordination may also have had much to do with the rising social quality of the post-war midshipman and the confusion it caused over the precedence of naval or social rank.

2. Social order and the naval hierarchy

The social data for junior officers examined in Chapter Nine showed the increased presence of young nobility in the service after 1815, while the landed gentry retained a significant presence in the entry-level ratings. Such circumstances effectively justified attitudes that were becoming evident during the first decades of the nineteenth century, which equated officer status with gentility. By 1821 the increased presence of young elites meant that, for some, less effort was required to be convincing as a gentleman. Conversely,

²² ADM 12/27F.

for those who were not born gentlemen, the need to carry off the appearance of one became more pressing as they competed for career advancement. A heightened awareness of class, both in the cockpit and within the shipboard society, only raised tensions over the merits of natural and assigned authority.

The presence of more well-born young gentlemen in the junior officer ratings also placed considerable strain on superior officers, particularly lieutenants, who were charged with their immediate supervision. Preferment to post rank was, for them, a matter of securing the patronage of powerful, well-connected men; the same men who may well have claimed kinship or close friendship ties with the new cadre of elite recruits. The possibility of damaging a vital avenue to promotion by mishandling a noble or well-connected trainee made it difficult for commissioned officers to exercise their authority without fear of reprisals. Such concerns were apparent even before the close of the war. Aboard the *Unité* in 1807 Robert Wilson recalled that even in a “ship of strict discipline,” First Lieutenant John Wilson could not (or at least did not) enforce the mastheading of a well-connected midshipman, Mr. McDougal, who refused to obey his orders. Rather than confining the youth for insolence and insubordination, Lieutenant Wilson waited for the return of the captain, who later saw to McDougal’s punishment.²³ By 1815 even well-born lieutenants were begging-off disciplinary responsibilities that might prove damaging to their careers. John Boteler recalled his dealings as a lieutenant with “young Searle,” the son of a Royal Navy captain who possessed social and professional connections equal to Boteler himself.²⁴ Noting that the boy “was a constant thorn in my side,” Boteler declared that he was fed up with Searle’s whining and “stubbornness,” but declined to take action

²³ Wilson’s journal in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*, pp. 128, 162.

²⁴ Boteler was the son of William Boteler Esq., of Kent and the grandson of Captain John Harvey who was mortally wounded at the battle of the Glorious First of June. He was also the nephew of Captain Sir Thomas Harvey, see Marshall, *Royal Naval Biography*, p. 349.

and “had [Searle] moved to another watch by the first lieutenant.”²⁵ Boteler’s instincts proved correct as the unmanageable midshipman could not be controlled even by his father, who found himself at the wrong end of his son’s dirk after an argument aboard the *Hyperion* some time later.²⁶

For lieutenants who could not avoid altercations with well-connected young gentlemen the results could be disastrous. In 1819 aboard the sloop *Leveret* an Admiralty midshipman of good family accused a lieutenant of stealing from one of his servants. The charge was serious and, if proved, could have resulted in the officer being dismissed from his ship, or possibly from the service. Fortunately for the lieutenant, the charges were determined to be specious, and Midshipman Christopher Palmer was brought before a court martial of his own and charged with making false accusations against a superior officer. The court’s decision to severely reprimand Palmer and render him incapable of promotion for two years was evidence of their belief that the midshipman had acted maliciously.²⁷

If the situation was tricky for lieutenants, non-commissioned officers stood little chance. Early in his career William Dillon wielded his social rank like a shield taunting his schoolmaster to strike away with his cane then warning, “recollect that I am a gentleman, and beware of the consequence.”²⁸ In 1810 Midshipman Owen B. Williams led a pack of young gentlemen in a night attack on the master of the *Triumph* as he slept ashore. After beating the master about the head Williams called him a “damned rascal, and [declared] that [he] was not entitled to wear a sword.” Williams then opted for the ultimate

²⁵ Boteler, *Recollections*, p. 57.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 76.

²⁷ ADM 12/27F. Court Martial of Christopher Palmer, 10/7/1819.

²⁸ Dillon, *Adventures*, Vol. I, p. 26. Again, such outbursts may well have reflected Dillon’s own dubious claim on gentility.

degradation, forcing the older man to “walk the streets nearly naked.” For Williams and his friends the title of gentleman, and the right to wear a sword, was a privilege of birth, not professional status. As fair justice the court found Williams guilty and disgraced him “to serve before the mast” as a common sailor.²⁹

Even captains were not immune to the perceived entitlements of elite young gentlemen. Captain Gambier lost all patience with the fourteen-year old Dillon and was moved to declare: “you are a refractory young gentleman. I see how it is. You rely on your influential connections. Quit the Cabin directly.”³⁰ Boteler too, recalled the unpredictable behavior of a fellow midshipman, a gentleman’s son he named “the Squire.” High-ranking family connections had convinced the Squire that he was above the orders of the lieutenants and even his captain, such that when threatened with a flogging for one of his many offences, the boy obtained a pocket pistol with which to defend his honor. Boteler persuaded him to give up his weapon, “convinced [that] had the captain sent for him in the cabin that [the Squire] would have shot him.”³¹ Such challenges to authority were side effects of a system that operated on patronage networks heavily influenced by social and political weight.

It is evident, however, in the post-war data that charges of insubordination and disobedience differed in one important way from those cases tried during the war years when the proportion of noble sons was not as great. After 1815 there was a distinct fall-off in insubordination cases involving *physical* violence, a situation which may be indicative of more genteel sensibilities circulating among aspirants in the post-war navy. The disappearance of charges of theft and embezzlement – crimes of need or want – also

²⁹ TNA: PRO ADM12/27D, f. 43, Court Martial of Midshipman Owen B. Williams, 1/3/1810.

³⁰ Dillon, *Adventures*, Vol. I, p. 110

³¹ Boteler, *Recollections*, pp. 42-43, 52.

suggests a change in the socio-economic character of junior officers. As the financial requirements for entry increased, fewer boys from underprivileged backgrounds gained access to the midshipmen's berth. For those who had more to begin with there was little need to steal, while greater social pressure to uphold the honor of a gentleman, especially for those who were not gentlemen by birth, helped to eliminate the desire.

In conclusion, the answer to the question posed in Chapter One of this study as to whether the increased presence of high-born young gentlemen led to the downfall of subordination and discipline, the answer appears to be "no." Overall there was very little change in the proportion of charges for insubordination and disobedience between 1776 and 1795, when peerage interest among junior officers was relatively low, and the period from 1816 to 1831, when the influence of the nobility rose sharply. While there is much evidence to suggest that the confusion of naval and social rank became the primary source of conflict between junior officers and their superiors after 1790, it appears that *real* social rank had little to do with this phenomenon. The accessibility of gentlemanly status, by appearance and by ambition to commissioned rank, meant that in the new century the majority of officer aspirants considered themselves "gentlemen" regardless of their origins. Self identification as a gentleman, more than the rigid classifications of birth and wealth, can therefore be seen as the single largest influence on the state of discipline and subordination on Royal Navy quarterdecks between the American War of Independence and Parliamentary Reform.

PART IV Explaining the Developments

Chapter Eleven: Beyond Reform and the Implications of Centralization

1. The years beyond 1831

After 1831 the navy also underwent some radical changes which affected both the system of entry and the mode of advancement within the junior officer ratings. While these changes ultimately advanced the central power of the Admiralty to determine who entered the navy as an officer candidate, the process was far from direct. Efforts to standardize recruitment manifested slowly and at times appeared to be all but abandoned. Not until the mid-nineteenth century did a more uniform, centralized system of selection, education, and training finally take form.

a. The abolition of the Royal Naval College, 1837

Beginning in 1816 the Admiralty refocused its attentions on the age-old problem of educating young gentlemen at sea. The shortage of qualified schoolmasters persisted despite earlier efforts to convince chaplains to take on the role of teacher in addition to their clerical duties. Pay increases for schoolmasters were awarded in 1816 and again in 1819,¹ although Dickinson notes that these inducements “had little effect on the overall numbers.”²

The lack of success in attracting qualified men to serve as schoolmasters meant that even greater pressure was placed on Admiralty efforts to maintain standards at the Royal

¹ In 1819 the bounty was raised to £30 per year.

² The Admiralty tried another tack in 1822. By centralizing the examination for schoolmasters and conducting it at Portsmouth, rather than at Trinity House in London, it was hoped that the appearance of a more professional, service-oriented position might attract more of the better sort of schoolmasters. More stringent examinations in mathematics and classical subjects were aimed at separating university graduates from the rest. Little progress was made, however, even after additional pay increases in 1832. By the start of the 1830s the number of schoolmasters was negligible with only three positions being filled in 1832. See Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 29.

Naval College at Portsmouth. Greater attention was paid to academic subjects in the decades after 1815 and the school's reputation as a "sink of vice and abomination"³ mellowed accordingly. In 1830 the lieutenant governor of the College pronounced that there was a "large portion of high spirited and gentlemanlike feelings amongst the boys generally and the smallest quantity of evil."⁴ Despite improvements in the behavior of the students and the curriculum, some senior officers continued to voice concerns over the lack of practical training. First Lord Sir James Graham noted that he had been "afraid that there was too much of science and too little of practical knowledge creeping into the Royal Navy."⁵ Graham's fiscal cutbacks, which took place between 1830 and 1834, also reflected current Whig attitudes towards public education and a belief that the provision of free schooling to the sons of wealthy gentlemen was a prime example of Tory-esque corruption.⁶ In 1835 the College accepted its last officers-in-training and two years later closed its doors to young gentlemen for the last time.

Closure meant that all young aspirants were "pitchforked"⁷ directly into warships, if they were able to find an opening, where the attention paid to education and training was entirely dependent on individual captains. Boys became reliant on the "luck of the draw" for their general education. Vocal debates in Parliament and within the service over educational matters led to the development of a new shipboard position – the naval

³ Hardin Craig, ed. "Letters of Lord St. Vincent etc.," in Lloyd, *Naval Miscellany*, Vol. 4, p. 472. Much of what St. Vincent had to say of the Academy can be discounted as political and professional blustering.

⁴ Quoted in Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 53. Captain Frederick Chamier's tales of his seafaring life, published in serial form in 1831-32, declared that the midshipman's "education is better attended to, and the suavity of the gentleman is now distinguished from the self-sufficient boisterous tyranny of the uneducated seaman," Chamier, *Life*, p. 16; also see P. J. van der Voort, *The Pen and the Quarter-deck: A Study of the Life and Works of Captain, Frederick Chamier, RN.* (Leiden, 1972), p. 67.

⁵ Quoted in Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 55.

⁶ Rodger, "Officers, Gentlemen and their Education," p.144; Morriss, *Naval Power*, p. 143. Whig attitudes to other aspects of the navy saw Benthamite reform imposed on the Navy and Victualling Boards and dockyard management. Morriss notes that "economies were possible because the naval establishment was cut to the bone," see *ibid.*, pp. 199-200; also see *Cockburn*, pp. 199-201.

⁷ Lewis uses the term to emphasize the haphazard nature of the new system, Lewis, *Transition*, p. 107.

instructor. Instituted in May 1837, instructors were to be university-educated men capable of supervising a curriculum based on the same subjects that had been offered at the College. As warrant officers of wardroom rank, instructors received higher salaries which were also supplemented by fees levied on their students. Overall, compensation remained low and unsurprisingly there were few applicants for the new positions. By 1838 educational provisions for young gentlemen had regressed to pre-1733 levels; circumstances that did not bode well for the academic and professional future of the officer corps.⁸ No significant improvements to the system took place until 1857 when Captain Robert Harris offered up his own son as a test-case in order to experiment with officer training aboard HMS *Illustrious*. The success of Harris's efforts saw “naval cadets” (the new title for aspirants which superseded that of “1st class volunteer” in 1843) presented with the first program of standardized education and training offered since the closure of the College. The popularity of the training-ship scheme saw an increase in the number of new cadets and forced a move into the larger 120-gun *Britannia*. Aboard *Britannia* the curriculum consisted of equal parts seamanship and academic studies, the quality of which was high and generally well-regarded.⁹ By the time the training ship arrived at its final mooring in Dartmouth in 1863, the “*Britannia* system” represented the most uniform arrangement of officer entry and training that had ever existed in the Royal Navy.

b. *Qualifications: examinations for young gentlemen*

A significant step in the process of achieving centralized control was laid down in the years immediately following Parliamentary Reform. The 1830s saw the institution of two new examinations – one for prospective 1st class volunteers and one for prospective midshipmen – both of which sought, in theory, to standardize prerequisites for entry and

⁸ Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, p. 60. The Naval Academy opened in 1733.

⁹ Ibid., p. 66.

advancement to the junior officer ratings. The concept of an examination, in which there was always the possibility of failure, undoubtedly raised criticism, especially among the more well-connected aspirants vying for positions in the post-war navy. The volunteers' test demanded that the candidate be "able to write English correctly from dictation, and be acquainted with the first four rules of arithmetic, reduction and the rule of three."¹⁰

According to Rodger the real entry prerequisites were social and political with the Admiralty Board controlling more than 70 percent of all nominations by mid-century.¹¹

The examination for aspiring midshipmen, instituted in 1839, was equally stringent. Conducted by an Admiralty appointee, the exam scrutinized a volunteer's journal as a way of assessing his suitability for a career at sea.¹² The exam presented the Admiralty with an opportunity to weed out unpromising candidates before they progressed to the point that only a court martial could dismiss them from the service. Ultimately, it represented another significant step in the Admiralty's efforts to control just who would be eligible to one day sit the examination for lieutenant.

Part of the standardization process involved placing tighter restrictions on officer entry. In 1849 the entry age for nominees was set between twelve and fourteen years of age. Six years later, the minimum age was raised to between fourteen and fifteen, a change that came with more rigid stipulations on the educational prerequisites for candidates. In addition to the basic mathematical skills and abilities in English, boys were expected to have "a general knowledge of geography and foreign languages."¹³ After the Pelham

¹⁰ Lewis, *Transition*, p. 108.

¹¹ Rodger notes that political influence far outweighed social and even naval interest by the 1850s, to the disgust of many including Lord Ellenborough (First Lord in 1846), although even he upheld the Admiralty's traditional preference for "inducing young men of high Station in Society to enter the Navy," quoted in Rodger, "Officers, Gentlemen and their Education," pp. 145-47.

¹² Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy*, pp. 62-63.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

Commission of 1856, the standards for the midshipmen's examination were also raised.¹⁴

Midshipmen would now be

examined at Portsmouth and expected to pass in English, Latin or French, scripture, modern geography, arithmetic and algebra. Those aged 14 were required additionally to demonstrate a familiarity with globes, latitude, longitude, azimuth and amplitude.¹⁵

Success in the examination was required by all cadets wishing to enter a ship from the *Illustrious*, or for any volunteer already aboard a warship wishing to move forward in his career. These new standards, coupled with the success of the training-ship format, allowed the Admiralty, for all intents and purposes, to assume control of officer entry.

c. *The effects*

The changes visited upon the system of educating and training young gentlemen after 1831 can be seen as having rerun the course of history. The abolition of the Royal Naval College as a school for officers-in-training resulted in a return to a fully decentralized arrangement that was haphazard, uneven and, at worst, non-existent. Concerns for the professional and personal development of young gentlemen resulted in the establishment of fixed standards of education and examinations to ensure their observance, and finally saw the reestablishment of a centrally-administered school.

This reinvention of the old system, from College to training ship, confirmed the value of a naval school, first to the Admiralty, which used it as a tool of standardization and centralization, second to the students who, like it or not, gained a solid professional grounding and a quality education, and finally to the service as a whole which benefitted from the output of educated young professionals capable of making their mark on the

¹⁴ The 1856 commission headed by Commodore F. T. Pelham reviewed the standards of the examination for cadets and midshipmen. The result was a strict set of entry requirements which would apply to the *Illustrious* and to the fleet in general, *ibid.* p. 65.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

service. While captains' nomination continued to exist in various forms into the early-twentieth century, by the 1850s, the Admiralty had secured almost complete control over officer entry as well as the means of training, educating, and advancing them towards quarterdeck status.¹⁶

¹⁶ Rodger, "Officers, Gentlemen and their Education," pp. 145-148.

Chapter Twelve: Summarizing the Data

The goals of this thesis, outlined in Chapter One, were threefold. The first was to test contemporary observations that the French Wars brought a social “revolution” to the aspiring officer corps, one which saw opportunities narrow for all but the social and political elites, and resulted in the rise of a more aristocratic corps of young gentlemen by 1815. The need to revisit these observations in light of Michael Lewis’s opposing theory of a growing social diversity among quarterdeck recruits during the later years of the war¹ provided the starting point for this study. The second aim was to assess the Admiralty’s role in altering the social make-up of the midshipmen’s berth through its efforts to centralize recruitment. The third goal sought to test theories that the perceived wartime influx of well-born, well-connected young gentlemen threatened quarterdeck professionalism and discipline through the confusion of naval and social rank.

The influence of social, political, and cultural factors on naval decision-making as it related to recruitment provided the lens through which the selection and advancement of officer trainees could be viewed. The process of examining these issues involved an investigation into the social backgrounds of more than 4500 young gentlemen whose careers spanned several decades on either side of the French Wars.

1. Answering the questions

a. *The social make-up of the midshipmen’s berth*

In light of the evidence shown in the data, the simplest answer to the question of whether the French Wars saw the greatest social change among recruits and the greatest

¹ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 42; *Transition*, p. 21.

“influx of young nobility into the service,”² must be “no.” In terms of aristocratic social qualifications, both the samples for quarterdeck boys and junior officers showed significantly higher proportions of young men with aristocratic connections in the navy of 1771 than in 1791, 1801, or 1811.³ The glossy image of the service after its victories in the Seven Years’ War raised the social prestige of a naval career, while a political climate that favored the aristocratic Whig party contributed to a strong showing of young men with peerage connections in 1771. It is worth remembering that in most cases (with the exception of junior officers in 1771) the percentage of young men with traceable backgrounds in the years prior to 1791 was small. It is, however, also important to note that of the various sources used to conduct background searches those dealing with the titled elite and the landed gentry were among the most consistent over the time period, resulting in an accurate portrayal of elite involvement in the trainee-officer ratings. The reliability of this data allows the conclusion that the proportion of traceable junior officers with connections to the nobility was slightly higher in 1771 than it was even in 1831,⁴ when the importance of high birth and political connections in forging a successful naval career has been well documented.⁵ The high proportion of noble aspirants in 1771 suggests that long before the start of the French Revolutionary Wars, social influence weighed heavily on naval recruitment. Daniel Baugh has argued that in the first half of the eighteenth century “there were enough external connections to keep the navy securely

² The Earl St. Vincent to Benjamin Tucker, 1806 in Tucker, *St. Vincent, Vol. 1*, p. 270.

³ See Appendix A1 for a recap of the proportional data.

⁴ The combined proportional data showed 20% of traceable junior officers with ties to the peerage in 1771 and 18 percent in 1831, although the overall traceability of the sample in 1831 was double that of 1771 (48% to 24% respectively).

⁵ Rodger, “Officers, Gentlemen and their Education,” p. 140; Lewis, *Transition*, p. 23.

within the aristocratic network.”⁶ Such a position appears to be equally true of the sample years leading up to the American War.

In general, the data also showed a much higher proportion of elite junior officers (midshipmen, mates, and acting lieutenants) than quarterdeck boys (captains’ servants and volunteers). The only time when this did not appear to be the case was in 1821 when 19 percent of quarterdeck boys, as opposed to 13 percent of junior officers,⁷ revealed ties to the titled nobility. This anomaly may be evidence of stricter post-war enforcement of Admiralty regulations which required all recruits to *enter* the service as 1st class volunteers, whereas the data for previous years showed much arbitrary handling of entry-level appointments, and that a midshipman’s rating was often preferred for socially-elite recruits.⁸

When it came to young gentlemen with connections to the landed gentry, there is more evidence to support contemporary perceptions of an increase in the presence of the “elite” sons. The significant increase in the appearance of quarterdeck boys with gentry connections, which rose from 13 percent of the traceable sample in 1781, to 34 percent in 1801, and 37 percent in 1811, is evidence of a decisive change in the social make-up of the corps of volunteers.⁹ This increase was mirrored, less dramatically, in the steady rise of gentry connections among junior officers during the French Wars,¹⁰ although the peak in

⁶ Baugh, *Administration, 1715-1750*, p. 5.

⁷ These proportions refer to the traceable samples. See Appendix A1 for a recap or Appendix H, “Collated Data and Charts, 1761 – 1831” for a full explanation of the data.

⁸ See Chapter Five, Section 3b.

⁹ It must be acknowledged that despite the consistency of many of the sources used to identify connections to the landed gentry, the wealth of biographical information available in O’Byrne and Marshall proved very useful in identifying gentry interest for the samples after 1791. If such biographical resources were available for the mid-eighteenth century, it would undoubtedly be possible to identify far more young gentlemen in terms of their social and professional connections. For a recap of the percentages see Appendix A1.

¹⁰ The proportion of the traceable sample for junior officers connected to the gentry rose from 25% in 1791 to 29% in 1811.

gentry presence visible in 1811 was still less than the proportion of gentry sons identified in the 1761 junior officers' sample.¹¹

The overall increase in the appearance of young aspirants with connections to the landed gentry during the French Wars may be seen as evidence of rising social qualifications for officer candidates and a growing perception among recruiting captains that officers should, among other things, be gentlemen by *birth*. Ultimately these findings challenge Michael Lewis's theory that the later years of the war saw an increasing social diversity among quarterdeck recruits.¹² The data may also be seen as evidence of increasing civil pressures – social, political, and economic – affecting naval patronage networks and the decision-making processes of recruiting officers. As a naval career became more fashionable for the sons of gentlemen, the social pressures applied to individual captains and the naval bureaucracy may well have resulted in the sudden increase in the appearance of young “gentlemen” in the ranks of quarterdeck boys beginning in 1801. While the Admiralty's policies outlined in the Order in Council of 1794 may have done little to effect the social stratification of new entrants, it appears that the ultimate goal of the order – to create a more genteel midshipmen's berth – saw some success during the war years.

The increase in the presence of gentry sons does not, however, explain the contemporary observations regarding an overabundance of blue-bloods in the navy of the French Wars. In the two sample years *after* 1815 the preference shown to the sons of the landed gentry was, in fact, reversed in both sets of data with preference being shown

¹¹ It must be noted that the 1761 sample involves very small amounts of data.

¹² Lewis, *Social History*, p. 42; *Transition*, p. 21. This is not to say that the sons and relatives of the landed gentry represented the *majority* of officer aspirants. Their numbers were, however, increasing as a proportion of the total sample of QDBs and JOs, while the proportion of boys from working class or untraceable backgrounds correspondingly declined. The increased presence of elite young gentlemen and the greater financial commitment required for entry into the service meant that social diversity in the midshipmen's berth was effectively decreasing.

instead to the sons or relatives of peers. The “vast overflow” of *aristocratic* youth was therefore, as Michael Lewis suggests,¹³ a post-war phenomenon and one that resulted in a synchronous decline in the presence of gentry influence. This form of “opportunity cost,” in which one type of influence appeared to rise or fall in direct relation to another, is visible throughout the data and forms the basis for some of the more solid conclusions that can be drawn.

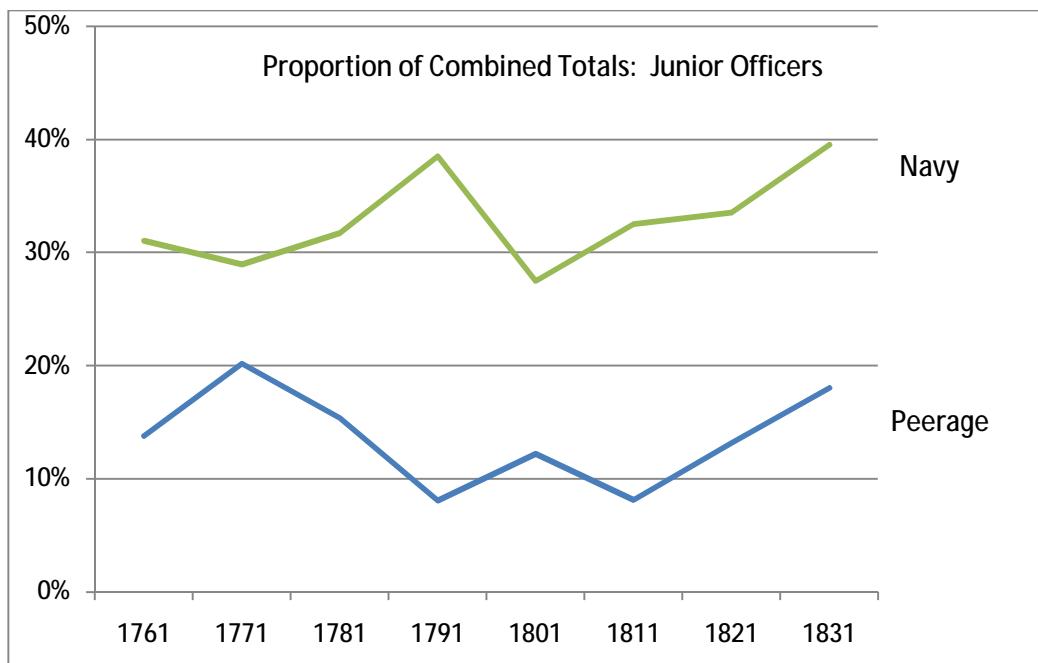
i. Opportunity cost in the selection of young gentlemen

The clearest pattern to emerge from the combined proportional data is that social influence generally rose and fell in direct opposition to naval influence. This observation relates more frequently to the peerage/naval relationship among junior officers, and the gentry/naval relationship among quarterdeck boys.

In terms of junior officers, the inverse relationship between peerage and naval influence was clearly visible throughout much of the period examined here, with the only exception occurring in the years after 1815 when both influences were on the rise.

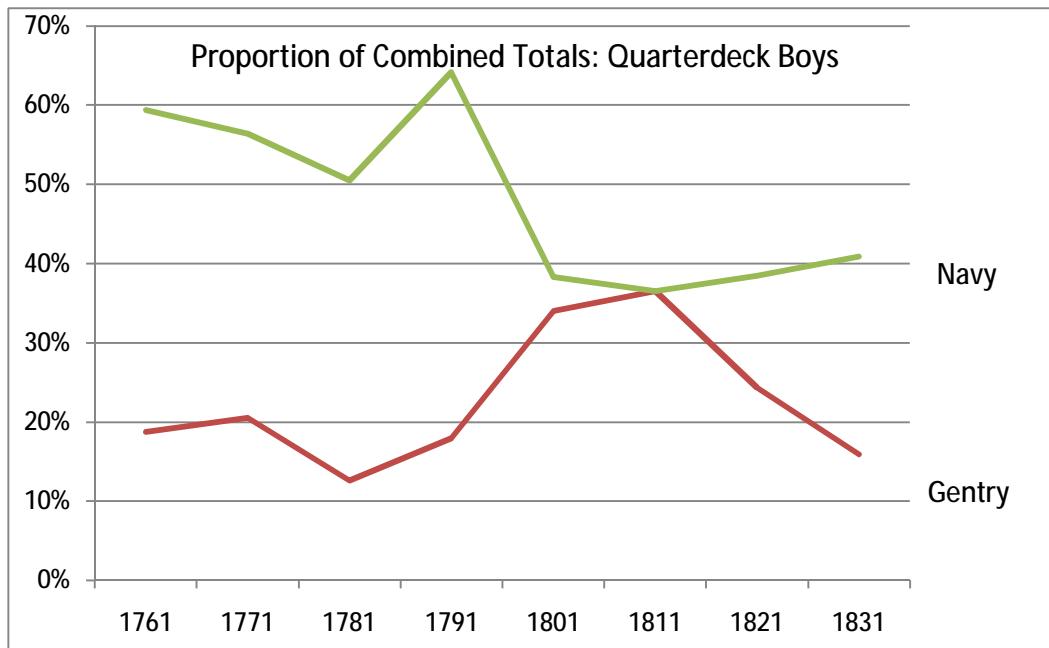
¹³ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 159.

Figure 12.1 Comparison of Trends, JOs: Naval and Peerage Influence, 1761-1831



The inverse relationship was also true of naval and gentry connections for quarterdeck boys. The exceptions here occurred in 1781, when both forms of influence fell slightly, and in 1791 when both influences increased.

Figure 12.2 Comparison of Trends, QDBs: Naval and Gentry Influence, 1761 – 1831



In both data sets, the general rule appeared to be that the rise of one form of social influence adversely impacted naval influence and vice versa. While this would seem to suggest that the two were mutually exclusive, it must be remembered that these results are taken from the *combined* proportional data in which young gentlemen who revealed multiple influences were counted more than once; and that candidates with *both* social and naval connections were counted in both categories. What the data does reveal are variances in the relative importance of each socio-professional connection and from this it can be concluded that when demand for entry-level positions was high among the social elites, it was satisfied – to the detriment of naval connections.

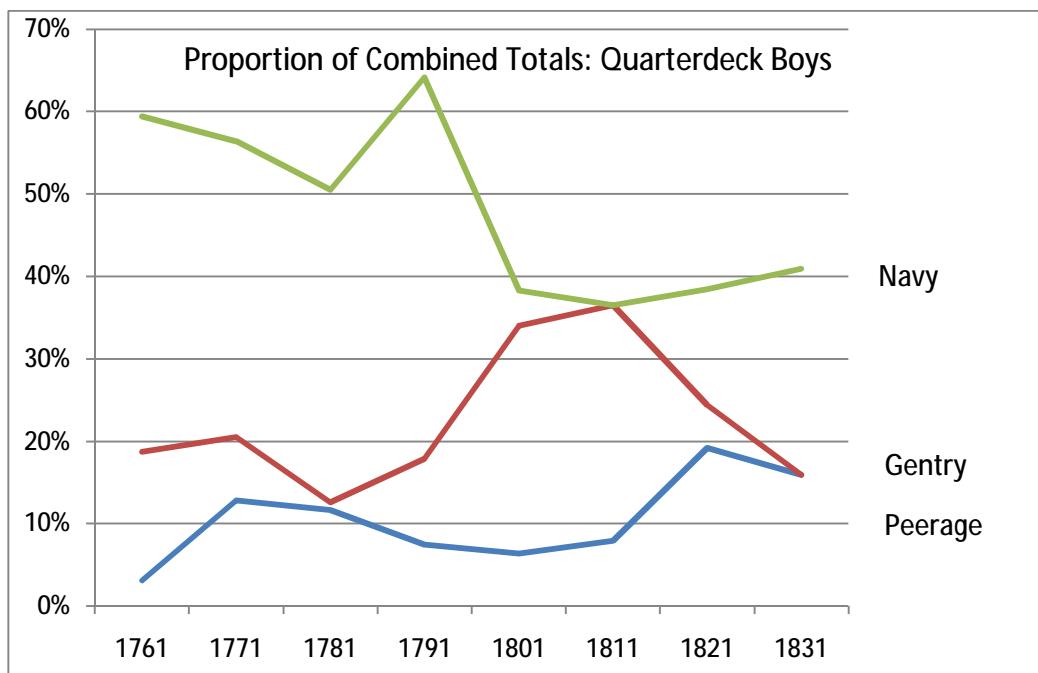
The relationship between supply and demand meant that in years when fewer positions were available for young gentlemen, particularly in times of peace or when there was a marked surplus of officer aspirants, social influence of one form or other generally triumphed. This was true for quarterdeck boys in the peacetime sample for 1771, when gentry influence rose sharply as naval influence declined. During the war years of 1801 and 1811 the expansion of the fleet opened more positions for volunteers,¹⁴ although a surplus of applicants meant that competition was high and accordingly the influence of the landed gentry peaked, to the point that it equaled naval influence in obtaining an entry-level appointment.

The fall-off in gentry influence during the post-war years appeared to have less to do with the rise in the importance of naval influence and more to do with the spike in

¹⁴ See Appendix B for a comparison of the estimated number of positions available for each sample year. For the early years of the French Wars, up until Trafalgar, the problem of an overabundance of midshipmen appears to have had little impact on the day to day lives of young gentlemen or the captains who managed their appointments. Not until the later years of the war were measures instituted to help curb the appeal of a naval career. In 1808 the Admiralty rolled out a strong disincentive, revising the allocation of prize money so that commissioned officers received considerably less. The change effectively represented a large pay cut for lieutenants and captains and no doubt dulled the luster of a naval career for ambitious young gentlemen. See Benjamin, "Golden Harvest," pp. 20-21.

peerage connections that took place among quarterdeck boys. While the importance of gentry and peerage connections rose together during the peace of 1771, the more significant cut backs associated with the post-1815 navy meant that members of the elite with the greatest sway, typically the titled nobility, received a larger slice of the smaller pie.

Figure 12.3 Comparison of Trends, QDBs: Naval, Gentry, and Peerage Influence, 1761 – 1831



The effect seen in 1831, when both forms of social influence appeared to decline relative to a very shallow rise in naval influence likely reflects uncertain times in naval administration and among the social elites on the eve of Parliamentary Reform. It may also reflect aristocratic and gentry disdain for the Admiralty's application process¹⁵ which sought to replace traditional forms of patronage with centralized political controls. Rodger's

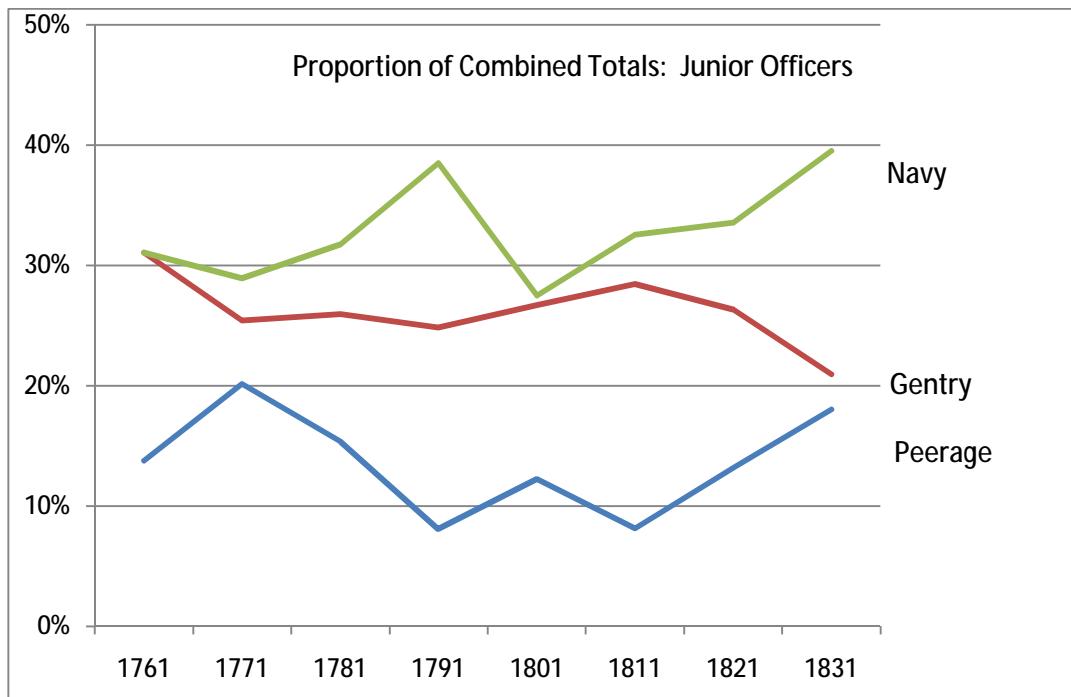
¹⁵ See Chapter Nine, Section 2b.

assessment of the social quality of officer candidates in the decades after Reform suggests, however, that the dip in elite presence was a short-lived phenomenon.¹⁶

In the sample of junior officers, peerage connections also peaked during the peace of 1771 when opportunities were more limited and powerful connections brought greater leverage to bear on the social networks influencing naval patronage. Peerage connections rose slightly again in 1801, although the overall showing of young nobility in the ranks of midshipmen and mates remained low during the sampled war years. After 1815 a shortage of positions for young gentlemen saw a synchronous rise in the importance of aristocratic connections. This increase was, however, paralleled by a rise in naval influence – a scenario that appears to be as much a reflection of the larger, post-war “service elite,” which consisted of officers who received titles as rewards for service, as it was a commentary on the increasing social standards that were being applied to post-war junior officers.

¹⁶ Rodger, “Officers, Gentlemen and their Education,” pp. 145-47; also see Lewis, *Transition*, pp. 22-26.

Figure 12.4 Comparison of Trends JOS: Naval, Gentry, and Peerage Influence, 1761 – 1831



The simultaneous decline in the relative importance of gentry connections among junior officers in the years after 1815 does, however, suggest that the quality of the social connection became a determining factor in the advancement of quarterdeck boys to the rating of midshipman or mate. This trend is noteworthy in that it coincides with the Admiralty's first significant efforts to seize control of the appointment process.¹⁷ The Admiralty's traditional preference for the "sons of noblemen and gentlemen"¹⁸ was facilitated by a more centralized system of recruitment and advancement. This in itself was enabled by the need for vast and rapid reductions in the size of the officer corps which justified the centralization of power and the Admiralty's assault on a captain's powers of nomination.

¹⁷ ADM 3/185; and *The Naval Chronicle*, 34 (1815), p. 167.

¹⁸ See "Royal Proclamation," May 8, 1676 in *BND*, p. 283; ADM 7/339, ff.420-30; and HC 1794 XXXII, p. 537.

It is also important to note, however, that the backing of a peer in 1831 seemed to carry the same weight as it had done in 1771, when the Admiralty influence on the selection and appointment of young gentlemen was negligible. This suggests that while the Admiralty of the post-war years may have been keen to raise an officer corps with an elite social pedigree it was, by no means, setting a precedent for recruitment. It appears that social rank, and its attendant powers, could be just as effective in dominating the patronage networks of individual captains as it was the centralized naval bureaucracy. Peaks in the importance of elite social connections, seen at the beginning and end of the study, suggest the possibility that if other factors such as politics, fashion, and public opinion had not affected the desirability of a naval career for elite sons, that peerage and gentry connections would have presented consistently higher showings throughout the period examined. The inverse relationship of social and naval influence, seen throughout most of the data, also supports the idea that when social interest appeared it was given precedence. The developments in the later years of this study may therefore, be seen less as the re-emergence of social traditionalism (which never really went away) and more as a resurgence in the popularity of a naval career for the sons of noblemen and gentlemen relative to a smaller navy with fewer employment opportunities. The trends provide evidence that despite fluctuations and variances within the system, the paternalistic mentality that was visible in the early years of this study continued to be a dominant feature of wartime recruitment for quarterdeck boys and of post-war appointments for junior officers.

ii. Social streamlining

In terms of whether these developments resulted in a more socially homogeneous corps of young gentlemen, it appears that there was a discernable narrowing of the social

parameters for aspirants after 1815. The results, however, must be placed in the context of the larger sample. One of the goals of this study was to avoid the sample biases inherent in Michael Lewis's surveys of commissioned officers, which ignored the candidates who did not give information on their social backgrounds. The limitations of the genealogical search techniques used in this survey are thoroughly acknowledged, although the problems can be partially mitigated by making use of the “untraceables” in both data sets.

Table 12.1 Percentage of Traceable Quarterdeck Boys and Junior Officers, 1761-1831 (Combined Totals)

	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831	Total
QDB	8.3%	10.6%	23.2%	16.7%	12.2%	16.7%	23.2%	27.5%	17.1%
JO	9.7%	24.1%	22.3%	34.9%	29.7%	29.0%	43.0%	48.4%	29.5%

Sources: Appendix H, “Collated Data and Charts: Summary.”

This table shows that on average, roughly 80 percent of quarterdeck boys and 70 percent of junior officers remained untraceable in terms of their social backgrounds. This suggests three possibilities: first, that the vast majority of recruits and junior officers possessed no notable social connections;¹⁹ second, that a large portion of those sampled were not, in fact, “young gentlemen” with tenable ambitions to commissioned rank;²⁰ and finally, that the majority of these young men did not continue with a naval career having lost interest or failed to keep up with the rigors of life at sea before reaching commissioned rank.²¹

¹⁹ Further research into local records, including the Victoria County Histories, would undoubtedly reveal a wealth of information regarding the presence of sons who hailed from farming, trade, merchant, and even professional backgrounds.

²⁰ This is true up until 1831. See Chapter Nine, Section 2 for a full discussion of the issues in the post-war years.

²¹ Failure to make it to the lieutenants’ examination and hence to a central register of officer candidates reduced the likelihood that a young gentleman could be traced. In terms of the “drop-outs” there could be many reasons for leaving the service, not least a desire for self-preservation. One notable example of a lad who chose not to carry on with his career was eighteen-year old Richard Francis Roberts, a midshipman who served aboard the *Victory* at Trafalgar. Roberts was assigned to the orlop to assist the ship’s surgeon during the battle – an experience so harrowing that he left the service immediately after the battle, never to return. See Brockliss, *Nelson’s Surgeon*, pp. 110, 115, 120.

It is worth noting, however, that in the sample years before 1794 the traceability of quarterdeck boys (approximately 20 percent on average) aligns roughly with service and Marine Society estimates which allowed that less than one quarter of all servants' positions were reserved for "young gentlemen."²² It is therefore possible that the traceable samples for eighteenth-century quarterdeck boys are reasonably accurate reflections of the socio-professional make up of officer recruitment and offer a fairly reliable view of a strong elite presence up until 1781.²³ While the Order of 1794 should have made it easy to gauge just who were officer aspirants and who were not, the amount of movement between the ratings of "volunteer" and "boy" makes such generalizations difficult, at least up until 1815.²⁴ It is likely, however, that the majority of those included from the "boy" ratings in each sample year, were not aspiring officers but were being groomed as seamen or warrant officers.

The simplest way of viewing the amount of overall change in the social character of aspirants is to look at the presence of the elites as a percentage of the *total sample* for each year.

Table 12.2 The Proportion of Peerage and Gentry Connections to the Total Sample of Junior Officers, 1761-1831

JO:	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
Peerage (combined)	1.6%	7.6%	5.0%	4.3%	5.7%	3.5%	9.3%	13.8%
Gentry (combined)	3.5%	9.6%	8.5%	13.3%	12.4%	12.2%	19.0%	16.0%
Total † (isolated)	5.0%	16.5%	12.8%	16.9%	17.6%	14.3%	27.0%	29.3%

Source: Appendix H, "Collated Data and Charts: JO Charts."

†The total shown here is NOT the sum of the "combined" percentages shown above it. It is the percentage of the "isolated" totals, meaning that candidates showing both gentry and peerage influence were counted only once. In this way, the clearest, most accurate view of the proportion of "elites" to the whole sample can be seen.

²² See Chapter Five, Section 1 for the estimates of the Marine Society. Also see Rodger, *Command*, p. 313. Appendix B details an estimate of the number of servants' positions available in each of the sample years.

²³ Approximately 33% of the traceable total for 1771 claimed connections to the peerage or gentry. See Appendix H, "Collated Data and Charts: QDB Charts" or Appendix A1 for a summary.

²⁴ In 1815 new regulations gave *de jure*, if not *de facto*, control of all new appointments to the Admiralty. See Chapter Nine, Section 1.

Table 12.3 The Proportion of Peerage and Gentry Connections to the Total Sample of Quarterdeck Boys, 1761-1831

QDB:	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
Peerage (combined)	0.3%	1.6%	4.0%	1.6%	1.0%	2.0%	6.6%	6.9%
Gentry (combined)	2.2%	2.5%	4.3%	3.9%	5.6%	9.4%	8.4%	6.9%
Total † (isolated)	2.5%	4.0%	7.9%	5.2%	6.5%	10.6%	14.0%	13.7%

Source: Appendix H, "Collated Data and Charts: QDB Charts."

†The total shown here is NOT the sum of the "combined" percentages shown above it. It is the percentage of the "isolated" totals, meaning that candidates showing both gentry and peerage influence were counted only once. In this way, the clearest, most accurate view of the proportion of "elites" to the whole sample can be seen.

It is clear from these progressions that the elites assumed a far greater role in both samples after 1815. Among junior officers in 1821 and 1831 nearly one third of the *total sample* was made up of young men with connections to the peerage and the gentry, representing not only a significant portion of the whole, but a substantial increase over previous years. The same increase is also visible in the quarterdeck boys' data. While the change is not as pronounced, an examination of the proportions relative to the fact that in 1821 and 1831 more than 70 percent of untraceables were rated "boy," the picture becomes clearer, as the vast majority of these were not officer candidates according to criteria attached to the new entry-rating systems implemented in 1818, 1824, and 1831.²⁵ Chapter Nine, Section 1 discussed the decline and disappearance of movement between the volunteer and boy ratings in the post-war years. It can, therefore, be concluded with some certainty that the traceable sample of quarterdeck boys in the years after 1815 is largely representative of the social character of true "young gentlemen." Among junior officers, the circumstances of the untraceables are less certain, as their ages indicate that they too were "young" aspirants. It is likely, however, that the majority of these unknowns, who possessed no obvious social, political, or professional connections, were not vying for commissioned

²⁵ See Chapter Nine, Section 1b for a more detailed explanation of these changes.

rank but for warrant officer status as masters.²⁶ This position does not belittle the importance or the desirability of a master's rating. Neither does it rule out the inclusion of well-born young gentlemen in the corps of aspiring masters. It does, however, suggest that boys with the best connections – social, political, and service related – came to dominate the body of commissioned-officers-in-training leaving no professional alternative for the remaining majority. Overall, such a development supports arguments for a shift towards a more homogenous, more socially-elite officer corps in the new century.

iii. Politics and culture

An important explanation for the various movements seen in the naval/social relationship as it impacted recruitment involved politics and the cultural effects of political change. It has been noted that the popularity of a naval career for the sons of the elites could vary with the political climate.²⁷ Pitt the Younger's government saw the largely aristocratic Foxite Whigs cast into opposition and brought subtle socio-political factors to bear on elite perceptions of the navy as a suitable career for well-born sons.²⁸ The relative fall-off in peerage influence visible in both samples in 1791 may be evidence of the declining popularity of a naval career for Whig-peer sons while the service was in the hands of their political rivals; just as the small spike in peerage connections among junior officers in 1801 might reflect a renewed interest with the presence of a Whig peer at the Admiralty during the early years of the war.²⁹ After 1807, however, the era of coalition governments ended and the Whigs fell from power entirely. The subsequent decline in

²⁶ This assumption is based on the fact that the vast majority of untraceables did not appear to have passed the examination for lieutenant. See Pappalardo, *Passing Certificates*, Vols. 1 & 2. See Appendices F7-F8, "Quarterdeck Boys 1821-1831."

²⁷ See Chapter Six, Section 3; Chapter Eight, Section 3; and Chapter Nine, Section 2.

²⁸ See Chapter Six, Sections 1-4 for a full discussion.

²⁹ Between 1794 and 1804, the admiralty was lead by Whigs, first the Earl Spencer, 1794-1801 followed by the Earl St. Vincent, 1801-1804.

peerage influence seen in both sets of data for 1811, may well be symptomatic of this political change.

The strength of politics may also be responsible for the decline in gentry influence seen in both sets of data in 1831 and of aristocratic influence for quarterdeck boys in the same year. The fall of the Tories in 1830 saw a changing of the political guard from a party which, in the new century, had become the arbiter of social traditionalism to a new Whig ethos of reform.³⁰ Even so, the Whigs abolished Melville's policy of centralized recruitment, a policy that allowed political loyalties to be easily identified and rewarded. It also appeared to open opportunities for the mercantile, professional, and middle classes.³¹ While reform may have topped the Whig political agenda there was little change visible in their social agenda for the navy. Although aristocratic influence may have fallen slightly in the early months of the new Whig regime, no corresponding hike in the presence of mercantile or professional influence showed an appreciation for a more middle-class, entrepreneurial ideal. Army influence received favor instead – the aristocratic associations of which have been discussed at length.³² Regardless of what political book could be made through the distribution of naval patronage, policies of advancement, be they Tory or Whig, continued to safeguard the elite character of the nineteenth-century officer corps.³³

The impact of war-time policy on cultural impressions of the navy also affected the social make-up of the aspiring officer corps. The association of the aristocracy with vice –

³⁰ It is important to note that while Whigs may have championed the “entrepreneurial ideal,” the leadership of the party remained firmly in the hands of wealthy peers, Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 272, 216-17, 290. For a discussion of the continuity of patrician power also see Colley, “Whose Nation?” p. 117.

³¹ See Chapter Nine, Section 2b for a full explanation of the social effects of Melville's centralized “application” process for 1st class volunteers.

³² See Chapter Six, Section 3b; Chapter Eight, Section 2 and Section 3b; also see Reader, *Professional Men*, p. 8; Rodger, “Honour and Duty,” p. 427; Janowitz, *The Professional Soldier*, p. 95; Razzell, “Social Origins,” pp. 254-55; and Wood, *The Limits of Social Mobility*, personal notes.

³³ See Appendix H, “Collated Data and Charts: Summary;” also see Rodger, “Officers, Gentlemen and their Education,” pp. 156-74.

from immorality to infidelity in matters of patriotism – heightened during the French Revolutionary Wars and helped to inspire a general shift in the way English society defined the qualities of a gentleman.³⁴ The infiltration of middle class values such as duty, dependability, and professionalism into concepts of honor and gentility, brought the more middle-class Royal Navy sharply into focus in the public mind. Widely held perceptions of the navy as a more “democratic” institution than its military counterpart, and the general belief (perpetuated by the Pittite administration) that the navy offered a career open to talent,³⁵ helped position the service at the center of British consciousness and captured the imagination of a society obsessed with social mobility.³⁶ Victories and a slew of larger-than-life heroes cemented the Royal Navy and its officers at the very heart of the nation’s self-image. The popularity of a naval career for all who considered themselves gentlemen, by deed and by appearance, if not by birth, was matched by corresponding increases in the presence of boys from professional or trade/merchant backgrounds as well as the sons of the landed gentry who embodied the new creed of morality and manners. The small spike in the presence of young nobility among junior officers in 1801 may also be reflective of the heightened popularity of a naval career and the cultural importance of the service in the wake of victories at Cape St. Vincent, Camperdown, the Nile, and Copenhagen.

Such enthusiasm could not, however, outlast the war. The economic and political turmoil that came with the peace was matched by a cultural malaise which found little comfort in the symbolic institution of the navy or its victories. The desire for a return to Old Stability paved the way for the resurgence of paternalism which, in turn, appeared to

³⁴ See Chapter Eight, Section 2a for a full discussion of these developments.

³⁵ Jenks, *Naval Engagements*, pp. 4, 192.

³⁶ Langford, *Polite*, pp. 65-67. Perkin also notes that “the emphasis on the many-runged social ladder sprang from the concern with social mobility which was nearer the heart of the middle class than of the aristocratic ideal, and was the salvation and justification of the new class society . . . ,” Perkin, *Origins*, p. 374.

refuel the engines of Old Corruption,³⁷ the consequences of which came to a political and cultural head in 1832. For the navy the result was a shift in recruiting practices which, after 1815, reflected the renewed importance of being well-born, well-moneyed, and well-connected.

b. *Centralization and the Admiralty*

For the Admiralty, post-war stability could best be achieved by gaining control of its numerically-unwieldy and socially-diverse corps of officer aspirants. Centralization of the recruitment and appointment process for young gentlemen was crucial to achieving this goal; but wreaked havoc on traditional patronage networks and effectively stripped captains of the power which came from leveraging those networks. Research detailed in Chapter Nine, Sections 1 and 2, has shown that the policies implemented in 1815 aimed at taking greater control of the recruitment and appointment process than previously thought. Contrary to Lewis's interpretation, the new orders went far beyond Admiralty control of midshipmen's appointments,³⁸ giving the central administrative body legal, if not practical, control over *all* new appointments for young gentlemen. The 1815 regulations also placed the Admiralty, not individual captains, in charge of the career development of aspirants,

³⁷ This is true in as far as Cobbett's "Old Corruption" referenced a "parasitical system - ostensibly built up to enormous proportions during the Napoleonic Wars – through which the elite fed its insatiable appetite for power and money at the people's expense." This was achieved through sinecures, contracts, pensions, and preferments – in short - patronage. See Philip Harling, "Rethinking 'Old Corruption,'" in *Past and Present*, 147 (May, 1995): p. 127; and *The Waning of "Old Corruption": the politics of economical reform in Britain, 1779-1846* (Oxford, 1996). Rubenstein argues that "Old Corruption," which specified a "wider general milieu as well as political corruption," persisted until the change of government in 1830, W. D. Rubenstein, "The End of 'Old Corruption' in Britain, 1780-1860," in *Past and Present*, 101 (Nov., 1983): pp. 55-57. Colley notes that "Old Corruption, that Byzantine mesh of sinecures and pensions, continued to characterize British governmental machinery until after the Reform Act," Colley, "Whose Nation?" p. 113. Also see Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford, 1985), Chapter 5.

³⁸ Lewis, *Social History*, p. 159.

granting the Lords Commissioners authority over all aspects of a young gentleman's professional life, from disciplinary action to advancement.³⁹

It must be acknowledged that the centralization of power was a ponderous process. There is little evidence in the available manuscripts from which to gauge the success (or otherwise) of the 1815 regulations although a reworking of the order in 1830 suggests that some tweaking was necessary as it included stronger language regarding the need for strict observance of Admiralty power in all matters regarding young gentlemen.⁴⁰

At times the centralization process also appeared to reverse course. The Admiralty's decision to close the Royal Naval College to officer trainees in 1837 once again gave individual captains sole charge of the education and training process – a move that appeared to fly in the face of progress towards a single governing authority. The fiscal constraints and political concerns⁴¹ that drove the decision could not, however, mask the need for more structured management of the educational and professional development of future officers. The revival of an Admiralty-run training and educational facility by mid-century restored the authority of the Lords Commissioners and paved the way for future advancements towards a fully-centralized system of officer entry, education, training, and advancement.

The aristocratic surge visible in the data for young gentlemen after 1815 opens one small window onto a view of the effects of post-war society, politics, and culture on the Royal Navy's officers-in-training. Although the trends seen in the junior officers' sample suggest that the relative importance of peerage influence was not as great in 1831 as it had been in 1771, and that the gap separating peerage influence from naval influence in 1831

³⁹ ADM 3/185; *The Naval Chronicle*, no. 34, p. 167.

⁴⁰ See Chapter Nine, Section 2 for a full discussion of the new regulations.

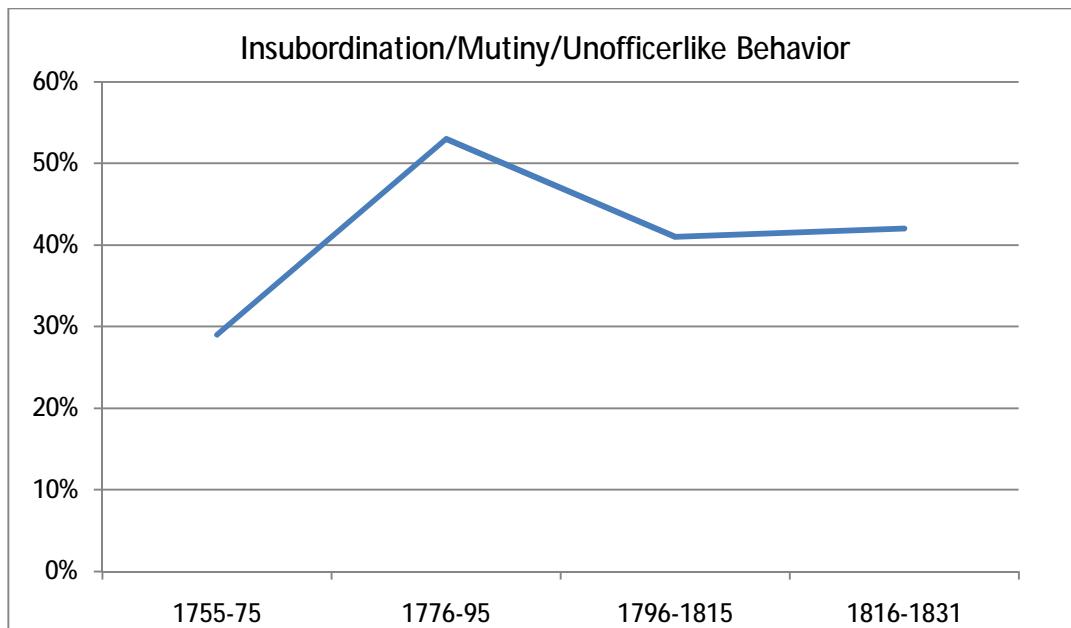
⁴¹ The decision was part of Sir James Graham's policies of economy and reform, see Morriss, *Cockburn*, pp. 198-202.

was more than double what it had been in 1771, the high level of reliability in the post-war data shows a real increase in the importance of social influence and is a clear sign of social change in naval recruiting policies. While the corps of young gentlemen continued to be drawn from relatively diverse social and professional backgrounds, the data unequivocally shows the Admiralty's preference for selecting its next generation of officers from the ranks of the social elites. Such a conclusion ultimately justifies the observations of St. Vincent and his colleagues who noted a change in the social quality of officer aspirants. Though their comments may have been several years premature, it is likely that career officers, men who had spent a lifetime in the service and were well attuned to the timbre of naval life, saw the small signs of social change and recognized the impact they would have on future generations of command.

c. Effects on professionalism and subordination

The final question to be answered dealt with contemporary concerns for the rising social status of recruits and its deleterious effects on subordination and naval professionalism. Based on the data gathered from courts martial records it appears that the fears of the admirals, from Nelson to Patton, were largely unfounded. The results show that overall the proportion of crimes which involved insubordination, mutiny, or unofficerlike behavior were in slow decline between 1776 and 1831.

Figure 12.5 Percentage of Charges for Crimes against Superiors, 1755-1831



While crimes aimed at superiors remained the single largest category of charges brought against junior officers between 1776 and 1831, the period during which they were most prevalent (1776-1795) corresponded to a time in which the proportion of junior officers with ties to the peerage was in steep decline, falling from 20 percent of the traceable total in 1771, to 15 percent in 1781, and 8 percent in 1791. The years in which the proportion of junior officers with connections to the peerage was highest, in 1761 and 1771, and again in 1821 and 1831, coincided with periods in which the proportion of crimes aimed at superiors was comparatively low.

The perceived threat to standards of discipline and subordination was, like the perceived increase in the wartime presence of young “honorable,” not supported by the data.⁴² This, however, is not to say that contemporary observations of a growing indiscipline among young gentlemen during the French Wars were completely groundless. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that the confusion of social and naval rank

⁴² See Chapter Ten, Section 1.

was a growing concern. Dillon, Boteler, Wilson, and a number of senior officers including Nelson and Collingwood, recalled the aggressions of young well-borns who took umbrage at the disciplinary measures taken against them. The actions of Edward Moore and his likeminded colleagues in the Midshipmen's Mutiny showed a high degree of confusion among the young gentlemen of the Channel Fleet as to which took precedence, the authority of a superior officer or the authority of a gentleman. Although the "mutiny" was quashed before it developed into a more significant threat, it nonetheless represented a clear and present danger to quarterdeck authority and an unequivocal challenge to the established chain of command.

At the most basic level, the concerns of the Channel Fleet's midshipmen appear to have been reflections of wider social and cultural developments. The inclusiveness of the new, looser standards of "gentility"⁴³ heightened the sensitivity of many officer aspirants, who were not gentlemen by birth, to the point that defense of personal honor became more important than traditional codes of naval discipline and subordination. Social and professional unrest among midshipmen was followed by a string of upheavals including the Great Mutinies of 1797, which forever changed ideas of how order and discipline should be enforced. These events also resulted in greater efforts by senior officers to encourage separation between the ranks and ratings and enforce a stricter observance of the naval hierarchy.⁴⁴

Concerns for the maintenance of subordination and discipline were therefore justifiable during the French Wars; yet they were the product of a reordering taking place in wider society rather than an increase in the presence of young nobility in the Royal Navy's junior officer ratings.

⁴³ See Chapter Eight, Section 2 for a full discussion of the issues.

⁴⁴ Rodger, *Command*, p. 450; Knight, *Pursuit*, p. 103.

2. Implications for the navy

The thematic threads explored in this thesis have attempted to weave a depiction of the officer recruit – one that shows the changing face of the young gentleman before, during, and after the French Wars. The relationship between issues concerning the social exclusivity of the midshipmen's berth, its effects on subordination and discipline, the importance of social and political interest, and the centralization of administrative control demonstrate the sensitivity of the young gentleman's condition to the influences of civil society throughout the period under consideration.

The pattern of development that emerges is more cyclical revolution than linear evolution – suggesting a recurring pattern in which specific social, political, and cultural conditions coalesced at intervals, allowing the elites to dominate the corps of entry-level recruits and junior officers. These conditions were generally produced by periods in which a naval career was more popular among the highest-ranking members of society and employment opportunities were more limited, usually due to conditions of peace.

The reoccurrence of recruiting practices that favored the elites, to the detriment of all other social and professional groups, also provides evidence of the limitations of social mobility afforded by a naval career. When more sons of the landed gentry and the titled nobility were occupying the midshipmen's berth, fewer opportunities were available for those from the middling and lower orders, including the professions. For officer aspirants it appears that the potential for real social mobility, involving the ascendency of the working and middle classes to the ranks of the economic and landed elite, waned with the close of the eighteenth century. While the years from 1761 to 1791 displayed variances in the social make-up of the corps of young gentlemen, showing periods characterized by wide social diversity and, by extension, the chance for social transcendence, the nineteenth-century

sample years showed a distinct narrowing of the social parameters for selection, and particularly for advancement to the junior officer ratings. It was a change that signaled the beginning of a slow but inexorable march towards a navy officered in large part by the social elite.⁴⁵

a. *A pattern of selection*

The suggestion of a cycle in which different socio-professional influences took precedence at different times can be traced through developments in the data relative to changes taking place in civil society. From the early years of this study, findings show recruitment patterns that were highly susceptible to social influence. The solidity of the old social order, and its centrality to the operation of naval patronage networks, particularly in 1771, is reflected in the strong showing of noble and gentry sons in the entry and junior officer ratings. Sandwich's "radical" and highly criticized view of patronage, which awarded favor based on merit and deservedness rather than on birth and connections was, in itself, evidence of the prevailing climate of social conservatism in the years following the Seven Years' War.

The pattern of recruitment and appointment changed, however, during the last two decades of the eighteenth century to reflect an increasingly dynamic social state. A maturing culture of entrepreneurialism, economic mobility, and a broadening definition of "gentility"⁴⁶ coincided with a period in which employment opportunities for young gentlemen were expanding. Together these changes allowed the development of a more

⁴⁵ Lewis shows that 45% of the 834 commissioned officers surveyed between 1814 and 1864 were the sons of the titled nobility or the landed gentry. Though he addresses the issue of new service creations, it is unclear as to whether Lewis counted the sons of "service" peers and baronets in the "titled" category or in the "professional" naval category. It is therefore possible that the proportion of the titled elites could actually be higher than 45%. See Lewis, *Transition*, p. 22. Also see Rodger, "Officers, Gentlemen and their Education," p. 144.

⁴⁶ Langford, *Polite*, pp. 67, 329, 464; Dewald, *European Nobility*, p. 51; Hunt, *The Middling Sort*, p. 51; Cannon, *Aristocratic Century*, p. 167; Nye, *Masculinity*, p. 32; Chaussinand-Nogaret, *The French Nobility*, p. 34.

socially-diverse midshipmen's berth. The decline in the importance of elite social connections among young gentlemen in 1781 and 1791 was matched by a small but noticeable rise in the presence of trade/merchant and professional sons, including those with connections to the navy and the clergy.⁴⁷ The fashionability of middle-class values combined with more accessible standards of gentility, transformed the age-old naval conundrum of a “professional gentleman” into the contemporary ideal.⁴⁸ The trends seen in the data for junior officers (1781 and 1791) seem to be indicative of a strengthening belief within the service that officers and gentlemen could be formed, through a combination of professional training and education.⁴⁹ Such a principle provides evidence of a navy, and by extension, a society, characterized by a strong potential for social mobility.⁵⁰

This mobility, in turn, gave rise to a form of “class consciousness” in the first decades of the new century. As the middling and lower-middling orders became more covetous of genteel status, or at least “respectability,” as a social and financial goal⁵¹ the importance of signifiers such as manners, morality, education, codes of honor, dress,⁵² and standard of living rose among the corps of young gentlemen, just as they did in civil society.⁵³ The data, and indeed much of the anecdotal evidence from the later-war years,

⁴⁷ This was the most dramatic upturn in both sets of data related to naval influence in 1791. This symmetry suggests that during the rapid mobilizations of 1790-91, recruiting captains chose to favor the sons of the service over and above boys with social connections – a decision that reflected a general belief espoused by many senior officers of the day (including Nelson), that second or third generation naval families were more deserving of opportunities for their sons. The spike may also be seen as evidence of a belief that naval sons, whether the scions of officers or not, were suitable for grooming as officers and gentlemen. See Chapter Eight, Section 2 for a discussion of this general position.

⁴⁸ Langford, *Polite*, pp. 73; Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, pp. 174, 202.

⁴⁹ Reader, *Professional Men*, pp. 10-11; Corfield, *Power and the Professions*, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰ Langford, *Polite*, p. 66; Ackroyd, *Advancing with the Army*, pp. 19-20, 340.

⁵¹ Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 55-56, 61-62.

⁵² Or, in this case, Brummell-style “undress.” See Kutch, *Three Piece Suit*, p. 174; Kelly, *Brummell*, p. 5.

⁵³ These qualities were attainable through the accumulation of wealth and the general economic expansion that facilitated it. Perkin, *Origins*, pp. 60-61, 223; also see Langford, *Polite*, pp. 438, 464. Lord John Russell, writing in 1821, noted that there was “no better sign of the future prosperity of the country, than the wealth, comfort, and intelligence of its middle orders,” quoted in Warhman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, p. 254.

corroborates the impression of a rising awareness of social class.⁵⁴ The sharp increase in the importance of gentry connections in the quarterdeck boys' sample and the shallow increase among junior officers in 1801 and 1811 suggests that the navy of the early-nineteenth century was also placing greater emphasis on the social status of officer trainees. This suggestion is supported by the data and by the corresponding fall in the relative importance of naval connections in both samples from the later-war years.⁵⁵ Chapter Ten chronicled the accounts of young gentlemen who showed much awareness of the importance of proper dress, diction, and manners, as well as concerns for family wealth, social prestige, and political interest.⁵⁶ The trends seen in the traceable data give a solid indication of the increasing importance of gentry influence in gaining a start on a naval career. The need to cast aspirants as "true" gentlemen, even if they were not yet officers, was reflected in attitudes espoused by senior officers regarding the need for greater separation between the ranks and ratings and an emerging class consciousness, particularly on naval quarterdecks.⁵⁷

The escalating importance of gentility by birth and connections, rather than just the appearance of it, propelled the cycle and saw its ultimate return to a state of social and cultural conservatism in the navy of the post-war years. After 1815 dramatic cuts in the size of the navy and significantly fewer opportunities for recruits resulted in a return to

⁵⁴ See Chapter Six. Note the memoirs of Dillon, Gardner, Hall, Boteler, Jackson, Chamier, and Perceval as young gentlemen and the commentary of senior officers such as Collingwood, Nelson, St. Vincent, Patton, and Griffiths. This aligns with McCahill's view of a growing sense of stratification by rank, even among members of the aristocracy, McCahill, "Peerage Creations," pp. 259, 277.

⁵⁵ It is also a position supported by Lewis. See Lewis, *Transition*, p. 23.

⁵⁶ Particularly Dillon, Boteler, Chamier, and Hall all of whom began in the service with significant naval and social connections.

⁵⁷ See Admiral Philip Patton, "Strictures," c. 1807 in Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 622-23; and Captain Anselm Griffiths, "Observations," c. 1811 in Lavery, *Shipboard*, pp. 354-357, 363. Also see Collingwood's impressions as to the uniqueness of his own attitudes towards advancing those without family and connections, see Hughes, *Collingwood Correspondence*, p. 274.

old-order standards that gave precedence, once again, to the power elites.⁵⁸ In the post-war data the noble status⁵⁹ of young gentlemen appeared to count for more in the recruiting and appointment decisions handed down by the Admiralty and the captains who increasingly operated under its control. The parallel rise in the importance of naval connections among junior officers suggests an alignment of naval/peerage influence; that as more senior officers became peers or baronets, the corps of young gentlemen was doubly pressured by both social *and* service interest.⁶⁰ Overall, the percentage increase in the relative importance of peerage connections between 1811 and 1831 more than doubled, as naval interest increased by only 17 percent. While peerage influence rose to represent only half that of naval influence in 1831, aristocratic connections showed the largest percentage growth in any of the data for that year. When it is considered that 14 percent of the *total sample* of 225 junior officers taken for 1831 showed connections to the peerage, as opposed to 3 percent of the total sample for 1811,⁶¹ the rate of growth appears substantial. In light of the fact that the previous peak in aristocratic influence, which was seen in 1771, showed only 8 percent of the total sample as having peerage connections, it must be conceded that while a cyclical pattern of recruitment emerged the extent and longevity of the post-war resurgence of the elites was far greater, establishing a standard of recruitment for decades to come.

⁵⁸ The increased importance of “elite” connections, that is, peerage *and* gentry influence, is also visible as a proportion of the total sample for 1821 and 1831. See Table 12.2 above.

⁵⁹ Noble status also brought considerable political stroke, although the data on political influence does not reflect the full extent of the connection.

⁶⁰ For the extent of peerage creations from members of the armed services see McCahill, “Peerage Creations,” p. 271.

⁶¹ See Table 12.2 above.

Conclusion

Over the seventy-year span of this study it is clear that, in addition to the external social, political, and cultural pressures acting upon the recruiting decisions of captains, there was another equally significant factor which propelled the rotation of social and professional networks. The gradual centralization of Admiralty power in all matters related to young gentlemen was of critical importance in allowing the wheel of patronage to revolve and ultimately advance in the direction of a more socially and politically exclusive field of selection. Admiralty pressure on captains to appoint and promote elite sons was not only systemic – meaning that appointment drawn to the center would always be more susceptible to pressure from the socially and politically powerful – but was a conscious policy designed to fulfill the perceived need for “natural” leaders.

It is important to note that the success of the Admiralty’s social agenda regarding officer aspirants was enabled by the complicity of the social and political establishment and by a prevailing cultural climate that upheld the authority of the traditional social hierarchy. Like the society it served, the navy bent and flexed with the changing demands of war and peace and with changing social and cultural standards. This allowed a great deal of social diversity among the corps of officer aspirants during times of need – when conditions of war expanded opportunities for recruits and when the choices of individual captains enlarged the pool from which young hopefuls could be drawn. Yet the data from both the beginning and end of this survey suggests that, in the final analysis, preference was, and always would be, given to the power elites when the demand appeared. Thackeray, writing more than a decade after the close of this study noted the centrality of

the aristocratic legacy in the national zeitgeist: “Lordolatry is part of our creed . . . our children are brought up to respect the “Peerage” as the Englishman’s second bible.”⁶²

Proof of such a view relative to naval quarterdecks can be seen first in the proportional view of the distribution of patronage to the peerage and the gentry. Among quarterdeck boys from 1761 to 1831 the social elites represented between 22 and 44 percent of the traceable candidates, proportions which, after 1801, saw them ranked above naval interest in the available data. Among junior officers the proportions were even greater, with the landed elites accounting for 33 to 46 percent of traceable candidates. In all but one year, 1791, these figures exceeded or equaled naval interest. Where merit could not be a consideration (as few if any boys brought experience to their entry-level positions), social and political connections and the fortunes of birth trumped even the deservedness of naval interest when demand for limited positions was high.

Second, there is evidence of Thackeray’s lordolatrous creed in the navy’s system of rewards. The highest honors available to senior officers were peerages and knighthoods, and while these honors may have been distributed sparingly and selectively,⁶³ the possibility, however remote, of gaining a title through service provided a powerful incentive for young gentlemen across the social spectrum. The prospect of a peerage made a naval career one of the few professions that could, for a *very* select minority, lead to real social and economic transcendence. Even the slim chance of achieving a title also helped fuel perceptions of the navy as a career open to talent. While such rewards inherently suggested a society characterized by the potential for social mobility, they also helped

⁶² William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Book of Snobs and Sketches and Travels in London* (London, 1879), p. 16.

⁶³ Colley, *Britons*, p. 191; Rodger, *Command*, p. 513.

perpetuate the supremacy of the old hierarchy in which elite social rank was the ultimate achievement.⁶⁴

Third, there is much evidence of an *ancien régime* mentality in the contemporary record. While journals and personal correspondence must be contextualized as individual opinions subject to a wide variety of influences, the sum of the parts discussed in Chapters Eight and Nine, produce a picture of young gentlemen becoming more aware of the importance of gentlemanly status and the convincing appearance of it. The need for midshipmen and mates to convey the manners and deportment of gentlemen was a far more important theme in the memoirs of Dillon, Hall, Chamier, and Boteler⁶⁵ and in the actions of Edward Moore and his fellow midshipmen, than it was in earlier accounts by Gardener, Trevenen, and even the young John Jervis. Commentators such as Collingwood, Nelson, St. Vincent, Barham, Byam Martin, Patton, and Griffiths all addressed the changing social character of young gentlemen entering the service and the pressures – social, political, and professional – that influenced their appointments.

In the post-war years popular culture added much to the discussion of increasing social and economic exclusivity within the ranks of young gentlemen. In literature and popular art the distance between those “with” and those “without,” and the professional prospects afforded to each, were a common theme. The popularity of works by novelists such as Marryat and Austen; of plays by Sheridan and Thompson; of poets, from Byron to the anonymous midshipman published in the *Naval Chronicle*; and of cartoonists like

⁶⁴ Porter notes that “those in power . . . dangled before people’s eyes ambition, self-respect, new enjoyments, polite values and fashionable lifestyles,” Porter, *Society*, p. 344; also see Langford, *Polite*, p. 65. McCahill notes the general “preoccupation with rank,” particularly in early-nineteenth century, “inflated the demand for titles of nobility” and caused existing peers to demand “promotions up the noble hierarchy.” McCahill, “Peerage Creations,” pp. 259, 261.

⁶⁵ Also see George Vernon Jackson in Lewis, *Life Before the Mast*, pp. 128-159; George James Perceval, PER1/21; Walter Millard, NMM, MS/77/087. Even those who were not young gentlemen like Peter Cullen, Robert Wilson, and the Rev. Edward Mangin, offered much commentary on the state of appearances and manners in the new century. See “Edward Mangin’s Journal,” in Thursfield, *Five Naval Journals*.

Cruikshank and Hall confirmed the strength of these socio-professional stereotypes in both naval and civil society and reinforced, in various ways, the principles of the old hierarchy.

Overall, the picture of the Royal Navy drawn by the evidence gathered here suggests that while the fully decentralized system of recruitment, which existed up until 1815, allowed the possibility of greater socially diversity among the corps of officer aspirants, selection and appointment decisions remained susceptible to the demands of the social elites. Recruiting captains were, however, answerable only their personal and professional interests which could vary with the state of war, the demands of the service, and their own financial, social, or political ambitions. What changed after 1815 was that these variables were slowly eliminated allowing the will of the Admiralty to be carried out more effectively.

A by-product of these changes was the increasingly limited opportunity for social mobility among officer aspirants.⁶⁶ On the social/political level the presence of more young aristocrats and gentlemen by birth limited opportunities for those from less exalted circumstances, effectively limiting the scope of social mobility that could be achieved through advancement to commissioned rank and therefore, the status of gentleman. On the operational level, economic mobility was also impacted by the elimination of prize money which came with the peace. Despite the loss of such a powerful incentive,⁶⁷ the service continued to attract boys with ambitions for fame and adventure. While the glorious legacy of French Wars ensured a steady stream of young hopefults into the service, their chances of once day becoming lieutenants, commanders, and captains diminished substantially after 1815 for, as the navy shrank, so did opportunities for advancement. In the years after

⁶⁶ Similar conditions in the army – involving the overabundance of the elites in the commissioned ranks which limited social mobility – are addressed in Andrew Wood’s current PhD research into the social and economic mobility of army generals. See Wood, *Limits of Social Mobility*, personal notes.

⁶⁷ Benjamin, “Golden Harvest,” p. 22, Table 9.

Napoleon's defeat only those with pedigree and powerful interest had a real shot at career success. It was a structure that would crystallize in the decades to come and one which defined the Royal Navy's officer corps well into the twentieth century.

Appendix A. List of Ships Sampled from the National Archives, 1761 – 1831.

Table A1: TNA Ship's Musters, 1761

Rates & #	Ships	ADM	Range	CS/LtS	Mids
1st & 2nd 3	Namur	36/6258	Feb-Sep	39/6	18
	Union	36/6950	Feb-Jul	29/6	14
	Royal William	36/7044	Jan-Sep	33/6	15
3rd 6	Cambridge	36/5262	Mar-Jun	53/7	24
	Valiant	36/6984	Dec 60-Jul 61	70/5	21
	Bellona	36/5105	Jan-Oct	34/5	17
	Hero	36/5838	Mar-Oct	36/3	17
	Warspite	36/7071	May-Dec	66/5	23
	Essex	36/5471	Apr-Mar 62	38/3	22
4th 6	Medway	36/6047	Aug 60-Aug 61	19/4	15
	Rippon	36/6513	Nov 60-Aug 61	25/6	5
	Chatham	36/5304	Aug 60-Jul 61	20/4	9
	Preston	36/6369	May 61-Jul 62	21/4	11
	Pembroke	36/6350	May 61-Jun 62	54/6	15
	Panther	36/6393	Dec 60-Oct 61	15/5	10
5th & 6th 10	Southampton	36/6687	May 61-Mar 62	18/3	8
	Venus	36/6976	Feb 61 - Jan 62	24/2	6
	Thames	36/6877	Jan - Nov	24/2	6
	Alarm	36/4946	Aug 60-May 61	12/2	6
	Actaeon	36/4900	Jan-Dec	9/2	4
	Niger	36/6268	Nov 60-Dec 61	15/2	5
	Tartar	36/6847	Jun 60-Aug 61	14/2	4
	Coventry	36/5283	Feb 61-Feb 62	10/2	5
	Lizard	36/6011	Jan 61-Jun 62	8/2	4
	Maidstone	36/6132	Mar 61-Mar 62	14/3	4
SL 10	Albany	36/4816	Sep 60-Aug 61	12/2	2
	Barbadoes	36/5082	May 61-Apr 62	4/1	1
	Swallow	36/6675	May 61-May 62	12/2	2
	Swan	36/6598	Jan 61-Jan 62	5/1	4
	Baltimore	36/5018	Jan-Dec	5/1	1
	Beaver	36/7326	Mar 61-Dec 62	5/1	1
	Hunter	36/5800	Apr 61-Mar 62	6/1	2
	Druid	36/5457	Apr 61-Dec 62	5/1	1
	Wolf	36/7016	Nov 60-Dec 61	7/2	4
	Kingfisher	36/5912	Jan 61-Jun 62	6/1	4

CS = Captains' servant

Blue

Note dates of sample

LtS = Lieutenants' servant

Table A2: TNA Ship's Musters, 1771

Rates & #	Ships	ADM	Range	CS/LtS	Mids
1st & 2nd 3	Namur (PO June)	36/7449	Nov 70-Jun 71	43/7	36
	Ocean (fr Jul)	36/7779	May-Sep	23/6	16
	Barfleur (in port)	36/7711	Nov 70-Mar 71	63/6	19
3rd 6	PrsAmelia (fr Feb)	36/7273	Feb-Nov	34/4	12
	Trident (fr Jul)	36/7692	Jun 71-Jul 72	16/5	19
	Orford	36/7652	Mar 71-Mar 72	28/4	16
	Northumberland	36/7647	Dec 70-Aug 72	32/9	17
	Centaur	36/8312	Apr 70-Jun 71	27/6	12
	Marlborough (fr Feb)	36/7636	Jan 71-Feb 72	27/9	6
4th 6	Portland	36/7470	Oct 70-Nov 71	18/3	6
	Pembroke	36/7473	Mar 71-Mar 72	16/5	12
	Panther	36/7660	Feb 71-Apr 72	31/4	12
	Warwick	36/7701	Dec 70-Mar 72	14/8	10
	Salisbury	36/7512	Jun 70-Mar 72	24/3	11
	Dunkirk	36/7590	Mar 71-Feb 72	16/5	13
5th&6th 10	Jason	36/7421	Mar 70-Nov 71	9/2	5
	Winchelsea	36/7698	Mar 69-Aug 71	11/2	7
	Lowestoffe	36/7633	Jun 69-Aug 71	4/1	6
	Lizard	36/7635	Oct 70-Dec 73	6/1	0
	Rainbow	36/7667	Nov 70-Sep 72	8/5	6
	Boston	36/7564	Sep 70-Jul 72	9/2 (1 VPO)	7
	Quebec	36/7475	Jun 69-Jun 71	8/2	7
	Niger	36/7448	Mar 70-Jul 72	11/2	7
	Juno	36/7429	Oct 70-Feb 72	8/4	6
	Alarm	36/7748	Jul 70-Feb 72	9/1	8
SL 10	Beaver	36/7331	Jan 70-Oct 72	7/1	3
	Tamar	36/7695	Oct 70-Mar 73	8/1	3
	Martin	36/7433	Dec 68-Dec 71	4/1	1
	Vulture	36/7533	Sep 69-May 71	4/1	3
	Pomona	36/7464	Sep 68-May 71	4/2	2
	Weazle	36/7844	Jul 69-Mar 71	6/1	2
	Favourite (fr Feb)	36/7371	Aug 68-Dec 71	4/1	3
	Otter (fr Feb)	36/7456	Oct 70-Sep 73	4/2	4
	Swallow	36/7766	Dec 70-Apr 73	3/1	2
	Nautilus	36/7454	Dec 70-Nov 73	6/2	3

CS = Captains' servant

Blue

Watch dates of sample

LtS = Lieutenants' servant

VPO = Volunteers per order

Table A3: TNA Ship's Musters, 1781

Rates & #		May 1781	ADM	Range	CS/LtS	Mids
1st & 2nd 3	Britannia		36/8690	Feb-Nov	35/7	30
	Barfleur		36/9187	Feb-Jul	30/7	19
	Sandwich		36/8865	Jan-Jun	28/7	22
3rd 6	Bedford		36/9379	Mar 80-Apr 81	21/3	17
	Superb		36/10076	May -Dec	26/5	20
	Berwick		36/8901	Oct 80-Nov 81	25/7	18
	Gibraltar		36/9453	Jan 80-Jul 81	28/9	17
	Suffolk		36/9395	Apr-Oct	5/2	14
	Fortitude		36/9384	Apr 81-Jan 82	23/5	21
4th 6	Roebuck		36/8644	Mar-Dec	15/2	3
	Medway		36/8855	Jan-Aug	21/3	10
	Adamant		36/8816	May 81-Jan 82	15/3	13
	Bristol		36/8121	Jan-Sep	14/3	9
	Panther		36/8599	Oct 80-Sep 81	16/4	13
	Warwick		36/8657	Jul 80-Jul 81	12/5	17
5th & 6th 11	Ulysses		36/10375	Nov 80-Jun 81	14/3	10
	Ambuscade		36/9566	Jul 80-Oct 81	13/3	6
	Thetis		36/8389	Jan 80-Jun 81	8/2	7
	Lizard		36/8577	Jul 80-Sep 82	16/2	5
	Porcupine		36/9797	Feb 81-Apr 82	9/1	4
	Orpheus		36/10099	Jan 80-Oct 81	8/2	9
	Hyaena		36/9547	Nov 80-Aug 81	8/1	6
	Hinchinbrook		36/9512	Apr 81-mar 82	9/1	7
	Lowestoffe		36/10051	Jul 80-Apr 81	9/2	8
	Coventry		36/9784	Mar 81-Sep 82	7/2	1
	Medea		36/9506	May 80-Jun 81	8/2	3
SL 9	Nymphé		36/9719	Dec 80-Dec 81	13/3	7
	Cygnet		36/9600	Oct 80-Oct 81	2/2	3
	Shark (fr Mar)		36/10127	Oct 70-Sep 81	8/1	3
	Kite		36/8952	Nov 80-Feb 83	2/0	2
	Merlin		36/10096	Nov 80-Feb 82	5/1	2
	Loyalist		36/8202	Jan-Aug	7/1	3
	Drake		36/9890	Apr 81-Jul 83	8/0	2
	St Vincent		36/9419	Feb 80-Nov 81	4/1	5
	Seahorse		36/9419	Dec 80-Aug 81	6/2	6

CS = Captains' servant

Blue

Watch dates of sample

LtS = Lieutenants' servant

VPO = Volunteers per order

Table A4: TNA Ship's Musters, 1791

Rates & #	Ships	ADM	Date Range	CS/LtS	Mids
1st & 2nd 3	Victory (till Sep)	36/10993	Jan-Aug	47/8	27
	Impregnable (till Sep)	36/10920	Jun 90-Sep 91	47/9	20
	Barfleur (till Sep)	36/10800	Feb-Sep	32/8	25
3rd 6	Saturn (till Sep)	36/10972	May 90-Sep 91	34/5	16
	Bedford (till Aug)	36/10806	Nov 90-Aug 91	24/4	8
	Alfred (till Aug)	36/10757	Dec 90-Aug 91	26/5	11
	Vanguard (till Sep)	36/10994	Jun 90-Sep 91	22/3	19
	Swiftsure (till Sep)	36/10974	Mar-Sep	26/6	11
	Crown	36/11013	Jul 90-Jul 91	23/6	14
4th 6	Centurion	36/11117	Jul 90-Sep 91	12/3	18
	Medusa	36/11132	Aug 90-Oct 91	12/3	10
	Adamant	36/11106	Sep 90-Aug 91	14/4	21
	Trusty	36/11215	May 91-Aug 92	12/4	18
	Leopard	36/10925	Jun 90-Dec 91	15/2	4
	Leander	36/10933	Jul 90-Mar 92	13/3	9
5th & 6th 8	Penelope	36/11049	Jan 91- Jun 92	8/3	9
	Hebe	36/10913	Jan 91 - Mar 92	16/3	10
	Solebay	36/10983	Feb 91-May 92	8/1	9
	Druid	36/11227	Oct 90-Oct 91	7/2	7
	Minerva	36/11193	May 90-Jun 92	12/2	8
	Diana (Sep-Dec)	36/11131	Feb 91-Jun 92	15/2	10
	Pomona	36/11456	Jul 90-Oct 91	15/2	5
	Hussar	36/11281	May 90-Feb 92	15/2	6
SL 9	Atalanta	36/11143	Sep 88-Jul 91	6/2	3
	Rattlesnake	36/11482	Feb 91-Dec 92	7/2	3
	Scourge	36/11070	Mar-Nov	4/2	2
	Thorn	36/10990	May 90-Sep 91	5/2	2
	Rattler	36/10957	Oct 89-May 92	3/2	2
	Scorpion	36/11155	Sep 90-Jun 92	1/1	3
	Fortune	36/10910	May 90-Oct 91	3/2	1
	Brazen	36/11288	Jun 90-Apr 93	0/0	2
	Racehorse	36/11061	May 90-Sep 91	8/0	5

CS = Captains' servant

Blue Watch dates of sample

LtS = Lieutenants' servant

VPO = Volunteers per order

Table A5: TNA Ship's Musters, 1801

Rates & #	Ships	ADM	Range	V1/B2/B3	Mids
1st & 2nd 3	Ville de Paris	36/13852	Jan-Aug	11/17/26	24
	Barfleur	36/14023	Mar-Sep	5/15/20	23
	London	36/14066	May-Sep	8/16/23	47
3rd 6	Centaur	36/14167	Dec 00-Jul 01	6/10/16	10
	Ajax	36/14303	May-Dec	6/11/8	17
	Bellona	36/14355	Mar-Dec	6/12/18	22
	Excellent	36/15236	Jan-Dec	7/11/14	21
	Carnatic	36/14428	May-Nov	2/4/4	10
	Leviathan	36/14754	Oct 80-May 81	3/8/13	24
4th 6	Abergavenny	36/14575	Mar-Oct	2/4/2	10
	Madras	36/15368	Oct 00-Aug 01	7/12/14	14
	Romney	36/15286	Feb 01-Mar 02	3/6/10	11
	Centurion	36/15378	Dec 00-Jul 01	0/9/10	9
	Isis	36/14604	Aug 00-Jul 01	6/8/10	15
	Jupiter	36/15329	Feb 99-Dec 01	3/1/3	8
5th & 6th 8	Topaze	36/14917	Jun 00-Nov 01	4/6/11	6
	Trent	36/15228	May 00-Jun 01	4/0/10	6
	Cambrian	36/15240	Nov 00-Nov 01	4/7/9	5
	Aurora	36/14710	Mar 01-Apr 02	4/6/7	3
	Fox	36/15077	Jan 01-Jan 02	3/1/2	7
	Apollo	36/15194	Nov 00-Apr 02	2/5/10	5
	El Carmen	36/13938	Jun 00-Jun 01	1/2/6	5
	Severn	36/14894	Jan 01-Feb 02	2/6/8	7
SL 10	Bittern	36/14526	Sep 00-Oct 01	2/5/7	2
	Bonne Citoyenne	36/4515	Jun 00-Jul 01	0/3/2	3
	Fairy	36/14782	Mar 00-Jul 01	3/4/7	3
	Stork	36/15135	Jan 01-Sep 02	2/5/9	3
	Pheasant	36/15035	Sep 00-Jun 03	3/3/4	4
	Echo	36/15062	Aug 00-Sep 01	1/3/4	2
	Snake	36/15047	Feb 00-Oct 01	2/4/7	3
	Termagant	36/14749	May 00-Sep 01	3/4/3	2
	Hornet	36/15054	Jul 00-Aug 01	3/4/5	1
	Sophie	36/15013	Jan 01-?	1/5/6	2

V1 = 1st Class volunteer

Blue Watch dates of sample

B2 = 2nd Class boy

B3 = 3rd Class boy

VPO = Volunteer per order

Table A6: TNA Ship's Musters, 1811

Rates & #	Ships	ADM	Range	V1/B2/B3	Mids
1st & 2nd 3	Royal Sovereign	37/2821	Nov 10-Apr 11	1/1/8	14
	Ville de Paris	37/2871	Jan-Jun	1/3/7	24
	Caledonia	37/2729	Jan-May	4/5/17	11
3rd 6	Warspite	37/2883	Mar-Nov	4/6/11	22
	Colossus	37/2741	Feb-Oct	1/7/15	11
	Tonnant	37/2861	Jan-May	7/11/13	20
	Foudroyant	37/2767	Mar-Oct	0/7/15	13
	Dragon	37/2748	Sep 10-Apr 11	0/8/15	13
	Defiance	37/2749	Jan-Jun	3/10/12	12
4th 3	Antelope	37/2486	Jan-Aug	4/7/8	11
	Diomede	37/2461	Sep 10-Sep 11	3/4/5 5/6/9 (1VPO)	8
	Grampus (Only 3)	37/2562	Jan-Dec		7
5th & 6th 10	Argo	37/2493	Jan-Dec	3/7/9	8
	Cerberus	37/2527	Sep 10-Aug 11	1/5/4	7
	Phoebe	37/2632	Nov 10-Oct 11	4/7/9	7
	Naiad	37/2618	Jan-Sep	1/3/7	2
	Medusa	37/2601	Nov 10-Oct 11	3/7/10	6
	Undaunted	37/2680	Nov 10-Aug 11	1/7/9	7
	Cambrian	37/2525	Jan-Oct	1/4/7	8
	Macedonian	37/2609	Jun 10-Jun 11	3/6/8	6
	Piedmontaise	37/3282	Jul 10-Dec 11	1/3/4	6
	Amphion	37/2464	Jan-Aug	2/5/6	5
SL 10	Cherub	37/3030	Jan 10-Apr 11	2/3/6	2
	Blossom	37/3005	Jan 10-Jul 12	3/4/8	3
	Harpy CR	37/3071	Apr-Nov	2/5/5	1
	Barracouta	37/2999	Mar-Oct	1/3/4	2
	Actaeon	37/2994	Sep 10-Jun 12	2/4/6	3
	Star	37/3176	Apr 10-Nov 11	3/3/3	2
	Trinculo	37/4851	Mar 11-Jun 12	1/4/5	3
	Halifax	37/3076	Sep 09 - Dec 11	1/3/3	1
	Alacrity	37/2988	Jan 10-Apr 11	1/4/5	2
	Hyacinth	37/2396	May 10-May 11	2/3/1	1

V1 = 1st Class Volunteer

Blue Watch dates of sample

B2 = 2nd Class boy

B3 = 3rd Class boy

VPO = Volunteer per order

Table A7: TNA Ship's Musters, 1821

Rates & #		Ships	ADM	Range	V1/B2/B3	Mids
1st &2nd	1	Rochefort (Only 1)	37/6319	Nov 20-Apr 21	6/10/14	11
3rd	3	Superb Spencer Vigo (Only 3) Note: 122 comp. for part of yr?	37/6326 37/6062 37/6332	Mar-Aug Jul 20-Apr 21 Nov 20-Apr 21	6/10/11 2/4/7 6/10/16	9 3 12
4th	5	Salisbury Leander Liverpool Newcastle Liffey	37/6117 37/6352 37/6100 37/6361 37/6096	Mar-Sep Mar 20-Oct 21 Sep 20-Apr 21 Jan-Aug Nov 20-Oct 21	1/6/7 4/7/10 1/6/7 4/7/9 3/6/8	5 3 (2AM) 12 (7AM) 17 (8AM) 15 (8AM)
5th & 6th	10	Sybille Cambrian Phaeton Forte Topaze Eden Conway Tamar Tartar Dauntless 24	37/6589 37/6545 37/6369 37/6556 37/6404 37/6207 37/6419 37/6612 37/6140 37/6652	Aug 20-Jun 21 Aug 20-Dec 21 Nov 20-Aug 21 Mar 21-Feb 22 Sep 20-Jun 21 Sep 20-Aug 21 May 20-Oct 21 Mar-Dec Jul 20-Apr 21 Nov 20-Aug 22	3/6/6 4/6/7 3/4/6 7(2VPO)/6/7 2/5/6 3/5/3 2/5/5 1/5/7 2/7/8 1/6/5	6 1 4 12 (8AM) 4 2 7 (4AM) 5 (2AM) 3 3
SL	10	Carnation Medina Heron Satellite Slaney Racehorse Sophie Larne Falmouth Esk	37/6180 37/6710 37/6429 37/6768 37/6472 37/6262 37/6750 37/6435 37/6675 37/6666	Nov 20-Sep 21 Jan 20-Feb 23 Sep 20-Oct 21 Oct 20-Aug 21 Sep 20-Jun 21 May 20-Apr 21 Jan 21-Feb 22 Jul 20-Oct 21 Mar 20-Apr 21 Aug 20-Oct 21	0/1/2 3(1VPO)/5/5 0/2/4 0/2/4 2/4/3 1/2/4 0/2/4 6(4VPO)/5/5 2/5/4 2/4/5	2 3 (2AM) 3 2 3(2 AM) 5 (2AM) 3 3 (2AM) 4 (2AM) 3

V1 = 1st Class volunteer

Blue Watch dates of sample

B2 = 2nd Class boy

Fit/full c Fitting out with full complement

B3 = 3rd Class boy

VPO = Volunteer per order

CV = College volunteer

AM/CM = Admiralty Mid/College Mid

Table A8: TNA Ship's Musters, 1831

Rates & #	Ships	ADM	Range	V1/V2/B1/B2	Mids
1st & 2nd 3	Britannia	37/7927	Jan-Jun	5/0/16/18	9 (1CM)
	St. Vincent	37/8366	Feb-Aug	7(2CV)/0/12/18	14(3CM)
	Ganges	37/8089	Jan-Jun	4/3/10/13	12
3rd 6	Kent	37/8130	May 30-Apr 31	5/0/10/14	7
	Donegal	37/8031	Jul 30-Jun 31	6/2/10/15	9(2CM)
	Wellesley	37/8473	Sep 30-Aug 31	6/0/13/14	9
	Warspite	37/8479	Sep 30-Apr 31	7/3/10/14	12(2CM)
	Melville	37/8154	Jul 30-Sep 31	8/3/10/20 (3 B1 to B2)	6(1CM)
	Revenge	37/8313	Oct 30-Dec 31	7/0/12/14	16(5CM)
4th 5	Southampton	37/8358	Jan-Aug	3/3/7/11	7(1CM)
	Winchester	37/8487	Mar 31-Aug 31	4/2/7/11	7(4CM)
	Alfred (fit/full c)	37/7878	Feb-Oct	3(1CV)/0/10/11	3
	Barham (fit/full c)	37/7911	Mar-Aug	4(1CV)/0/7/11	6(1CM)
	Dublin (fit/full c) (Only 5)	37/8042	Apr-Aug	4(1CV)/0/8/13	9(2CM)
5th & 6th 11	Tribune	37/8413	Jul 30-Jun 31	2/1/6/4	5
	Briton	37/7893	Apr 20-Jun 31	5/2/7/8	9(4CM)
	Belvidera	37/7907	Nov 30-Sep 31	6(2CV)/2/7/0	8(1CM)
	Undaunted	37/8449	Nov 30-Aug 31	5(1CV)/8/6/7	7(2CM)
	Druid	37/8022	Sep 30-Jun 31	3/1/7/12	9
	Blanche	37/7899	Jan-Oct	3/2/6/7	3
	Sapphire	37/8396	Nov 30-Dec 31	4(1CV)/2/5/6	5(1CM)
	Dryad	37/8018	May 30-Jun 31	5/1/6/7	4
	Success	37/8334	May 30-Apr 31	1(Mid to V1)/1/1/0	3
	Crocodile	37/7951	Jan-Dec	0/0/4/6	3
	Maidstone	37/8187	Jan 31-Aug 31	2/0/6/7	6
SL 10	Wasp	37/7831	Jan-June	3/1/4/2	1
	Medina	37/8145	Jul 30-Jul 31	3/2/5/3	2
	Alert	37/7848	Mar 30-Feb 32	0/0/2/4	2
	Comet	37/7954	Jan 30-Jun 31	2/1/5/5/	2
	Wolf	37/8497	Jun 30-Apr 32	3/2/2(V3)/2/4	2
	Zebra	37/8503	Aug 30-Mar 32	3/0/2/2+1 Native B2	1
	Satellite	37/8348	Jan-Oct	0/0/1/4	0
	Champion	37/8010	Jul 30-Aug 31	2/0/6/5	2
	Scylla	37/8393	Mar 30-Apr 31	3/2/2/4	2
	Pelican	37/8246	Apr 30-Oct 31	3/0/2/4	2(1CM)

V1/V2 = 1st Class volunteer/2nd class volunteer

B2/B3 = 2nd Class boy/3rd Class boy

VPO = Volunteer per order

CV = College volunteer

AM/CM = Admiralty Mid/College Mid

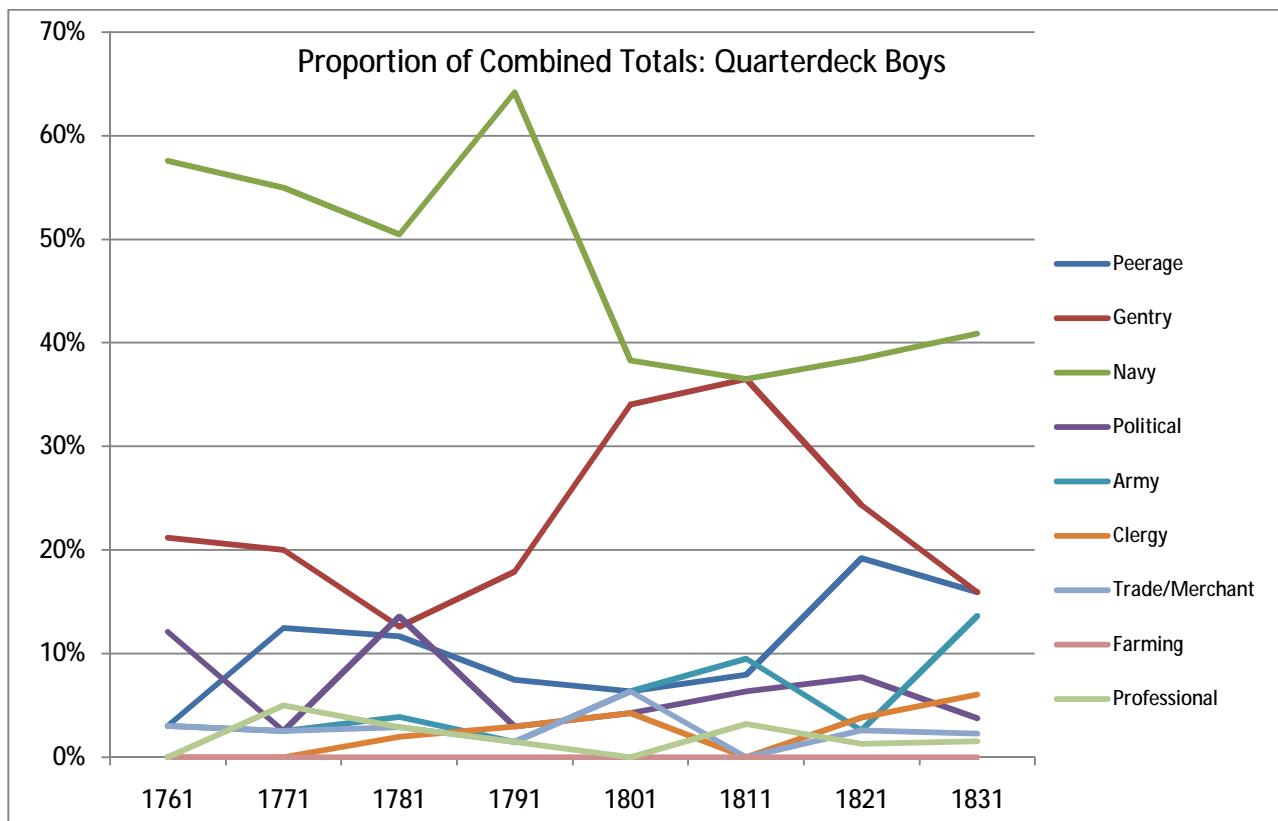
Blue Watch dates of sample
(Fit/full c) Fitting out with full complement

Appendix A1. Combined percentages of Socio-Professional Representation, QDBs and JOs, 1761-1831.

Combined Proportional Representation of the Data for QDBs

	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Peerage	3.0%	12.5%	11.7%	7.5%	6.4%	7.9%	19.2%	15.9%
Gentry	21.2%	20.0%	12.6%	17.9%	34.0%	36.5%	24.4%	15.9%
Navy	57.6%	55.0%	50.5%	64.2%	38.3%	36.5%	38.5%	40.9%
Political	12.1%	2.5%	13.6%	3.0%	4.3%	6.3%	7.7%	3.8%
Army	3.0%	2.5%	3.9%	1.5%	6.4%	9.5%	2.6%	13.6%
Clergy	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%	3.0%	4.3%	0.0%	3.8%	6.1%
Trade/Merchant	3.0%	2.5%	2.9%	1.5%	6.4%	0.0%	2.6%	2.3%
Farming	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Professional	0.0%	5.0%	2.9%	1.5%	0.0%	3.2%	1.3%	1.5%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

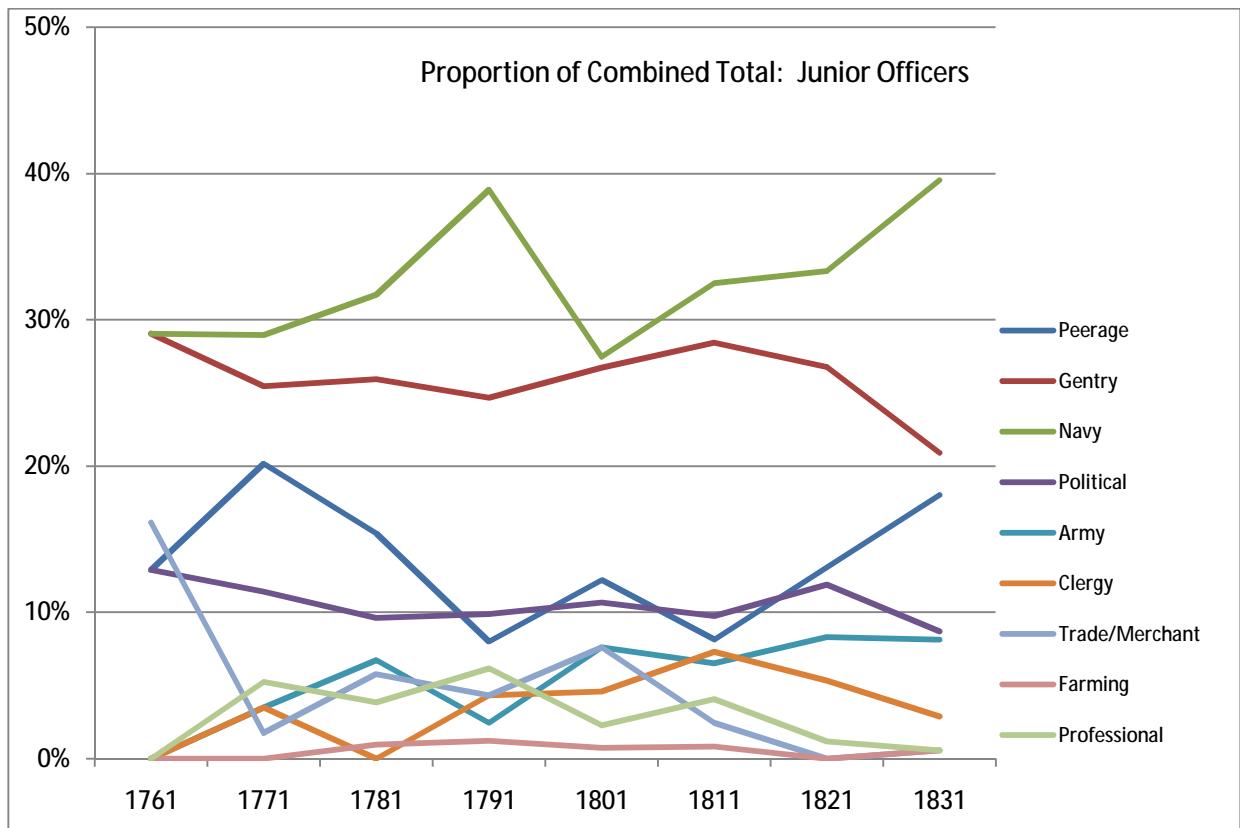
Graph representation of the above data:



Combined Proportional Representation of the Data for JOs

	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Peerage	12.9%	20.2%	15.4%	8.0%	12.2%	8.1%	13.1%	18.0%
Gentry	29.0%	25.4%	26.0%	24.7%	26.7%	28.5%	26.8%	20.9%
Navy	29.0%	28.9%	31.7%	38.9%	27.5%	32.5%	33.3%	39.5%
Political	12.9%	11.4%	9.6%	9.9%	10.7%	9.8%	11.9%	8.7%
Army	0.0%	3.5%	6.7%	2.5%	7.6%	6.5%	8.3%	8.1%
Clergy	0.0%	3.5%	0.0%	4.3%	4.6%	7.3%	5.4%	2.9%
Trade/Merchant	16.1%	1.8%	5.8%	4.3%	7.6%	2.4%	0.0%	0.6%
Farming	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	1.2%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%	0.6%
Professional	0.0%	5.3%	3.8%	6.2%	2.3%	4.1%	1.2%	0.6%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Graph representation of the above data:



Note: these same charts are referenced throughout the chapters on specific periods.

Appendix B. Estimate of the Total number of Quarterdeck Boy positions Available,
1761 - 1831

Table B1. Estimate of Captains' Servant Positions available in 1761

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# CS per Ship	Total Possible CS
1	3	2310	770	32	96
2	8	5805	725	28	224
3	52	29675	570	24	1296
4	42	16315	388	16	672
5	40	9470	236	8	320
6	54	9520	176	8	432
SL	49	4970	62	4	196
					3236

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/36, "List Books, 1761."

Note: Captains' Servant calculations are based on estimates at 4 per 100 crew members, HC 1700 VI, p. 9.

Table B2. Estimate of Captains' Servant Positions available in 1771

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# CS per Ship	Total Possible CS
1	0	0	0	0	0
2	3	2250	750	28	84
3	33	18670	565	24	792
4	13	4495	345	12	156
5	24	4545	189	8	192
6	24	3300	137	4	96
SL	31	2510	80	4	124
					1444

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/47, "List Books, 1771."

Note: Captains' Servant calculations are based on estimates at 4 per 100 crew members, PC 2/78, HC 1700 VI, p. 9.

Table B3. Estimate of Captains' Servant Positions available in 1781

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# CS per Ship	Total Possible CS
1	3	2605	868	35	104
2	11	8215	747	30	329
3	79	44405	562	22	1776
4	17	6330	372	15	253
5	52	12105	233	9	484
6	58	10220	176	7	409
SL	66	6525	99	4	261
					3616

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/57, "List Books, 1781."

Note: Captains' Servant calculations are based on estimates at 4 per 100 crew members, HC 1700 VI, p. 9.

Table B4. Estimate of Captains' Servant Positions available in 1791

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# CS per Ship	Total Possible CS
1	1	884	884	35	35
2	7	5357	765	31	214
3	29	17267	595	24	691
4	8	2700	338	14	108
5	34	6364	187	7	255
6	27	4300	159	6	172
SL	39	3695	95	4	148
					1623

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/67, "List Books, 1791."

Note: Captains' Servant calculations are based on estimates at 4 per 100 crew members, HC 1700 VI, p. 9.

Table B5. Estimate of 1st Class Volunteer Positions available in 1801

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# V1 per Ship	Total Possible V1
1	4	3350	838	8	34
2	14	10332	738	7	103
3	99	54930	555	6	549
4	15	4555	304	3	46
5	158	32889	208	2	329
6	38	8925	235	2	89
SL	111	12186	110	1	122
		127,167			1272

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/81, "List Books, 1801."

Note: 1st Class Volunteer calculations are based on estimates at 1 per 100 crew members, HC 1794 XXXII, p. 537.

Table B6. Estimate of 1st Class Volunteer Positions available in 1811

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# V1 per Ship	Total Possible V1
1	5	4261	852	9	43
2	6	4428	738	7	44
3	94	56023	596	6	560
4	3	1016	339	4	12
5	127	33776	266	3	381
6	17	2810	165	3	51
SL	214	23490	110	3	642
		125,804			1733

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/81, "List Books, 1811."

Note: 1st Class Volunteer calculations are based on estimates at 1 per 100 crew members HC 1794 XXXII, p. 537, except where the *Regulations and Instructions* of 1801 specify otherwise (ADM 7/971).

Table B7. Estimate of 1st Class Volunteer Positions available in 1821

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# V1 per Ship	Total Possible V1
1	2	278	139	1	3
2	1	580	580	6	6
3	9	1906	212	2	19
4	7	3905	558	4	28
5	19	4844	255	3	57
6	18	2217	123	3	54
SL	54	5149	95	3	162
		18,879			329

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/101, “List Books, 1821.”

Note: 1st Class Volunteer calculations are based on estimates at 1 per 100 crew members HC 1794 XXXII, p. 537, except where the *Regulations and Instructions* of 1801 specify otherwise (ADM 7/971).

Table B8. Estimate of 1st Class Volunteer Positions available in 1831

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	# V1 per Ship	Total Possible V1
1	4	2280	570	8	32
2	2	290	145	7	14
3	8	5565	696	6	48
4	5	2171	434	4	20
5	15	4335	289	4	60
6	19	3048	160	3	57
SL	49	4654	95	3	147
		22,343			378

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/111, “List Books, 1831.”

Note: 1st Class Volunteer calculations are based on the document Steel’s Navy List of March 20, 1831 which reprinted the details of the Order in Council of June 23, 1824.

Appendix C. Estimate of the Total number of Midshipmen's and Masters' Mates positions Available, 1761 - 1831

Table C1. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1761

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	3	2310	770	24	6	90
2	8	5805	725	24	4	224
3	52	29675	570	16	3	988
4	42	16315	388	10	2	504
5	40	9470	236	6	2	320
6	54	9520	176	4	2	324
SL	49	4970	62	2	1	147
		78,065				2597

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/36, "List Books, 1761."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are from "Regulations and Instructions" quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 348-49.

Table C2. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1771

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	0	0	0	24	6	0
2	3	2250	750	24	4	84
3	33	18670	565	16	3	627
4	13	4495	345	10	2	156
5	24	4545	189	6	2	192
6	24	3300	137	4	2	144
SL	31	2510	80	2	1	93
		35,770				1296

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/47, "List Books, 1771."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are from "Regulations and Instructions" quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 348-49.

Table C3. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1781

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	3	2605	868	24	6	90
2	11	8215	747	24	4	308
3	79	44405	562	16	3	1501
4	17	6330	372	10	2	204
5	52	12105	233	6	2	416
6	58	10220	176	4	2	348
SL	66	6525	99	2	1	198
		90,405				3065

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/57, "List Books, 1781."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are from "Regulations and Instructions" quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 348-49.

Table C4. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1791

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	1	884	884	24	6	30
2	7	5357	765	24	4	196
3	29	17267	595	16	3	551
4	8	2700	338	10	2	96
5	34	6364	187	6	2	272
6	27	4300	159	4	2	162
SL	39	3695	95	2	1	117
		40,567				1424

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/67, "List Books, 1791."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are from "Regulations and Instructions" quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 348-49.

Table C5. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1801

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	4	3350	838	24	6	120
2	14	10332	738	24	4	392
3	99	54930	555	16	3	1881
4	15	4555	304	10	2	180
5	158	32889	208	6	2	1264
6	38	8925	235	4	2	228
SL	111	12186	110	2	1	333
		127,167				4398

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/81, "List Books, 1801."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are from "Regulations and Instructions" quoted in Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 348-49.

Table C6. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1811

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	5	4261	852	24	6	150
2	6	4428	738	24	4	168
3	94	56023	596	16	3	1786
4	3	1016	339	10	2	36
5	127	33776	266	6	2	1016
6	17	2810	165	4	2	102
SL	214	23490	110	2	1	642
		125,804				3900

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/81, "List Books, 1811."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are based on ADM 7/791, "Regulations and Instructions of 1808."

Table C7. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1821

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	2	278	139	24	6	60
2	1	580	580	24	4	28
3	9	1906	212	16	3	171
4	7	3905	558	10	2	84
5	19	4844	255	6	2	152
6	18	2217	123	4	2	108
SL	54	5149	95	2	1	162
		18,879				765

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/101, "List Books, 1821."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are based on ADM 7/791, "Regulations and Instructions of 1808."

Table C8. Estimate of Midshipmen and Masters' Mates Positions available in 1831

Rates	# Ships in Service	# Men total	# Men per Ship	Midshipmen per Ship	Masters' Mates per Ship	Total Possible JO
1	4	2280	570	24	6	120
2	2	290	145	24	4	56
3	8	5565	696	16	3	152
4	5	2171	434	10	2	60
5	15	4335	289	6	2	120
6	19	3048	160	4	2	114
SL	49	4654	95	2	1	147
		22,343				769

Source: TNA: PRO, ADM 8/111, "List Books, 1831."

Note: Midshipmen and Masters' Mates calculations are based on ADM 7/791, "Regulations and Instructions of 1808."

Appendix D. Ages and Passing Times of Junior Officers and Quarterdeck Boys,
1761-1831.

Table D1: Average Ages of Junior Officers.

<u>Ave Ages of Junior Officers</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Ave Age	18.76	21.23	19.02	22	22.17	18.96	20.82	18.13
Ave Age of Elites (Peers & Gentry)	17.50	18.92	14.70	19.98	18.84	17.32	20.23	18.11
Ave Age of Unknowns					23.17	19.44	20.41	17.45

Sources: Appendices G1 through G8, "Junior Officers: Calculations," Primary Databases.

Table D2: Average Passing Ages of Junior Officers taking the Examination for Lieutenant

<u>Ave Passing Age for the Lt's Exam</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Ave Age	20.7	22.7	23.4	22.1	21.1	20.5	19.5	20.1

Sources: Appendices G1 through G8, "Junior Officers: Calculations," Primary Databases.

Table D3: Average number of years between Passing the Examination and Receiving a Commission.

<u>Ave time between Passing and Receiving a Commission</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Ave time in yrs	6.0	3.2	3.5	2.2	1.1	3.5	5.9	6.6

Sources: Appendices G1 through G8, "Junior Officers: Calculations," Primary Databases.

Table D4: Number and percentages of those who passed the examination while under age.

<u>Passed under the age of 20/19 after 1811</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
No. of total known	4/10	18/55	9/35	29/148	19/79	10/87	21/119	10/86
Proportion	40%	33%	26%	20%	24%	11%	18%	12%

Sources: Appendices G1 through G8, "Junior Officers: Calculations," Primary Databases.

Table D5: Average Age of JOs receiving a Commission

<u>Ave age of Lt's Commission</u>	<u>1761</u>	<u>1771</u>	<u>1781</u>	<u>1791</u>	<u>1801</u>	<u>1811</u>	<u>1821</u>	<u>1831</u>
Age in yrs.	26.3	25.33	27.23	24.37	22.67	24.04	25.42	26.67

Sources: Appendices G1 through G8, "Junior Officers: Calculations," Primary Databases.

Table D6: Average, Mode, Median, Minimum and Maximum Ages of JOs, 1761-1831

Junior Officers	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
Average Age of JO	18.8	21.2	19.0	22.0	22.2	18.9	20.8	18.1
Mode Age of JO	16	20	16	21	18	18	22	18
Median Age of JO	19.0	21	18	21	20	18	21	18
Minimum Age of JO	7	8	8	12	10	11	13	14
Maximum Age of JO	29	56	58	38	46	49	46	28

Sources: Appendices G1 through G8, "Junior Officers: Calculations," Primary Databases.

Table D7: Average, Mode, Median, Minimum and Maximum Ages of QDBs, 1761-1831.

Quarterdeck Boys	1761	1771	1781	1791	1801	1811	1821	1831
Average Age of QDB	n/a	13.5	13.3	14.7	15.1	15.3	17	14.5
Mode Age of QDB	n/a	15	14	14	14	15	17	17
Median Age of QDB	n/a	13.5	14	15	15	15	17	17
Minimum Age of QDB	n/a	8	4	3	10	10	9	12
Maximum Age of QDB	n/a	23	22	27	21	24	25	22

Sources: Appendices F1 through F8, "Quarterdeck Boy: Average Ages," Primary Databases.

Appendix E: Wages and Numbers of Junior Officers and Quarterdeck Boys,
1761, 1797, 1807.

Where unspecified numbers refer to pound, shillings, and pence (e.g. 2 *l.* 10*s.* 6*d.*)

Table E1: Wages and Numbers of Junior Officers, 1761

1761 Wages	1st Rates	2nd Rates	3rd Rates	4th Rates	5th Rates	6th Rates
Midshipmen	2.5.0	2.0.0.	1.17.6	1.13.9	1.10.0	1.10.0
Captains' Servant*	12 <i>l.</i> p.a. (same in all rates) to the captain					
<u>1761 Numbers</u>						
Midshipmen	24	24	16	10	6	4
Captains' Servants	32	28	24	16	8	8

Sources: Pay Establishment, 1700 in Rodger, *Command*, pp. 622-23.

* Pay is rounded up and based on the compensation awarded to officers in 1794, HC 1794 XXXII, p. 536.

Midshipmen's complement from "Regulations and Instructions," in Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 348-49.

Servants' complement based on estimates of 4 servants per 100 crew. See Appendix B.

Table E2: Wages and Numbers of Junior Officers, 1797

1797 Wages	1st Rates	2nd Rates	3rd Rates	4th Rates	5th Rates	6th Rates
Midshipmen	2.10.6	2.5.6	2.3.0	1.19.3	1.15.6	1.15.6
1st Class Volunteers	6 <i>l.</i> p.a. (same in all rates)					
2nd Class Boys	5 <i>l.</i> p.a. " "					
3rd Class Boys	4 <i>l.</i> p.a. " "					
<u>1797 Numbers</u>						
Midshipmen	24	24	16	10	6	4
1st Class Volunteers	8	7	6	3	2	2

Sources: Rates of Pay from, Rodger, *Command*, pp. 624-25.

Midshipmen's complement from "Regulations and Instructions," in Rodger, *Wooden World*, pp. 348-49.

Volunteers' complement based on estimates of 1 volunteer per 100 crew. See Appendix C.

Table E3: Wages and Numbers of Junior Officers, 1807

1807 Wages	1st Rates	2nd Rates	3rd Rates	4th Rates	5th Rates	6th Rates
Midshipmen	2.15.6	2.10.6	2.8.0	2.4.3	2.0.6	2.0.6
1st Class Volunteers	9 <i>l.</i> p.a. (same in all rates)					
2nd Class Boys	8 <i>l.</i> p.a. " "					
3rd Class Boys	7 <i>l.</i> p.a. " "					
<u>1807/08 Numbers</u>						
Midshipmen	24	24	16	10	6	4
1st Class Vols**	8	7	5-7	4	3-4	3
2nd Class Boys**	13	12	9-12	7	6	4-5
3rd Class Boys**	19	18	13-16	11	9-10	7-9

Sources: Rates of Pay 1807, Lavery, *Nelson's Navy*, pp. 2236-37.

Complement in *ibid.*, pp. 328-29.

** Complement from the 1808, "Regulations and Instructions," ADM7/971.

For Appendices F through N please see the CD-ROM inside the back cover of Volume Two.

Listing of Appendices included on the CD-ROM:

Appendix F: 1-8. Primary Databases for Quarterdeck Boys (QDB), 1761 – 1831.

Appendix G: 1-8. Primary Databases for Junior Officers (JO), 1761 – 1831.

Appendix H. Collated Data and Charts, QDB and JO, 1761 – 1831.

(See “Charts” Workbooks for QDB and JO for all charts used in the text)

Appendix I. Geographical Summary QDB and JO, 1761 – 1831.

Appendix J. JO Ages and Ranks, 1761 – 1831.

Appendix K. Servants’ and Volunteers’ Change of Status, 1761 – 1831,
and JO Passed Status, 1821 – 1831.

Appendix L. 1st Class Volunteer Applications, 1830 - 1831.

Appendix M. Courts Martial Summary, 1755 – 1831.

Appendix N. Extrapolations estimating the Representativeness of the Samples.

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ADM 8/81	List Books, 1801
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ADM 8/101	List Books, 1821
ADM 8/111	List Books, 1831
ADM 12/21-26	Court Martial records by crime, 1755 - 1806
ADM 12/27B-E	Black Books and Index , 1741-1793
ADM 12/27F	Court Martial Index, 1812-1855
ADM 36 & 37	See attached Appendix "TNA List" for full recap of all Ships' Musters used
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ADM 51/846	Captain's Log HMS Saturn
ADM 107/3	Lieutenants' Passing Certificate for John Clarke, April 14, 1740
ADM 107/24	Mr. Phillimore's speech impediment
ADM 107/64	Lieutenant's Exams 1795 – 1797
ADM 107/70	Lieutenant's exams 1814, complete for 1821 & 1831.
ADM 305/82	Log of Mid. John Joseph O'Connor 1807-1809
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