## The Growing Professionalism of the Naval Shore Establishment, 1778-1811

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis will examine the growth of professionalism within the shore establishment of the Royal Navy from 1778 to 1811. The thesis will examine the career of one particular administrator whose career coincides with this period, that of Sir Charles Middleton, First Baron Barham, in order to demonstrate his contribution towards the process of professionalisation. The thesis will take into account the work that Barham did whilst in official government office, as a member of, or advisor to, various Parliamentary Select Committees and Commissions during his career, and how this work furthered the process of professionalisation of government offices in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries. The general level of the professionalism of the naval shore establishment shall be investigated at the beginning and end of the period, with investigation into exactly how professionalism is measured in different occupations, particularly as it relates to government. Various aspects of how Barham attempted to introduce greater efficiency, ability, and professionalism into the departments he worked within shall be covered, culminating in the work he did as First Lord of the Admiralty and chairman of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy.

This work is deemed necessary due to the relative lack of attention given to the professionalism of the administration of the military services in Britain during the eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries, with the preference of study given to the active service officers in both the Army and Navy. The focus of study in government departments has also focussed predominantly on the Treasury, Exchequer, and Secretaries of State. The naval departments are worthy of study, however, due to their archaic nature, with several departments tracing their lineages to the Restoration, and, in the case of the Navy Board, to the Tudors. The ways in which these departments were modernised and prepared to adapt to the nineteenth-century ways of governance will reveal how they were thought of by the governments of the day, what measures were necessary in order for these institutions to break their seventeenth-century constitutions, and how critical it was that such departments operated to the greatest levels of efficiency and professionalism during three great wars during this period.

# Table of Contents

Chapter	One – The Growing Professionalism of the Naval Shore Establishment, 1778-
1811	
(a)	Lord Barham and the professionalisation of the Naval Shore Establishment8
(b)	Naval Administration and the balance of naval power during the late-eighteenth
	and early-nineteenth-centuries11
(c)	Defining 'professions' and 'professionalism'18
(d)	The growing professionalism of the Navy's administration throughout the
	eighteenth-century24
(e)	The effects of professionalism and the importance of Barham30
Chapter	Two – Sir Charles, Lord Barham, of Barham Court and Teston in Kent
(a)	Middleton's temperament and personality traits
(b)	Middleton's work ethic and methods during his career in administration47
(c)	Middleton's relationships with those in power
Chapter	Three – Sir Charles Middleton as Comptroller of the Navy: Staving off defeat and
winning	the peace
(a)	Middleton's early career as Comptroller in the American Revolutionary War, and
	the situation at the Navy Board as he found it71
(b)	Middleton's reform measures and attempts as Comptroller
(c)	How the growing professionalism of the Navy Board enabled the coppering of the
	battle fleet95
(d)	The importance of increased professionalism when preparing for future
	conflicts106
Chapter	Four – Sir Charles Middleton as First Sea Lord120
(a)	The situation in 1794 and Middleton's measures whilst in office122
(b)	The politics of office and Middleton's ability to effect changes136
(c)	Middleton's departure from office and inter-departmental interference145
Chapter	Five – Lord Barham's reforms at the Admiralty156
(a)	The beginnings of Middleton's reintegration to naval shore administration157

(b)	The beginnings of Middleton's final reforms to the shore administration	166
(c)	The impeachment of Lord Melville and Middleton's path to the	
	Admiralty	179
(d)	Barham's measures at the Admiralty and the Commission of Revision	183
(e)	Barham's reforms to the active service	205
(f)	Barham's departure from office	212
Chapte	er Six – Conclusions	216
Appen	ndix $A - The$ active service career of Sir Charles Middleton, Lord Barham	231
Appen	ndix B – The administrative career of Sir Charles Middleton, Lord Barham	234
Biblio	graphy	238



# <u>The Growing Professionalism of the Naval Shore</u> <u>Establishment, 1778-1811</u>

#### Lord Barham and the Professionalisation of the Naval Shore Establishment

In 1775, on the eve of the revolt of the American colonists, Britain was the pre-eminent colonial power in Europe, with the largest and richest worldwide empire, built from the conquests of the Seven Years' War, a dozen years previous. In 1815, Britain again stood as the dominant power in the world, the world's first recognisable superpower, with an empire that was even larger, built from conquests made during the Napoleonic War. During these forty years though, Britain would lose the Thirteen Colonies, be severely tested in war by France, Spain, and the United Provinces, undergo political and administrative upheaval in order to meet the challenges of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and enlarge its navy to sizes hitherto unthought-of in order to become undisputed master of the world's oceans. Set alongside this is the career of Charles Middleton, later First Baron Barham, a man who, despite never being a politician, managed to cultivate networks between himself and some of the most influential people in the British government, enabling him to fill the highest and most important offices in the naval shore service during a career that spanned the years 1778 to 1809, with his legacy and influence lingering long after his death in 1813. Barham became Comptroller of the Navy at the start of the international stage of the American War of Independence, First Sea Lord at the beginning of the French Revolutionary War, and First Lord of the Admiralty during the crucial early years of the Napoleonic War, overseeing and orchestrating the Campaign of Trafalgar. Underpinning the Royal Navy's successes was the increasing professionalism of the naval shore establishment during this period, with a substantial portion of that being due to Barham's influence through his own measures, and those of people with whom he worked and advised.

This thesis will therefore explore the growing professionalism of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century Navy on shore, and the importance of Lord Barham to the increasing professionalisation of the shore establishment of the Royal Navy. It will also explore Barham's role in increasing the effectiveness of the departments over which he presided both through his time in office and via the various government commissions he chaired and advised; by doing this Barham's importance alongside such other luminaries of the period in the matter of increasing government efficiency can be better established. Exploration of these themes permits the role and increasing professionalism of the naval shore establishment to become better understood during this period, and how this related to the unprecedented naval success for Britain afloat. This study is intended to answer questions such as how professional the naval shore establishment was at the beginning and end of the period, what improvements and changes were made, and how they contributed to the efficiency and effectiveness of the individual aspects of the shore establishment.

The period that this thesis will focus on is concurrent with Barham's career ashore, through his time at both the Navy Board, and the Board of Admiralty in two stints, with a strong focus on his policies and his reformist tendencies, including his work out of office either heading, or making important recommendations to, various Parliamentary Commissions from 1782-1809. Unlike other studies, the thesis will not attempt to deal with any particular period in preference to others, as all aspects of Barham's career are requiring of further study in order to fully appreciate the work done to professionalise the administration of the Navy. While the work that Barham did in these offices is worthy of study in itself, the way in which he applied, adapted, and implemented his policies to increase professionalism can only be seen by taking the man's career as a whole, and not focussing on a particular period. By examining the work done through these offices it becomes much easier to see what Barham intended, and how influential he became. The impact Barham had on the professionalism of the service both on shore and afloat will be examined, and this impact will be shown in terms of how his reforms and measures stayed in the service longer than the man himself. The selection of subjects for the various chapters reflects these impacts, based on the various offices that the man filled throughout his time administering the Navy. A chapter is dedicated to each of the three major offices Barham occupied. A chapter is also devoted to the man himself and how he worked with others, a key subject for better understanding how Barham was able to do what he did.

The main published sources available for the study of Barham and his work remain the volumes of edited papers of Barham himself, those of John, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, and of George, Second Earl Spencer, among others, which were published by the Navy Records Society in the last decade of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth-centuries. These edited papers, while useful in providing the most important and interesting excerpts from a huge volume of official material, especially in the cases of Sandwich and Barham, do not tell the full story of the work that was done in the naval shore establishment at the time.

Because of their somewhat mundane nature, orders, correspondence, and plans that did not have noteworthy political or military outcomes have been left out by the editors, but it is these entries that tell much of the ways in which Barham and his contemporaries thought. Because of this, while they show some of the work that was done, they show it in a way that the editor wishes it to be shown and other sources must be used in order to gain a full picture of Barham's thoughts on the policies he pursued. Along with these edited volumes therefore, the Middleton papers collected in the archives of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich and the Admiralty and Navy Office Records present in the National Archives in Kew provide original letters, orders, and memoranda for the period from all departments of the naval shore service. Along with these government archives are also personal collections from leading political figures of the day who dealt with Barham, particularly around the time of his appointment as First Lord, and these personal letters and papers serve to indicate the views held by contemporary politicians about him. There is also a significant amount of secondary material concerning the Royal Navy's actions and operations in the three wars during this period. Unfortunately, there are barely any entries of a personal nature in Barham's collected works, a mark of the privacy he pursued in his personal life, though much is collected regarding his official work in office, reflecting Barham's views on record keeping. Happily, as Barham did not hold greatly with the genial and deferential nature of much of the period's official correspondence, his tone and language, particularly when dealing with superiors or regarding measures about which he felt particularly strongly, betray the man's personality as clearly as any personal letters or memoirs could.

The question of professionalism in British government during the eighteenth-century has been an important historical theme, looked at most prominently by scholars such as John Brewer in his seminal work *The Sinews of Power*.<sup>1</sup> The departments of government that have been analysed the most are the Treasury, Exchequer, and those of the Secretaries of State. The offices of the Admiralty are mentioned by Brewer and acknowledged in their scale and significance,<sup>2</sup> but critically, future scholarship would tend to look at the other key facets of government during the eighteenth-century, seeing them as far more representative of the growing professionalism of the state. This has led to a dearth of information

<sup>1</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989). The work is of critical importance, not least due to Brewer's coining of the term 'the fiscal-military state' and looking in depth at how warfare shaped the growth and evolution of eighteenth century European states, and most notably the British state.

<sup>2</sup> Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, chapters 2 and 3, pp. 29-87. These two chapters deal respectively with the increasing professionalism of the military services themselves, and the departments of government.

regarding the growing professionalism of one of the most important departments in the British state between the years 1778-1815, the Admiralty, and its subordinate departments, particularly the Navy Board. It was these departments that commissioned, built, oversaw, deployed, and administered the Royal Navy, Britain's greatest weapon and sole line of meaningful defence during the great wars against Bourbon, Revolutionary, and Napoleonic France. These departments changed a great deal during this time period, always becoming more and more professional as the demands placed upon them grew due to enlarged forces to administer, increased threats, and enhanced stakes in the wars that were fought at this time. Barham held the three most critical offices in the naval shore establishment during his career, which spanned all but the last five years of the conflicts with France. His work was essential in assisting in the natural progression from the seventeenth and earlyeighteenth-century government establishments that persisted well into the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries, to the modernised offices that the Great Reform Act of 1832 provided, and the complete reform of British Government that occurred at that time.

## Naval Administration and the Balance of Naval Power during the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth-Centuries

It is important that the world in which Barham operated is fully understood in order for the man's work to be fully appreciated, and so that the necessity of the measures undertaken to professionalise the shore establishment can be explained in their original context. There is a natural tendency for one to judge the past by the standards of their present, and it is only by fully accepting, understanding, and immersing oneself in the context of the various administrative Boards of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries that one can accurately judge the actions of Barham and his contemporaries. Likewise, hindsight has a powerful influence, and special care should be taken when applying it; one must ensure not to judge too harshly, and pass off or ignore revolutionary measures simply because they became commonplace in later years. To that end, a brief overview of naval administrative structure in this period is provided here.

Naval administration during this period was fragmented though not disorganised. Far from having one centralised Admiralty Board as would be recognisable today, with all professional organisations residing within, the professionalism of the administration was often to be found in Boards that were junior to the Admiralty, but which in certain cases could trace their lineages back further, as was the case with the Navy Board.<sup>3</sup> These junior Boards were not ruled by politics or the vagaries of Party. Rather, the Board members gained their positions either on merit or through patronage and, in many cases, held them until such time as they retired or died, as they received their positions through letters patent under the Great Seal. The Navy Board, whose responsibilities included the ordering of ships for the Navy, regulation of the Royal dockyards, and payment of the seamen, was the oldest naval institution in the country, established during the reign of Henry VIII and surviving over the interregnum period also.<sup>4</sup> The Victualling Board, established during the reign of James II, was responsible for contracting for the various foodstuffs that the fleet required in home waters and ports and, in some cases, in ports abroad where the Victualling Office held a presence.<sup>5</sup> Some admirals would be required to contract for foodstuffs and water locally when serving on foreign stations, but would always be reimbursed by the Victualling Office. The Ordnance Board was slightly separate from the main offices of naval administration, in that it also supplied artillery to the Army on land, but from a naval point of view they were responsible for arming all ships with cannon, and providing the shot and powder required to use them.<sup>6</sup> The Ordnance Board, however, was not influenced in any way by the Admiralty or the wider naval administration at this time, and so will receive only minimal attention in this thesis. The Admiralty was a far more political Board, with all Admiralty Lords either being, or being appointed by, politicians, and almost always leaving or switching positions when a new administration came to power. The Admiralty Board did not directly oversee all aspects of naval administration as it often lacked detailed specialist knowledge of the workings of the establishment, though it was technically senior in political terms: Rodger describes it best as being at 'the centre of the naval system rather than its head."7 It considered promotions and appointments of commissioned officers, the movements of fleets and how money and resources were allocated. It worked with the subsidiary boards, the Navy, Victualling, Transport, Sick and Hurt, and Ordnance Boards, and was the main hub of communication between the administrative and active parts of the Royal Navy.8

<sup>3</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2006) p. 187.

<sup>4</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean* p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean* pp. 304-07.

<sup>6</sup> Rodger, The Command of the Ocean p. 258.

<sup>7</sup> Rodger, The Command of the Ocean pp. 295-96.

<sup>8</sup> Brian Lavery, *Nelson's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organisation, 1793-1815* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 2005) p. 22.

At the beginning of Barham's time in naval administration, the Royal Navy was in a situation that it had not found itself before, and nor would it find itself again. Allowing itself to succumb to the idea of natural British naval superiority from the successes the Navy had achieved, most notably through the Seven Years' War,9 the successive administrations had not spent sufficient money in maintaining the Navy through the period 1763-1775,<sup>10</sup> as the fleet built in haste by Anson and Hawke from green timber in order to win the Seven Year's War rotted in the dockyards,<sup>11</sup> requiring much to be done to rebuild, repair and reorganise sufficient stockpiles of timber, cordage, hemp, furniture and all other supplies needed by warships.<sup>12</sup> By contrast, France had not stood still since the heavy and humiliating loss of her American colonies due to overwhelming British naval success, which enabled Britain to win a colonial war. France had built a great many ships by 1772,<sup>13</sup> and the rate did not slow down over the next five years. Despite warnings and intelligence gathered of this great re-arming, the North administration did not respond in kind, especially once the American colonies rebelled in the American War of Independence starting in 1775. It was thought that to prepare the fleet for war would act as an invitation to France to enter the war on the side of the colonists.<sup>14</sup> Even when it appeared that France was likely to enter the war regardless of British armament or conciliation, in 1777, the Government still did not respond, preferring the King's strategy of overwhelming the rebellions quickly to bring an end to the conflict.<sup>15</sup>

In consequence, when France entered the war on 17 June 1778, the Royal Navy had only had three months to mobilise.<sup>16</sup> The Navy was under prepared, under-equipped, in a bad state of repair, and spread far too thinly between home waters and the North American theatre to act against a European enemy.<sup>17</sup> British trade was also in serious danger as the

<sup>9</sup> G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen, (eds.) The Private Papers of John, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782 Volume I Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXIX (1932), pp. 19-23, letter dated Compton, September 5<sup>th</sup> 1772 – From North.

<sup>10</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich, Vol. I*, pp. 19-23, letter dated Compton, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1772 – North to Sandwich; letter dated Hinchingbrook, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1772 – Sandwich to North.

<sup>11</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich, Vol. I, pp. 14-17, letter dated Southampton Street, February 20<sup>th</sup> 1771 – From Mr. William Wells.

<sup>12</sup> Rodger, The Command of the Ocean p. 370

<sup>13</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich, Vol. I*, pp. 33-34, letter dated Dunkirk, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1772 – Dr. Durnford to Rochford.

<sup>14</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich, Vol. I, p. 201.

<sup>15</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich, Vol. I, pp. 226-27, letter dated Paris, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1777 – Lord Stormont to Lord Weymouth; p. 63, letter dated Kew, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1775 – From the King.

<sup>16</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich, Vol. I, p. 363, letter dated Admiralty Office, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1778 – Admiralty to Navy Board.

<sup>17</sup> J.G. Bullocke, (ed.), The Tomlinson Papers, Selected from the Correspondence and Pamphlets of Captain

vast majority of the cruising frigates usually used to protect commerce were employed in American waters fighting against privateers, and assisting with combined operations as the Army fought the colonists.<sup>18</sup> This also meant that, while just less than 60,000 men were employed in the Navy at this time,<sup>19</sup> most were not serving on ships of the line, and manning the main battle fleet became a serious problem. The end result was that, when Spain also entered the war against Britain in 1779, the Royal Navy was vastly inferior in numbers to the combined fleet of the enemy.<sup>20</sup> In May 1779 invasion panic swept through the nation as the combined Bourbon fleet with seventy-seven sail appeared in the Channel<sup>21</sup> and swept Sir Charles Hardy's Western Squadron before it, forcing him to seek shelter in Torbay and the Scilly Isles. All naval encounters up until this point, most notably the Battle of Ushant in 1778, had been inconclusive, and the inability of the Royal Navy to defeat their enemies produced a public and political outcry against the Government and Admiralty in particular.

Against this backdrop, the shore administration of the Navy had to work. They were forced, during the height of a great war, to attempt to increase the effectiveness, state of repair, and manning of the fleet in order to get ships to sea, and to increase the size of the Navy by building dozens of new ships of all sizes. Eventually, through shrewd negotiations, a willingness to try new methods, new technologies and new avenues of supply, Barham, as Comptroller, and Lord Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty at the time, enabled the Royal Navy to reach near parity with the combined Bourbon powers.<sup>22</sup> This culminated in Sir George Rodney's victory at the Battle of the Saintes in April 1782. Although not as complete a victory as those which Britain would achieve in fifteen and twenty years' time, it convinced the French and Spanish that they no longer had a realistic chance of defeating the Royal Navy, thereby enabling them to win a colonial war.<sup>23</sup> With the resignation on Britain's part to the fact that she would lose the Thirteen Colonies, and her ability to focus on winning a naval war thereafter, along with the unsustainable war

*Robert Tomlinson, R.N., and Vice-Admiral Nicholas Tomlinson.* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXIV (1935), pp. 41-43, letter dated From the S. James Chronicles of 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1779 – An Open Letter to Lord Mulgrave (by Lieutenant Robert Tomlinson, signed as TRUTH); pp. 44-50, Memorandum by Lieutenant Robert Tomlinson dated ?1779. Barnes and Owen, (eds.), *Private Papers of Earl Sandwich, Vol. I*, pp. 327-35, letter dated Admiralty, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1777 – To North.

<sup>18</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich, Vol. I, pp. 90-93, letter dated Abingden Street, 1st January 1776 – From Palliser.

<sup>19</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich, Vol. I, pp. 279-80.

<sup>20</sup> Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860 volumes I* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1993), p. 276: Table 23:16

<sup>21</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich, Vol. I, pp. 64-67, letter dated 20 August 1779 – Commissioner Ourry to Middleton; pp. 69-70, letter dated August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1779 – From the Comptroller.

<sup>22</sup> Glete, Navies and Nations Vol. I p. 272, table 23:14.

<sup>23</sup> Rodger, The Command of the Ocean pp. 353-54.

expenditure in France and Spain, very reasonable terms of peace were agreed to by the European powers, with Britain ceding just Senegal and Tobago to France, and Florida and Minorca to Spain. In return, all other territory gained by the Bourbon allies was returned to Britain, and Britain also acquired Negapatnam in India from the Dutch.<sup>24</sup>

Over the next decade the country attempted to rebuild from the devastation of a war and colonies lost. Stung from the defeat and realising the mistakes that had been made during the previous peace, the first administration of William Pitt the Younger attempted to reform the finances of the country,<sup>25</sup> and give the naval administration sufficient funding to ensure that the Royal Navy could keep up not just with France, but the combined Bourbon fleets in order to ensure that when hostilities broke out anew, she would be ready to meet the challenge. Central to this effort was Barham and the Navy Board's work in advancing the technology of the fleet, rebuilding and repairing the ships after the war and ensuring that the ideas set out by Sandwich during the 1770s were acted upon. By the use of these methods, Britain had upwards of ninety ships of the line in good condition in 1790, needing only men to complete their complements as Barham resigned his office as Comptroller, after two major mobilisations had been made necessary in 1787 and 1790 to meet the Dutch and Nootka Sound crises respectively.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, during this period, reforms were set in place that would greatly enhance the professionalism of the Navy Board, though they would not be enacted until 1796. These reforms though, would hold close parallels with what was to come in the early-nineteenth-century and their study is important.

The French Revolutionary War threw the French naval establishment into turmoil as the old, ennobled officer class was either killed or forced into exile as the terror gripped France.<sup>27</sup> Crews were now leaderless and junior officers were promoted without any respect paid to their ability. While the new revolutionary spirit could animate a land army to great effect, the technical knowledge and technique required even to sail a ship of the line, much less battle against the elements and stand in the line of battle, required active

<sup>24</sup> For more information see Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert (eds.) *Peace and the Peacemakers: The Treaty* of 1783 (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1986).

<sup>25</sup> For a full account of Pitt's financial measures see Carl B. Cone 'Richard Price and Pitt's Sinking Fund of 1786' *The Economic History Review, New Series, Vol. 4, No.* 2 (1951), pp. 243-251

<sup>26</sup> J.K. Laughton, (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813 Volume III Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXIX (1910)* pp. 15-21, On The State of the Navy dated April 1803. Barham set down an overview of the important work he had done to remedy the situation the service found itself during the American War and the peace of the 1780s. He did this because he saw clear parallels between the situation in 1783 and that of 1803.

<sup>27</sup> A good, if dated, overview of the period in France can be found in A.T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power* Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812 (London: Sampson Low, 1893) pp. 39-69.

experience at sea, experience the French recruits simply did not have, and could not gain once at war with Britain and confined to port for the great majority of the war. With the old professional officers and their knowledge of the difficulties associated with handling ships at sea and in battle lost to the French, completely new and inexperienced French officers and recruits fought against seasoned British veterans of sailing the oceans, both in naval and merchant ships. To give an idea of how much the officer classes suffered, by the time of the Glorious First of June 1794 there were three admirals and twenty-six captains present in the French fleet. The Commander-in-Chief, Villaret-Joyeuse, had been a lieutenant under the old regime, the other two admirals a lieutenant and a sub-lieutenant. Of the captains, three had been lieutenants, eleven sub-lieutenants, nine captains or mates of merchant ships, one a seaman in the navy, one a boatswain and one not given.<sup>28</sup>

Because of these advantages, the excellent state of the Navy that Barham's Navy Board had helped to bequeath the nation, along with a more efficient Navy Board, a reconstituted Transport Board, and a structure for the future, Britain achieved many great victories over the French, Spanish, and Dutch forces during the French Revolutionary War, crippling the Dutch navy in the process and removing the last vestiges of the old Dutch naval power at the Battle of Camperdown in 1797. While these victories helped secure British trade and gave the British a psychological advantage against her enemies, the combined allied fleets still matched the Royal Navy in terms of numbers, and were constantly considered a threat that required blockading in port in order to prevent them escaping and doing serious damage to British merchant shipping.

The French fleet was given necessary breathing space by the Peace of Amiens, enabling repairs and rudimentary training of crews now the fleets were not blockaded by enemy ships. The British declaration of war in 1803 though, was far sooner than Napoleon, by now First Consul, and soon to be Emperor of France, had wanted to go back to war, and as such his fleets were not in the condition he had hoped to get them into.<sup>29</sup> However, the British fleet had fared scarcely better during the eighteen months of fitful peace. Lord St. Vincent, First Lord of the Admiralty during the peace, was convinced that it would hold<sup>30</sup> and, determined to rid the shore service of the vice and corruption he had perceived, launched a damaging Commission of Enquiry into the dockyards, which ensured that no

<sup>28</sup> Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution p. 57.

<sup>29</sup> Rodger, The Command of the Ocean p. 528.

<sup>30</sup> So eager was St. Vincent to demobilise the fleet upon hearing only of the preliminaries of peace that one can reach few other conclusions. David Bonner-Smith (ed.) *Letters of Admiral of the Fleet The Earl of St. Vincent whilst First Lord of the Admiralty 1801-1804 Vol. 1* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LV (London 1922) pp. 147-8.

work could be done quickly and retarded the process of repairing the fleet, meaning that that very little new building or acquisition of stores could be effected.<sup>31</sup> Because of this attitude, the British situation in 1803 was considerably worse than it had been ten years previously when war had first broken out.<sup>32</sup> When Lord Melville was brought into the office of First Lord in 1804, upon Pitt's return to government in place of the Addington ministry, he found that a great deal of work would be required to enable Britain to meet her enemies in battle with any realistic chance of success. While the crews were generally more professional and better trained than their French and Spanish counterparts, fighting in worn out ships with limited material and stores would quickly negate the advantage of knowledge and experience. More ships had to be brought forward, and older ships needed to be made ready in haste. In this moment of need, with the advice and support of William Pitt, Melville turned to his older cousin, Barham, for advice and counsel.<sup>33</sup>

Before a definitive campaign could be fought against the enemy, however, Melville would be impeached by the House of Commons for the actions of the Paymaster of the Navy, Alexander Trotter, who had used public funds to further his own ends by playing the stock market, while under Melville's jurisdiction.<sup>34</sup> While it remained unclear as to whether or not Melville had been aware of Trotter's actions, and no money had been lost, the opposition saw a clear way to attack Pitt through one of his closest allies and took it. Stripped of his capable minister at the head of the Admiralty, Pitt took the only action he believed he could, backed by Melville's judgement. He recruited Barham as First Lord in order that the latter could continue Melville's work, as much of it had been his idea in the first instance.<sup>35</sup> Elevated to the peerage as a condition of his taking the position, Barham was now in an office that would finally give him a chance to reform the shore administration from the very top, and which also gave him the chance to use his prodigious knowledge, experience, and talents in the task of finally winning the naval war for Britain against her combined enemies.

<sup>31</sup> David Bonner-Smith (ed.), Letters of Admiral of the Fleet The Earl of St. Vincent Whilst First Lord of the Admiralty, 1801-1804 Volume II Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXI (1927), pp. 171-72, letter dated 29 April 1801 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond.; pp. 181-82 letter dated 18 January 1802 – St. Vincent to Sir A. Hammond; p. 193 letter dated Plymouth Dock, 29 August 1802 – St. Vincent to Addington; pp. 194-95 letter dated Rochester, 13 September 1802 – St. Vincent to Sir E. Nepean.

<sup>32</sup> Bonner-Smith, St. Vincent Vol. II p. 289, letter dated 14 May 1803 - St. Vincent to Admiral Cornwallis.

<sup>33</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 272-75 – Memorandum for Mr. James (unknown recipient, written by J.D. Thompson) no date.

<sup>34</sup> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, 1803-2005, Volume 5, House of Commons Debate, 11 June 1805 pp. 249-323.

<sup>35</sup> R.I. Wilberforce, S. Wilberforce, (eds.) and W. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce: In Five Volumes, Volume III* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1839), p. 223.

#### Defining 'Professions' and 'Professionalism'

It may serve us well to consider how one might define how an occupation becomes, or is defined as, 'professional'. The simple answer to this question has always defined a 'profession' as a job or occupation that is necessarily possessed of a specialised set of knowledge, skills, or both, in order to be executed properly. Classic examples of 'professions' include occupations in science, medicine, law, and religion. Mike Saks's work provides the historiography of the differing approaches historians have taken towards the question of professionalism, saying that

The task of defining professions seriously began with the taxonomic approach of the 1950s and 1960s. Professions within this approach were seen as possessing a diverse range of characteristics differentiating them from other occupations. These characteristics centrally encompassed knowledge and expertise – as well as others such as playing a positive part in the community.<sup>36</sup>

There were two main variants of the taxonomic approach as defined by Saks; trait writers, and functionalists. Trait writers would establish lists of characteristics presumably found in professions, where functionalists sought connections between professions and society and attempted to show how the state granted a higher social status to those occupations that protected and benefited the public through the knowledge and skills required. Tables and lists of personality traits, focussing not only on knowledge and expertise, but also altruism, rationality, and education, however, do not tell the whole story of what defines a profession, and taxonomic writers and approaches have been criticised for being uncritical in their analysis. Trait tables often sought to glorify a profession and those men within it, with much being assumed and a focus on ideology, not reality.<sup>37</sup> The centrality of knowledge and skills to the taxonomic argument is attacked by its critics due either to politicisation, or because taxonomic historians ideologically enhanced the weight in order to enhance their social standing.<sup>38</sup>

Even with these provisos, however, one can easily see, based on the evidence available, that these criteria of specialised knowledge, skills, and certain personality traits certainly applied to the departments of the shore establishment of the Navy, and also to the measures

<sup>36</sup> Mike Saks, 'Defining a Profession: The Role of Knowledge and Expertise' in *Professions and Professionalism Volume 2, No. 1* (2012) pp. 1-10 p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 4.

that Barham implemented during his long career in naval administration. Based on the taxonomic approach it is an easy task to chart the professionalism of the naval shore establishment through measures such as setting down that certain positions required a certain skill-set, or required the persons who occupied the positions to execute a certain number of specific tasks that would require specialised knowledge in order to comprehend, such as accountancy, tactical acumen, or logistical aptitude. With regard to personality traits, Barham also advocated that administrators should possess certain traits or come from certain backgrounds, and, by setting this in writing, this aspect of professionalism was also provided for going into the nineteenth-century. In terms of the possession of specialised skills and knowledge, and certain personality traits, via the taxonomic approach, Barham may be shown to be the consummate naval administrative professional, well-versed as he was in naval logistics, administration, communication between departments and between the shore and active services, and the deployment and use of fleets.

Following the taxonomic approach was the work of Michel Foucault, and the Foucauldian movement that he initiated. Saks defines this more philosophical and analytical approach by saying that

Foucauldians centre their thinking on 'governmentality' involving the 'institutionalisation of expertise' and argue that the state is not a coherent, calculating entity, but an ensemble of institutions, knowledge, and procedures derived from the outcome of governing

However, critically in this context, the position of professions is not here defined as being inherently generated by knowledge and expertise per sé; rather, this group of occupations is seen as based on the selective political incorporation of expertise into state formation as a key resource of governance.<sup>39</sup>

This context is especially relevant for the shore establishment of the Navy during the eighteenth-century, as the subordinate offices especially became the employ of men with specialised knowledge not to be found in any other part of society, with the skills and knowledge required for these offices being dictated from implementation and repetition of practice from as early as 1546 in the case of the Navy Board, harnessed by the state for the good of the nation. Taken in this context therefore, it could well be argued that the naval shore establishment as a professional body had been established first between 1689-96 with Pepys's work at the Navy Board, and 1709 when the office of Lord High Admiral was put permanently into commission, as it was during these years that the foundations of those

<sup>39</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 3.

offices as eighteenth-century institutions were laid. However, within these bounds lie difficulties, for this analysis works mainly for the clerks and lower-level secretaries within the various offices.

At all levels of the shore establishment, but particularly in the higher offices, and certainly the entire Board of Admiralty, the issue of patronage and political influence muddies the waters. With political power, rather than professional knowledge or skills being the main reason for men being appointed to the positions of Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the status of the Board of Admiralty as a professional body during the eighteenth-century is called into question. Even the senior positions on the Navy, Transport, and Victualling Boards are debatable, for although officers such as the Comptroller were selected from the list of serving post-captains, they usually had little to no experience of shore administration and were expected to learn on the job. Likewise, the Surveyor was selected from the lists of master-shipwrights, but he was not an allencompassing administrator, and would again need to learn on the job. This description also fits Barham, for apart from a short period spent as acting commanding officer at Chatham dockyard, he had not held a position on shore since he began his naval career when he accepted the position of Comptroller in 1778. Despite the positions on the various Boards not being political once the incumbent was in place, the appointments to the positions were made at the suggestion of the First Lord of the Admiralty, who was invariably a politician, and who also sat on the Privy Council. Even if the First Lord was an admiral, they were a political player, sitting in one of the Houses of Parliament, for no purely professional seaman was appointed to such an office during this period; indeed, few high-ranking professional sea officers were not also members of Parliament. Appointments to high office based purely on merit, knowledge, and skills, therefore, were all but unheard of in this political climate. Although the positions themselves demanded specific skills, knowledge, and characteristics, the men appointed to those positions did not necessarily possess those attributes at the time of their appointment.<sup>40</sup> Because of this, it is difficult to see the Principal Officers and Commissioners of the Navy, along with the Lords of the Admiralty, as an institutionalisation of professional knowledge and expertise at the beginning of the period, for the appointees invariably gained their expertise once placed in office. During this period, however, these positions would come to demand a specific skill set or knowledge base from the appointee before being placed in office, thus ensuring that

<sup>20</sup> 

<sup>40</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 81.

the naval shore establishment received the best administrators possible, a change that enabled the state to institutionalise expertise for better governance, with this process being a measure that Barham championed throughout his career.

Barham differed from the accepted norm in this regard during his career, allowing him to set in motion the changes necessary to professionalise the Navy. Whilst there had been admirals and naval officers who sat on the Board of Admiralty for many years before Barham came to the office of First Lord, rarely were they chosen purely on the basis of their professional knowledge. Barham had gained the type of knowledge required by these posts during his long, eventful, and successful tenure as Comptroller of the Navy, during which he had acquired a great deal of expertise on the way in which the shore establishment was run, and how it might be improved in the future. He was a man who did very little to engage in Party politics within Parliament, though he had cultivated extensive and productive political networks from his friends, relations, and protégés. His appointments in later life owed everything to his specialised skills and knowledge that many within the British political system acknowledged to be without peer. Barham recognised the benefits to the service that his previously acquired knowledge brought, and how the men who fulfilled the higher positions within the shore establishment could ill be afforded a lengthy period to learn their craft in the context of a period of constant warfare. To this end, Barham would go on to specify the tasks that the various dockyard officers, Principal Officers and Commissioners of the various subsidiary Boards, and Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty would be required to perform whilst in office during his tenure as First Lord, thus ensuring that men could be appointed to these positions already aware of the specialist knowledge and skills they would be required to possess or learn on the job. This could also serve to assist the minister at the head of the Admiralty when choosing his Board, as he would be able to select the best men, or the best men available, for the positions.

This work that Barham did to define the tasks and procedures that should be carried out by the Admiralty, and the type of men suitable to sit on the Board ties in somewhat with a type of Neo-Weberian thinking, that defines a profession more on the exclusion of outsiders to the occupation, an exclusion sanctioned by the state.<sup>41</sup> Saks defines the Neo-Weberian approach as

<sup>41</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 4.

Centred on the tenet that we live in a dynamic and competitive world of macro-political interests and power, in which occupational groups gain and/or maintain professional standing based on the creation of legal boundaries that mark out the position of specific occupational groups.<sup>42</sup>

The Navy, Victualling, and Ordnance Boards already had a measure of social closure in the Neo-Weberian vein, by only permitting men from certain social, educational, or previous professional backgrounds to sit on these Boards. While clerkships and the secretariat would have been slightly easier to enter into, it was the Commissioners who sat on the various Boards that took decisions, and gave and enacted orders relating to the running of the Royal Navy. As the various Boards became more and more bureaucratic, public permeability also decreased, as knowledge of exactly what these Boards did was reserved for those in government.<sup>43</sup> It was also important for the increasing professionalism of the naval shore establishment that Parliament in general did not greatly interfere in the running of the Navy, recognising the need for a strong, permanent naval force to safeguard the country. This is not to say that naval matters were not in the minds of politicians in general, but the long recesses and general ebb and flow of eighteenth and nineteenthcentury politics meant that any politician not immediately involved with the running of the Navy (usually either in the Cabinet, Parliamentary Enquiries, Select Committees, or at the Board of Admiralty) found it difficult to obtain enough information and experience to form a cogent and respected viewpoint on its administration.<sup>44</sup> Barham's changes to the structure of the Board of Admiralty pushed the last political office towards a sense of requiring specialised knowledge in order to perform its duties, thereby pushing it further away from politics, and making the prospect of social closure a future possibility. Although it would take a set of wholesale changes to remove politics from the vast majority of the Board, the first seeds of this change can be seen here. Saks defines this Neo-Weberian approach as having 'registers creating bodies of insiders and excluding outsiders',<sup>45</sup> and while such registers did not exist for the Board of Admiralty – outside of the wider naval lists of commissioned officers - inter and intra-departmental promotions and career changes were common within the naval shore administration, and key positions were invariably filled through promotion of existing members of the office, rather than bringing in outsiders from

<sup>42</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* p. 83.

<sup>44</sup> C.I. Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 22.

<sup>45</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 4.

a different government department.<sup>46</sup> Men could enter at the bottom and make their way up, but would generally not enter into higher positions as an outsider, and if they did, they were invariably unpopular within the administration and resented for bypassing the traditional system, as the treatment of the graduates of the Royal School of Naval Architecture, who were immediately appointed quartermen, showed.<sup>47</sup> Neo-Weberian perspectives on what defines a profession shift from control by the producer over the consumer, through to legitimate, organised autonomy over technical judgements and organisation of work.<sup>48</sup> There is also the caveat that simple knowledge and expertise does not guarantee professional standing, the socio-political and economic climate is allimportant, as well as marketplace competition, as not all learned occupations have been defined as professions.<sup>49</sup> All of these factors can be seen within the naval shore establishment, but are often sporadic, and found in far greater quantities in one office than another, with levels of professionalism varying throughout the system, especially at the beginning of Barham's career. In none of these perspectives are specialised knowledge and skills central to the definition, but they may be used to justify and maintain the established sheltered social standing of professional men. The position within the marketplace and the necessity of higher-education credentials to gain entry are still seen as being essential to defining a profession.<sup>50</sup>

Along with this demonstration of possession of specialised skills and knowledge, professionalism would also come to mean the demonstration of a particular type of personality and character, key traits of which were rationality, independence of thought, and clear-headedness.<sup>51</sup> While this type of professional character would become most associated with professional scientists, stemming from a scientific education, it has been perceived that the specialised knowledge and skills of the sciences led to the development of a character.<sup>52</sup> Barham also displayed all of these characteristics, at a time when those around him did not always do so, and they became key tenets of how he and others viewed his work and his character. It is also worth noting that Barham expected these same traits

<sup>46</sup> Geoffrey Holmes, *Augustan England: Professions, State and Society, 1680-1730* (London: George Allan and Unwin, 1982), p. 246.

<sup>47</sup> J.M. Haas, A Management Odyssey: The Royal Dockyards, 1714-1914 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 58-60.

<sup>48</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession' p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Heather Ellis 'Knowledge, Character and Professionalisation in Nineteenth-Century British Science' in *History of Education, 43:6* pp. 777-792, p. 781.

<sup>52</sup> Ellis, 'Knowledge, Character and Professionalisation', p. 781.

from those with whom he worked and oversaw, thus increasing the professionalism of the departments he worked in. His views came to form the basis of the push for meritocratic appointments and the desire for individually responsible administrators, which became established throughout the naval shore establishment by the mid-nineteenth-century.

## <u>The Growing Professionalism of the Navy's Administration throughout the Eighteenth-</u> <u>Century</u>

Work that has been done on the armed forces of Great Britain during the eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries has, understandably, focussed on the officers and men that were on active service, particularly those of the Army, as it moved from a model more familiar to a feudal state, through the Cromwellian 'New Model Army,' finally to professional, state-paid, lifetime career officers and a professional state-sponsored standing British Army. Much has been made of the marked increase in professionalism found within the active services, as sustained state investment created, over the course of the lateseventeenth and early-eighteenth-centuries, a standing Army and a permanent Navy. Because of this, a military profession becoming a reputable choice for genteel members of society, with careers in the state military as well as family dynasties being established first in the Navy, and later in the Army, both being prevalent by the end of the Seven Years' War.<sup>53</sup> These changes, while important, do not tell of some of the most important changes in the British military, namely those found within the shore establishments of the Royal Navy. The institutions that made up the supply of the Navy were vast, easily the largest manufacturing businesses in Britain, and most likely the entire world, up until that point. Their efficient and effective administration was of paramount importance to a state that relied almost entirely on its navy to protect itself, ensure its continued prosperity, and enlarge its ever-growing commercial and territorial empire. Yet the administration remained in much the same vein for the first three-quarters of the eighteenth-century. While Geoffrey Holmes talks of the removal of venality, emoluments, and sinecures from government departments as being essential to the professionalisation of those departments,<sup>54</sup> one still finds many instances of sinecures, fees, perquisites and emoluments in the shore establishment of the Navy and other government offices in 1785, leading to the

<sup>53</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power, p. 55.

<sup>54</sup> Holmes, Augustan England, pp. 257-58.

establishment of the Commission on Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments in the Public Offices by William Pitt the Younger.

It may be helpful to assess the ways in which professionalism changed during the eighteenth-century from what had gone before, in order to better understand the changes that were made during the years of Barham's career in the naval shore establishment. Early-seventeenth-century Britain tended to place responsibility for government offices under the auspices of a single individual in a critical department, who would be personally responsible to the King. The period of the Civil War and Interregnum marked a change of direction, however, and the men who held such an office, such as the Lord High Admiral or Lord High Treasurer, became far less common after the Glorious Revolution in 1688. These offices began to be dispensed 'in commission' by a board or committee of members who split the tasks formerly assigned to a single person into parts, to better execute the business as the scope of said business increased with the growth of the state.<sup>55</sup> This move also gave the government of the day more opportunities to exercise its power through patronage as there were more government positions to fill, and also gave the Boards the benefit of taking away individual responsibility and scrutiny by the Opposition. At a time when service for the public good was almost unheard of, the board structure also gave government departments the ability for the Board as a whole to cross-examine each member's actions in order that corruption was not allowed to creep in. Holmes says that almost all new boards created after 1680 were immediately put in commission, and the vast majority of the boards outside of the Admiralty, Trade, and Ordnance Boards were nonpolitical with their own administrative make-ups.<sup>56</sup> The administrative departments of the Navy followed this trend of shared responsibility, with the office of Lord High Admiral being 'in commission' during various periods from the Restoration onwards, and permanently from 1709, aside from a brief interlude between 1827-28 when the Duke of Clarence was Lord High Admiral. When looking at this aspect of administration, Barham made very little difference; the Boards on which he sat were in commission when he first arrived and were in commission when he left them. But it would be the ways in which they were made up, the efficiency with which the Boards handled business, and the ways in which knowledge and expertise were used that would be very different once Barham had left them.

<sup>55</sup> Holmes, Augustan England, p. 244.

<sup>56</sup> Holmes, Augustan England, p. 244.

Holmes speaks of the fact that the two departments which already displayed considerable professionalism coming into the eighteenth-century were the Admiralty Office and Navy Board, both of which had, not coincidentally, felt the touch of Samuel Pepys. This professionalisation started in 1680, when two generations of public servants were taken in and trained, amounting to over five hundred men, and which meant that the foundations of the Admiralty and Navy Board's bureaucracy were laid.<sup>57</sup> Through this training, the clerks and secretariat became highly skilled and consummate in their knowledge of the workings of their departments and how best to execute their offices, a great many of which carried considerable responsibility. These clerks would also begin to stay in the same departments, or at least within the shore establishment of the Navy, for their entire careers through internal promotion. A good example would be John Clevland, who entered the administration at the Navy Board as a clerk in the Storekeeper's department in 1722 through his father's influence as Comptroller of Storekeeper's Accounts, and who died in 1763 as First Secretary to the Admiralty.<sup>58</sup> This longevity in office meant that the staff of the Boards remained in those departments throughout their careers, enabling skills and knowledge about the administration of the Navy to be built up over time and transmitted to newer recruits in those offices, meaning that crucial professional knowledge remained within the naval shore establishment, raising the effectiveness of administration. This level of professional knowledge, experience, and expertise within the departments can be seen especially during the early 1780s when the Commissioners of Accounts, appointed by Lord North, turned to the senior clerks and accountants in the various government offices for advice and knowledge. Brewer states that at that time, the chief clerks in the Navy and Victualling Offices had together worked for the state for a total of seventy-three years.<sup>59</sup> While this level of expert knowledge and skills did not drop off throughout the eighteenthcentury, Barham was still able to improve the ways in which the Boards worked. While administration could often be effective, and knowledge levels high, it was not always efficient or professional in how the business was executed and how that knowledge and

<sup>57</sup> Holmes, Augustan England, p. 246.

<sup>58</sup> Ann Veronica Coats, 'Clevland, John (1706–1763)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/64851, accessed 17 Sept 2017]. Clevland rose from a clerk of storekeepers accounts to chief clerk of that department in four years and in 1731 was made Clerk of the Cheque at Plymouth Dockyard. By 1741 he was M.P. For Saltash, an Admiralty seat, but vacated the seat by 1743 to become Clerk of the Acts, swapping to the Admiralty three years later to become Second Secretary. He would sit for Parliament on several more occasions, for the Cinque Ports, another Admiralty seat (1747-54), Sandwich (1754-61), and Saltash again (1761-63). He became Admiralty Secretary in 1751 and remained in post until his death.

<sup>59</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power pp. 80-81.

expertise was used. An expedient such as fixing hours for various tasks, even for something as basic as hours of attendance, was one of the ways in which the offices could be made more like a modern bureaucracy, rather than an eighteenth-century institution.

Assisting the longevity in office that aided the gradual build-up of professional knowledge, the government officials, who might be termed in modern parlance 'civil servants' became de-politicised during the early-eighteenth-century, and tended not to resign their office or be removed due to political pressures or changes of ministries. Although successive government changes between 1688-1720 resulted in a few officials and clerks being removed from their posts in the Admiralty and Navy Boards, after the 1720s 'the overriding pattern became one of survival [through political changes], either until death or until retirement, for almost everyone except temporary clerks.<sup>60</sup> This would become a key factor in Barham's own career at the Navy Board, when the fact that he received his commission as Comptroller of the Navy through letters patent under the Great Seal meant that he was all but immune from the efforts of the First Lord of the Admiralty to remove him from his post. This also became a critical factor during Lord St. Vincent's time as First Lord from 1801-04, as it became clear that he would have removed the members of the Navy Board or even abolished the Board altogether were it not for the fact that the members of the Board sat by order of the King's patent. It had become clear that specialist knowledge and skills that were unavailable outside the particular offices had made the men who worked in those offices indispensable. The removal of politics from the administrative system was also a necessary measure as the politicians of the day realised that if the various departments were completely subject to state and personal patronage, it would likely create a system of administrators more concerned with promoting themselves rather than the public good. They also realised that partial, incompetent, and inexperienced administrators who changed with every shift in the ministry would ruin the country. Thus, a set of conventions within government became established concerning what constituted virtuous, acceptable, and proper administrative conduct.<sup>61</sup>

One of the main methods of determining professionalism in a government department has been identified as the presence of salaries of sufficient amounts to prevent the need for perquisites, emoluments, and gratuities in office in order to allow clerks, secretaries, and other members of an office to earn enough money to support themselves and their

<sup>60</sup> Holmes, Augustan England, pp. 246-47.

<sup>61</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power pp. 73-74.

families.<sup>62</sup> Salaries also gave government officials the incentive to work for promotion, due to the fact that salaries increased as officials progressed up a career ladder, which also held the promise of a government pension. While the salaries may not appear to be large when examined, Brewer claims that they compare very favourably with other 'white collar' occupations around the same time.<sup>63</sup> The other benefit was that government employment provided regular remuneration in cash, which was unusual in late-seventeenth and earlyeighteenth-century England. With salaries also came expectations of administrative loyalty and 'an ethos of public duty and private probity.'<sup>64</sup> Promotion also increased a civil servant's social standing, very much in keeping with how professions are defined. In the upper echelons of administration could be found men of a mercantile and professional background for whom the fruits of an administrative career were the means of acquiring the status and property of a gentleman, which again links with the Neo-Weberian principals of a closed professional group providing improved life chances for its members through enhanced income, status, and power in society.<sup>65</sup> Finally, the bureaucratic structuring that salaries brought involved the examination of entrants on arrival in office and official training, along with constant examination and systems of punishment and reward.<sup>66</sup> Holmes states that well before 1730, those who profited from fees were very much the exception to the general rule of salaried professionals.<sup>67</sup>

In every one of the new departments erected between 1671 and 1711, as well as in the earlier Navy Office, three practices were adopted from the start. All employees from top to bottom were appointed 'during pleasure'...; all were paid realistic salaries; and all were forbidden to take either fees or any other payments on the side. So by 1714 the vast majority of England's civil servants were, officially at least, in this position.<sup>68</sup>

In fact, however, while the Navy Office may have supposedly been subject to these rulings officially, there is no evidence that this was followed in practice, and fees, emoluments, and gratuities pervaded the office more and more as the century passed by, with no increase in salaries from what had been set down in 1689. The only members who were fully salaried employees of the state were the Commissioners of the Navy, who sat on the Navy

<sup>62</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 69.

<sup>63</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 79.

<sup>64</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 69.

<sup>65</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession', p. 4.

<sup>66</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 69.

<sup>67</sup> Holmes, Augustan England, pp. 257-58.

<sup>68</sup> Holmes, Augustan England, pp. 257-58.

Board proper, and were Crown appointees. The rest of the office remained in possession of their fees. Brewer explains this by saying that these new commissions and boards added in the late-seventeenth-century,

[D]id not replace but [were] added on to the existing institutions. Its rules and practices were not accompanied by wholesale reform of older departments, many of which contained sinecurists, pluralists and officers whose chief source of income took the form of fees. Rather administrative innovation in Britain, as elsewhere in Europe, either worked around existing office-holders and their interests or reached an accommodation with them by combining the old and the new to their mutual satisfaction.<sup>69</sup>

In this regard, therefore, we can see that the naval shore establishment, particularly the Navy Board, the oldest and perhaps most critical of all the departments during the eighteenth-century, was severely behind the curve in this aspect of professionalism. While clerks in the office did collect salaries, they were woefully inadequate by the end of the eighteenth-century, if they had even been sufficient from their inception. The clerks and secretaries of the various offices relied heavily on fees to allow them a sufficient wage, especially during wartime, when prices in general became inflated. Fees were paid on a wide variety of things that passed through the offices, from the passing of accounts and petitions, to the making out of bills, contracts, and charters. Each pair of hands through which these documents passed extracted a small fee for the work, which combined throughout the year could run to well over a thousand pounds, especially in times of war, when the business of these offices was at its highest level. Sinecures that required little to no work, or work that could be executed by a deputy were often used as rewards for long standing service at both the Navy and Admiralty Boards. Clerks at the Admiralty of over twenty years' service were often made pursers of ships, which they executed by deputies to whom they paid a wage of their own choosing. Appointments to Greenwich Hospital were used in a similar way for Navy Board clerks.<sup>70</sup> Brewer though provides a counter-point to Holmes's black-and-white viewpoint on fees in offices by saying that England's administrative system, especially in the early-eighteenth-century, with its mix of medieval and early-modern apparatus, defies any clear categorisation.<sup>71</sup> Offices were held for a wide variety of tenures and offered vastly differing rewards: some received fees; others received salaries and were, as Holmes remarked, forbidden from receiving any other forms of

<sup>69</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 69.

<sup>70</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 76.

<sup>71</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 70.

payment. Even in efficient departments such as the Navy Board, officials had to pay a *douceur* of two or three hundred guineas upon entry to secure their office, but Brewer does acknowledge that in such critical departments as the Navy Board and Admiralty, while irregularities, perquisites, and emoluments did still exist, the work they did was too vital to succumb to grift and corruption.<sup>72</sup> When Barham arrived at the Navy Board he swiftly made it his business to attempt to put an end to fee-taking within the Navy Office, and though he had to wait until he could do so anonymously as advisor to the Commissioners on Fees in the Public Offices, he realised that salaried officials were as efficient and motivated during peacetime as during wartime, with as much dedication to their public duty, as their salaries remained constant despite the vastly increased workload that wartime brought. By contrast, the fee-takers and sinecurists were happiest during wartime, when the increased business meant a huge spike in their personal revenues for relatively little additional work, while prolonged periods of peace could see their incomes slide considerably as the amount of business reached its lowest ebb.

In one vital way, however, the offices of the Admiralty and Navy Board displayed a great deal more professionalism than other contemporary government departments: application to business and hours of work. General eighteenth-century administration was not of the sort we might recognise today, and for a man to work even five days of the week was not to be automatically expected. In departments such as those that made up the naval shore establishment, however, such laxity in business was unacceptable when the security of the country was concerned. As Brewer says

Officers in such departments as the Navy, Admiralty and the Excise worked what were, by eighteenthcentury standards, long hours, pursuing tasks that required both skill and rigorous application...In the 1780s the Naval Clerk of the Acts claimed to work a seven day week in wartime. His colleague in the Admiralty, the Agent to the Marines, was normally at work from nine until three and from five to eight.<sup>73</sup>

#### The Effects of Professionalism and the Importance of Barham

The professionalisation of the naval shore establishment during the years of Barham's career would be crucial in assisting Britain to win three wars at sea, each one greater in scope and challenge than the last. The measures that were implemented also enabled the

<sup>72</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power pp. 75-76.

<sup>73</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power p. 70.

shore establishment to effectively administer the largest fleet ever seen at that point and moved the establishment on from what had originally been laid down nearly a century previous. While several departments had displayed many professional traits over the course of the eighteenth-century, several key actions would be taken to modernise the service, improve efficiency and reduce the political influence present in both the active and shore services of the Navy. These were actions such as the increasing of work-rate for both the Navy and Admiralty Boards, the re-organisation and division of responsibilities at those Boards, the implementation of professional bureaucratic organisation and management at the Sick and Hurt Board, the creation of a dedicated professional Transport Board, and the removal of officers also employed on active-service from the Board of Admiralty. While there were many good men active in professionalising government in general at the time, and several within the naval shore establishment, more often than not, the name of Barham is complicit with the changes, or at the very least his influence can be seen in them. It is therefore extremely difficult to assess any changes made during this period without also assessing Barham's own work, and this thesis shall not attempt to separate them.

The major changes that will be discussed are: the restructuring of the Navy Board in both Barham's recommendations to the Commission on Fees, and his work done as Chairman of the Commission of Revision; the changes made to the routine and attitude of the Board of Admiralty during Barham's short tenure as First Sea Lord; the reorganising of the Sick and Hurt Board; the implementation of the Transport Board during the French War, and the earlier work with the transport service by the Navy Board during the American War; the changes to the ways in which the dockyards performed their work through various measures proposed and acted upon during Barham's career; the changes to the way the active-service fleet was administered afloat such as divisions of a ships' crew, and the enforcement of the keeping of log-books; and finally the sweeping changes made to the structure of the Board of Admiralty made when Barham was First Lord and the wider naval shore administration through his influence as Chairman of the Commission of Revision. Through these measures it will be possible to see how the shore establishment of the Navy was brought up to more modern standards by the early-nineteenth-century.

It is also possible to ascertain whether the demands of the wars of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries were the catalysts for these changes, or whether it required a man of vision, intent, and professionalism to bring them about. Did Barham enter a professional administration, or did he cause the administration to adopt a new professionalism during his career? Additionally, was he alone in his work, or did he have others around him to assist the process, and was their influence greater than his own? Finally, how did he manage to be in these positions to influence government and the shore administration for so long? On this point, it can be seen that it was not just the variety of positions that Barham held that made him so unique, but rather the type of work that he continued to pursue throughout his time in the naval shore establishment. As political offices changed hands so regularly, usually being given to those men in the Party that needed an important seat, professional naval expertise such as Barham's, Howe's or St. Vincent's, was not the quality always most sought after in a naval minister. Far more important could be a young nobleman's standing and political allegiance as was the case with Earl Spencer, or previous administrative knowledge, as was the case with Earl Sandwich and the Viscount Melville. Barham also did not have the benefit of a glorious active service record to point to in order to justify his selection for the highest office as Anson, Hawke, Howe, Keppel, and St. Vincent did.

Because of these frequent changes in office, it is often difficult to see the emergence of policy and pursuance of professionalism beyond the scope of a few months or years at best in either an individual or a ministerial government department. In Barham though, we can see clear examples of policies pursued from his earliest years under Sandwich, and the adoption of the latter's ideals, to his definitive nine months as First Lord of the Admiralty, and finally as chairman of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, which comprised the final evolution and implementation of those plans drawn up and first acted upon twenty-seven years previously. C.I. Hamilton, in his work The Making of the Modern Admiralty speaks of the fact that contemporaries of Barham would not speak in terms of policy: i.e. a constant application of principals; but instead would use terms such as 'object,' 'measure,' or 'course of action,' which suggested, and indeed worked towards, immediate, tangible ends with results oriented towards treating the symptoms of any given situation prevailing at the time.<sup>74</sup> Barham possessed a quality unusual in eighteenth-century administrators, namely the ability to look to and plan for the future and understand how his actions at the time would affect actions possible in a decade's time. He also realised that he possessed this talent and that it separated him from many of the other governmental personnel around him, as can be seen in his appraisal to Melville of the administration of Lords Spencer and St. Vincent, when Melville arrived in office in 1804 to

<sup>74</sup> Hamilton, *Making of the Modern Admiralty*, p. 38. Hamilton is not talking specifically about Barham in this passage but rather about administration in general. While he does not hold Barham up as an example of the sort of man who bucked this trend, it is very easy to see how Barham differed from the example that Hamilton describes.

find that the merchant yards had been sorely underused for the purposes of building and repair during the French Revolutionary War. Of these men, Barham wrote

It is evident their minds were not of the comprehensive kind, and their views did not reach beyond the daily occurrences of office.<sup>75</sup>

Barham adopted a more strategic approach and worked instead to prevent problems occurring in the first place, looked ahead for what might be required and learned lessons from the past. Hamilton also speaks about the fact that there was no precedent for policy or dedicated far-sighted pursuance of professionalism in eighteenth-century government, and that it simply wasn't expected.<sup>76</sup> For any man to look more closely at a situation and propose additional measures that may have appeared extraneous and excessive at the time in order to ensure that the establishment might be run more efficiently and similar problems did not occur in future was completely against the normal run of government and could have elicited calls of unnecessary expenditure and caused consternation by breaking from traditional practice. While there were undoubtedly measures and rules that guided administrators, these were usually based on previous examples and trials, and very rarely looked to the future and anticipated what could occur. This was partly to do with a strong sense of tradition that pervaded naval administration and also to do with the fact that modern-style record keeping simply did not exist (although it was something that Barham typically pushed for upon entering a new office).<sup>77</sup>

For one man to pursue the kinds of reforms and professional attitudes that Barham did for so long was extremely rare in eighteenth-century politics, as was the workload he went through in all the offices he held, as he constantly found the accepted methods and work-rates far below the standards he assumed were necessary. Roger Morriss, in his opinion of Barham, detects an 'obstinate perseverance' in him, as he remained attached to the same ideas for the length of his career.<sup>78</sup> It was this ability to think ahead and lay the groundwork for what he or others might do in the future that solidifies Barham as different. His work was constantly possessed of a bureaucrat's obsession with professionalism and efficiency, and he was always prepared to tell anyone who would listen, the standards to which naval

<sup>75</sup> Laughton, Barham, Vol. III p. 34 - Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804.

<sup>76</sup> Hamilton, Making of the Modern Admiralty pp. 39-40.

<sup>77</sup> Hamilton, Making of the Modern Admiralty p. 38.

<sup>78</sup> Roger Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham 1726-1813, An Administrator Reassessed' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding, (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 301-23, p. 302.

officers and administrators should strive, and imposed those ideals on whomever he could throughout his career. Through the pursuance of these policies of efficiency, increased professionalism, reform, and dedication to the betterment of the service, Barham, and through him, the increasingly professional naval shore establishment, contributed greatly to British naval victory in three successive world conflicts.



#### Sir Charles Lord Barham of Barham Court and Teston in Kent

Charles Middleton was an essential part of the reason that Britain was able to emerge in 1815 as the world's first true superpower, and one of the most important people engaged in professionalising the Royal Navy during the period 1778-1815. During this time he cultivated a significant political network, which involved many of the most influential members of Government and expanded into areas other than naval administration, such as the rising Evangelical movement in Britain and the abolition of slavery, movements which will not be covered in detail in this thesis due to constraints on content.<sup>79</sup> These political networks were brought about in part due to his nationality, background, and family; Middleton was a Scot, at a time when Scottish nationals were not popular within the English political elite. Scots were seen as clannish, pushy, unreliable, and politically treacherous; they also rose to command some of the highest positions in British society, becoming the top bankers, engineers, and surgeons, seemingly out of all proportion to their numbers. When attempting to hold against this general feeling amongst the English administrative and political system, Middleton was assisted by the fact that he was closely connected to both the Dundas and Pitt families through birth and marriage respectively. He also possessed ties to the sea and customs service through his father, who was Collector of Customs at Dundee, with this factor allowing Robert Middleton to enter his son onto the books of a merchantman in order to gain young Charles 'sea time.' This was a corrupt but common practice amongst middle-class families to manufacture a swift entry for their son into the Navy by having their name borne on the books of a ship as a servant or such, without the young man ever setting foot on board. These factors, when added to his tireless attention to his duty as an administrator, coupled with a true zeal for the betterment and professionalisation of the naval service brought Middleton into government office on three separate occasions, when none of them seemed the most likely appointment due to circumstances or Middleton's own standing, and also saw him invested as chairman of one of the most far-reaching, comprehensive, and influential government commissions regarding the Royal Navy.

When looking at the professionalisation of the naval shore establishment in the lateeighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries, it is necessary to further study both Middleton

<sup>79</sup> For a fuller appreciation of the Evangelical movement within Britain, and more especially the Royal Navy, see Richard Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy*, 1775-1815: Blue Lights and Psalm-Singers (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008).
himself and the people with whom he worked in order to understand more fully what, why, and how he did what he did, who and what influenced his career ashore, and how he was allowed to do what he did for such an extended period of time by so many people. Also, how he was able to be brought back into higher and higher office repeatedly, despite not being an active politician and, as shall be seen, holding a deep dislike for the presence of politics in the naval shore administration, preferring the council and influence of professional men with experience and specialised knowledge. In keeping with the aims of the thesis, due care and attention will be paid to the social and political context in which Middleton worked when making evaluations and judgements, for the pressures that Middleton and the Navy as a whole were under should not be discounted, nor should the social context of the eighteenth-century as a whole be allowed to be replaced with conventions more common in the twentieth and twenty-first-centuries.

#### Middleton's Temperament and Personality Traits

Sir Charles Middleton has been described as a difficult man to work with by many historians, such as Leslie Gardiner, Roger Morriss, Sir Oswyn Murray and John Talbott.<sup>80</sup> This though is not a case of historical judgement alone, for contemporaries, such as Henry Dundas and the Earl of St. Vincent,<sup>81</sup> thought much the same, although he was always acknowledged by those around him, both subordinates, peers, and superiors as hardworking and possessed of great knowledge regarding the administration of the Navy on shore. He was described by one clerk of long-standing service as 'the most indefatigable

<sup>80</sup> Leslie Gardiner, *The British Admiralty* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1968), pp. 181-82. Gardiner says that Middleton's faults 'were those of great admirals and statesmen: a determination to have their own way about everything, a contempt for anyone who, while not necessarily opposing, is slow to agree with them. Roger Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham 1726-1813, An Administrator Reassessed' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000) pp. 301-23, p. 304. Morriss describes Middleton as being 'impatient, aggressive, short-tempered, patronising of peers and oppressive of subordinates. At times, he could be cruelly judgemental and brutally tactless.' Sir A.R. Murray, G.C.B., 'The Admiralty VI' in *Mariner's Mirror* 24 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1938) July 1938, pp. 329-52, p. 335. Murray describes Barham, based on his correspondence, as 'a prig and bore of the first water.' John E. Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor: Charles Middleton and the King's Navy, 1778-1813* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 135; pp. 143-44 Talbott describes Middleton as Pitt and Chatham's 'difficult, erstwhile colleague' and as a man of obstinate perseverance, while saying that 'obstinate perseverance may also have a tiresome, provoking and unproductive quality.'

<sup>81</sup> Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor* 'That damned Scotch pack-horse' St. Vincent decried Middleton as. J.S. Corbett (ed.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty 1794-1801 Volume I* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XLVI (1913), pp. 5-7, letter dated Wimbledon, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Dundas to Spencer, marked 'very private.' Dundas described Middleton as having 'very great official talents and merit, but he is a little difficult to act with from and anxiety, I had almost said an irritability of temper, and he requires a great deal of his own way in doing business in order to do it well.'

and able of any in my time.<sup>32</sup> His compulsion to seek perfection in all he did led him to see laziness and neglect in others who would have been considered perfectly able by even the most critical of eighteenth-century standards. His strong Evangelical beliefs leant authenticity and importance in his mind to the work he was doing 'in God's name,' guided by His hand, for the betterment of the country and service. His strong principals could not be shaken by any man on earth, as he knew himself 'answerable to a higher power.'<sup>83</sup> It is this attitude to his life and more especially his work, that is indicative of the world-view of the man behind some of the most important and far-reaching reforms of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century naval establishment, and a man who established himself, willingly or otherwise, as a wellspring of professional naval knowledge, whose experience and administrative acumen caused him to be brought out of self-imposed retirement time and again by those in power. As an administrator who filled the roles of Comptroller of the Navy, First Sea Lord, and First Lord of the Admiralty, Middleton's personality, working habits, and the relationships he cultivated with his peers and those in government bear further study, in order that one can better understand his place in context and how he came to be so successful in naval shore administration.

Some of the best examples of Middleton's temperament, which indicate his sometimes high temper, intolerance of vice, and intense dislike of being spoken against, are to be found during his time in active service, notably aboard the *Anson* (60) and *Arundel* (24), both before and after being posted as Captain. Middleton's temper can be seen in an event that occurred on 30 January 1757 in the *Anson*, which saw Middleton, as first Lieutenant, strike an insubordinate seaman, John Dunbar. Dunbar had come to complain to Middleton about his rum ration being stopped, and, as the conversation became heated, Middleton struck Dunbar with a stick and reached for a pike, threatening to run Dunbar through with it, while being restrained by a crowd of men. Middleton instead ordered Dunbar to be put into irons and court-martialled. The seaman was eventually condemned to sixty lashes for 'contempt, insolence, reproachful and provoking speeches tending to make a disturbance in the ship.'<sup>84</sup> Middleton himself elicited a statement from another lieutenant in his defence,

<sup>82</sup> John B. Hattendorf, R.J.B Knight, A.W.H. Pearsall, N.A.M. Rodger, & Geoffrey Till, (eds.), *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 131 (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1993), pp. 460-62, A View on the Navy Board, 2 December 1782 – Robert Gregson, Chief Clerk to the Clerk of the Acts to Lord Shelburne.

<sup>83</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I, p. 183, letter dated 26th October 1795 - Middleton to Spencer.

<sup>84</sup> The National Archives, Kew, Admiralty Records, Courts Martial Papers Jan. 1756 – Dec. 1757, ADM 1/5296 p. 183.

saying that 'his constant rule' was 'to do as much justice as ever was in his power.'<sup>85</sup> The second incident, on the *Arundel* after Middleton had achieved post-rank, resulted in another court-martial, this time following a quarrel with the ship's carpenter. On New Year's Day 1760, after ordering the crew to stop work, Middleton went below to order the carpenter, Thomas Slater, to clear the deck of oakum. Slater said he would at dusk, but said later, after it had rained, that he could not do so without breaking off from other work. Once Slater had finished work he reported to Middleton on the quarterdeck, where words were exchanged culminating in Middleton striking Slater with his open hand and kicking him. After further words were exchanged, Middleton ordered Slater confined and court-martialled, where Slater was found guilty of treating Middleton with contempt and mulcted of his personal pay and that of his servant for one year.<sup>86</sup>

While these incidents certainly paint a picture of a man who had little time for insubordination, one more prone to control through force rather than persuasion and one who was in all likelihood not a particularly well-loved captain, Middleton was by no means a tyrant as some captains turned out to be. One should also be careful not to judge Middleton too harshly for his open use of violence in an age when it seemed far more acceptable to settle matters with a blow than it might be today, especially in matters involving superior officers and crew. Clive Emsley<sup>87</sup> and Danielle Coombs<sup>88</sup> both point to the peculiarity of the British for engaging in public displays of violence, both as a way to settle a private dispute and also as a public display of masculinity. This attitude was also known to extend to the military ranks as a way of settling personal disputes.<sup>89</sup> While there were those officers who did not deal in violence against their crew at all, Middleton was hardly unique in employing it when dealing with subordinates. While Talbott may remark on Middleton as 'quick-tempered' and 'easily provoked to rage',<sup>90</sup> there is the social context of the age to consider before one judges Middleton too hastily. Coombs also makes the point that

89 Coombs, Crime and the Soldier pp. 140-41.

<sup>85</sup> The National Archives, Kew, Admiralty Records, Courts Martial Papers Jan. 1756 – Dec. 1757, ADM 1/5296 p. 183.

<sup>86</sup> The National Archives, Kew, Admiralty Records, Courts Martial Papers 1760, ADM 1/5299 pt1, p. 30.

<sup>87</sup> Clive Emsley, Hard Men: Violence in England Since 1750 (London: Hambledon and London, 2005) pp. 9-11.

<sup>88</sup> Danielle Sarah Eleana Coombs, *Crime and the Soldier: Identifying a Soldier-Specific Experience of Crime in the British Army, 1740-1830* (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Leeds, 2015), pp. 110-111.

<sup>90</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 9.

[R]efusing to obey an order, disrespectful language to a superior officer, making comments about service conditions could all lead to charges of mutiny, or the related charge of using mutinous expressions.<sup>91</sup>

When looking at Middleton's later career on shore, especially with regard to how he pushed forward the professionalism of the various aspects of the Navy, it was this intense dislike of laziness, dereliction of duty, and insubordination, along with a preference for military-style command structures that caused Middleton to push for strict order, proper division of business, and hierarchy in the Boards at which he was to serve. It also indicates why he wished for greater codification and organisation of the Standing Orders issued to both the dockyards and officers serving afloat, along with his desire that the various admirals were more closely managed by the Admiralty, coupled with a disdain for the more maverick officers such as Sir Sydney Smith. While physical violence would avail an administrator of nothing in disputes, it was often replaced with words, either spoken or written, with Middleton preferring the latter. Scathing assessments, withering retorts, and unrestrained attacks all became hallmarks of Middleton's correspondence, and showed that while the man may have laid down his arms, his combative personality, together with an intense dislike of being gainsaid, had not left him. While this combative streak and determination to rule over any Board on which he sat in an absolute manner might have been disastrous in an incompetent or lackadaisical man, when coupled with Middleton's talents for administration and reform, it enabled him to shape his Boards to his standards and ensure that all business was conducted along his lines and to his standards. These, thankfully, were found to be of benefit to the service rather than a detriment.

Middleton possessed strong Evangelical religious beliefs, a religious movement which, throughout his career, gained more and more of a foothold in British society, politics, and indeed the Navy,<sup>92</sup> and meant that by 'fearing God and trusting in Providence [it] released him from the need to fear man.'<sup>93</sup> Middleton was also a firm supporter of the anti-slavery movement, a movement that Mark Noll claims Middleton engineered and introduced William Wilberforce to through his capacity as an M.P.<sup>94</sup> The belief that all work was that

<sup>91</sup> Coombs, Crime and the Soldier, p. 83.

<sup>92</sup> John Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2006). See in particular chapter 7 – Politics: freeing slaves, saving nation, pp. 183-216. For the movement in the Royal Navy, see Blake *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy*.

<sup>93</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, pp. 14-15.

<sup>94</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester: Apollos, 2004), p. 226, 238. Noll claims that through James Ramsey, Middleton's physician aboard his

of the Lord enabled him to undertake huge workloads for the time, and caused him to expect the same of others, an attitude that put him at odds with the traditional eighteenthcentury administrator. These Evangelical beliefs also gave him access to more political networks than a simple Scottish administrator and unremarkable naval captain in a largely English political system and Navy, might have been able to access, and gave him the means to push forward with measures for the professionalisation of the Navy.

Middleton's Evangelicalism was a key aspect of his personal and professional character, and deserves highlighting further. He was not born an English Evangelical, but rather a Scot, and not of a puritanical breed, with his faith inherited not from his immediate family, but rather given by his wife, Margaret Gambier, both during their courtship and married life.95 This can be seen as early as 1757 when Middleton was appointed commander of the sloop Speaker (10) when he began to read the service of Morning Prayer to the ship's company on a Sunday, along with delivering a sermon.<sup>96</sup> Although the naval Regulations did promote the delivery of sermons and the reading of prayers, it had fallen out of practice throughout the eighteenth-century and Middleton stood out as a captain who promoted faith aboard ship. This early act helps to demonstrate Middleton's aptitude for innovation and effecting change where he felt that it was needed, even if what he proposed went against the accepted norm, for it was unusual for even a chaplain to read prayers, rarer still for him to deliver a sermon, and for a layman such as Middleton to do either, much less both, was unheard of. Middleton, in this matter as in all others he would deal with throughout his career, had realised that changes would have to be made if discrepancies within the service were to be remedied, and he was willing to take matters into his own hands in order to lead the way. It was also during this time that Middleton wrote a personal memorandum on the duties of captains aboard ship, in essence a program for religious reform in the Navy, and one that Blake claims 'deserves to be regarded as the manifesto of the Blue Lights.<sup>97</sup> The term 'Blue Lights' would come to be an all-encompassing term for religious zealots, particularly Evangelicals within the officer class of the Royal Navy, and it is perhaps here that one can first discern the ways in which Middleton was to think as an administrator,

commands in the Caribbean, and his wife, Margaret Gambier, Middleton was to become an active Evangelical and was persuaded that something needed to be done about the issue of slavery, but that he was not the man to champion its cause. Wilberforce, first impressed of the issue by Ramsey's 1784 book *Essay* on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies, later selected by Middleton as the best champion of the cause, and aided by his and his wife's Evangelical network, became the firmest proponent of anti-slavery movements until eventual abolition in 1807.

<sup>95</sup> Blake, Evangelicals in the Royal Navy p. 38.

<sup>96</sup> Blake, Evangelicals in the Royal Navy, pp. 35-36.

<sup>97</sup> Blake, Evangelicals in the Royal Navy, p. 36.

promoting deference, order, and application of business, with a sense of simply doing one's duty, rather than performing exceptional service worthy of significant reward.

The next twelve years of Middleton's life, while unexceptional from a naval or administrative standpoint, were extremely important in how his life would develop, and formed his character for his career ashore. For it was during this time, in 1761, that Middleton married Margaret Gambier, who had turned down a marriage arranged by her father in order to wait for Middleton, an act which forced her to move out of her family home and live with her friend Elizabeth Bouverie, at Barham Court in Teston, Kent. Margaret had imparted her Evangelical beliefs to Middleton in some capacity before he left for the West Indies on active service and now Middleton converted fully, utilising Barham Court, where the newly wedded Middleton's lived with Elizabeth Bouverie, to cultivate significant personal and, although perhaps initially unintentional, political networks through his Evangelicalism. During this period also, Middleton's religion became completely inseparable from his character and views. He would hold a spiritual standpoint on any matter, which others might well have perceived as hypocritical or morally superior, especially in an age where pious religion did not dominate the public consciousness as it once had, or would again a century later.<sup>98</sup> This religiosity, however, would be the making of Middleton, for while he had all the previous attributes that make up a good administrator (business sense, intelligence, and a commitment to the public services, all inherited from his family), his religion allowed him to persevere in the face of immense pressures, hardships, and opposition, knowing that God was on his side. It was this attitude that persuaded him to push for reforms in office when others around him were too selfinterested to desire it; it allowed him to pursue his plans for the rebuilding of the fleet during Howe's Admiralty, when relations between the Navy Board and Admiralty broke down; and it allowed him to form a wealth of knowledge and opinion on how each department of the naval shore establishment should be run when many administrators did not care to look outside their own offices, in turn allowing him to put those views into practice during the 1800s. The eighteenth-century system of government was built for men to pursue self-interest and nepotism through vehicles such as patronage, fees, gratuities, sinecures, and political influence. It required something such as religion for a man like Middleton to rise above the system, decry archaic aspects of government, and push for modernisation and true professionalism, rather than political amateurism, in government

<sup>98</sup> Blake, Evangelicals in the Royal Navy, p. 40.

office. Over the course of the remainder of the eighteenth-century the rise of Evangelicalism would lead to groups such as 'The Saints', under William Wilberforce, emerging within politics and the House of Commons. They would speak out against corruption and waste, and critically, promote the idea that government positions should be held and executed for the public good, and not treated as a form of private property.<sup>99</sup> In this sense, Middleton would become the archetypal Evangelical administrator.

The networks that Middleton would form during this time would catapult him into the higher reaches of society, as the Middletons hosted artists such as Sir Joshua Reynolds, Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, and James Boswell. Along with this came influential officials, philanthropists, and clergymen, such as Ambrose Serle, a government official and religious writer, Reverend James Ramsay, whose works would inspire the abolitionist movement, John Newton, the founder of the Clapham Sect, John Howard, a prison reformer, Jonas Hanway, founder of the Marine Society, Hannah More, a leading religious writer and philanthropist, the Reverend Benjamin Latrobe, leader of the Moravian Church and his son of the same name, who would go on to become the second Architect of the Capitol after emigrating to America, and finally, Beilby Porteus, Bishop of Chester from 1776-1787 and later of London from 1787-1809. Bishop Porteus would also be a political ally, for his position in later life as Bishop of London was facilitated by William Pitt, and included a seat on the Privy Council. He had also been appointed Chaplain to King George III in 1769, and was always an outspoken advocate of the abolitionist movement in the House of Lords and the Church of England. Finally, political players began to visit Barham Court. Henry Dundas, Middleton's cousin and William Pitt's long-time political lieutenant would visit, along with William Pitt himself, a distant relation of Margaret, and William Grenville. Leading abolitionists also used Barham Court as a base to discuss matters regarding the abolition of the slave trade, men such as William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp, and Thomas Clarkson. These networks would stay with Middleton throughout his career, and go some way towards explaining his influence throughout government, how he was brought into office, and how he was able to circumvent the system at various points. Finally, if the character and legacy of the aforementioned people is any guide, it also explains Middleton's desire for reform and professionalism within the naval shore establishment.

<sup>99</sup> C.I. Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 33.

In spite of his religion and his desire for reform of the system, as a result of his ambitious and self-righteous nature, Middleton was not above disregarding the nominal chain of command in order to intrigue with politicians who might further his aims, nor was he content with the amount of power held by any of the posts which he occupied during his career, and constantly fought to obtain more power for those offices, and by doing so, himself. Syrett rightly describes Middleton as 'nakedly ambitious and a bureaucratic imperialist'<sup>100</sup> and many of Middleton's statements about the work that he performed, the measures he implemented and the improvements that he achieved must be looked into slightly further than Middleton was willing to elucidate, for he often enhanced his own position in the retelling of stories, while downplaying or often completely leaving out the accomplishments or assistance of others.

To further illustrate his ambition for himself and also for his family, it becomes clear when examining his correspondence, that while Middleton fought against sinecures and patronage throughout his career, one can also see that he could be found soliciting politicians for those same positions for himself and for his relations,<sup>101</sup> most notably his brother, George.<sup>102</sup> When looking at the time period though, Middleton was not the only one to work and speak against the system whilst using it for their own ends, seemingly unable to see the inconsistencies in their behaviour. Brewer is also quick to point out that eighteenth-century critics of corruption were not always advocates of modern bureaucracy, but understood the value of patronage and influence, as long as they were legitimate and free from venality.<sup>103</sup> He also makes the excellent point that it behoved both patron and client to ensure that private connection and public duty were consonant, and Middleton's record throughout his career certainly bore out that line of thinking.

Middleton was also not above intrigue and subterfuge when trying to advance himself or his schemes,<sup>104</sup> for example, the way in which he went behind Lord Sandwich's back to

<sup>100</sup> David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War, 1775-83: A Study of British Transport Organization* (London, The University of London, The Athlone Press, 1970), p. 23.

<sup>101</sup> J.K. Laughton (ed.), Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813, Volume II, (Publications of the Navy Records Society, Volume 38, 1910) pp. 151-54, letter dated 18<sup>th</sup> July 1783 – Middleton to Keppel (corrected copy, autograph). Middleton solicited Keppel for some favours for his brother-in-law, the elder James Gambier, owing to the 'utter disorder of his affairs' and the 'anxiety and unease' that Middleton suspected Gambier must have been feeling.

<sup>102</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives SAN/F/10/9 and 17, *Papers Relating to John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich (First Lord of the Admiralty), 1718-1792*, (Naval papers. Jan-Aug 1777.

<sup>103</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989), pp. 73-74.

<sup>104</sup> Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* pp. 6-7. This is the way in which Hamilton introduces Middleton, and, with very little context towards the ways in which he worked, one can gain the impression that Middleton was actually more of a scheming politician than was the case. With no background, the reader

intrigue with Lord Shelburne; his dealings with William Pitt the Younger in order to go over the head of Lord Howe; and his correspondence directly with Francis Baring in his capacity as Chairman of the Commission on Fees, again, in an attempt to bypass Howe as First Lord. These instances will be discussed more fully in chapter three, and, in the case of Middleton and Pitt, later in this chapter. His recollections of his achievements are in some cases over-inflated, such as his forgetfulness of the problems encountered during the process of coppering, and he was often unwilling to see the viewpoints and merits of many of his contemporaries, Lord Sandwich being a prime example. In this context therefore, Roger Morriss is quite correct to assert that Middleton should not be taken at face value,<sup>105</sup> and one must exercise caution when examining Middleton's achievements to ensure that the old administrator's rhetoric does not colour one's judgement or blind one to the truth by being led to see only the blinkered viewpoint that Middleton held at times.

Middleton's own personal ambition can be seen most clearly when dissecting his recommendations to Lord Shelburne following the Commission for Examining the Public Accounts in 1782. He recommended that due to the scope of work that the Comptroller of the Navy Board was required to do, the position should in future be filled by an officer from the list of admirals, in order to avoid the situation of a post-captain either giving orders to, or refusing requests from superior officers afloat. He also advised that the Comptroller should be better acquainted with the operational side of the Navy, and be able to advise the First Lord on matters regarding appointments and dockyard procedures, even going as far as to assert that the Comptroller should assist in decisions regarding operations and fleet movements themselves.<sup>106</sup> In short, the Comptroller's position would need to be moved from the Navy Board to the Board of Admiralty, and in recommending this, Middleton's own ambitions are revealed. In one stroke he could acquire the flag which tradition precluded him from while he held the Comptrollership, and rise in the administrative ranks to the senior board, with his position being equal to, if not superior to,

is unaware of the fact that this was simply how Middleton operated due to his unshakeable belief that he knew better than his superiors.

<sup>105</sup> Morriss 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p.302. Morriss also brings up the fact that Laughton's choice of letters and papers to print compares Middleton favourably with Lord Fisher, the great naval reformer of his own day, though Morriss's subsequent claim of this selection enhancing Middleton's reputation too much or unfairly is highly debatable, with Morriss's own glowing conclusions of Middleton causing him to contradict himself in this.

 <sup>106</sup> William L. Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan, The Shelburne Papers in America Volume 151. Naval (1782): Sir Chas Middleton, Mr. Gregson, Contracts Subsisting, Committee's Report on Christr. Atkinson's Transaction, Number 40 – 9 September 1782, Middleton to Shelburne.

the First Sea, or Professional Lord.<sup>107</sup> He qualified the need for these changes with the assertion that the Comptroller 'was next in consequence, though not in rank, to the First Lord',<sup>108</sup> with the clear inference that the Comptroller should therefore be next in rank to the First Lord, and sit on the Board of Admiralty.

When deciding on whether or not to censure him though, one must weigh Middleton's personal stake in the proposition of schemes of reform and economy, whether such self-aggrandising stipulations were ever acted upon, and the need in the service at the time for the measures. Middleton asked that the Comptroller's seat be included on a revised Board of Admiralty, but this scheme was never acted upon by the later Commission on Fees in the Public Offices instituted by William Pitt, nor did Middleton again push the matter, though it would have assisted greatly in the efficiency of the shore establishment, as would his suggestion that the head of the Victualling Board be placed on the Navy Board.<sup>109</sup> Was the proposal merely ambition, or could the promotion of the Comptroller be of use to the naval establishment? The Comptroller and First Lord had maintained a close and productive working relationship during Sandwich's time as First Lord,<sup>110</sup> a relationship that lapsed during Middleton and Howe's tumultuous and strained period as Comptroller and First Lord,<sup>111</sup> with the Comptroller moved to write

I find from the manner in which business is carried on, as well as the correspondence that has passed between us in things that concerned the public service that my opinion carries no weight, I shall henceforward give up the attempt.<sup>112</sup>

<sup>107</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, p. 119.

<sup>108</sup> Clements Library Archive Shelburne Papers Vol. 151, Number 40 – 9 September 1782, Middleton to Shelburne.

<sup>109</sup> Clements Library Archive Shelburne Papers Vol. 151, Number 40 – 9 September 1782, Middleton to Shelburne.

<sup>110</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 22-23, letter dated Admiralty, 24<sup>th</sup> January 1781 – Sandwich to Middleton (Holograph). Despite issues between the First Lord and Comptroller on the subject of dockyard appointments, Sandwich hoped that the 'friendly intercourse and connection' between the two men 'may not be discontinued', with Sandwich 'ready...to renew and continue it with the same cordiality as existed before.' Sandwich would also 'continue to ask information from you, as I have done ever since you have been comptroller of the navy, in matters both within and without the cognisance of the navy board.'

<sup>111</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 178-79, letter dated Hertford Street, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1784 – Middleton to Howe; p. 179, letter dated Admiralty, 16<sup>th</sup> November 1784 – Howe to Middleton; pp. 179-82, letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> November 1784 – Middleton to Howe; pp. 182-83, letter dated Admiralty, Friday evening, 19<sup>th</sup> November 1784 – Howe to Middleton. By the end of their correspondence regarding Howe's wish that the Navy Board's extra commissioners be dispensed with, Howe was ready to accept Middleton's resignation. Middleton, however, refused to give Howe the satisfaction and instead solicited the help of Pitt.

<sup>112</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* p. 189, letter dated Hertford Street, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1784 – Middleton to Howe. See also p. 190, letter dated Admiralty, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 1784 – Howe to Middleton, for Howe's reply.

A good Comptroller could be of infinite use to a First Lord, especially when the latter was a civilian who might lack the intimate knowledge of the ways in which the management of the dockyards and the supplying of ships was carried on. The consequences of a breakdown of the relationship between First Lord and Comptroller can be seen most clearly in the years during which Lord St. Vincent held the office of First Lord, when the state of the Navy was brought close to ruin by the start of the Napoleonic War.<sup>113</sup> By having the Comptroller sit on the Board of Admiralty, whilst superintending the work of the Navy Board and other subordinate Boards, the efficiency of the naval establishment would be much increased, the professional knowledge of the Admiralty, still lacking in the 1780s, could be augmented with the expertise of the Comptroller, with the happy coincidence that Middleton's position would now belong on the senior Board. Interestingly, when Middleton became First Lord himself, the duties he gave to the Second Sea Lord bear close resemblance to the work that a Comptroller posted to the Board of Admiralty would perhaps have undertaken.<sup>114</sup>

### Middleton's Work Ethic and Methods during his Career in Administration

Throughout his career in naval administration, Middleton displayed several key tenets of his working ethic, one of the most significant being his insatiable appetite for business, for professional bureaucracy, and organised, efficient management. The thoroughness with which he administered the offices and Boards on which he sat was unusual for an eighteenth-century official, as was his desire to look outside of his professional bounds at every opportunity and take the chance to provide others with his professional opinions on their current situation. Examples of this habit include his repeated memoranda to Lords Sandwich<sup>115</sup> and Chatham<sup>116</sup> about the ways in which the fleet should be used both when he

<sup>113</sup> David Bonner-Smith, Letters of Admiral of the Fleet The Earl of St. Vincent Whilst First Lord of the Admiralty, 1801-1804 Volume II Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXI (1927), pp. 39-40; p. 202, letter dated 29 December 1802 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond; pp. 202-03, letter dated Rochetts, 2 January 1803 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond.

<sup>114</sup> J.K. Laughton, (ed.), Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron, 1758-1813, Volume III Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXIX (1910), pp. 76-78, Conduct of Business dated Admiralty, May, 1805 – P.R.O. Admiralty Minutes No. 256. Under Barham's 'Business of the Board', written upon his arrival at the Board of Admiralty in 1805, the Second Sea Lord was given the duties as follows. "The Second Professional Lord will receive from the Secretary (after they are read) all letters or other papers belonging to the Navy Board, Transport, Victualling, Sick-and-Hurt Boards, and Greenwich Hospital, and minute those which have been determined on and return them afterwards to the secretary, so that they may be dispatched; such as require deliberation, to be acted on as soon after as possible. He will keep up an intercourse with the heads of such boards whenever information or explanation is necessary."

<sup>115</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 2-6, letter dated 1779 - Middleton to Sandwich, endorsed by Middleton:

was in the office of Comptroller and later out of office respectively, far removed in both instances from any official necessity to involve himself with fleet operations. In his own words, when again lecturing Sandwich on the finer points of convoys and escorts during the American War,

It is not my practice, my Lord, to put my name to anything that is either uncertain or untrue, and particularly as a member of a public Board. To suppose me ignorant on the subject in question is concluding me asleep while I sit there. The truth however is that I suffer no object to divert my attention from the public business, and therefore I am seldom wrong in my information concerning it.<sup>117</sup>

The other, interlinked, tenet that was so important to the way in which Middleton worked, was his pursuit of long-term goals. Syrett describes Middleton's overall ways of working as 'considerably in advance of those held by most of his contemporaries'<sup>118</sup> and to that we can add, considerably in advance of all those concerned with naval administration, excepting Lord Sandwich, from whom Middleton learned a great deal.

In the context of the time Middleton worked extremely hard. It must also be acknowledged that the Navy Board remained the more professional of the two between itself and the Admiralty at the time of Middleton's Comptrollership, and the amount of work that passed through a relatively small Board of six Principal Officers and Commissioners required unceasing action to ensure that the Navy was capable of meeting the challenges set by Britain's enemies. Others at the Navy Board recognised that it was Middleton's influence and work ethic that enabled the Navy Board, in its as-yet unreformed state, to undertake the level of business created by the American War. Of Middleton, Robert Gregson, a clerk of nearly thirty-five years service at the Navy Board said to Shelburne,

The load of business he goes through at the Board, at the Treasury, the Admiralty, and his own house, is astonishing, and what I am confident no other man will be able to execute. There is talk of his leaving us for a flag, if he does we are ruined...Upon the whole the weight of business falls upon a few, and of those

Letter to Lord S. on Naval Subjects; p. 7, rough draft, not dated, presumed to be sent to Sandwich; pp. 37-41, 'Project of the Naval Campaign, 1782, dated 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1781, endorsed: a naval arrangement for 1782, given to Lord Sandwich on Christmas Day and desired by Sir C.M. to be submitted to all able sea-officers unconnected with party or politics.

<sup>116</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 353-56, letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> October 1793 – Middleton to Lord Chatham; pp. 356-60, letter dated Teston, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1793 – Middleton to Chatham with Additional Queries; pp. 360-68, Memorandum by Middleton (for Chatham) undated [October 1793] on the State of the Navy.

<sup>117</sup> G.R. Barnes, and J.H. Owen, (eds.) The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782, Volume IV, 1781-82 Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXVIII (1938), pp. 370-71, letter dated 5 October 1780 – From the Comptroller.

<sup>118</sup> Syrett, Shipping and the American War, p. 22.

few chiefly on the Controller and Secretary, who have a pile of papers before them a foot high to digest and minute, while two or three at the Board are looking on or reading newspapers.<sup>119</sup>

Much of this would have been in stark contrast to the usual workload undertaken even by the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Lord Sandwich, who was First Lord when Middleton began his career as Comptroller, can be seen as one of the more hard-working men to fill that position during this time.<sup>120</sup> This workload was frequently complained of by Middleton though, and his frequent letters to Sandwich often contained passages alluding to his wishes never to have taken the office but for the necessity he saw in continuing his work for the good of the public service. In one letter he even contemplated leaving the office when Sandwich retired from the Admiralty.<sup>121</sup>

Middleton was unique in his administrative career through the late-eighteenth and earlynineteenth-centuries, not simply because of his longevity as an administrator, for one could point to other examples such as Lords Howe and Sandwich as men who remained in administration over a long period of time, but also because of the variety of posts that he held, and the way in which he was able to advance up the chain of command on shore, from acting commissioner of Chatham dockyard through to becoming First Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>122</sup> Because of this, there can be a temptation to believe that it was simply Middleton's persistence and his influence over a period of many years that enabled his systems, regulations and reforms to be implemented, while the schemes of other men were left by the wayside, unable to compete with Middleton's influence among the political classes who enacted the measures. Such a viewpoint, however, is disingenuous not only to Middleton, but to those in government who approved his policies over the years, suggesting that they knew so little about the jobs they were doing that they were willing to allow anything to be suggested to them, as long as they did not have to do the leg-work in actually drawing up the schemes.

For example, had Middleton's reforms for the constitution of the Navy Board not been well thought out and applicable to the situation in the 1780s and '90s, the Commissioners on Fees would not have accepted them. To be sure, the Commissioners were overworked and

 <sup>119</sup> Hattendorf, Knight, Pearsall, Rodger, Till, *British Naval Documents* pp. 460-62, A View on the Navy Board,
2 December 1782 – Robert Gregson, Chief Clerk to the Clerk of the Acts to Lord Shelburne.

<sup>120</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, p. 78.

<sup>121</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. III* pp. 42-45, letter dated 9 July 1779 'from the Comptroller.' While Middleton also bemoaned the fact that he was the only sea-officer present on the Board and argued for the inclusion of an as-yet-unnamed Deputy Comptroller, he also found the time in the same letter to sent myriad ideas and exhortations to Sandwich regarding the Channel fleet, an area greatly outside his office's mandate.

<sup>122</sup> For Middleton's full career ashore see Appendix B.

apt to accept any help they could get,<sup>123</sup> but their recommendations to Parliament would reflect badly on them personally if it was found that they did not follow their mandate and benefit His Majesty's service.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, it was exactly this circumstance, that of allowing false information and partiality to colour their judgements in regard to a government department, namely the Post Office, that eventually caused the work of the Commission to become a liability to Pitt, and forced him to shut down their work.<sup>125</sup> Following on from this, when finally persuaded to look in detail at the measures proposed by the Commission on Fees in 1795-96, the Board of Admiralty, who were by this point without Middleton's influence, approved his schemes in their entirety, with only minor changes to the pay-scales suggested by the Commissioners.

Middleton, once made First Lord of the Admiralty in 1805, continued the process he began earlier in his career at the Navy Board to reform and overhaul the offices he oversaw to increase professionalism, efficiency, and promote better working habits. This time though, it was not at a Board in, what we might call in modern parlance, part of the 'civil service', but rather a political Board, with members that changed with the administration. Middleton's reforms to the Board of Admiralty in 1805 were allowed to stand, without written constitution, virtually unchanged until 1832. With Middleton's influence removed in the largest part from the shore establishment after 1806, it can be seen that Middleton's reforms were found to be satisfactory and effective measures for the shore establishment of the navy until 1832, attributes which were useful tests for administration, and were reasons in themselves to avoid unnecessarily changing working methods which were providing results.

Despite the amount of time that Middleton spent on shore in an administrative post, he never lost sight of the fact that he had started his career as a naval officer, and until the very end of his service, considered himself and other 'professional' naval administrative officers and lords as superior to those of a civil background, 'the pen and ink gentlemen' as he

 <sup>123</sup> John R. Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees 1785-1801' *The Historical Journal Volume 27* No. 1(March 1984) pp. 59-81 (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984), p. 66. Breihan calls Middleton's recommendations 'a textbook case in effective departmental advocacy.' In the end the Commissioners simply restated a great deal of Middleton's work in their final reports.

<sup>124</sup> William Cobbett (ed.) *The Parliamentary History of England from the Earliest Period to the year 1803 Volume XXV* pp. 298-311, 'Debate in the Commons on the Reports of the Commissioners of Public Accounts, Feb. 17.' The Commissions mandate was set out by Pitt "to enquire into the fees, gratuities, perquisites, and emoluments, which are, or lately have been, received in the several public offices...; and to report such observations as may occur to them for the better conducting and managing the business transacted..." p. 310

<sup>125</sup> Breihan 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' pp. 71-72. The report on the Post Office is described as the Commissioners' 'only passionate exercise' and proved to be their downfall as a result.

referred to them.<sup>126</sup> Even at the Navy Board, which was predominantly concerned with civil matters of administration, Middleton yearned for more influence from sea officers, and wrote to the Admiralty to request that this was provided for by appointing sea officers to posts at the Navy Board other than that of Comptroller and Extra Commissioner,<sup>127</sup> a measure Middleton thought necessary, but which was impractical and would most likely have been detrimental to the Board's ability to handle the many civil matters it attended to. Middleton claimed that civil officers were unable to answer matters pertaining to the active service with which the Board dealt intimately, and so he was left with the task of dealing with those matters alone as the sole permanent sea officer on the Board; therefore, sea officers would be better suited to fill the positions at the Navy Board. It is doubtful, however, that these sea officers would have had the knowledge, contacts or organisational skills to deal with the financial, contract, and legal elements of the work of the Navy Board. A mixture of men of different backgrounds, providing a wide variety of professional knowledge, skills, and expertise was always the best compromise for a department such as the Navy Board, and Middleton's views skewed too far towards the naval service in this instance, although the Navy Board would perhaps have benefited from the Extra Commissioners becoming permanent members, considering the workload the Comptroller was faced with. The proposal was never to be implemented, even by his own hand when chairmen of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy two decades later, although certain members of the newly reformed Navy Board were sea officers, and those men were given duties specifically designed to take full advantage of their knowledge in matters such as the supply of ships, and claims for salvage and pilotage.<sup>128</sup> This preference for men with a background in naval affairs was to dominate the ways in which Middleton treated the men in office around him until the very end, as he clearly thought little of the capabilities of Lords Chatham and Spencer to be more effective at running the Board of Admiralty than himself, and when elevated to the office of First Lord, he gave substantial amounts of power to the professional naval members of the Board of Admiralty, while approving the civil lords to oversee correspondence and other

<sup>126</sup> G.R. Barnes, and J.H. Owen, (eds.), *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-82 Volume III, May 1779-December 1780* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXV (1936), pp. 69-70, letter dated August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1779 – From the Comptroller.

<sup>127</sup> J.K. Laughton, (ed.), Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813 Volume I Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXII (1907) pp. 159-61, letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> December 1783 – Middleton to Philip Stephens, First Secretary of the Admiralty.

<sup>128</sup> Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p. 183.

menial tasks.<sup>129</sup> While this was understandable at the time, as shall be seen in chapter five, the fact that Middleton was insistent about the number and identity of the men who made up the professional naval part of both his Admiralty Board and that of his predecessor, Lord Melville, while mentioning little pertaining to the civil lords, shows that he was far more concerned with the ways in which the naval members of any given Board administered their positions, than the civil members.<sup>130</sup> What Middleton did manage to achieve through this mindset though, was a compromise between the 'civil service' element of naval administration, and the professional sea officer's influence and knowledge of operations afloat. Both aspects were necessary in order that the various Boards in the establishment were capable of quickly, efficiently, and successfully answering questions directed to them, making future plans, and solving problems that occurred. If any one aspect was lacking, delays could occur as expertise was sought from various places such as other Boards or the dockyards in the case of sea knowledge, and the Secretaries of State in the case of policy and civil knowledge.

Middleton was apt to promote a system of meritocracy wherever possible and would only consider promotion through seniority when merit dictated that promotion was wise. These policies can be seen early on in his career during his wrangles with Sandwich over the issue of dockyard appointments, specifically those of warrant officers.<sup>131</sup> While Middleton eventually lost the argument over whom should command the question of appointing warrant officers in the higher positions, this policy of meritocracy remained in Middleton's mind throughout his career, and one can see no better examples of this than his recommendations to Melville,<sup>132</sup> and his own handling of patronage as First Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>133</sup> Middleton wished for the shore establishment to follow the same rules as a ship's crew at sea, with no sinecures or places for supernumeraries, and no tolerance of incompetence.<sup>134</sup> This was an attitude sometimes at odds with the established practices within politics and government office at the time and which could earn a man a great many

<sup>129</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III, pp. 76-78 - Conduct of Business by Barham dated Admiralty, May, 1805.

<sup>130</sup> British Library Archive *William Dacres Adam: Correspondence of William Pitt, the Younger* (Add MS 89036/1/14, 1805), letter dated Teston, 14<sup>th</sup> April 1805 – Sir Charles Middleton to Lord [omitted]; letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> April 1805 – Sir Charles Middleton to Pitt.

<sup>131</sup> For a full account of the incident between the Navy Board and the Board of Admiralty, see the study written by R.J.B. Knight, 'Sandwich, Middleton and Dockyard Appointments', *Mariner's Mirror*, LVII, (1971), pp. 175-92.

<sup>132</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39, Memoranda of Advice dated May 1804.

<sup>133</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 281-82, letter dated Ville de Paris: at sea, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1805 – Cornwallis to Barham; pp. 283-84, letter dated Admiralty, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1805 – Barham to Cornwallis.

<sup>134</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, p. 118.

enemies. Despite this, it did serve to increase the overall professionalism of any department or body in which it was enforced by promoting superior ability and knowledge, forcing men to work harder for their reward and improve their professional capabilities compared to their peers, and allowed the most able of men to reach the top ranks with time enough left in their careers to benefit their department or service.

Talbott makes the claim that this drive for the application of merit over seniority and politics was not the hallmark of a man ahead of his time: that Middleton bears no resemblance to the great Victorian reformers yet to come. While this view holds a certain truth, in that Middleton did not go nearly as far as the men who were to follow him in the century to come, he did not accept the social and political order quite as Talbott claims.<sup>135</sup> This view also relies on comparing Middleton solely to men who were to come after him, and not to the men with whom he shared his time. Talbott rightly claims that Middleton wished for the shore establishment to acquire the same levels of efficiency and the same intolerance for incompetence that could be found on board ships, but claims that he did not see fit to try to rearrange the political and social order. Such claims wholly ignore the work of Middleton's reformations of both the Navy Board and Admiralty, not to mention the seismic political change he effected as First Lord by directing that no longer would serving sea officers with their ships under sailing orders or ready for sea be allowed to take up a seat in either House of Parliament.<sup>136</sup> This was a significant step towards depoliticising the service. A hundred officers had served in Parliament between 1790 and 1820, with twentynine returned to Parliament in 1802 and thirty in 1806.<sup>137</sup> He also rallied behind Pitt and Shelburne in their attempts to abolish sinecures and prevent corruption in the political system, spurred on by his Evangelical moral leanings, which Talbott claims led him to see the political system as 'God's handiwork...it could be tidied up, but it ought not to be rearranged.<sup>138</sup> Blake, who has studied Middleton's Evangelicalism in detail, however, holds the view of this author, in that Middleton's Evangelicalism caused him to root out corruption and expose unrighteous policy and conduct, rather than allow things to go on as they were, with some simple 'tidying up.' In his judgements about the system and the men within it he could be harsh and uncompromising, and certainly not willing to allow matters

<sup>135</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, p. 118.

<sup>136</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III p. 79 - Order, Barham's Autograph.

 <sup>137</sup> R.G. Thorne, (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1790-1820 in Five Volumes* (<u>http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/survey/iii-members</u>) accessed 11/01/16.
138 Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor* p. 118.

to go on as they were if the good of the service was compromised.<sup>139</sup> While Middleton did not work against allowing members of the aristocracy into naval positions both on sea and shore service, he did insist that birth had no place in the way in which promotions in the Navy were managed.<sup>140</sup> Ashore, Middleton did not seek to 'tidy up' in many cases, but rather make wholesale changes, such as the institution of the Transport Board, and the abolition of the Sick and Hurt Board; and while he did not work specifically to abolish sinecures such as the Vice-Admiral of England, or the Lieutenant-General of Marines, he knew that they were a necessity within the service to placate the feelings of sea-officers and a key part of the arsenal of Admiralty patronage. While he did not go anywhere near as far as the Victorian reformers, within his own time, Middleton can be seen as a keen reformer within his own confines. That he did not go as far as those that followed him is not to be wondered at; the wonder is that he saw fit to do anything at all in a deeply conservative, slow-moving political system, in which, Middleton claimed, 'politics mix with every thing, and therefore nothing is done as it ought to be.'<sup>141</sup>

#### Middleton's Relationships with those in Power

While Middleton professed that politics had got too great a hold on his branch of the Navy,<sup>142</sup> he was not above engaging in political activity, and enlisting the assistance of more influential men than himself to attain his goals during his career in administration. In this he was assisted by his previously detailed family ties and Evangelical connections more than anything, born as he was a Scot with close connections to the Dundas family, ascendant in Scottish politics,<sup>143</sup> and a marriage that brought him into connections with the Gambiers and Pitts. Ties to Lord Sandwich through mutual contacts and shared interests also allowed him to gain his initial position as Comptroller.<sup>144</sup> Political networks, and Party politics, therefore, were a blight on the service only when they did not suit Middleton; for Middleton was a politician, even if he did not take much of an active role in either House of Parliament when a member. Rather, his political career was pursued in the boardrooms

<sup>139</sup> Blake, Evangelicals in the Royal Navy p. 40.

<sup>140</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 - Memoranda of Advice dated May 1804.

<sup>141</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 55-57, letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1804 – Middleton to J.D. Thompson.

<sup>142</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 28-30, letter dated [February 1781?] – Middleton to Sandwich (never sent), endorsed by Middleton dated January 1786.

<sup>143</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, 1718-1792 (London: HaperCollinsPublishers, 1993) p. 159.

<sup>144</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham', pp. 308-09; Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl* pp. 159-60; Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor* pp. 25-28.

of either Whitehall, Crutched Friars or Somerset House, with his unique professional talents and ability to provide detailed, easy to digest and comprehensive information to superiors, whether asked for or not, meaning that the leading politicians of the Pitt ministries frequently turned to him for advice and the formation of naval policy. As Morriss states,

At a time when politicians knew little of the demands of shipping, dockyards and the practical task of building, fitting and repairing ships distant from London, Middleton provided a bridge between the political forum and naval contingencies.<sup>145</sup>

Middleton's relationships with many influential people in power can easily be seen to have smoothed his way through the naval shore establishment, and certainly no man of the time could have too many good connections (a key reason why Middleton was created Lord Barham and placed at the head of the Admiralty in 1805; his appointment owed much to Melville recommending that Middleton succeed him).<sup>146</sup> The fact that Pitt knew Middleton through family, through his visits to Barham Court, and not least from their time corresponding over naval matters during Middleton's time as Comptroller, also ensured that Pitt was fully aware of Middleton's talents and his ability to command such an office.<sup>147</sup> The way in which Middleton differed from those who might be considered the norm in late-eighteenth-century patronage politics was that, while he was a supporter of the Pitt ministries, this was not partisan support, and he had no firm political patron, along with few friends amongst his superiors in naval administration. Middleton attained his positions on merit: through his professional knowledge, talents, and reputation rather than through a desire to appease political interests. Indeed, his work to abolish sinecures and patronage from the naval shore establishment would have appeased very few men at the time. When considering the many influential people with whom he worked (Pitt the Younger being the standout politician Middleton had a close working relationship with) it was invariably the politician who sought Middleton out, eagerly seized on his ideas, or invited Middleton into office following initial communications, as can be seen with Shelburne in 1782,<sup>148</sup> Pitt in

<sup>145</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 303.

<sup>146</sup> R.I. Wilberforce, S. Wilberforce, (eds.) and W. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce: In Five Volumes, Volume III* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1839), p. 223.

 <sup>147</sup> See the lengthy and comprehensive set of letters that passed between the two men in Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* for further examples. In particular pp. 197-208, letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1785 – Middleton to Pitt, enclosed, Mr. Pitt's Queries.

<sup>148</sup> Clements Library Archive *Shelburne Papers Vol. 151, Number 40 – 9* September 1782, Middleton to Shelburne.

1784,<sup>149</sup> Francis Baring in 1786-87,<sup>150</sup> Chatham in 1793-94,<sup>151</sup> and Pitt and Melville in 1803-05.<sup>152</sup> While Middleton was never above the idea of using his positions to solicit those in power to advance others in his family, he always portrayed himself as being against selfinterested advancement, and although his appeals to Pitt in both 1787 and 1805 for flagrank and a peerage respectively give the lie to this, both were done with selfless intentions along with personal advancement, as his desire to remain as Comptroller would ordinarily have precluded him from promotion in 1787, (Lord Howe especially wished to prevent him from attaining his flag), and he wished his daughters to have the financial security of the remainder of a peerage in 1805.<sup>153</sup>

Middleton's first appointment to the naval shore administration as Comptroller was brought about by his relationship with Lord Sandwich when the latter was First Lord of the Admiralty. Viciously attacked by contemporaries and historians alike, Sandwich, as Nicholas Rodger has shown, was a very able administrator, particularly adept in the office of First Lord, and not a man who displayed a partisan nature in his use of patronage; a trait which earned him a great many of his political enemies, in a highly partisan era.<sup>154</sup> By 1778 he had been in office for seven years and had overseen a particularly troublesome period in naval history: having to fight against political procrastination and reluctance to spend on the part of Lord North, and the legacy of the fleet built from green timber by Anson and Hawke before him.<sup>155</sup> After the previous Comptroller, Sir Maurice Suckling, had died after a period of ill health, unable to adequately dispense his duties, with the consequence that the business of the Navy Board suffered, Sandwich required a man with a

<sup>149</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 176-78, letter dated [private] Hertford Street, 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1784 – Middleton to Pitt.

<sup>150</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 232-49, letter dated [? December 1785] – Middleton to Francis Baring; p. 250, letter dated Office of Enquiry, Whitehall. 11<sup>th</sup> December, 1786 – From the Commissioners of Enquiry.

<sup>151</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 356-60, letter dated Teston, 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1793 – Middleton to Chatham; pp. 360-68, Memorandum dated [October 1793].

<sup>152</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 15-21, On the State of the Navy dated April 1803; pp. 24-39, Memoranda of Advice dated April 1804.

<sup>153</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 72-73, letter dated Teston, 16th April 1805 – Middleton to Lord Melville.

<sup>154</sup> For a fuller history of Lord Sandwich's political history, see the excellent book by Nicholas Rodger, which debunks the long-held beliefs wrongly held about Sandwich's conduct and general handling of the Admiralty during the difficult period 1771-82. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl*, especially pp. 174-76 for his use of patronage and the attitudes of his peers towards it.

<sup>155</sup> G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen, (eds.) The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1771-1782 Volume I Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXIX (1932), pp. 14-17, letter dated Southampton Street, February 20<sup>th</sup> 1771 – Mr. William Wells to Sandwich; J.G. Bullocke, (ed.), The Tomlinson Papers, Selected from the Correspondence and Pamphlets of Captain Robert Tomlinson, R.N., & Vice-Admiral Nicholas Tomlinson. Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXIV (1935), pp. 41-43, letter dated From the St. James's Chronicles of 13<sup>th</sup> May, 1779 – An Open Letter to Lord Mulgrave (by Lieutenant Robert Tomlinson and signed as 'TRUTH'); pp. 44-50, Memoranda by Lieutenant Robert Tomlinson dated ?1779.

voracious appetite for business and the ability to help turn Britain's fortunes in war around in a short space of time. In Middleton, he found the man he sought.

How Sandwich and Middleton first became acquainted is unclear, although it is known that both men shared a love of the same things: Handel, fine art, and the Evangelical movement in Britain. Middleton was also a proprietor of East India Company stock, and Sandwich had an interest in the Company at the time.<sup>156</sup> It is also possible, indeed most likely, that Sandwich and Middleton first met at a meeting of the Concerts of Ancient Music, of which Sandwich was the founder and to which Middleton was a subscriber, with the movement being identified by many with the revived piety of the early Evangelical movement, although Sandwich himself was no Evangelical.<sup>157</sup> Talbott puts forward the idea that Sandwich 'was bound to feel obliged to a shareholder who so assiduously backed the government's candidates in Company elections.<sup>158</sup> This view though does not take into account Sandwich's more sensible use of patronage than has sometimes been acknowledged, and the fact that there were other officers far more suited to the First Lord's taste than Middleton. Additionally, the Comptrollership was far from the only position he could have offered Middleton, as a sinecure post would have suited Middleton's life as a country gentleman at Teston in Kent,<sup>159</sup> and given him some reward for his cooperation while ensuring Sandwich did not have to work with a character as difficult as Middleton. Additionally, although Middleton had no prior knowledge or experience in naval administration aside from a short tenure as senior naval officer at Chatham dock, a man as astute as Sandwich would not have chosen a man he felt unsuitable for so critical a post on family connections, or a feeling of obligation alone, regardless of how prominent the family was, or how generous Middleton's support of the East India Company had been. A letter from a close personal friend of Middleton's, Reverend James Ramsey, also shows that Middleton had something of a reputation for wishing improvement in the administration, something that Sandwich may well have picked up on.<sup>160</sup> Also of interest to Sandwich would have been the fact that Middleton had keen business sense and possessed great industry, (as shown by the money that he had made from agriculture at Teston), a strong moral code, a sometimes brutal honesty that came from his religion, his connections amongst various influential people outside of Sandwich's circle, his wartime experience at

<sup>156</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 307; Rodger, The Insatiable Earl, p. 160.

<sup>157</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, pp. 25-26; Rodger, The Insatiable Earl, pp. 119-20.

<sup>158</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, pp. 25-26.

<sup>159</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' pp. 306-07; Rodger The Insatiable Earl, p. 159.

<sup>160</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. I p. 46, letter dated 23rd April 1779 - Rev. James Ramsey to Middleton.

sea in the West Indies during the Seven Years' War, and his understanding of Britain's interests in the East Indies.<sup>161</sup> Sandwich's judgement of character led him to ask Rear-Admiral James Gambier, Middleton's brother-in-law, to sound him out on his readiness to accept the Comptroller's post, which Middleton considered for a time, finally realising an opportunity to put his particular talents to their full use.<sup>162</sup>

The two men that now occupied the posts at the head of the two most important naval Boards could hardly have been more similar in their desires to better the King's service, and yet more different in their working practices, personalities and temperaments. Middleton was brash, opinionated, outspoken, self-confident, and heavily critical of others, with a special hatred of jobbery, laziness, and supernumeraries. Sandwich was urbane, polite, genial, deferent to those with superior knowledge to himself, and astute at using the politics of patronage to obtain and retain positions in government for himself and his followers. On many occasions, Middleton displayed a disdain for authority and belittled of the work of others where he believed there to be fault, and criticised Sandwich's workload, while always enhancing his own image.<sup>163</sup> While it was customary at the time and indeed until recently for Sandwich's workload at the Admiralty to be scorned and degraded,<sup>164</sup> he has since been proven to be a diligent and extremely competent First Lord of the Admiralty, and Middleton's criticisms of him can now be seen as partly ignorant of the work the First Lord did and needed to do as a professional politician, member of the Cabinet, and holder of a political office, and partly self-aggrandising of his own work and the importance of it.<sup>165</sup> It may have been the case that, due to Sandwich being a political First Lord and a landsman, Middleton believed that, regardless of how long Sandwich had been associated with the Admiralty, all naval matters would be best dealt with by a naval officer, regardless of how short a time they had spent in administration. Years of experience in office would not change Middleton's opinion of the importance of seamen in naval administration, but it would give him a greater appreciation of the political strains that high office brought, and the necessity of men of civil backgrounds, even if he never considered them the equal of professional seamen when dealing with naval matters.

<sup>161</sup> Blake, Evangelicals in the Royal Navy pp. 42-43.

<sup>162</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 308.

<sup>163</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 2-3, letter dated 1779 – Middleton to Sandwich; Barnes and Owen Sandwich Vol. IV pp. 371-3, letter dated 23 October 1780 – From the Comptroller; pp. 374-75, letter dated 21 January 1781 – From the Comptroller.

<sup>164</sup> See Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl*, pp. xiii-xviii for more detail on how Sandwich has been remembered through history, also pp. 319-30.

<sup>165</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 2-3, letter dated 1779 – Middleton to Sandwich.

Middleton was therefore unduly harsh on his First Lord when decrying his work ethic, and worse quarrels were to come. As the Navy Board still retained its position as the more professional Board, and would continue to do so until the 1790s when the push for professionalism in the Admiralty Office began to change the dynamic between the Boards, (arguably brought on by Middleton's own influence when First Sea Lord), Middleton believed that he and his Board were more capable than Sandwich and the Admiralty when matters of the promotion of warrant officers and minor dockyard officials came about. The Navy Board controlled positions lower in rank than a master's mate, but the higher positions came under the control of the Admiralty, an arrangement that the Navy Board felt would be better handled if the junior Board took over the appointments of all warrant officers, or at the very least, if the Admiralty consulted only the Navy Board on the appointments it made, or followed their recommendations.<sup>166</sup> This was due in no small part to the fact that it was the Navy Board that was responsible for the management of the dockyards<sup>167</sup> and a vast amount of political jobbery could come about in the appointment of supervisors in the dockyards.<sup>168</sup> While the appointment of yard officials might have been better and more professionally managed by the organisation that knew them best and worked most closely with them (although the Navy Board's control over the intricacies of the yards was beginning to wane by the late 1770s) such a move would have stripped a political Board of an essential form of patronage and political control over the yards, and would have been a complete change in the accepted methods of political administration during the eighteenth-century, especially during wartime.

Middleton's hubristic personality came to the fore when arguing with Sandwich about the best authority to promote and appoint officials in the Royal yards, displaying his intense dislike of being overruled by superiors as well as his insatiable ambition. It was perhaps fortunate for Middleton that Sandwich was willing to be as patient as he was with him, being careful to manage his subordinate's temper and irritation at what he perceived as the work of politics within a military organisation.<sup>169</sup> Middleton was also perhaps unable to

<sup>166</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 11-12, letter dated Navy Office, 4<sup>th</sup> January 1781 – Navy Board to Philip Stephens; pp. 16-17, letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> January 1781 – Middleton to Sandwich.

<sup>167</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 28-29.

<sup>168</sup> J.M. Haas A Management Odyssey: The Royal Dockyards, 1714-1914 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), p. 5.

<sup>169</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. I* pp. 22-23, letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> January 1781 – Sandwich to Middleton. Sandwich attempted to make Middleton see exactly how much he had listened to him in the past on various matters even though on the subject of dockyard appointments he must retain the power for himself. He says on the time the two men had worked together 'My conduct show that the instruction I have received from you has been much attended to by me' and few could say otherwise. Middleton was simply too hungry for power

realise that when Sandwich took advice from him, it was not, as Middleton perhaps thought, the superior viewpoint of an experienced seaman and officer, but more as one of a variety of views from a range of sources solicited by a master politician. Sandwich's successors in office were not as ready to work with and acknowledge the talents of the Comptroller, a situation which Middleton was to realise and admit four years after Sandwich had left office, having had desperate trouble working in the same way as he had become used to.<sup>170</sup> Middleton also realised that the men who succeeded Sandwich, Admirals Keppel and Howe, were much more secretive than Sandwich, far less concerned with the improvement of the service, and far more fitting of the term 'jobber' than Sandwich ever had been.<sup>171</sup> The episode also does much to inform us of Middleton's ambition not just for the Navy Board, but for his position as Comptroller. Power of appointment over dockyard officials would have entered important and powerful patronage into the hands of the Comptroller, the type of power that the Admiralty based much of its legitimacy on and wished to retain at all costs. Sandwich was correct when he brought up the idea that by receiving recommendations from sources other than the Navy Board, the First Lord had more chance of receiving all the information available, and therefore being able to make the best appointment possible.<sup>172</sup> However, Middleton may have had a point about the benefits of dockyard workers being appointed by merit. Senior dockyard promotions were politically motivated for the most part, with the system open to abuse as with much of eighteenth-century government, especially as the dockyard officers knew that 'a proper vote would cover a corrupt practice.'<sup>173</sup> Haas details that dockyard positions were 'almost hereditary' with each yard possessing powerful 'clans' brought together through blood, marriage, politics, or other bonds.<sup>174</sup> This meant that the best candidates for a position were often passed over for promotion, even for candidates who were ill-suited for the position in question. This must have influenced the morale and efficiency of dockyard workers, and strained the relations between labourers and supervisors, but only Middleton seems to have condemned the system, proposing a rudimentary merit system whereby

and, blinded by a seaman's prejudices, dismissive of the work of a politically appointed landsman to see this until Sandwich left office.

<sup>170</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. I* p. 30, Endorsement dated January 1786. in Middleton's hand to draft letter possibly dated February 1781 – Middleton to Sandwich (never sent). Middleton's distaste for politics can be seen here as he laments that while he thought Sandwich a jobber, those who followed him were more so and that 'I find politics have got too great a hold on this branch of the navy' come 1786.

<sup>171</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II, p.10 - Endorsement by Middleton on letter dated 1780.

<sup>172</sup> The best overview of the issue can be found in the excellent study written by Knight 'Sandwich, Middleton and Dockyard Appointments' pp. 175-92.

<sup>173</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham', pp. 313-14.

<sup>174</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey p. 23.

superior officers kept records of the personalities, characters, abilities and performances of all workmen eligible for promotions, all key aspects in the definition of professionalism. So vehement was Middleton in his argument and his push for more power for himself and the Navy Board, that Morriss may not be wrong when he claims

This dispute revealed Middleton in his worst light: blinkered, dogmatic and persistent. Sandwich remained urbane and courteous, though he had much to tolerate. But he seems to have accepted the abrasive side of his Comptroller as the complement of his administrative efficiency.<sup>175</sup>

Middleton's relationship with Howe was never friendly, frequently frosty, and, at times, openly hostile. While Sandwich had always attempted to work with Middleton to get the best out of his temperamental Comptroller, and Keppel had not been in office long enough to develop anything like a working relationship between First Lord and Comptroller, especially at a time when the entirety of the shore establishment was given over to decommissioning the fleet, in Howe, Middleton came across a man with whom he had to work with as a superior, but who paid him little attention, cared little for the professional expertise the Navy Board had to offer, and who disliked consulting it.<sup>176</sup> Middleton, for his part, claimed that he could never get along with his fellow seamen, Howe and Keppel, at the Admiralty, because they bore grudges against him for the Comptroller's refusal of various items for their ships during the American War.<sup>177</sup> From the point of view of the First Lords, they no doubt were unimpressed with Middleton's attempts to secure overall control of all departments subservient to the Admiralty, and to change his position at the Navy Board from first among equals to undisputed leader and chairman. Whatever the truth of these claims and counter claims, Middleton's refusal to bow to an authority with which he disagreed put him in a difficult situation of limited power and influence, with few ways to increase it without the support of the First Lord, which he had lost when Sandwich left office.

The fact that Middleton and Howe never developed similar views on how the Navy should be run during their time working together is somewhat strange when one reads in Sir John Barrow's biography and memoirs of Howe that the First Lord himself declared upon leaving office for the first time in 1783 that Britain's success during the American

<sup>175</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham', p. 314.

<sup>176</sup> See Middleton's correspondence with Howe in Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 178-83; p. 189. See also pp. xi-xii.

<sup>177</sup> British Library, London, Dundas Papers, Add. MSS 40, 179, 21-4 – letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 1794, Middleton to Dundas.

War of Independence had been due to chance, and that essential rebuilding and recruiting were necessary during peacetime if Britain did not wish to be inferior to her enemies: a viewpoint on which he claimed he and Keppel disagreed.<sup>178</sup> As it was, Howe was not one to listen to the recommendations of the Navy Board, or pay any attention to the status and administrative territory of the Comptroller,<sup>179</sup> though Middleton was able to use his political contacts to push through his ideas and recommendations despite Howe's obstinacy. Also to consider is the fact that Barrow's collection of Howe's files and memoirs in his biography of the admiral, while useful, was not sympathetic to the history of the Navy Board during this period, written as it was by a man who was the architect of, and apologist for, the abolition of the Navy Board. Historical accuracy was not his aim, but rather he sought to boost Howe's legacy, and please both the King and Howe's family, and many falsehoods prevail. Howe is depicted as a man attempting to deal with a belligerent and superfluous Navy Board when said Board was by far more knowledgeable and professional than the Admiralty during the 1780s.

Perhaps the broader point that these episodes serve to illustrate is that, regardless of whether or not Middleton's views coincided with those of his superiors, Middleton required a great deal of autonomy and the ability to implement his proposed schemes and policies in order to remain content. It was not enough for him to implement someone else's work and interpretation of a measure he supported, he had to have his own way, or he declared it political jobbery, and inferior to the versions he championed. Perhaps the clearest instance of this was his viewpoint on the way in which his proposed reforms to the dockyards were eventually implemented by the Bentham-Nepean revisions in 1800-01. Middleton believed that the work would have alleviated all potential problems if implemented as per his recommendations, but in the event he believed it had been 'sadly garbled', and was now no longer fit for purpose.<sup>180</sup> Middleton did not respect the traditional order of rank and deference, which might be considered unusual from a military officer, particularly a naval captain, but Middleton's professional administrative knowledge convinced him that, in matters pertaining to the shore administration of the Navy, he was second in rank to no man, regardless of his political rank or standing in society. Only Sandwich stands out as the man capable of denying Middleton his own way, while still keeping him on-side throughout their relationship, a mark of Sandwich's political acumen.

<sup>178</sup> Sir John Barrow & Richard, First Earl Howe, *The Life of Richard, Earl Howe, K.G., Admiral of the Fleet and General of Marines* (London: John Murray, Albermarle Street, 1838) pp. 169-70.

<sup>179</sup> Knight 'Richard, Earl Howe', pp. 286-87.

<sup>180</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice (to Melville), undated, presumably May 1804.

Had Middleton not found another man who would enable him to push through his schemes and was prepared to acknowledge his professionalism and knowledge, it is very possible he would have resigned his office during the 1780s, so despondent was he at times, feeling oppressed by the politics of superior officials. Middleton though had managed to gain the support of William Pitt the Younger, thus giving him a man to work with who was senior to Howe in the Government, and a lifeline for his policies and recommendations for improvement. By doing this, the distance that had manifested itself between First Lord and Comptroller was offset as Middleton was still able to have his views heard by the leading men in the administration. Pitt's Government was well aware of the necessity of maintaining a stronger peacetime naval force than previously in the eighteenth-century;<sup>181</sup> such had been the scale of humiliation faced in the early years of the American War, followed by the devastating loss of the American colonies and the national despondence that loss had caused. Middleton's situation was alleviated by the fact that Pitt preferred working with experienced departmental managers possessed of professional expertise,<sup>182</sup> and was happy to indulge Middleton's passion for providing advice. Pitt was also deeply interested and concerned with the administration of British governmental departments, in stark contrast to many other leading politicians of his day. Middleton, for his part, was happy to intrigue behind Howe's back both for his own gain and that of the service when it was obvious that Howe's planned economies were at odds with the idea of rebuilding the fleet.<sup>183</sup> Pushing dockyard peacetime targets and proposals of wartime expedients, Middleton ensured Pitt invested in the Navy, enabling forty-three new ships to be built, with ten more placed on the stocks, and eighty-five to be repaired between 1783 and 1793.<sup>184</sup> So close did Pitt and Middleton's working relationship become that it was commonly known that Pitt was happy to bypass the First Lord entirely and go straight to the Comptroller, hardly a vote of confidence in the senior Board. Writing of the relationship between the offices of Prime Minister and Comptroller in later years, holding it up as an example of good administration, Sir Thomas Byam Martin, Comptroller of the

<sup>181</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the work done by Pitt and Middleton, see P.L.C. Webb, 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet, 1783-93' in *The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research Volume 50* (London: Longmans, 1977), pp. 194-209.

<sup>182</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 317; Sir Richard Vasey Hamilton (ed.) Letters and Papers of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Thomas Byam Martin, 1773-1854, Volume III Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XIX (1900) p. 381. John Ehrman, The Younger Pitt: The years of Acclaim (London: Constable, 1969), p. 92, 299.

<sup>183</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2006) pp. 375-77

<sup>184</sup> Webb 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet' p. 202.

Navy from 1816-1831 remarked on the work done to rebuild and repair the fleet and dockyards from 1783-1790,

It was no uncommon thing for Mr. Pitt to visit the Navy Office to discuss naval matters with the Comptroller and to see the returns made from the yards of the progress in building and repairing the ships of the line.<sup>185</sup>

While Middleton also provided Pitt with another vote he could count on in his capacity as an M.P., he was far more valuable for his expertise, though the two men could not be considered friends. Pitt, even more so than Middleton, was notoriously frosty toward all but a handful of men in his innermost circle, and, while the two of them enjoyed a productive working relationship they were never close. Middleton may well have first attracted Pitt's attention through his family ties to Henry Dundas, Pitt's lieutenant throughout his political career, and his Evangelical and ideological ties to William Wilberforce.<sup>186</sup> Throughout his political career, no evidence can be found that Middleton ever presumed upon a friendship with Pitt, nor did he solicit him for position when out of office. The memoranda and letters Middleton wrote were borne from a desire to see the Navy used to the best ability: that Pitt often saw fit to place Middleton into positions whereby he could utilise his knowledge was due to his respect for, and appreciation of Middleton's abilities, and how they could benefit the country.

The situation between Howe and Middleton came to a head in September 1787, once Middleton had submitted his recommendations to the Commission on Fees. Howe, realising that Middleton held their ear and was likely to have the Commissioners concur with his opinion to give the Comptroller additional power over the subordinate departments of the administration, wrote to Pitt to request that Middleton's recommendations be ignored and that Middleton himself be removed from office and placed in a dockyard post. This is something which would have been almost without precedent as members of the Navy Board were rarely removed from their positions once in place.<sup>187</sup> Along with this, Howe refused to allow Middleton's promotion to rear-admiral although he did have precedent for this step, as Comptrollers usually held the rank of post-captain and were assumed to have given up their ambitions for promotion upon entering such an office. Howe's efforts backfired, however, as Pitt sided with Middleton, especially after the latter protested

<sup>185</sup> Hamilton, Letters of Byam Martin Vol. III p. 381.

<sup>186</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, p. 123.

<sup>187</sup> Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 67.

strongly against the measures undertaken by Howe.<sup>188</sup> As a result, in September 1787 Middleton's promotion was affirmed and, in July 1788, amid criticism in the Commons for Howe's decision not to promote several other captains<sup>189</sup>, Pitt asked Howe to resign as First Lord, and replaced him with his older brother, the Earl of Chatham.<sup>190</sup>

Over a decade later, when brought back into office as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1805, Middleton behaved as autocratically as any of the First Lords whom he had served under during his long career, with the kind of aloofness that he had cautioned those such as Howe and Spencer against when he found himself unable to alter their mindset or have his opinions acted upon. While hypocritical, Middleton's actions were based upon his unshakeable self-belief, conviction that he was doing the right thing for the service, and his ability to make decisions and stick to them in the face of criticism from those around him. His results as First Lord speak for themselves and one cannot doubt his abilities in administering the fleet and reforming the shore establishment during the years he held the influence to be able to do so. While he cloistered himself away and expected all his subordinates to back his decisions without question, as Spencer had done with Middleton himself while the latter was First Sea Lord a decade previously, Middleton's knowledge of the service, and his grasp of naval strategy and logistics, far outstripped Spencer's. Middleton had also been wise enough to form his Board from men who owed him loyalty either through family ties or patronage in the service, and who would not question his decisions through respect and deference. James Gambier, his wife's nephew, thirty years Middleton's junior, and whose family Middleton preferred to stay with when in London, was indebted to him for his place in the administration.<sup>191</sup> Philip Patton was a long-time colleague and protégé of Middleton, who had attained positions in government, notably on the Transport Board in 1794 through Middleton's influence, and was also a fellow Scot who had served on the *Prince George* (90) when Middleton was placed in command in 1776. Their relationship had also seen them work together during the 1780s and 1790s with another lowland Scot, Robert Beatson to assist in his writing of the three volumes of his Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain, from the year 1727 to the present time, a

<sup>188</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 258-59, letter dated 23rd September, 1787 - Middleton to William Pitt.

<sup>189</sup> William Cobbett, (ed.), *Parliamentary History of England, Volume 27* (London, 1806-20) pp. 281-82 – Mr. Pitt, speaking in the House of Commons on *Debate on the Conduct of the Admiralty in the late Promotion of Admirals*.

<sup>190</sup> Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 67.

<sup>191</sup> I. Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty' in *Mariner's Mirror LXIV* (Greenwich: Staples Printers St. Albans at The Priory Press, 1978), pp. 217-233; p. 222.

work also influenced by Adam Smith. All four men were Scots, connected by the Customs and Excise service.

Middleton was a driven, stubborn, innovative, and hard-working individual, whose personality both allowed him to achieve feats that might well have been impossible for a contemporary, and made him extremely difficult to work with. He was always best as a leader, almost as a statesman who did not engage in normal political life, but rather excelled at heading government departments in a civil, rather than a political capacity. He embodied the traits of senior admirals and politicians in believing that he was right and all around him deserved the benefit of hearing his ideas on how things might best be carried on. While infuriating for his superiors over the course of his career, when Middleton came to the highest offices later in his life, these traits enabled him to take swift, decisive action, borne of his confidence in his own ability. It was fortunate indeed therefore, that Middleton's self-confidence was not mere ego, but was rooted in a comprehensive knowledge of the capabilities of the Navy afloat and ashore, and incisive and well-reasoned views on how changes could be made to better the service.

Middleton's relationship with Pitt can be seen to have been the most critical of those that he cultivated, for it allowed him to advance in the service throughout his career, and critically kept him in the office of Comptroller to shape his legacy and reputation in spite of Howe's resentment of his influence. Without an outlet for his schemes to be heard, and adopted through both Pitt and the Commissions instituted throughout the 1780s, it would not seem unreasonable to suggest that Middleton would have resigned his post, returned to the life of a country gentlemen at Teston, and would have disappeared from administrative life, which would have been a serious loss to the country in the future.

The political networks that Middleton created within government were not based on friendship, for he was a difficult man to befriend. Nor were they based on political patronage, for Middleton despised the use of politics in the naval service and attempted to remove the influence of politics wherever possible. Rather, they were based on a sense of duty, an appreciation for his talents and his work-ethic, and a shared desire for reform in order to improve the naval service. While Pitt and Sandwich had the most effect in shaping Middleton's views on naval policy, he was always his own man, flying in the face of tradition and authority on more than one occasion in order to ensure that his ways and policies were adopted. While this attitude was to cost him two offices, it allowed him to be remembered throughout his career by those in power, and therefore allowed him to return to office when his talents were again required by a nation gripped by conflict.

# Sir Charles Middleton as Comptroller of the Navy: Staving off Defeat, and Winning the Peace

We have already seen the type of man that Middleton was, how he worked, and how he dealt with his career. This chapter will examine Middleton's first posting in administration as Comptroller at the Navy Board: his most celebrated post to date.<sup>192</sup> The work that he did spanned twelve of the most critical years in Britain's history. In the few months before Middleton was brought to the Navy Board, in late 1777 into 1778, it became clearer to the British that, as the war moved from being an attempt to subdue rebellious colonies to a war against France and Spain, the war in America could not now be won without defeat in Europe, and there was a strong chance that the colonies would be lost.<sup>193</sup> To add to these issues, once France and Spain had entered the war, they came close to humiliating Britain at sea due to their superior preparations following their defeat in the Seven Years' War.<sup>194</sup> The European war also had significant implications for the Navy Board's ability to supply the dockyards and prepare the already badly supplied fleet for war as enemy movements jeopardised convoys and trade, with the League of Armed Neutrality threatening to cut off the Baltic naval supplies altogether. Following these setbacks, after the war had ended Britain had to rebuild her shattered fleet and ensure that such a situation as had occurred in 1778 could never come to pass again. Thanks to Middleton's ceaseless work, those goals were realised.

Much has been written about this period by a variety of authors, in particular Roger Knight and Roger Morriss, who have worked on several aspects of Middleton's career as Comptroller, and the relationships between the Admiralty, Navy Board, and Royal dockyards. They have covered matters such as dockyard appointments,<sup>195</sup> the coppering of

<sup>192</sup> Much of this can be seen to stem from Laughton's assessment of Middleton in his original entry in the D.N.B: J.K. Laughton, 'Middleton, Charles, Lord Barham' in *Dictionary of National Biography Vol. XXXVII* p. 341. Even the most complete biography that exists of Middleton is disproportionately weighted towards his time as Comptroller, John E. Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor: Sir Charles Middleton and the King's Navy*, 1778-1813 (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

<sup>193</sup> G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen, *The Private Papers of John, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782 Volume I* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXIX (1932), pp. 226-27, letter dated Blackheath, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1777, 35pt 6 p.m. – From Lord Suffolk; pp. 327-35, letter dated Admiralty, 7<sup>th</sup> December 1777 – To North.

<sup>194</sup> Barnes and Owen *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 14-17, letter dated Southampton Street, February 20<sup>th</sup> 1771 – From Mr. William Wells; pp. 19-23, letter dated Compton, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1772 – North to Sandwich; letter dated Hinchingbrook, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1772 – Sandwich to North; pp. 33-34, letter dated Dunkirk, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1772 – Dr. Durnford to Rochford.

<sup>195</sup> R.J.B. Knight, 'Sandwich, Middleton and Dockyard Appointments', *Mariner's Mirror*, LVII, (1971), pp. 175-92.

the fleet<sup>196</sup> the rebuilding and repair of the Navy,<sup>197</sup> and the reformative work that was done during the 1780s that Middleton helped to shape.<sup>198</sup> While the facts of each issue are made plain, they are individual studies, and therefore do not take each other into account. Even John Talbott's work on Middleton, which serves to overview his Comptrollership as a whole, falls down on the account of not following the strands of his work to his later postings. This is an essential matter, for without it one cannot accurately chart the ways in which Middleton increased professionalism throughout the service, not just in one office. In keeping with the theme of the thesis, the state of the Navy Board in 1778 will be assessed, followed by the changes that were made in the office during Middleton's time as Comptroller, how those changes were implemented, what their effects were, how they impacted on the state of professionalism at the Navy Board and the service in general by the time Middleton resigned as Comptroller in 1790, and how they laid the groundwork for what was to come throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

Roger Morriss pertinently claims that during the 1770s through to the early-nineteenthcentury, the members of the Navy Board, and more especially the other Comptrollers, can be compared with distinct disadvantage to Charles Middleton.<sup>199</sup> This can be seen as being due to circumstances of office and the politics of their respective times; no other Comptroller until 1815 would have the span of peacetime that Middleton was allowed in which to overhaul the condition of the fleet. Also, by the time such a period came about again, the Admiralty had become a much more professional body then it was during the 1780s, much more capable of understanding the business that was once the sole province of the Navy Board, due in no small part to Middleton's influence at the Admiralty in his later career. This disadvantage in circumstances, however, was also to do with the fact that Middleton's appetite for business, and the methods of reform he worked so hard to implement, eventually overshadowed the work of all others around him. Julian Corbett, reflecting on Middleton's early career as Comptroller, stated that Middleton '[stood] out through that period of inept administration as the pillar of the service, the confidant to

<sup>196</sup> Randolph Cock, "'The Finest Invention in the World': The Royal Navy's Early Trials of Copper Sheathing, 1708-1770' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume LXXXVII* (2001), pp. 446-459; R.J.B. Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing into the Royal Navy' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume 59*, (St. Albans: The Priory Press, 1973), pp. 299-309, p. 301.

<sup>197</sup> P.L.C. Webb, 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet, 1783-93' in *The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research Volume 50* (London: Longmans, 1977).

<sup>198</sup> John R. Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees 1785-1801' *The Historical Journal Volume 27 No. 1(March 1984)* pp. 59-81 (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984).

<sup>199</sup> Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), p. 6.

whom all the best men afloat turned in their distress and despair.<sup>200</sup> While Corbett was writing without the benefit afforded by later historiography of seeing all the work that Sandwich, the First Lord of the Admiralty and central part of the 'inept administration' to which Corbett referred, did in the face of many hardships sent against him from both the enemy and parliamentary opposition, his assessment of Middleton was made with all the information he had to hand, which was a great deal more than historians of the nineteenth-century had had to work with.<sup>201</sup> Middleton's importance to the smooth running and preparedness of the Royal Navy during his time as Comptroller cannot be overstated, while the situation he found himself in during the 1780s was very favourable for him to use his administrative and reformative talents to the fullest.

## <u>Middleton's Early Career as Comptroller during the American Revolutionary War and</u> <u>the situation at the Navy Board as he found it.</u>

It will assist the reader to explain exactly what the Comptroller's role was in the naval shore administration of the eighteenth-century, where he sat, what powers and responsibilities he had, and how he was appointed. The Comptroller of the Navy was the chairman of the Navy Board, the oldest institution in the naval administration, first formed in 1546 by Henry VIII. At the start of Middleton's tenure the Comptroller was the *de facto* head of the Board, even if he was, according to the constitution of the Board, primus inter pares. The Comptroller oversaw the work of the Board as a whole, audited accounts, checked correspondence, oversaw orders and ship-building contracts, and communicated directly, either in a personal or official capacity, with the Board of Admiralty, and the First Lord of the Admiralty in particular. The Comptroller had also taken over the duties of the Treasurer of the Navy by this time, and the office of Treasurer had become more of a sinecure, with the incumbent not actively sitting on the Board. The Comptroller was almost always selected from the lists of post-captains in the Navy and was appointed by the First Lord of the Admiralty. He was also the only sea-officer permanently posted to the Board at the time of Middleton's appointment, although Extra Commissioners were often brought in for extended periods during war-time. It was usually accepted that an officer

<sup>200</sup> Julian S. Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar (London: Longmans, 1910) pp. 69-70.

<sup>201</sup> Corbett had been afforded special access to Sir J.K. Laughton's work in editing Middleton's papers for the Navy Records Society in order to gain a better understanding of the Campaign of Trafalgar as a whole. Sandwich's papers would not be published for a further twenty-two years after Corbett's eponymous work emerged.

who took the post of Comptroller had given up his ambitions for active service, and could generally expect to be passed over for a flag whilst he remained in the post. While the use of patronage could affect the choice of man to become Comptroller, the office was not one for the lazy and indolent, many other positions within the shore service existed for such men. The First Lord also needed to be aware that a lacklustre Comptroller could not easily be removed from office once placed therein, as the office was awarded by letters patent under the Great Seal, and therefore ceased to be a political office. A single Comptroller could therefore potentially expect to work with several ministries and First Lords over the course of their tenure, two good examples being Sir Richard Haddock who, apart from a two year period from 1686-88 when the office was vacant, held the Comptrollership from 1682-1715, and Sir Thomas Byam Martin, who held the Comptrollership from 1816-1831. In terms of power, throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth-centuries the Comptroller and the Navy Board as a whole were the most professional of all the Boards in the naval shore establishment, being the repository of expertise in building the fleet, manning it, paying the seamen, and administering the royal dockyards, along with making deals with the merchant yards in London. Although some Lord Commissioners would remain at the Board of Admiralty under successive First Lords, and sea officers appointed there brought professional knowledge to an extent, the Board of Admiralty did not have the capacity, time, or inclination in many cases to challenge the Navy Board on professional matters. The Navy Board also appointed all warrant officers under the rank of Master's Mate, and the minor dockyard officials, but the real power of patronage lay with the Board of Admiralty. While the Comptroller did not have any outright control over patronage, he handled a great deal of the business of the Board, and would regularly meet with the First Lord to discuss matters of administering the fleet, meaning he was able to advise the First Lord on professional matters. Recommendations from the Comptroller would be taken seriously within government by more than just the First Lord, especially a Comptroller who proved himself to be an adept administrator, as Middleton would do.

The Board itself was made up of six members, known as the Principal Officers and Commissioners of the Navy, and they were: the Comptroller, the Surveyor, the Clerk of the Acts, and the Comptrollers of Storekeepers, Treasurers, and Victualling Accounts. In addition to the members situated at Cruched Friars in London, every Royal Dockyard other than Deptford and Woolwich (which were close enough to London to be overseen directly) had a resident Dockyard Commissioner who, in theory, had the same status as the Principal Officers and Commissioners who sat on the Navy Board. While these Dockyard
Commissioners and the Treasurer of the Navy (which by now was merely a sinecure position, his work being carried out by the Treasurer's nominee, the Paymaster of the Navy), were nominally Principal Officers and Commissioners, they did not sit on the Board itself in London, and are therefore unimportant when one considers the work of the Board. Business that came before the Navy Board was considered by the Board as a whole, although each individual member tended to their own business, assisted by their respective clerks. The Surveyor was responsible for overseeing new building work and laying down the designs of the ships to be built in conjunction with the master shipwrights of the various yards. The Surveyor himself would be selected from the lists of the Master Shipwrights of the Royal Yards, and would have considerable shipbuilding experience. This experience was to assist him in the laying down of new designs for the ships contracted for and to analyse reports on captured ships from other nations. The other members of the Navy Board were men of accounts, with backgrounds in accounting, experience as clerks, and had sometimes worked for other government departments, though this was a rarity in comparison with internal promotion of clerks.

Little has been written about Middleton's earliest years as Comptroller, other than when dealing with the issue of coppering the fleet. Talbott<sup>202</sup> and Morriss<sup>203</sup> both deal with it in overview, but without the ability to go into great detail. Other aspects such as the amalgamation of the Transport Service into the Navy Board's work is presented in admirable detail by David Syrett,<sup>204</sup> who also provides a good overview for the period in his two volume work about the Navy's operations.<sup>205</sup> Much that has been written about this period centres on the operations afloat, as is generally the case with any conflict, but especially so considering the political fallout from the Keppel-Palliser affair, and the hysteria created by the Combined French and Spanish Armada gaining control of the English Channel. Against this, the arrival of an unheralded naval captain as Comptroller of the Navy, and the work he did to make the office he inherited more efficient and professional, does not merit a great deal of interest. However, when looking at this brief

<sup>202</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, pp. 21-44

<sup>203</sup> Roger Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham 1726-1813, An Administrator Reassessed' in Peter Le Favre, and Richard Harding, (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000) pp. 301-23, pp. 310-14.

<sup>204</sup> David Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, 1775-83: A Study of British Transport Organization (London, The University of London, The Athlone Press, 1970)

<sup>205</sup> David Syrett, *The Royal Navy in European Waters During the American Revolutionary War* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), *The Royal Navy in American Waters 1775-1783* (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1989).

period, several strands of policies that Middleton would follow to the end of his career begin to emerge, such as the employment of the merchant yards, the search for greater efficiency and harder work in his offices, and preferment of professional knowledge in the men with whom he worked.

Middleton entered office at the behest of Lord Sandwich, another keen naval reformer and proponent of professionalism in the Navy.<sup>206</sup> Sandwich's ideas had been stymied and hamstrung by economy measures during the first half of the 1770s<sup>207</sup> and, from 1775 onwards, by the need to operate the Navy in concert with the Army for combined operations on the North American coastline, which sapped resources, manpower and ships from the overall stockpiles. Once international war was declared in June 1778 it was immediately obvious that the Royal Navy could not contend with the French navy as the superior force, as had been the case in the Seven Years' War,<sup>208</sup> and the drain on resources from a war being fought across the Atlantic was becoming a major problem.<sup>209</sup> Middleton began at once to try to alleviate these issues through various means, and often followed the ideas and measures already set down by Sandwich during the previous seven years, but always adapted them, coming up with new ideas and taking matters further, to their logical conclusion.<sup>210</sup> By doing this he provided Sandwich, and future First Lords, with the kind of professional knowledge that was so often lacking at the Admiralty during the middle of the eighteenth-century. He also provided the shore establishment with fresh energy in the Navy Board, which enabled matters that would previously have been sniffed at by the Board as injurious to the ways in which the establishment ran, to be considered on their respective merits, and, in many cases, implemented to facilitate greater efficiency.

Middleton was forced to deal with a situation which Britain had not found itself in previously in the eighteenth-century: that of being significantly behind in preparation compared with her rivals, with Sandwich lamenting to North on the eve of preparations for

<sup>206</sup> See chapter two for full details on how the appointment came about.

<sup>207</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 19-23, letter dated Compton, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1772 – North to Sandwich; letter dated Hinchingbrook, September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1772 – Sandwich to North.

<sup>208</sup> Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860 Volume I* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1993), pp. 271-73 – Tables 23:13, 23:14; pp. 278-81 – Tables 23:16-23:21.

<sup>209</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* p. 42; pp. 242-44, Memorandum in Palliser's writing dated 25<sup>th</sup> August 1777; pp. 279-80; pp. 349-53, letter dated Admiralty, 6<sup>th</sup> March 1778 – To North.

<sup>210</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 14-17 – letter dated Southampton Street February 20<sup>th</sup> 1771, Mr William Wells to Sandwich. Wells was a well-known shipbuilder on the River Thames, p. 5. In this letter one can make out the genesis of Sandwich's ideas and measures that he was to pursue throughout his third tenure as First Lord. They also bear a striking resemblance to several of the measures that Middleton would strive towards throughout his long career as Sandwich gave him the perfect platform on which to build his naval policies through the next quarter-century.

international war beginning, that Britain had fifty of the line in commission compared with sixty-five French and Spanish, with frigates in home waters being 'very bare indeed.'<sup>211</sup> This inferiority in naval strength was confirmed once Spain entered the war in 1779, and the situation was made worse as Britain was without a European ally.<sup>212</sup> This situation had come about as the result of a variety of decisions taken earlier in the 1770s. Lord North had concerned himself more with reducing the national debt, claiming in a letter to Sandwich in 1772 that during peacetime, expenditure had to be cut in order to allow the National Debt to be paid off, an attitude that was based upon the assumption that neither France nor Spain was ready for war, and as such Britain did not require a large peace-time establishment. North's argument was as follows:

It must be owned that we suffered a little from the unprepared state in which we were at the opening of the last two wars; but then, our resources, our credit, and the length of our purse, which had been carefully managed during the preceding times of peace, carried us through with glory and success. Great peace establishments will, if we do not take care, prove our ruin: we shall fail, at the long run, by exhausting in times of tranquillity those resources on which we are to depend in times of war.<sup>213</sup>

While this policy had indeed worked for Britain throughout the eighteenth-century, when her superior dockyards, shipbuilding capacity, manpower reserves, and finances had enabled her to out-build her enemies, it was from the starting point of being equal in numbers and preparation to them, if not marginally ahead. The situation was now changing, and Britain was becoming inferior in strength, a circumstance which cancelled out her traditional advantages that North still clung to. Due to the apparent calm in the international situation, North then proposed going even further in his economy measures,

For my own part, as I am clear that the public revenue cannot afford above a million and a half, or at the most 1,600,000*l*, a year to the navy, and as I hold it to be absolutely requisite to the credit of the state to increase rather than diminish the annual payments of the national debt, I must be of opinion for reducing the number of guardships to sixteen or even lower, if that number cannot be maintained within the compass of the proper allowance to the navy.<sup>214</sup>

213 Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 19-23, letter dated Compton, September 5th 1772 - From North.

<sup>211</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 349-53, letter dated Admiralty, 6th March 1778 - To North.

<sup>212</sup> Syrett, *The Royal Navy in European Waters*, pp. 1-16, chapter 1, 'The Failure to Mobilise for War. See also Glete, *Navies and Nations Vol. I*, p. 278, table 23:16.

<sup>214</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 19-23, letter dated Compton, September 5th 1772 - From North.

The number of guard-ships had stood at twenty before this point, a usual number to be maintained, as they provided not only a standing military force, but a pool of trained seamen to man those ships, and reducing their number reduced far more than the simple quantity of ships might indicate. Even so, North's wider diplomatic appreciation regarding France and Spain was correct at the time, and had he guaranteed immediate expenditure on the Navy in the event matters should alter materially, the compromise could have been made. Sandwich was not convinced, however, and while he accepted that North's appreciation of the national finances greatly outstripped his own, he pointed to the situation in northern Europe, particularly with regard to Russia and Sweden, as the Swedish King Gustav III had just seized absolute power via a *coup d'etat*. He also proposed the same argument to North that would be accepted by Pitt during the 1780s when he wrote

I am sure I need not point out to you the immense advantage it will be to us to have a formidable fleet in readiness; and nothing can so effectually contribute to that purpose as the keeping up the twenty guardships in their present complete and useful state.<sup>215</sup>

Sandwich also notified North that the French and Spanish were ahead of Britain in numbers at that point, and that any fleet reduction would put the colonies and British trade at risk due to an inability to send ships to the East and West Indies if a conflict should break out suddenly. Sandwich's fears were not just paranoia, for others were writing to the Government with news that France was not standing idle and was making moves to augment her navy. One such letter came from Andrew Durnford of the Royal Engineers, posted to demolish the fortifications and canal of Dunkirk as per the Treaty of Paris. He claimed to Rochford, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, that the French East Indies fleet had been absorbed into the wider French navy, which gave them a manning advantage that they had not previously possessed, that the French were building many ships in all their ports, and gave an appreciation of the situation in France as things stood.

I beg leave to observe to your Lordship that the French fleet at the beginning of the year 1757 was comprised of 75 ships of the line and 34 frigates besides small craft, and that at the end of the last war their fleet was reduced to about 10 ships of the line fit for sea. Since the peace the greatest attention has been paid to their navy; and they are now able to send to sea a fleet of 74 ships of the line, 54 frigates, 10

<sup>215</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 23-26 - latter dated Hinchingbrook September 10th 1772

praams, and above 60 small craft. This fleet I consider far superior to that at the beginning of the last war from the goodness of the ships, which are mostly built since the peace.<sup>216</sup>

Sandwich's fears did not abate over the coming years, and by 1776 he again wrote to North, worrying about the possibility that France could enter the war on the side of the colonists and prepare a fleet of fifty sail of the line before Britain could respond.<sup>217</sup> North, however, was willing to believe the assurances given by the French Foreign Minister, Monsieur de Vergennes that the French had no intentions to enter the war,<sup>218</sup> whereas Sandwich clearly did not share North's optimistic appraisal of France's strengthening of arms, and put forward his opinion to North that even if France truly did not mean war, she clearly meant an armed negotiation.<sup>219</sup>

While Sandwich again tried unsuccessfully later in the year to persuade North to allow him to arm the fleet,<sup>220</sup> with reports reaching London in April 1777 from Lord Stormont, the British ambassador to France, that the French were arming ships and manning them with French seamen for use by the rebel colonists under American captains,<sup>221</sup> coupled to the British Government deciding by mid-1777 that France could not be submitted to for much longer, still the preferred course of action was that of following the King's priority of putting down the rebellion in the Thirteen Colonies.<sup>222</sup> Even with this admission, the remainder of 1777 passed with Sandwich still desperate to mobilise greater naval forces in European waters, as North seemed more concerned with the colonies, requesting that ships be sent there to cover the ten Spanish ships reported at Havana, with the French also reported to possess a force in the West Indies.<sup>223</sup> Sandwich, meanwhile, was concerned that while the French had forty-four ships of the line in commission, and the Spanish had twenty, Britain had only forty-three, sixteen of which were with Lord Howe in America, with several others on convoy duties, not expected to be back for several months.<sup>224</sup> By

<sup>216</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 33-34 – letter dated Dunkirk, 14<sup>th</sup> December 1772, Mr. Durnford to Rochford.

<sup>217</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 213-14, letter dated Admiralty, 21st July 1776 - To North.

<sup>218</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I p. 214, letter dated Bushey Park, 21st July 1776 - From North.

<sup>219</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 215-16, letter dated Hampton Court, 21st July 1776 – To North.

<sup>220</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 216-17, letter dated Sunday morning, 20th October 1776 - To North.

<sup>221</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 221-23, letter dated Paris, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1777 – Lord Stormont to Lord Weymouth. Weymouth had taken over as Secretary of State for the Southern Department from Rochford in 1775.

<sup>222</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I p. 63, letter dated Kew, 1<sup>st</sup> July 1775 – From The King; pp. 226-27, letter dated Blackheath, 29<sup>th</sup> June 1777, 35 past 6pm – From Lord Suffolk. Suffolk was Secretary of State for the Northern Department at the time.

<sup>223</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 235-38, holograph draft? Dated Hampton Court, August 3<sup>rd</sup> 1777 – To North.

<sup>224</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I p. 245, letter dated August 26th 1777 - To North; pp. 279-80.

December 1777, when the Government had reluctantly acknowledged that the rebellions could not be quietly or quickly quelled, we find Sandwich writing to North, showing great awareness of the situation at the time, and for the future, saying,

It will take a twelvemonth to get 25 more ships of the line ready for sea...If we are in imminent danger of a foreign war (which in my opinion is the case), a day ought not to be lost. What shall we have to answer for if we are then unprepared, and reduced to the necessity of either leaving our distant possessions undefended or seeing France and Spain in the Channel with a superior fleet?<sup>225</sup>

The Government still would not relent, however, and in February Sandwich had begun to take matters into his own hands, as the news came that the French had commissioned a ship of 110-guns. Sandwich almost demanded that the *Victory* be made ready, along with all other line of battle ships, and wrote that he had already begun sourcing seamen to man the fleet.<sup>226</sup> Finally, on 2 March 1778, North relented in his reticence, but would not do so before a decision was reached by the Cabinet as a whole.<sup>227</sup> The result of the retrenchment and vacillation of the previous seven years was that France was able to send more ships to sea in European waters upon entering the war than had been possible in the past,<sup>228</sup> while the Royal Navy was thinly spread, mostly comprised of frigates, and without a great many ships of the line ready or in condition to put to sea in home waters without sizeable repairs and a large additional complement of men.<sup>229</sup> The order to mobilise the fleet for war with France was not given until three months before hostilities actually broke out, far too short a time for any state of readiness to be achieved, especially from the vastly reduced state of the battle fleet following North's measures.<sup>230</sup>

The scope of Middleton's task was vast; Britain's fleet was thinly spread, under-financed, badly prepared, and with the vast majority of its smaller ships employed on the North American coast to combat the nascent Continental Navy and assist the British land forces

<sup>225</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp, 327-35, letter dated Admiralty, 7th December 1777 - To North.

<sup>226</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 342-43, letter dated Admiralty, 27th February 1778 - To North.

<sup>227</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I p. 347, letter dated [2nd March 1778] - From North

<sup>228</sup> Glete, Navies and Nations Vol. I pp. 271-72, tables 23:13, 23:14.

<sup>229</sup> J.G. Bullocke, (ed.), *The Tomlinson Papers, Selected from the Correspondence and Pamphlets of Captain Robert Tomlinson, R.N., & Vice-Admiral Nicholas Tomlinson* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXIV (1935) pp. 44-50 – Memorandum by Lieutenant Robert Tomlinson dated ? 1779. Several contemporary viewpoints, including tables showing the state of the Navy at the time. Mostly concerned with attacking Sandwich and defending Hawke against Sandwich's allegations, but useful when attempting to quantify the work Middleton was required to do.

<sup>230</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* p. 361, Minute of Cabinet March 14<sup>th</sup> 1778 at Lord Weymouth's House – the order to prepare for war is submitted to the King; p. 363 – letter dated Admiralty Office, 16<sup>th</sup> March 1778, Admiralty to Navy Board.

with transport and amphibious operations. As a result, there was very little left in home waters to protect essential trade and oppose the enemy's small ships and privateers.<sup>231</sup> The 50,000 men employed in the service were, likewise, mostly employed abroad.<sup>232</sup> The Admiralty, and Sandwich in particular as First Lord, was under attack in both Houses of Parliament for its handling of the fleet during the previous three years, with many questions being asked about why the fleet was in its present condition, rather than ready to meet the French.<sup>233</sup> Middleton contributed to the defence of the shore establishment's performance through an appreciation of the state of the administration to be used by Sandwich to defend himself in the Lords. This paper shows to indicate just how quickly Middleton had acquainted himself with the various aspects of his office after just eight months as Comptroller, as he laid down the situation of the supply of hemp, timber, masts, pitch, tar, and iron both home and abroad, along with the state of the contracts for 1779, saying that 'the naval arsenals of [the] kingdom [had] never been so fully supplied' and called the situation 'extraordinary'.<sup>234</sup> The inconclusive Battle of Ushant in 1778 and the subsequent rifts opened in the service following the recriminations between Admirals Keppel and Palliser only added to the political problems of the Navy,<sup>235</sup> but the apolitical nature of the Navy Board allowed it to escape the political storm and continue to do its work to prepare and augment the fleet.

In order to ready the fleet now he was Comptroller, Middleton also needed to increase the workload that the Navy Board had been used to under the previous, sickly Comptroller, Maurice Suckling, who had been a celebrated sea officer, an assiduous administrator, and was the uncle of Horatio Nelson, who took great inspiration from Suckling's brave conduct.<sup>236</sup> While Suckling had worked well at the start of the American War with the former Comptroller Sir Hugh Palliser, (who was then at the Admiralty as a Naval Lord), from January 1777 to his death in July 1778 Suckling had been struck by a debilitating, but

<sup>231</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 349-53, letter dated Admiralty, 6th March 1778 - To North.

<sup>232</sup> For further information on the state of Britain's preparedness in both theatres of war in the years 1775-78 see Syrett's books *The Royal Navy in European Waters* and *The Royal Navy in American Waters*.

<sup>233</sup> See, for example G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen (eds.), *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782 Volume II March 1778-May 1779* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXI (1933) pp. 253-281 'A Debate in the House of Lords 23 April 1779'. This discusses the motion called by the Earl of Bristol for the removal of Lord Sandwich from the Admiralty.

<sup>234</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. II* pp. 262-63 'Paper D' in Middleton's hand dated 10<sup>th</sup> April 1779 – To Sandwich.

<sup>235</sup> For more information on the Keppel-Palliser affair see J.H. Broomfield 'The Keppel-Palliser Affair, 1778-1779' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume 47, no. 3, August 1961* (1961) pp. 195-207.

<sup>236</sup> Ruddock Mackay, 'Suckling, Maurice (1725–1778)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26758, accessed 1 Dec 2015]

unknown disease that seriously compromised his abilities as Comptroller. Now that European war, as well as the ongoing civil war in the colonies, had been declared, the British fleet needed to be prepared to meet the French threat and it was the Navy Board which needed to act efficiently and quickly, while still labouring under a constitution and working arrangements left over from the time of Pepys.<sup>237</sup> At the beginning of his Comptrollership Middleton did not try to fundamentally alter the ways in which business was done at the Board, but rather he contented himself with increasing the hours that the office worked, the work ethic of the Board as a whole, and that of the Comptroller's department in particular. Leslie Gardiner insinuates that the members of the Navy Board, and by extension the clerks who made up the Navy Office, had not been treating the position as a full-time job. Of their working habits, Gardiner says

Fellow Principal Officers, just as they had done in Pepys's time, came to the Navy Office as to a weekly committee, as they might come to the weekly causerie of the Greenwich Hospital...It had amused the Comptroller's department, when their new chief arrived under the delusion that he was expected to put in five days a week; before long he, and the department, were working seven.<sup>238</sup>

Without this change, it seems highly unlikely that the Navy Board could possibly have coped with the increased demands made on it during war, nor could it have worked to augment the strength of the fleet and prevent a humiliating defeat in battle.

The Navy Board, while professional in a fiscal and logistical administrative sense, did not always possess the kind of professional knowledge that a career sea officer might possess in great quantities. For that it relied upon its Comptroller and any Extra Commissioners who might join the Board during times of increased workload, such as wartime. This was a situation that Middleton decried as an 'improper arrangement' that had 'precluded the seamen from every one of the established offices.'<sup>239</sup> Middleton tried desperately to change this, pushing for professional sea knowledge to feature prominently at the Board in order that the fleet be administered by professional sea officers, backed by men whose background lay in accounts and logistics, so that their orders might be effectively carried out. He even went so far as to push Lords North and Sandwich for another Extra

<sup>237</sup> For more information about how the Navy Board had operated since the changes made to its constitution in 1691 and before, see J.M. Collinge (ed.), *Office Holders in Modern Britain VII – Navy Board Officials 1660-1832* (Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1978).

<sup>238</sup> Leslie Gardiner, *The British Admiralty (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1968)*, p. 178. 239 J.K. Laughton (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813*,

*Volume II*, (Publications of the Navy Records Society, Volume 38, 1910), pp. 159-61, letter dated 8<sup>th</sup> December 1783 – Middleton to Philip Stephens, First Secretary to the Admiralty.

Commissioner after receiving the services of Captain Le Cras, by mentioning Captain Wallis, who was placed at the Navy Board soon after this.<sup>240</sup> While Middleton never achieved a preponderance of naval officers in the organisational structure of the Navy Board, (perhaps not surprising given the majority of the work that the Navy Board did, such as payment of sailors, ordering of ships, and overseeing the ordering and inventorying of stocks and supplies, had very little to do with the kind of work an active-service sea officer would have been accustomed to), the changes he was to make at the Board of Admiralty effectively achieved this object via different means. Middleton was the only professional sea-officer present at the Board upon his investment as Comptroller<sup>241</sup> and, although he soon acquired the services of the two aforementioned officers as Extra Commissioners,<sup>242</sup> the balance of the office was always weighted towards the 'pen and ink gentlemen' as Middleton referred to the members with backgrounds in business, shipbuilding and accounts.<sup>243</sup> His opinion of these men was never high when he spoke during these early years on the subject of administrative efficiency, and there may well be a basis for this low opinion based on Robert Gregson's report to Shelburne on the business of the Board.<sup>244</sup> Indeed, when the threat of invasion loomed over the dockyards in 1779 and Sandwich resolved to send Captain Le Cras to Portsmouth to calm the rising panic among dockyard officials, Middleton was moved to write

Send the whole of the pen and ink gentlemen except the Clerk of the Acts, and I shall never miss them, but I flatter myself your Lordship will give up the idea of Mr. Le Cras, unless you should think the quieting of a madman of more importance to his Majesty's service than providing the several yards as well as the whole fleet with stores.<sup>245</sup>

Clearly Sandwich did, for Le Cras went to Portsmouth, leaving Middleton without another sea-officer at the Board for a while. While the 'pen and ink gentlemen' were undoubtedly

<sup>240</sup> G.R. Barnes, and J.H. Owen, (eds.) *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782, Volume IV, 1781-82 Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXVIII (1938),* pp. 369-70, letter dated 29 September 1780 – From the Comptroller. Wallis was appointed on 17 November.
241 Collinge, *Navy Board Officials* pp. 21-23.

<sup>242</sup> Collinge, *Navy Board Officials* p. 23. Captain E. Le Cras was appointed April 10 1778, with Captain S. Wallis appointed December 28 1780.

<sup>243</sup> G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen (eds.), The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782 Volume III, May 1779-December 1780 Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXV (1936), pp. 69-70, letter dated August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1779 – From the Comptroller.

<sup>244</sup> John B. Hattendorf, R.J.B. Knight, A.W.H. Pearsall, N.A.M. Rodger & Geoffrey Till, (eds.), *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 131 (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1993), pp. 460-62, A View on the Navy Board, 2 December 1782 – Robert Gregson, Chief Clerk to the Clerk of the Acts to Lord Shelburne.

<sup>245</sup>Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. III pp. 69-70, letter dated August 22<sup>nd</sup> 1779 – from the Comptroller.

competent in their respective fields, Middleton was far more concerned at that time with stocking the fleet and preparing as many ships as he could for service, especially considering the additional business that war brought to the Comptroller's department. In this matter he clearly preferred the work of sea officers rather than civil administrators, though the Navy Board's collective expertise was capable of handling such tasks with great efficiency and success. By the time Middleton came to advise the Commissioners on Fees on how the Navy Board should be organised, he had largely dropped this bias towards sea officers, and simply resolved to attempt to increase the effectiveness of the various departments.

## Middleton's Reform Measures and Attempts as Comptroller.

One of the first aspects of the vision Middleton had for the greater organisation and professionalisation of the naval shore establishment was the need for greater efficiency and streamlining of communication regarding the transporting of troops and supplies to North America, where the British Army needed the full support of the Navy in order to obtain supplies and engage in coastal operations. At the time, transports for troops and supplies across the Atlantic were hired and managed separately by the Treasury, Navy, Ordnance, and Victualling Boards, with the Boards themselves having to bid against one another in order to secure transports for their various services.<sup>246</sup> Middleton could see the obvious flaws in such an arrangement, as doubtless had others, but he alone had the wherewithal and work ethic to proceed to do something to rectify the situation. He recommended that the Navy Board alone take sole charge of the hiring of transports for all the various services that required them in order to increase the number of transports available as a whole, and decrease the cost to the Crown from inflated prices brought about through the bidding process.<sup>247</sup> This was gratefully received by the Treasury, which up until that point had been in charge of organising the relief for the soldiers fighting the rebellious colonists in the North American theatre and recognised the benefits of having a Board well-acquainted with naval logistics taking over the task of supplying naval transports. This is a good example of the business of government being put under the control of men who had the specialised knowledge and skills to execute the transport service, and closing naval

<sup>246</sup> The best study regarding the supply situation between Britain and the Army in America can be found in David Syrett's *Shipping and the American War*, 1775-83: A Study of British Transport Organization (London, The University of London, The Athlone Press, 1970)

<sup>247</sup> The National Archives, Kew. T/24/48; T/64/200, Navy Board to Treasury, 3 February 1779.

governance to 'outsider' administrators. Where the Navy Board was intimately connected with the work required in the yards for the readying of convoys and transports, the Treasury, while capable of making government contracts, could not appreciate the more nuanced aspects of the transport service, such as fitting out and assessing the seaworthiness of ships, and convoy sailing. The Navy Board therefore assumed control of the Army victualling transports in 1779. Under the direction of the Navy Board in London, the various transports were inspected in the Royal dockyards, with the whole process being overseen by Middleton himself, and his management of the service 'represented a significant improvement in the efficiency of managing the logistics of war in North America.<sup>248</sup> Syrett also singles Middleton out for praise, saying that 'without a doubt the Transport service would not have functioned as well as it did...without his supervision and management' and calls his methods of administration 'considerably in advance of those held by most of his contemporaries.<sup>249</sup> Again Middleton looked to the future, as, while the system was flawed before the Navy Board assumed control, it did work after a fashion, even if it was costing more than it necessarily should have done. By pooling all transport business under a single heading, however, more could be done to provide for the Army in North America. It also collected the disparate naval government business under a single department, removing unnecessary fragmentation of expertise while also narrowing the range of the departments that could affect naval administration. By doing this the professionalism of the administration could once again be enhanced, while removing the amateur from the organisation of the Navy, with specific knowledge, experience, and expertise now required in order to hire, manage, and organise the inspection and loading of transports, many of which required naval escort and were intrinsically linked to military organisation. If amateurism had been allowed to continue throughout such an important conflict and then into the French Wars in the following decades, the essential work of expeditions such as those to the West Indies throughout the 1790s, the relief of Gibraltar in 1780-83, and Craig's expedition to Malta in 1805 would have been much more difficult to organise. Furthermore, close co-operation between disparate aspects of naval administration would also have suffered due to lack of professional knowledge in the hire, management, and organisation of the transport service. As an example of how the amateur could hinder organisation of this nature, while the Navy Board took control of the hiring, inspection, and loading of transports, the locations in which they were first gathered

<sup>248</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 310.

<sup>249</sup> Syrett, Shipping and the American War, p. 22; p. 24.

remained outside their remit. Middleton proposed that neither Chatham nor the yards on the Thames should be used for embarkations, with the western yards to be preferred, owing to the delays caused by adverse winds, tides, and the general difficulties in navigating the Thames and Medway late in the eighteenth-century.<sup>250</sup> This suggestion, however, was not acted upon by the Government or the Admiralty, and throughout the war further delays were experienced due to the very problems that Middleton and the Navy Board had identified.<sup>251</sup>

This experience that Middleton gained in matters of organising transports would make him a vocal advocate of the merits and necessity of setting up a separate Transport Board when war again broke out in 1794. This is another example of how Middleton used the lessons he learned from the past in terms of how professional knowledge needed to be used to achieve its greatest effectiveness, and how he saw the need to protect against situations that may occur in the future, while also serving to highlight his adherence to lines of policy that began several years before.

During the early years of his Comptrollership, Middleton was instrumental in introducing a key technological innovation to the Navy, one which would again alter the balance of power in battles at sea, especially amongst smaller ships: the carronade. Middleton knew the man who initially designed the weapon, Charles Gascoigne, who was the manager of the Carron foundry.<sup>252</sup> Built by the Carron Company based in Falkirk, the carronade was a short-barrelled cannon, designed to fire shot of much larger calibre than a long gun, over a shorter distance. For close quarters fighting, nothing could smash enemy hulls, or clear rigging and decks of snipers like a carronade, which was able to fire up to 68-pound shot whereas the largest long guns on the lowest decks of a ship would be 32-pounders.<sup>253</sup> Carronades also had the advantage of being smaller, producing far less recoil as a result, meaning they could be mounted on the top decks of ships on pivots if necessary, and operated by a vastly reduced gunnery crew than that required by a long gun. New cylinderboring techniques had enabled the carronade to become a possibility, as the gun could be cast as a single piece of iron and then bored out, rather than being cast around a core, that the molten iron would invariably distort.<sup>254</sup>

<sup>250</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II, p. 45, letter dated ? 1779 - Middleton to Sandwich.

<sup>251</sup> Syrett, Shipping and the American War, pp. 225-26.

<sup>252</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 63.

<sup>253</sup> Talbott The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 63-64.

<sup>254</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 61-62.

Talbott raises a question as to whether or not Middleton was induced to promote the carronade as vociferously as he did simply through a zeal for His Majesty's service, or whether he had a financial stake in the Carron Company itself, but no evidence can be found to give any weight to the argument.<sup>255</sup> No record survives to corroborate the theory, but so insistent was Middleton about a great many measures and innovations that it does not seem as though his championing of the carronade was necessarily based on any potential financial gain. He was also able to come up with several different ways in which the new type of gun would help the Navy overall other than just weight of broadside. These included the carronade's advantages as a force multiplier for frigates and smaller ships of the line, and the reduction in manpower required to fire a carronade rather than a long gun.<sup>256</sup>

By 1794 the importance of the carronade had begun to achieve widespread acceptance, which was finally acknowledged by the Admiralty by the issuing of an order to all dockyards to outfit all ships with carronades.<sup>257</sup> In practice, while there were guidelines to show how many carronades each type of ship should carry, it was left to the individual captains initially to decide how many, if any, carronades they wanted on their ships, but changes began to be made.<sup>258</sup> These views on the carronade did not come purely from the British. No less an authority on the value of artillery than Napoleon himself weighed in on the subject of carronades, as he argued for their being placed on French ships of the line alongside long guns of 36-pounds and recommended that 36-pound carronades replace all long guns of lighter weight of shot. He also lamented in several letters to Vice-Admiral Decrès, his Ministère de la Marine in 1805, that the British were far ahead of the French in their use of carronades, which the Emperor regarded as a significant advantage for his enemies.<sup>259</sup> It has been proposed by Talbott that the Emperor, unused to warfare at sea, despite his peerless knowledge of artillery, may have overestimated the usefulness and

<sup>255</sup> Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor* p. 63. Talbott asks the question of Middleton's integrity, and describes Gascoigne as 'an entrepreneur of shady reputation', but he admits that there is no answer to his question.

<sup>256</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. IV* pp. 414-17, letter (with two enclosures) dated 12 March 1780 – From the Comptroller.

<sup>257</sup> William James, *The Navy History of Great Britain, From the Declaration of War by France in 1793, to the Ascension of George IV Vol. I* (London: Richard Bentley, 1836) p. 231.

<sup>258</sup> James, The Naval History of Great Britain Vol. I pp. 230-31.

<sup>259</sup> Napoléon 1<sup>st</sup>, Emperor of the French, *Correspondance de Napoléon 1er, Publiée par Ordre de l'Empereur Napoléon III, Tome Dixieme*, (Paris: Henri Plon, J.Dumaine, 1862), pp. 221, 473, 520-1, 555-6, au Vice-Amiral Decrès, 8428, La Malmaison 22 Ventóse an XIII (13 mars 1805), 8830, Milan 13 prairial an XIII (2 juin 1805), 8887, Camp de Castiglione, 24 prairial an XIII (13 juin 1805), 8938, Bologne 3 Messidor an XIII (22 juin 1805).

impact of the carronade.<sup>260</sup> One would have to imagine, however, that Napoleon's opinion was formed from the experience of the French navy against British ships mounting carronades and the amount of damage that those guns could, and did, do to enemy ships during actions. To say that Napoleon did not fully understand strategic warfare at sea would be accurate, but his officers, the men from whom the reports of the new weapon came, and the men who had to face them in action, did understand warfare at sea. This was also not a subject peculiar to the Revolutionary period, as the carronade had been introduced during the American War initially, when the French officer corps was at its finest, before the revolutionaries did away with the ennobled classes and much of the professionalism of the corps with it. Even then, ships and officers considered carronades to be dangerous weapons, the famous action of 4 September 1782 involving the all carronade armed 44-gun frigate H.M.S. Rainbow's capture of the French frigate Hébé, serves as a perfect example.<sup>261</sup> Hébé was a much newer ship, armed with 38-guns, of which twenty-six were long eighteen pounders, but she struck to the *Rainbow* after the exchange of only a single broadside, which shot away the *Hébé*'s wheel and foremast, along with killing a number of her crew.

On the subject of the Royal Dockyards, Middleton and the Navy Board saw the need to restate, though not revise, the Standing Orders to the Dockyards, last set down nearly a century previous, and by that time rarely adhered to even in abstract terms.<sup>262</sup> The fact that it was thought necessary to provide Standing Orders to the dockyards betrays their size and complexity, and the inherent difficulties in administering such disparate organisations from a central location. The Standing Orders covered the ways in which the dockyards were supposed to operate, and new Orders covered new innovations, new duties and procedures, revisions, discontinuations and corrections to abuses and irregularities. The number of Standing Orders had grown from two hundred in 1715 to four hundred by 1750, to six hundred by 1771 and finally twelve hundred in 1786, when nearly every aspect of local management was dealt with.<sup>263</sup> The result of this administrative bloat was that every yard had slightly different procedures for most every activity they carried out and were wont to disregard any and all Standing Orders as the Principal Officers of the various yards saw fit.

<sup>260</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 61.

<sup>261</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2006) pp. 420-21.

<sup>262</sup> The National Archives, Kew, ADM 106/2507-09 - Standing Orders to the Yards 1660-1791

<sup>263</sup> J.M. Haas, A Management Odyssey: The Royal Dockyards, 1714-1914 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), p. 15.

This was clearly not the hallmark of a unified, professional structure, and the lack of standardisation of practice caused inefficiencies and confusion between the various yards and the Navy Board itself, all of which seriously hindered the latter's ability to manage the dockyards effectively. Talbott states that by wishing to re-issue the Standing Orders,

Middleton...meant to send sailors to sea in seaworthy ships and to reduce the terrible accidents that befell dockyard workers; to discourage dockyard 'embezzlement' in all its ingenious and costly forms; to minimise the authorities' arbitrary and unfair treatment of dockyard workers as well as the play of favouritism; to communicate the Navy Board's intentions to dockyard officials and to ensure that these officers reported on their doings regularly and in detail; and to ensure that all members of the naval establishment, high and low, were held accountable for their actions.<sup>264</sup>

While this was the purpose behind what Middleton and the Navy Board hoped to do, the hard-pressed dockyard workers and supervisors, trying desperately to repair the fleet, supply the Army in America, produce new ships and resupply the fleet at sea, could not adhere directly to new orders and implement new procedures during war time. As a result, each dockyard continued to do matters in their own fashion, often differing greatly from their Standing Orders. Middleton could see that such a method was not something to be accepted, and so, while his Comptrollership had seen huge increases in the numbers of Orders issued, he began the laborious process of revising and digesting all the Standing Orders issued to the yards, a process first ordered by the Admiralty in 1764, and compiling them into large books that would later be used by Lord Melville in 1804, thus beginning the war on paperwork that would be fought throughout government thereafter.<sup>265</sup> While this measure would not affect the dockyards during the 1780 and '90s, what should be noted above all else is that only Middleton possessed the application and foresight to work above and beyond the everyday call of his office to try to improve the efficiency of the largest industrial organisation in the world at the time, a task which might ordinarily have called for the attentions of an entire commission of men well versed in all aspects of administration and business. Middleton was again able to combine all areas of expertise in a single office, and eventually managed to implement the changes he felt were required.<sup>266</sup>

<sup>264</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 94.

<sup>265</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, p. 22.

<sup>266</sup> See also R.J.B. Knight *The Royal Dockyards in England at the Time of the American War of Independence* (PhD thesis, University of London, 1972).

As Comptroller, Middleton began the first in a long line of measures and recommendations designed to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and overall professionalism of the departments of the Navy, starting with his own Navy Board and the Victualling Board. As with his first years as Comptroller, history has not recorded in great detail the work that Middleton did in order to attempt reform in the naval departments during this time. Only Breihan's study into the Commission on Fees deals with Middleton's contributions to that body, and it is to his papers that one must again turn in order to find the information on exactly what was attempted. Again, Morriss and Talbott acknowledge this episode to have been extremely important for Middleton and indeed for the Navy as a whole, but are unable to go into great detail and link it to the measures that Middleton was able to implement as chairman of the Commission of Revision from 1805-09. The reforms that Middleton began to advocate in 1782 would follow him for the next twenty-five years as he fought to change the ways in which the shore establishment worked.

The 1780s was a peculiar time for Britain in the eighteenth-century, following as it did a costly war both territorially and financially. The American War had exposed serious flaws in the way administration and public finances worked, institutions which, in several cases, had remained the same since the days of the Tudors and, in some cases, the Plantagenets.<sup>267</sup> Middleton was well aware of these limitations and inefficiencies, and had even had conversations with Lord North as early in his career as 1780 on the subject of 'the remissness of detail in the public offices and the impossibility of conducting business with success till this was remedied.<sup>268</sup> In order to combat this administrative malaise, in 1780, Lord North had set up the Commission for Examining the Public Accounts,<sup>269</sup> which reported to Lord Shelburne – the new head of Government in 1782 – their proposals for what might be done to amend various departments of government with a view to greater efficiency, and which centred very much on corrupt practices such as payments of fees and other unofficial means of income in government offices.<sup>270</sup> This was all part of the gradual increase in professionalism throughout government begun in the late-seventeenth-century, continued through the eighteenth-century, but which had not always spread to the older institutions during that time. Now was the time for those more ancient departments to feel the touch of modernisation. Middleton, as Comptroller of the Navy and keen to have his

<sup>267</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 115.

<sup>268</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. IV* pp. 369-70, letter dated 29 September 1780 – From the Comptroller. 269 Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 59.

<sup>270</sup> Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' pp. 61-62.

department similarly reformed, also made recommendations to Shelburne,<sup>271</sup> without consulting Keppel, who had become First Lord after Sandwich left office with the North administration. These recommendations, which would later form the basis of Middleton's proposals to William Pitt in 1784,<sup>272</sup> to the Commissioners on Fees in Public Offices in 1786,<sup>273</sup> and to Chatham, along with Pitt again in 1789,<sup>274</sup> were favourably received by Shelburne but it was at this point that Middleton's nerve failed him. Middleton's convictions on the need for increased professionalism were as strong as before, and would continue to retain their strength in the future, but it seems clear that circumstances arose that convinced him that he was not in any position at that time to effect such sweeping changes without repercussions. While no records exist to corroborate the theory, it is likely that, upon consultation with the rest of the Navy Board, Middleton realised just how unpopular the removal of fees from the Navy Office would be.<sup>275</sup> All Navy Office paperwork came with a small fee added on, from the passing of accounts and petitions, to the making out of bills, contracts, and charters,<sup>276</sup> and it was through these means that the Navy Board's clerks and secretaries especially made their money; high ranking clerks, who signed off the majority of the paperwork in the office, could sometime receive up to ten times their £250 salary in fees and gratuities, with a significant rise during wartime due to the increase in officers' commissions passing through the office.<sup>277</sup> It was not without reason, however, that Middleton wished for these fees to be removed from government offices. Fees created the possibility for corruption to creep into government establishments, such as dockyard clerks dealing with contractors. While the fees that the clerks received for checking the quantity and quality of new stores arriving in the yards (work that should have been done by the Principal yard officers) were not bribes, they could end up being used as such by dishonest contractors taking advantage of dishonest clerks.<sup>278</sup> In addition to this, Middleton was a salaried official, forbidden to take fees of any

<sup>271</sup> William L. Clements Library Archives, University of Michigan, *The Shelburne Papers in America Volume* 151. Naval (1782): Sir Chas. Middleton, Mr. Gregson, Contracts Subsisting, Committee's Report on Christr. Atkinson's Transaction, Number 40 – 9 September 1782, Middleton to Shelburne

<sup>272</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II*, pp. 176-78, letter dated Hertford Street, 16<sup>th</sup> September 1784 – Middleton to Pitt, marked private.

<sup>273</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 235-49, letter dated ?December 1786 - Middleton to Francis Baring.

<sup>274</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* p. 319, letter dated Berkley Square, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1789 – Lord Chatham to Middleton; pp. 320-22, letter dated May, 1789 – Middleton to Pitt; p. 322, letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> December 1789 – Middleton to Lord Chatham.

<sup>275</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 315; Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1760-1850: Public Trust and Government Ideology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), p. 133.

<sup>276</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 130.

<sup>277</sup> Talbot, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 121.

<sup>278</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, pp. 38-39.

sort, and so did not benefit whatsoever from their retention. During wartime, while clerks could earn more money with the additional work, the Commissioners of the Navy Board received nothing for their extra application. The sense of public duty that the Commissioners felt also induced Middleton to push for the abolition of corrupt practice, a symptom of the earlier implementation of professional officials at the head of the Board.<sup>279</sup> Finally, the future prospects of the Navy Board and naval administration in general relied upon the removal of corruptions such as fees and gratuities, however much the establishment had previously relied upon them. Fees and means of making money other than salaries had been banned in several government departments from as early as the late-seventeenth-century, and it was because the Navy Office was of such long standing that they had not similarly been reformed at the time.

Having made his proposals to Shelburne, Middleton thereafter back-pedalled, as he did not have the level of power required to force through such measures and remain beyond reproach within his office. He did not want to have his own name ascribed to measures such as the abolition of fees and gratuities, which would have proven extremely unpopular with the lower levels of the Navy Office, creating ill will especially amongst those who had paid premiums to obtain their positions at the Navy Board, premiums that would not be refunded, and which new entrants to the office would not in future be required to pay.<sup>280</sup> While Morriss might claim that this showed Middleton to be far more interested in his own personal ambitions than the good of the service,<sup>281</sup> by following up his proposals he would have been required to fall on his sword upon learning of the unpopularity of his proposals in order to get them considered and perhaps passed by Shelburne. Because of this, Middleton waited until he could anonymously use another means, which eventually turned out to be the Commission on Fees. Also, the two measures proposed by Shelburne under his ministry, the Customs House Bill and the Public Offices Bill, both concerned with the complete abolition of fees, failed to be accepted, although the Public Offices Bill was later reintroduced by Pitt and it formed the greater part of the task of the Commission on Fees.<sup>282</sup> Had Middleton pushed through with his ideas for the reformation of the Navy Office with Shelburne he would almost certainly have been forced out of office in 1782-83, much as he

<sup>279</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989), pp. 86-87.

<sup>280</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, pp. 121-22; Morriss, Naval Power and British Culture p. 133.

<sup>281</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham', p. 315.

<sup>282</sup> Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 62.

eventually felt he was in 1790, through ill feeling created within the office.<sup>283</sup> Brewer also states that the only departments to be structurally reformed during the 1780s were the Treasury (under Shelburne, where the promotion of clerks was changed from seniority to merit, fees were abolished, and salaries and pensions implemented), and the Exchequer to a much lesser extent. While administrative procedures were improved throughout government in the 1780s, the abolition of fee-taking, sinecures and patent offices foundered on the issue of the incumbent's property rights.<sup>284</sup>

Following the proposals given to Shelburne by the Commissioners for Examining the Public Accounts in 1782, when William Pitt began his first ministry in 1784 he implemented, in 1785, the Commission of Inquiry on Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments in the Public Offices, based largely on the results of the Commission for Examining the Public Accounts.<sup>285</sup> While its title suggested a fairly narrow scope of practice, in reality Pitt also charged the Commission with investigating how government departments might be reformed or reorganised in order to eliminate corrupt practices, improve efficiency and save the administration money through the recommendation of pensions, ranks, and salaries along with securities against misconduct.<sup>286</sup> This remit mirrored Pitt's attempts to reform the Parliamentary system and the concept of rotten boroughs etc., continuing the push for professionalism, into which Middleton now felt able to thrust the naval shore establishment. This new Commission was to be the vehicle by which Middleton would eventually begin a long line of successful attempts to reorganise the shore establishment of the Navy to his own rigorous standards and satisfaction, all of which were based along the same lines of policy, though he would have to wait a long time to see the first of these attempts bear fruit. With the Commission on Fees having the capacity to recommend changes to the ways in which Boards were structured, fulfilling the task of recommending better ways to transact business, Middleton realised that, alongside the abolition of the various gratuities and emoluments present at the Navy Board, he could also effect a restructuring of the Board's constitution itself. By doing this, the scope for the employment of specialised knowledge could be further entrenched and streamlined by

<sup>283</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp.337-45, letter dated Hertford Street, 8<sup>th</sup> February 1790 – Middleton to Pitt. 284 Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* pp. 86-87.

<sup>285</sup> For a detailed view of the history and work of the Commission on Fees, see Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees'.

<sup>286</sup> The official remit gave the Commissioners the task of 'inquir[ing] into the fees, gratuities, perquisites, and emoluments, which are, or lately have been, received in the several public offices...; and to report such observations as may occur to them for the better conducting and managing the business transacted.' See also Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 59; pp. 64-65.

giving greater focus for various aspects of business via the introduction of several subcommittees under the Comptroller, who would remain as a general head, giving himself greater powers while increasing the efficiency, focus, and professionalism of the whole.

In what has been described as 'long memoranda and expert testimony'<sup>287</sup> Middleton wrote to the chairman of the Commission, Francis Baring, to outline the work he believed was necessary to reform the Navy Board to what was required in the late-eighteenth-century, after over a hundred years had passed since the reforms of Pepys had set its present structure.<sup>288</sup> Among these was the advice that the Navy Board should be increased in size from seven (although the Treasurer never sat on the Board by this point) to ten Principal Officers and Commissioners (with the Treasurer no longer included), with those then being divided into three separate committees; one for Store-keeping, one for Correspondence, and one for Accounts. This would allow further specialisation in offices and would allow members to work faster and more efficiently, unobstructed by the distractions of work that fell outside their area of expertise, thus enabling them to get through more of their business without time being dedicated to other matters with which they could not assist.

Middleton though, perhaps mindful that smaller groups, unchecked by a wider body, could allow corruption to seep in, put in the caveat that all committees would act as checks upon the other when business came to be read to the Board as a whole, thus keeping the old committee structure in place to a certain extent. This new structure would at once streamline and further complicate the business of the Navy Board, a circumstance only to be rectified by the recommendations of the Commission of Revision twenty years later. While small, expert committees were a step forward from the organisational structure of all business being discussed by the whole Board at once, even by members who were not immediately concerned with it, the fact that any important work done would be discussed by the entire Board as a kind of insurance policy had the potential to slow the process down again.<sup>289</sup> While the Navy Board was a professional body, and government officials as a whole had become more concerned with accountability and public duty over the course of the eighteenth-century, the general board structure was symptomatic of an archaic

<sup>287</sup> Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 66.

<sup>288</sup> The whole of Middleton's lengthy letter to Baring can be found in Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 235-50. The recommendations are comprehensive in their scope and forethought, and it is little wonder that the commissioners were content to take Middleton's recommendations with only minor alterations as their report concerning the Navy Board.

<sup>289</sup> C. I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 20-21. Hamilton rightly says that 'Middleton concentrated and speeded-up decision-making, but at the cost of accentuating the expense and laboriousness of the system as a whole.'

government culture where individuals in a position of public trust were not thought to possess a sufficient degree of personal and public probity to be allowed to operate alone, hence the need for the checks and balances a board structure brought.<sup>290</sup> While Middleton's new structure brought better implementation of specialist knowledge and experience through the new committees, the expedient of having matters also checked by the Board as a whole gave Middleton insurance against accusations of laziness or corruption creeping into these committees, while also ensuring that he, as Comptroller, would maintain overall control of all matters passing through the Board. It was not a perfect solution, but it was an important first step and, with Middleton's work-ethic galvanising the Board, and the lighter load of business during the 1780s than was to come over the following thirty years, it would have sufficed well at the time. From 1808, these committees would also be implemented into the Victualling Office, showing that, for the time, they possessed some value to government.

The Commissioners on Fees, overworked and with failing faculties,<sup>291</sup> received the work that Middleton had prepared gratefully, happy to allow a man with intimate professional knowledge of the department and its requirements in the late-eighteenth-century to put down the basis of the changes that were needed, and simply reused most of his work in their reports.<sup>292</sup> The reports, once submitted, recommended that Middleton, as Comptroller, be allowed to superintend the whole business of the Navy Office, not just sit as a chairman, first among equals, making him, according to Gardiner, 'The Tyrant of Somerset House in name and deed,<sup>293</sup> perhaps a touch dramatic, but applicable to the level of authority he would then possess. Middleton, unfortunately, due to political circumstances beyond his control, would not get to see these reforms undertaken during his time as Comptroller, although they would be immensely important in the years after they were implemented in 1796, and amended in 1806-08, as they would allow the Navy Board to better deal with the hugely increased amount of work that the late French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars would bring. Expanded personnel and improved structure at the Navy Board would help to administer the largest fleet in the world and ensure that the blockade of continental Europe was possible. As the testimony of Robert Gregson has already shown, it was predominantly through the supreme efforts of Middleton and his driving of the other Board

<sup>290</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, pp. 12-13.

<sup>291</sup> Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 63. Baring was becoming deaf, while another commissioner, John Dick, was becoming blind, but Middleton was more than happy to act as those men's eyes and ears.

<sup>292</sup> Breihan 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' p. 66.

<sup>293</sup> Gardiner, The British Admiralty, p. 181.

members that so much had been done during the American War and the peace of the 1780s, in spite of, rather than because of, the structure and size of the Board.

Once the reports of the Commission on Fees had been submitted to the Privy Council, it seemed that Middleton's planned reforms were about to bear fruit in the autumn of 1788. What nobody could have foreseen at the time though, was a combination of the King's illness and the ensuing Regency Crisis. This took Pitt's mind, and the attention of the Government, away from the reforms suggested throughout the 1780s as they attempted to stabilise the Government at a time of uncertain international politics.<sup>294</sup> Added to these circumstances would be the embarrassment caused by the Commission on Fees' bungled handling of their investigation of the Post Office,<sup>295</sup> which meant that the plans drawn up by the Commission were swiftly forgotten and merely handed to a special committee of the Privy Council for deliberation, a committee which did not meet until 1792.<sup>296</sup>

Middleton was left nonplussed by the entire affair, perhaps unsurprising owing to the political nature of the goings on behind the scenes that had led to the sudden shelving of the reports, especially after the King's illness had abated and Government had returned to normal. Seeing that he could do no more within the Navy Board as things stood, Middleton sent out several final letters to Pitt, pleading with him to once again take up the cause of reform in the naval departments, stating what needed to be done, promising greater economy, and benefits for Britain as a whole in any future conflicts.<sup>297</sup> When it became clear to Middleton that no help would be forthcoming after several letters to Pitt and Chatham, (the new First Lord after Howe resigned), fell on deaf ears regarding the implementation of the schemes of revision,<sup>298</sup> he offered his resignation as a last ditch

<sup>294</sup> Around this time the Dutch Crisis was occurring, to be followed soon thereafter by the Nootka Sound Crisis with Spain. Added to all of this was the escalating state of tension within France, culminating in the French Revolution.

<sup>295</sup> See Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' pp. 69-72. The work on the Post Office came after a series of political battles between Pitt and Charles Grey, concerning Grey's uncle, Lord Tankerville, the Postmaster General until 1786, when he was asked to resign by Pitt owing to disagreements within the office. When the Commissioners took up the work on the Post Office they produced what Breihan calls, 'their only passionate exercise', but were sloppy with their facts, opening Pitt up to criticism once they were called to account for their inaccuracies. They also criticised the abuses to the system that Tankerville had discovered, and the disagreements stemming from the same time he had been asked to resign.

<sup>296</sup> Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees' pp. 72-75. As a result of the Commissioners tenth report, that of the Post Office, Pitt was furious and quickly acted to suppress the Commission and its reports, refused to issue them any further instructions, and failed to renew their statute in 1789, leaving fourteen offices yet to be investigated. The reports were handed to a select committee of the Privy Council, and were not made public until 1793, after a follower of Shelburne asked about them in the Commons.
297 Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 337-45, letter dated 8 February 1790 – Middleton to Pitt.

<sup>298</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II p. 319, letter dated Berkley Square, 7<sup>th</sup> March 1789 – Lord Chatham to Middleton; pp. 320-322, letter dated May 1789 – Middleton to Pitt, rough copy, endorsed 'not yet sent'; p. 332, letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> December 1789 – Middleton to Lord Chatham; pp. 347-55, letter dated Hertford Street, 8<sup>th</sup>

attempt to get the reforms implemented, citing the fact that he felt 'the present situation of the navy office could afford me no means of continuing any longer useful.'<sup>299</sup>

## *How the Growing Professionalism of the Navy Board Enabled the Coppering of the <u>Battle Fleet</u>*

One of the most important measures in the American War was the coppering of the Royal Navy, a measure which also showed the professional knowledge of the Navy Board, and how its acceptance of a measure could be critical in getting said measure accepted and implemented throughout the Navy. Additionally, the process of coppering demonstrates the ways in which Middleton pushed the Navy Board to alter its traditionally-minded, reactionary, and conservative approach, and become a more modern, bureaucratic department. The entire process will be used here as a useful case study into how the Navy Board was capable of overseeing such a vast technical process and responding to the problems that emerged as a result. It will also show how the professional knowledge of the Board was essential in the matter, and will demonstrate the ways in which Middleton worked to further professionalise the Board.

Methods of sheathing a ship's bottom were almost as old as wooden sailing ships themselves, but metal sheathing had never before been accepted as a widespread alternative to traditional wooden sheathing, primarily because of the much higher cost, and unknown levels of benefit it would provide.<sup>300</sup> The Navy Board was privy to several reports gathered throughout the previous decades by the time Middleton came to the Board, but neither the Navy Board nor the Admiralty was convinced of the propriety of coppering larger ships than the frigates and sloops that had been coppered for the experiments.<sup>301</sup> This was due to the fact that the experiments had turned up evidence that the copper or lead sheathing previously trialled adversely affected the iron bolts that the ships were fastened with, a process now known to be galvanic corrosion, but which was not understood at the time. At the start of Middleton's Comptrollership, for example, in September 1778, one finds letters from the Admiralty to the Navy Board enquiring about whether ships of the line might be coppered, presumably as a thought on how to increase the effectiveness of the small British

February 1790 – Middleton to Pitt.

<sup>299</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 346-47, letter dated Hertford Street, 15<sup>th</sup> March 1790 – Middleton to Pitt; pp. 347-350, letter dated 1790 – Resignation, draft in clerk's writing, endorsed 'reasons for resigning the office'.
300 Cock, 'The Finest Invention in the World', pp. 446-459.

<sup>301</sup> Cock 'The Finest Invention in the World' pp. 451-55. Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 256-59, letter dated Hussar in Bull Bay, December 20<sup>th</sup> 1777 – Captain Salter to Sandwich.

fleet available at the time. The response was characteristically cautious from the Navy Board, which instead recommended that two 50-gun ships be coppered as a further experiment before the critically important ships of the line were risked.<sup>302</sup> In late 1778 though, Middleton learned from a Liverpool shipbuilder a method of insulating the copper sheathing from the ironwork in ships' hulls by means of thick, tarred paper. This method had been tried out on a 44-gun ship (presumed to be the *Jupiter*) and once Middleton and the Navy Board had the results of this experiment, a further request for information by the Admiralty on coppering ships of the line was met with much greater expectation of success than previously by the Navy Board.<sup>303</sup>

While this method would, in practice, prove not to be as effective as first hoped, Middleton was at once convinced that a solution had been found and resolved to push through the issue of coppering the fleet. Armed with the evidence of the experiments along with reports and requests from officers who had experience with coppered ships,<sup>304</sup> and convinced that copper sheathing was a viable alternative both in terms of cost (with the opening of several new copper mines in north Wales)<sup>305</sup> and protection from fouling, the Board, led by Middleton, moved forward with the process of sheathing the ships of the Royal Navy in copper. In this they were assisted by the experience and knowledge that they alone possessed at this time, of the measures required to maintain, refit, and repair the fleet in concert with the dockyards that they administered. What made the process of coppering the fleet different to normal innovations was the length of time the process took, and the amendments made to the process as time went by; problems were encountered and dealt with, and methods previously thought foolproof proved anything but.<sup>306</sup> It was also a departure from more traditional, reactive measures, and insistence on tried and true methods, with more modernised bureaucratic thinking as its replacement. The measure of coppering looked to the future and the time and resources required, financial as well as material, needed to be closely monitored. Methods also needed to be constantly assessed and, if necessary, changed. It would be the coppering of the fleet that would in effect 'make' Middleton's career within the naval administration as a progressive, professional,

<sup>302</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing into the Royal Navy' pp. 299-309, p. 301.

<sup>303</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 301-02.

<sup>304</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. I pp. 410-11 – letter dated Bristol, Port Royal, Jamaica, 25<sup>th</sup> April 1778, Sir Peter Parker to Sandwich. Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. II pp. 94-96, letter dated Victory, at sea, 20 June 1778 – From Keppel; pp. 158-62, letter dated Victory, at sea, 8 September 1778 – From Keppel; pp. 163-67, letter dated Victory, at sea, 13 September 1778, wind easterly – From Keppel.

<sup>305</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 303.

<sup>306</sup> Nation Archives ADM 106/2508 'Standing Orders to Yards 1756-1782'; ADM 106/2509 'Standing Orders to Yards 1783-1791.'

knowledgeable, successful bureaucrat, one who could be relied upon to get a job done. That the process of coppering was significant is well-known, but the purpose of this study is to highlight how the process reflected the changing methods and ethos that the Navy Board had by the 1780s, and how Middleton assisted in those changes. In order to underline the significance of the forward thinking nature of coppering, it must be understood that it was the Admiralty, not the Navy Board, that had been the engine of innovation throughout the eighteenth-century, with the Navy Board stating in 1752 that it was opposed to 'any Innovation' upon the Admiralty enquiring into the possibility of taskwork being introduced into the dockyards.<sup>307</sup> The Navy Board was conservative by the very nature of its constitution and the work that it did, a trait it shared with many other public boards that relied on time-tested practices known to produce results. It was also dismissive of the attitudes of the Admiralty, seeing the senior Board as mere political amateurs, and was backed by the attitudes of the dockyard officers in its conservative views.<sup>308</sup> Because of this, Middleton's influence in forcing the Board to attempt new innovations so quickly, and so thoroughly, persisting with the new innovations despite problems arising, is a noteworthy achievement and moreover, a significant step forward towards modernising the Navy Board. While Knight accuses Middleton's reminisces (in 1803) regarding the process of coppering the fleet of self-serving inaccuracies, in that it was he who persuaded a reluctant First Lord and Admiralty to accept coppering, in his description of how the watertight seal was discovered, how Middleton's change of opinion occurred, and how the process of coppering the fleet began in earnest, he directly contradicts his earlier assertion when all facts are considered.<sup>309</sup>

Starting in February 1779 with orders for two new ships of the line, the *Invincible* and *Russel* (74s), to receive the new sheathing, by May the order had been given for all ships of the line to be coppered as they came in for refitting or repair.<sup>310</sup> By July the process had been extended to include frigates. This break-neck speed of adoption of a hitherto uncertain method of sheathing can be due only to the confidence of the Board in its professional opinion and knowledge, for only with Middleton's conviction that a solution had been found to the problem of corrosion do we find such wholesale coppering of large numbers of ships. In the year since the declaration of war with France, the international situation had not changed to such a degree that desperation had set in, for the situation

<sup>307</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, p. 16.

<sup>308</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 190.

<sup>309</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 301-02; 307-08.

<sup>310</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' pp. 301-02.

remained as dire as it had done when Sandwich began his warnings of France's state of preparedness. Moreover, until Middleton became convinced that the process of coppering could be made safe, the Navy Board was unwilling to commit to more than piecemeal experiments on ships of up to fifty-guns, and the Admiralty would not at this point have attempted to overrule or gainsay the professional knowledge of the Navy Board. In September 1779, a letter from Middleton to Sandwich outlined that the yards were prepared to refit and copper the Channel fleet, which would be a key factor in allowing the British to deal with the combined power of the French and Spanish armada that had made itself master of the Channel briefly a month earlier.<sup>311</sup> It was estimated that the process would be completed by early spring 1780, in time to allow the fleet to retake the seas for the traditional campaigning season, meaning thirty-two ships of the line, including ten threedecked ships would be coppered in a little over six months.<sup>312</sup> Knight rightly notes that 'here, Middleton's role cannot be sufficiently emphasised.'<sup>313</sup> Without Middleton to urge the dockyards to work at their peak capacity over the winter months to copper the fleet, and convince the Admiralty that the process was coming along well, other concerns such as ordinary repairs, and the building of new ships, might have caused the process to become piecemeal, meaning that only parts of the fleet would end up coppered, a circumstance which made fleets much more difficult to manoeuvre due to the differing speeds of the ships. Middleton was aware of this fact as, even though he was not at the Admiralty, he was still in close contact with the Channel Fleet through personal correspondence with Admiral Kempenfelt, who often wrote to Middleton extolling the virtues of coppered ships and how they could transform the effectiveness of the fleet, especially at the time the Combined Armada was making its presence felt in the narrow waters of the Channel.<sup>314</sup> Along with this information, Middleton also received testimonials from officers such as Walter Young and Samuel Hood regarding the fact that coppered ships sailed much better and faster, were easier to handle, and made better use of light winds.<sup>315</sup> Finally, as evidence that coppered and uncoppered ships in the same squadrons would prove difficult to handle,

<sup>311</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. III p. 102, letter dated 15 September 1779 - from the Comptroller.

<sup>312</sup> Middleton set down two ships of 100-guns, eight of 90, one new 80, one old 80, thirteen 74s, six 64s and one 50-gun ship to be coppered. Half would refit at Portsmouth, one or two (presumably the smallest) at Chatham and Woolwich, with the rest at Plymouth.

<sup>313</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 307.

<sup>314</sup> J.K. Laughton, (ed.), Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813 Volume I Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXII (1907), pp. 296-97, letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 1779 – Richard Kempenfelt to Middleton.

<sup>315</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. I*, pp. 66-67, letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> July 1780 – Walter Young to Middleton; p. 132, letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> December 1781 – Hood to Middleton.

there was an appreciation by Young that convoy escort duties should be confined to uncoppered ships, as those who had been coppered sailed too fast for the merchants to stay in contact with easily.<sup>316</sup> Through this, Middleton's professional appreciation of not just logistical, but strategic and operational matters shows, as he realised that in order for coppering to be an effective measure, entire squadrons would need to be coppered at once. With the British fleets at a numerical disadvantage throughout the early years of the American War compared to the Bourbon powers, speed, manoeuvrability, and cohesion were the only effective weapons available to the British admirals. Only by having all their ships coppered could they hope to use them without fear of the slowest ships being cut off by the larger, if more unwieldy enemy fleets, and Middleton urged that the fullest use be made of the advantage, particularly before the enemy realised the advantages themselves and began the process of coppering their own fleets.<sup>317</sup>

During the course of the war, minor problems were solved quickly and efficiently, as should be expected of a body well used to overcoming minor design flaws when all of its creations, whether a part of the dockyards or a sailing vessel, were constructed by hand, and very often to different specifications each time. The dockyards were instructed to report back to the Board on the state of the bottom of each coppered ship taken into dock in order that the results gathered about the process were comprehensive. It was discovered, for example, that the copper plates by the bow were damaged or removed when weighing the anchors, so thicker plates were substituted at the bow and all anchor stocks were to be rounded off so that no sharp edges remained to snag the copper plates as they were raised, with orders given that the boatswains should take greater care. It was also found that the copper wore away much faster than had been anticipated, and thicker plates had to be applied all over ships' hulls in place of the thinner sheets that the Navy Board had hoped would suffice. Countersunk nails were used in place of nails of the traditional sort and were found to be vastly superior. Filling or studding the false keels of larger ships with copper nails was also found to be a superior way of protecting them rather than covering them with copper sheets, which could easily be damaged when hauling them in and out of dock.<sup>318</sup> All of this demonstrates that this was a systematic, procedural approach by an increasingly professional body, and one previously unused to driving forward innovation. While information on coppering had been gathered throughout the eighteenth-century, with

<sup>316</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. I, p. 82, letter dated 15th November 1780 – Walter Young to Middleton.

<sup>317</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. III* pp. 172-77, memorandum in Middleton's writing, no date (estimated between 1-15 September 1779).

<sup>318</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 302.

several trials during the previous two decades,<sup>319</sup> this work during the early 1780s was based not on reactionary measures, which would have served to have each dockyard perform a different procedure on each ship that presented with difficulties, but rather on a professional bureaucratic system of information gathering, compiling, analysis, and finally, procedural adaptation to meet the circumstances arising.

The Navy Board as a whole also worked hard to maintain an adequate and inexpensive supply of copper for the dockyards. This had the advantage of keeping yet another aspect of the naval business in professional hands rather than allowing another body, such as the Treasury, to acquire the copper needed for the Navy. By taking the business on themselves the Navy Board could order the correct amount of copper and, through their choice of suppliers, maintain the highest standard of quality. At the time the major sources of copper in Britain came from new mines sunk in north Wales, which were being heavily exploited by Thomas Williams, and it was Williams that the Navy Board decided to use as their supplier. The Navy Board also decided to use only one contractor for their supplies, William Forbes, who was the London agent for Thomas Williams, thus ensuring a clear and concise relationship between Government and their copper supply.<sup>320</sup> By this method the stocks of copper were gradually and smoothly built up, with the establishment being set in May 1780 at forty tons of copper per yard, thirty of which were to be lacquered with white lead. The supply of paper from London was also found to be deficient, as it reached Portsmouth damp and frequently rotten. A local supplier was found instead, who supplied the same product, but at a cheaper rate, and improved quality. While shortages did occur at the beginning of 1780 when the process was first going ahead without restraint, by the end of the year delays had been ended due to supplies once again reaching even the furthest yards.<sup>321</sup> The overcoming of these problems, and the sourcing of an adequate supply of relatively inexpensive copper, again alleviated any remaining concerns that may have been harboured about coppering, and ensured also that the process did not become prohibitively expensive, thus forcing measures to be cut short.

By the end of the war Sandwich could claim that over three hundred ships had been sheathed with copper (eighty-two ships of the line, fourteen of 50-guns, one hundred and fifteen frigates and one hundred and two sloops). Knight praises Middleton by saying 'it was largely due to Middleton's obstinacy that the Navy Board's innovation of 1779

<sup>319</sup> For more information see Cock 'The Finest Invention in the World' in particular pp. 451-55.

<sup>320</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 303.

<sup>321</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 303.

became the orthodoxy of 1783.<sup>322</sup> At the same time though he criticises the lack of testing done on the watertight seal and the slowness of the adoption of a copper alloy bolt, saying that "England's technological victory' may have had its effect at sea during the war, but the real technological victory was not won until after the war had been fought."<sup>323</sup>

Perhaps if Middleton and the Board had waited for the method of using thick, tarred paper as a watertight seal to receive a full and thorough test period it would never have been used, but the question must be asked of whether the nation could afford for such a lengthy process to have been undertaken in the face of a superior enemy and potential defeat at sea, taking away Britain's gains in the Seven Years' War at a stroke. The answer must be that such a test period was best suited to a prolonged span of peace, rather than the time of mobilising the fleet to face its greatest test to date. By using copper sheathing, even had it eventually only been used as a temporary measure during the American War, Britain was able to meet her enemies at sea on more even terms, and eventually win the only conclusive actions of the war from 1780-82. Without coppering it is highly doubtful that this could have been achieved. Additionally, had the process of coppering the fleet not been started in 1778-79, albeit with an ultimately faulty system of preventing corrosion, it is doubtful whether the process would ever have been undertaken at all, nor would a copper alloy bolt ever have been developed in 1783. While the watertight seal never worked fully, the process of galvanic corrosion was not understood, and as a result, methods for its prevention which were unlikely to work must be expected in a situation where trial and error of different preventative measures, rather than scientific principal, was the only course of action available. Eventually it took the spectre of the Admiralty removing copper sheathing from ships altogether for William Forbes, the contractor for the copper plates, to develop an affordable copper alloy bolt in conjunction with the Navy's supplier Thomas Williams, lest the largest consumer of copper in the country pull out of the market for lack of secure, affordable, and durable fastenings.<sup>324</sup> Middleton may be blamed for being too rash and hasty but he may have been left with little choice, especially if requests for information from the Admiralty can be taken to mean that they themselves were interested in coppering the fleet in its entirety.

There is also the significant fact to consider that if the dockyards had thoroughly followed the method of applying the tarred paper and copper plates as set down by the

<sup>322</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' pp. 307-08.

<sup>323</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' pp. 307-08.

<sup>324</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 306.

Navy Board, the method may have proved as watertight as Middleton had hoped upon being shown the original experiment. This point of view can be borne out somewhat by the fact that corrosion varied from ship to ship.<sup>325</sup> Again though, exertions during wartime could not hope to be as thorough as either required or desired through necessity of getting through as much work as possible in the shortest amount of time.<sup>326</sup> When one considers the titanic number of ships of all ratings that required coppering by six yards, with only Portsmouth and Plymouth easily able to receive the larger ships of the line due to the silting of the Medway, it is unsurprising that time and adequate supervision could not be provided to ensure absolute water-tightness between copper and hulls, especially when general repairs and maintenance also had to be carried out on those ships coming in to dock. In any case, the fact that wooden sailing ships 'worked', i.e. their timbers would move about minutely and then resettle, especially in hard weather, may have rendered any attempt to prevent water from entering between copper plates and iron bolts ineffective. Overall, there were simply too many variables, ranging from the fact that holes drilled in the copper plates could sit directly over a bolt and let water through, to the state of the timbers and caulking possibly being inadequate to provide a watertight layer, or the lacquering not being applied in time before it hardened.<sup>327</sup> It would be unfair to blame Middleton for these facts, or for being ignorant of the electrolytic properties of seawater on iron and copper. Middleton did as much as he could to further a process that he (along with the rest of the Navy Board, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and indeed the King) felt could prove the difference for the Navy against the Bourbon powers and without which it would seem certain that the war would have been comprehensively lost.

Where Middleton and the Navy Board could come under fire is for holding back the acceptance and implementation of copper-alloy bolts to be used alongside the copper plates, and their dogged adherence to the method of using paper and various compositions to create a seal between copper and iron, once it had been made obvious by persistent faults that the system was flawed. In this they displayed many of the hallmarks of the deeply conservative Navy Boards of the eighteenth-century, and moved away from the open-minded, analytical, and progressive approach that the initial coppering process had brought. As previously detailed, the watertight seal was subject to too many variables to have been a universal success without automated, precision manufacturing. The Admiralty was

<sup>325</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 305.

<sup>326</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' pp. 305-06.

<sup>327</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' pp. 305-06.

seriously considering the possibility of removing the copper from ships' bottoms before they were put into Ordinary, but such a suggestion was firmly rejected by the dockyard officers as impractical considering the work already required to lay up the fleet, which had grown larger than the dockyards could support.<sup>328</sup> During this time, until late 1783, the Navy Board and senior dockyard officials maintained that the system of thick brown paper and composition would afford sufficient protection from corrosion as long as the work was carried out correctly.<sup>329</sup> It was not until December 1783 that the Navy Board asked the question of the dockyard officers whether or not all copper-sheathed ships should be fastened with copper, following the development of the new bolt made from an alloy of copper and zinc.<sup>330</sup> It would then not be until 1786 that the final order was given by the Admiralty that all ships should be refastened with copper, three years after the zinc-copper alloy bolt from Williams and Forbes had been approved for use by the Navy Board.<sup>331</sup> While cost to government was considerable,<sup>332</sup> the necessity of refastening the fleet on the grounds of safety, when the process of coppering had already been so costly, and so much of Britain's superiority at sea rested on it being retained, surely merited the Board allowing itself to be proved wrong about the watertight seal.

How much Middleton's own pride and obstinacy can be blamed for this cannot be known, but it can be guessed. A man with such unshakeable confidence in his own judgement cannot have been happy to see the method he had championed for so long proved wrong, and it must have rankled that eventually he had to bow to superior evidence and sanction the refastening of the fleet. The eventual 'trial period' for the watertight seal was eight years, ordinarily a span of time that would have been allowed in the lateeighteenth-century, and in perfect circumstances it would have been far better to have pursued the idea of testing it on several small and medium sized ships instead of coppering the entire fleet, but such luxuries could not be afforded during the American War. When

<sup>328</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' pp. 305-06.

<sup>329</sup> In 1783 the Deptford officials reported that protection would be complete if the 'bolts be well drawn and well driven, and their heads when spread with driving, trimmed with a cold chisel, and driven a quarter inch within the surface of the plank, and that be filled up with paste, and covered with tarred canvas, before the bottom is payed with composition; and if the coppered sheets be well lacquered, and time be given to harden the lacquer, and the bottom well payed with composition, no bad effect can arise from the copper.' National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, ADM BP/4, 5 November 1783.

<sup>330</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 306.

<sup>331</sup> For a full account of the process that led to the copper-zinc alloy bolt coming into use, along with useful overview of the coppering situation as whole see J.R. Harris 'Copper and Shipping in the Eighteenth Century' in *Economic History Review Volume XIX Issue 3December 1966* (Welwyn Garden City: Broadwater Press, 1966) pp. 550-568, pp. 555-60

<sup>332</sup> The Board estimated that the cost of copper fastenings would equate to around £2,272 10s for a 100-gun ship, and £1,559 for a 74. The equivalent cost for iron fastenings was £630 for a 100-gun ship, and £247 for a 74. National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, ADM BP/4, 5 November, 1783.

the peace was finally fully established the measure could be taken in hand and made good. At the same time though, the Navy Board itself was a proud institution, with sure belief in its position and reputation as the non-political, professional naval Board, with knowledge that the Admiralty could not hope to possess in the eighteenth-century. Middleton could not force through measures that the entirety of the Office was against, as seen in the matter of reforms regarding fee-taking, and it stands to reason that in this instance the professional knowledge of the Navy Board prejudiced it against the idea that it could have been wrong in some regard where the upkeep of the fleet and naval innovation was concerned.

Despite his earlier obstinacy, Middleton, with the Navy Board behind him, was able to rescue the situation through good organisation once it had been proven and finally accepted that the watertight seal was unworkable, or at the very least, was proving very problematic. In July 1783, after some of the Commissioners had personally witnessed the problems present in the ironworking of the Edgar, Fortitude, and Alexander (74s), the Navy Board sent out orders not to re-copper any ships that were not fastened with copper, of which there were very few at the time, and reports were ordered from the various master shipwrights enquiring into their thoughts on how best to proceed with the present situation.<sup>333</sup> As expected, the shipwrights echoed the Navy Board's own thoughts that the copper sheathing was far too valuable monetarily, protectively, and technologically to give up and revert to wooden sheathing as detailed previously.<sup>334</sup> However, no yard could come up with a solution to the problem of ensuring that the join between copper and iron remained watertight. It was thought by the master shipwrights at Portsmouth that as the ships worked and strained while at sea, water would inevitably be let in, while those at Woolwich had determined that, all things considered, coppered ships could last no more than three to four years at sea on any service as things stood.<sup>335</sup> Only one conclusion was definitively reached: ships that were to be sheathed in copper should be fastened with copper.<sup>336</sup> Following this consensus of opinion the Navy Board recommended to the Admiralty that all ships should be fastened with copper bolts.<sup>337</sup>

<sup>333</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 305.

<sup>334</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich MID/9/1 'Yard Reports Concerning Copper Sheathing.' The dockyards felt that the additional protection from the worm that copper offered over wooden sheathing was advantage enough to keep it, but also mentioned that the frequency of docking a fleet in Ordinary sheathed once more with wood would take additional time and detract from the essential maintenance work ongoing on the fleet and dockyards themselves during the 1780s.

<sup>335</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich MID/9/1 'Yard Reports Concerning Copper Sheathing.' 336 National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich MID/9/1 'Yard Reports Concerning Copper Sheathing.'

<sup>337</sup> Hattendorf, Knight, Pearsall, Rodger, Till, (eds.), *British Naval Documents* p. 501, letter dated 5 November

<sup>1783 –</sup> Navy Board to Philip Stephens, Secretary of the Admiralty.

This process was again overseen by Middleton and the Navy Board, as they persuaded the Admiralty that the potential 400 per cent increase in costs compared to iron would be worth the extra money spent, and reduce Britain's dependence on foreign iron imports.<sup>338</sup> While Middleton was fanciful in estimating how long the copper bolts would last, he did what he needed to do in order that the process of copper sheathing might be saved. When the process had been ratified by the Admiralty, the Navy Board contracted with copper merchants directly, benefiting from the expansion of the industry through placing huge orders, meaning that costs declined overall during the 1780s, while standards of quality were maintained.<sup>339</sup> The Navy Board also bought all the copper that was to be distributed and sold on to the merchant yards when building, thereby ensuring that only good quality copper would be used in the construction of contract built ships, preventing those yards cutting costs on expensive copper components.<sup>340</sup> The work was ordered to be done as ships were taken in hand for routine maintenance, so that dockyards did not become swamped by the entire fleet coming in for emergency work on its coppering.

Coppering was an enormous undertaking on a scale never before attempted, using methods rarely tried previously. During the American War, in the face of overwhelming numbers of enemy ships in close proximity to the British coast, the prospect of having a coppered fleet to harass and out-manoeuvre an enemy fleet not similarly sheathed allowed a modicum of comfort and confidence on the part of the administrators when assessing the situation, and commanders on station could feel more assured of the condition of their ships and their ability to utilise them in the face of an enemy.<sup>341</sup> Pitched battles would not have brought favourable results had the British engaged on traditional terms, but by using the speed of their faster ships, they could await more favourable circumstances of weather or bad-handling, and exploit them to their fullest.<sup>342</sup> It not only allowed Britain to win the American Revolutionary War at sea against France and Spain through the Moonlight Battle and the Battle of the Saintes, but it meant that the Royal Navy remained in good condition

<sup>338</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, MID/9/1 'Navy Office, November 1784'.

<sup>339</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, p. 107.

<sup>340</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 107-08.

<sup>341</sup> Barnes, and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. II* pp. 158-62, letter dated Victory, at sea, 8 September 1778 – Keppel to Sandwich. The Commander in Chief of the Channel Fleet requested that Sandwich experiment with coppering the ships of the line, this before the Navy Board recommended that the procedure could be done with confidence. Keppel said that 'If active war is likely to be pursued, I do think the expense upon calculation is not too great that at least ten of your 74-gun ships should be coppered.'

<sup>342</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. I pp. 296-97, letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 1779 – Richard Kempenfelt to Middleton; G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen, (eds.) The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782, Volume IV, 1781-82 Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXVIII (1938), pp. 61-62, letter dated 5<sup>th</sup> September 1781 – From the Comptroller.

throughout the 1780s, enabling fast mobilisation due to the ships in Ordinary still being in good structural condition during the Dutch, Nootka Sound, and Ochakov Crises of 1786-91, these effects continuing into the French Revolutionary War. Through this use of technology, Britain had achieved a decisive tactical and operational superiority over her rivals. Throughout it all Middleton was to the fore, exhorting dockyards and officials, winning over the King and First Lord to the necessity of implementing the measure, attempting, and finally succeeding in leading the Navy Board and dockyards to a method of preventing corrosion, despite setbacks, and ensuring that Britain's fleets would be capable of service in any waters around the world without fear of the worm. Of the process, Talbott in particular remarks

Coppering was a remarkable innovation, an audacious response to a wartime emergency, a program on which, it could plausibly be claimed, the national security depended. In leading it, Middleton displayed something of 'the wide-ranging curiosity, the need to impose order and the instinct for business', that Richard Ollard ascribes to Pepys.<sup>343</sup>

Middleton's legacy as Comptroller was ensured by the fact that a solution was found to the problem of the corrosion caused by coppering. Had it not been, it is doubtful whether Middleton would have remained so prominent a figure in naval administration thereafter, if his greatest innovation and accomplishment was found to be dangerous and not fully tested. The necessary work to remove the copper from ships' bottoms and the disgrace that surely would have accompanied it, would have meant that the repairing and resupplying of the fleet would have stalled if not failed altogether by 1790 and Britain's position would have been far weaker than it turned out to be, even with the work required to refasten the fleet with copper bolts.

## The Importance of Increased Professionalism When Preparing for Future Conflicts

There has been only one significant study into the critical period from 1783-90, despite the repairing and preparing of the fleet during this period being the main reasons why Britain was able to do so well during the early years of the French Revolutionary War.<sup>344</sup> While the greater institutions of the Government during this time, such as William Pitt's Sinking

<sup>343</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor, p. 56.

<sup>344</sup> Webb, 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet'.

Fund,<sup>345</sup> have been discussed, the work that Middleton, Pitt, and the Navy Board did alongside this greater financial regulation and spending deserves further study.

The first aspect of this work began during the American War itself as Middleton's Navy Board oversaw the building and launching of thirty-three ships of the line and one hundred and thirty-one ships of fifty guns or less over the five years from 1778 to 1783 from both the Royal dockyards and the merchant yards.<sup>346</sup> It was in large part due to Middleton's influence that the merchant yards were used to a much more extensive degree than they had been in previous conflicts as the Royal yards were taken up with repairs and the building of the largest three-decked ships.<sup>347</sup> By the implementation of this building program, the British fleet was able to grow to such a degree that by 1783 it was almost able to numerically match the French and Spanish fleets combined, with no sign of the building work slowing down.<sup>348</sup> This marked a departure from the practices of the past, for while the merchant yards had been used previously they had not been used to the same extent as during the American War owing to fears over the quality of the work that they produced. As a consequence, even when a large-scale building program had been required in previous wars, the tendency had been to use the merchant yards for smaller ships only.<sup>349</sup> Middleton, however saw the need to use the Royal yards for repairs on existing ships, and realised that the workforce readily available in the yards on the Thames could be used to build new ships. By constant checks and audits of the progress that the merchant yards were making, the Navy Board was able to make use of the yards that were close enough to London to be supervised either directly or by a representative from the dockyards, thereby making them a viable alternative, and by on-site supervision the overall standards of work were increased. Labourers would regularly pass between private and government employment, the merchant yards provided better pay but only employed men for the duration of a single contract, with longer working hours as a result, while the Royal yards provided job security, more manageable working hours, and promises of promotion and protection of

<sup>345</sup> Carl B. Cone, 'Richard Price and Pitt's Sinking Fund of 1786' *The Economic History Review, New Series, Vol. 4, No. 2* (1951), pp. 243-251

<sup>346</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 313.

<sup>347</sup> J.K. Laughton, (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron, 1758-1813, Volume III* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXIX (1910), pp. 15-21, On the State of the Navy, draft, dated April 1803.

<sup>348</sup> Glete, Navies and Nations, pp. 271-73 tables 23:13-23:14; p. 276, table 23:16.

<sup>349</sup> Daniel A. Baugh, British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), pp. 260-61; C.R. Merriman, Queen Anne's Navy, Documents Concerning the Administration of the Navy of Queen Anne 1702 – 1714 (London: Navy Records Society, vol. 103 1961), p. 62.

earnings in old age.<sup>350</sup> The two industrial centres then were not truly separate from one another, and by bringing the two systems closer together, the effectiveness and productivity of the whole was improved.

The overall effect of the measures undertaken during the late American War; of coppering, of building additional ships in the merchant yards, and of making emergency repairs and putting those repaired ships to sea on light duties in home waters only,<sup>351</sup> was a fleet of over one hundred ships of the line on paper but, as contemporary critics were only too keen to point out,352 many were in poor condition by the end of the war and would likely have struggled to perform in a line of battle had the Battle of the Saintes not finalised the struggle for power in the Caribbean, and in doing so convinced France and Spain against continuing the war. The importance though, was not on having every ship in perfect condition for war at sea, but simply to have the ships out, in order to counter the fleets of the enemy. The ships in poor condition could be used for harbour service and routine patrols in the Channel and close home waters in favourable conditions, enabling those ships in best repair to be used in the battle-fleets massing in the Caribbean. The Battle of the Saintes put Britain's colonies beyond the reach of the Bourbon powers and saved Jamaica. Emergency measures which Middleton and the Navy Board had played a great part in enabled Britain to do this, and from this position she was then to be able to maintain a two-power standard throughout the 1780s.<sup>353</sup>

The issue of keeping the fleet in readiness for war was instrumental in allowing Britain the best chance of winning the French Revolutionary War at sea. Faced with the loss of the Thirteen Colonies, and defeat in war for the first time in nearly a century, even if the losses were nowhere near what they might have been, the British Government throughout the 1780s was determined not to be caught so unprepared again.<sup>354</sup> The loss of control of the Channel to the Combined Armada also alerted the Government to the benefit of having the fleet in good condition and supply so that quick mobilisation was possible, thereby eliminating the traditional inconclusive nature of early-war engagements such as the Battle of Ushant in 1778, that led to the build-up of French and Spanish supremacy in the early

<sup>350</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 97-98.

<sup>351</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 24-37 – Memoranda of Advice, very rough draft in Middleton's writing, dated May 1804.

<sup>352</sup> Bullocke, *The Tomlinson Papers* pp. 51-53 – letter dated February 15<sup>th</sup>, Lieutenant Robert Tomlinson to Sir George Saville, Bart., M.P.

<sup>353</sup> Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham', pp. 314-15.

<sup>354</sup> Webb, 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet' pp. 194-96.
years of the American War.<sup>355</sup> The result was that the Government, led by William Pitt the Younger, was willing to allow more money to be spent up-keeping and repairing the fleet during the decade of peace, and allowed more men to be retained by both the Navy and dockyards, rather than the usual swathe of cutbacks that peace usually brought with it.<sup>356</sup> It had been this attitude in peacetime that had seen Britain relying on superior trade networks, economy, merchant shipping, and colonial exports to attain readiness before her rivals:<sup>357</sup> an attitude which had still been the prevalent way of thinking, and had served well, until France entered the War of American Independence in a greater state of readiness than Britain. The Government of the 1780s was determined not to make the same mistakes, while taking pains to reduce the National Debt by means other than reducing the Navy, the main cause of naval cutbacks in the 1770s.<sup>358</sup>

In this role, Middleton's talents came to the fore. He was a man who acknowledged himself as being unusual, in that he looked beyond the daily occurrences of office and the present political situation and instead planned for the future, what might be coming, and what needed to be done to ensure that Britain and the Navy were prepared and ready to meet it.<sup>359</sup> He also saw this opportunity as the perfect time to reform the goings on in the dockyards, especially after touring them and examining what was overstocked and what was wanted in the storehouses and wood-stocks.<sup>360</sup> Dismayed at the lack of organisation and resources, and at the tardiness of work in the Royal yards, Middleton determined to ensure that the yards, as well as the fleet, were ready to meet any future challenge.<sup>361</sup> New methods, systems, and buildings were instituted in order that the yards might be able to accommodate and supply the fleet with its non-perishable stores and furniture quickly

<sup>355</sup> Webb, 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet' p. 194. Webb says that Toulon (1744), Minorca (1756) for which Byng lost his life, and Ushant (1778) were all inconclusive actions due to the fleets on both sides being unprepared for naval warfare. In the usual instance though, British capacity for mobilisation and superior production enabled them to out-build their rivals. In the American War, however, the French had already begun building a long time before Britain, thus neutralising this British advantage, an advantage that would take even longer to recover once Spain entered the war.

<sup>356</sup> Webb 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet' pp. 196-201.

<sup>357</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 19-23 – letter dated Compton September 5<sup>th</sup> 1772, North to Sandwich.

<sup>358</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 19-23 – letter dated Compton September 5<sup>th</sup> 1772, North to Sandwich.

<sup>359</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice dated May 1804. Middleton said of Lord Vincent's administration 'It is evident their minds were not of the comprehensive kinds, and their views did not reach beyond the daily occurrences of office' when talking about the issue of building ships in the merchant yards, something that Middleton was a great proponent of.

<sup>360</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 185-189 – letter dated ? (possibly in response to the Admiralty's visitation of the dockyards on 13<sup>th</sup> September 1784), Navy Board to the Admiralty.

<sup>361</sup> Gardiner, The British Admiralty p. 179.

when it needed to be mobilised.<sup>362</sup> Any perishable supplies would usually come under the jurisdiction of the Victualling Board.

Middleton and the Navy Board proposed that each ship in the fleet have 'twelve months' war consumption' of supplies provided in storehouses in the dockyard where it was moored.<sup>363</sup> By this method there would be no snap price-rises upon mobilisation due to the dockyards needing to buy great quantities of supplies in a short amount of time. Also, ships could quickly and efficiently be made ready for sea when called upon, with only manning presenting a problem.<sup>364</sup> New methods of accepting and keeping stores and supplies were implemented and inventory controls were tightened, with fewer people able to access critical storehouses.<sup>365</sup> Upon receipt, new materials were marked with the King's broad arrow. Timber was then piled in pounds, masts and spars submerged in ponds and locks, with storehouses built in order to keep certain materials under cover. 88,000 loads of timber had been accumulated by the time Middleton left office, and sufficient masts for several years' consumption.<sup>366</sup> Middleton also proposed that the timber accumulated should be left to season, in order that a ready supply was in the dockyards in case a large building program was found necessary in future conflicts. Adding to this was the suggestion that no new ships be laid down, but that the dockyards' energies should be expended on keeping the existing fleet in good repair, thus saving on timber usage.<sup>367</sup> Other storehouses were subdivided into berths for each ship in Ordinary.<sup>368</sup> By this method, each ship, or ships of the same class, could be readied for sea with alacrity and could be sure that all they required was available to them. Many of these schemes were those that Sandwich had attempted to implement into the yards when he returned to the Admiralty in 1771, but as he was now out of office, it fell to Middleton to attempt to do what Sandwich was not able to. All these measures can be attributed simply to better organisation of the shore establishment, and simply providing what was required ahead of time. While such an attitude would not seem out of place in modern society, when compared to the reactionary, cost-shy attitudes of the eighteenth-century they seemed very progressive and far more

365 Gardiner, The British Admiralty pp. 179-80; Haas, A Management Odyssey, pp. 40-41.

<sup>362</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 194-97, letter dated Hertford Street, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1785 – Middleton to Pitt; pp. 197-208, letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1785 – Mr. Pitt's Queries by Middleton.

<sup>363</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 194-97, letter dated Hertford Street, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1785 – Middleton to Pitt. 364 Morriss *The Royal Dockyards During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* pp. 89-90.

<sup>366</sup> Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy 1652-1862* (Hamden, Conneticut: Archon Books, 1965), pp. 45-46.

<sup>367</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 194-97, letter dated Hertford Street, 12<sup>th</sup> December 1785 – Middleton to Pitt. 368 Morriss *The Royal Dockyards During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* pp. 89-90.

bureaucratic than was commonly the case, further suggesting that the Navy Board and dockyards were becoming modern, professional branches of government.

The rebuilding and repair of the fleet from its condition at the end of the American War also occupied a good deal of the Navy Board and Middleton's energy. A peacetime establishment of frigates and cutters to cruise home waters, and a force of guard-ships for the major yards was to be completed as soon as possible.<sup>369</sup> Following this, it was decided that Portsmouth and Plymouth would undertake the repair of the ships of the line, with those in best condition to be taken in hand first, their defects made good and repaired where possible, and then put into Ordinary. After the decision was made regarding replacing the iron fastenings with copper-alloy, the repair work was extended to include that procedure. Those ships beyond repair would be converted to hulks, broken up, or sold, with new ships being built to replace those lost. Sheerness, Deptford and Woolwich would service the frigates, sloops, brigs, and cutters due to the shallower draught of the Medway on which they were based with those ships then sailing to the Western yards to be moored up.<sup>370</sup> The Navy Board, led by Middleton, also recommended in the strongest terms that ships be left on the stocks, and roofed over where possible, in order firstly to allow the ships to season *in situ*, secondly to prevent dry-rot from occurring, and thirdly to allow a fresh supply of ships, which had no wear and tear on them, to be launched swiftly in the event of a mobilisation crisis.<sup>371</sup> By this method, Britain would acquire a ready supply of well-built, sturdy, and long-lived ships instead of the hastily built ships made from green timber that had been resorted to during the previous two wars.<sup>372</sup> There were additional financial benefits to this proposal as well. Once launched, ships required a berth in Ordinary, and the newly enlarged fleet was already exceeding the capacity of the wharves to contain them. Once put into Ordinary, ships would need painting, ventilating, and sheathing in copper. It was far more economical all around to keep ships on their stocks rather than launch them unnecessarily.<sup>373</sup> The longer new ships could remain on the stocks and slips, the more they could season, while the use of the oldest ships as the small peacetime force would allow the newest ships to be brought forward to fight any future

<sup>369</sup> The whole plan as related to the Admiralty by the Commissioners of the Navy Board can be found in National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, ADM BP/3, Navy Board to Admiralty, 5 November 1783. A rough draft, corrected by Middleton's hand can be found in NMM, MID 2/54.

<sup>370</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 98-99.

<sup>371</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, MID/2/26, March 1783, To Lord Keppel on the importance of bringing forward the fleet in peace.

<sup>372</sup> Barnes and Owen, *Sandwich Vol. I* pp. 19-23, letter dated Compton, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1772 – North to Sandwich.

<sup>373</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 99-100.

wars.<sup>374</sup> All in all these were sound tactical, strategic, organisational, and financial decisions, reasons, and suggestions from a professional body with long experience of doing the jobs assigned to it.

Alas for well-laid plans; while Keppel's Admiralty approved the schemes in principal, Howe's Admiralty did not, and, following dockyard visitations made without the Navy Board's knowledge, Howe's Admiralty ordered that several ships that were to have been roofed over be launched instead, thereby contributing to increased peacetime costs and peacetime manning issues.<sup>375</sup> The episode as a whole serves to indicate that it was Middleton and the Navy Board alone in this era of naval administration that possessed this sort of foresight and professional knowledge, and even a celebrated admiral such as Howe could not appreciate the nuances of economy, preparedness, and efficiency that the Navy Board could. Had the scheme been approved and acted upon, it is possible that the fleet would have been in even better condition come the mobilisations that were to follow later in the 1780s.

Disagreements such as this with Howe's Admiralty would come up time and again over the course of the four years that Howe sat as First Lord. Middleton had already established a formidable reputation as Comptroller by the time Howe came to the Admiralty and the two men came to see their relationship as a struggle for power.<sup>376</sup> Contributing to this was the redefinition of the Navy Board's perception of itself and how it sat alongside other government departments. In 1786 the Navy Office, along with the Victualling Office, was moved from its previous home at Crutched Friars, sited by the Tower of London and close to the government manufactories and storehouses, to the new government building at Somerset House located on the Strand, thereby halving the distance to Whitehall. As the Navy and Victualling Boards moved, the government facilities also moved: further downriver to Deptford. Somerset House was the first large, purpose-built government building, begun in 1775, designed to concentrate all aspects of naval administration in a single place, which had previously been spread over a wide area. While the Sixpenny Office remained in the Port of London, the Navy, Victualling, Transport, Sick and Hurt, and Pay Offices were all relocated there over the following years, leaving the dockyards behind further down the river.<sup>377</sup> As a result of this move the prestige of the Board was

<sup>374</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 194-95, letter dated 12th December 1785 – Middleton to Pitt.

<sup>375</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 100-101.

<sup>376</sup> Roger Knight, 'Richard, Earl Howe' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 279-299. pp. 286-87.
377 Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, pp. 15-21.

greatly enhanced and the Board began to take its social standing and position in the administration very seriously.

This new attitude of the Board's comes through in Middleton's dealings with Howe; in his strident opposition to Howe's measures and high-handed tone, and in his willingness to work with others in Government as a high-ranking official. What eventually allowed Middleton the support and ability to further the cause of rebuilding and repairing the fleet and dockyards, was the relationship he built with William Pitt, and Pitt's willingness to work alongside him, often discounting Howe as First Lord to work directly with Middleton as Comptroller. Howe was not popular, either within the shore establishment or with his own Cabinet colleagues.<sup>378</sup> Pitt recognised that, unlike Howe, Middleton had clear plans and knowledge concerning the best ways in which the fleet might be maintained and allowed to match the two power standard, which the Navy had struggled to match before and during the American War. So successful did the relationship prove that Middleton was able to confidently assert to Pitt in late 1785 that

There is good reason to believe that, by the end of 1786, there will be upwards of ninety sail of the line, including the present guard ships, fit for service, and as many frigates of twenty guns and upwards exclusive of those now in commission. This is more than double the number of ships that were in good condition at the beginning of the last war. The provision of stores is equal to twelve months' war consumption, and in such foreign articles as are not subject to decay, more than two years.<sup>379</sup>

While this could be taken as another example of Middleton exaggerating the situation in order to improve his own standing, the numbers of ships speedily mobilised during the Dutch, Nootka Sound and Ochakov Crises of 1787, '90 and '91 respectively shows that these figures and estimates were not idle boasting but realistic forecasts of strength, as finally proven during the full mobilisation of the fleet from 1793 onwards. It could even be argued that a fleet in a good state of repair, with the capacity to be manned and loaded with stores quickly, allowed Britain to be more 'muscular' in its approach to international developments during this period, and to be more active in diplomacy during these crises, rather than sit by, unwilling to commit to a course of action or diplomacy that would see her driven to war unprepared and with the prospect of a long and costly mobilisation, as was the case in 1775-78. This work done by the Navy Board and dockyards was essential in order to ensure that Britain could retain control of the seas during any future wars

<sup>378</sup> Knight, 'Richard, Earl Howe', pp. 286-87.

<sup>379</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 194-95, letter dated 12th December 1785 – Middleton to Pitt.

against France and Spain, when hopefully those nations would have European enemies to divert some of their attention and resources from the seas. As a result, Britain 'won the peace' during the 1780s, meaning she was in prime position to begin the French Revolutionary War in a position of strength relative to France, and to win the first major naval engagement of the war, the Glorious First of June, the type of engagement that had, in previous eighteenth-century wars, resulted in an inconclusive and long-ranged battle.<sup>380</sup>

Middleton was perhaps the single most important man to the Royal Navy during this period. While he required the backing of other, more powerful men to ensure that his views were heard and acted upon, the breadth and depth of his expertise can start to be seen by 1787, when he made his proposals to the Commission on Fees, the first of his contributions towards increasing the professionalism of the naval shore establishment. While he may have been headstrong and reckless during his earliest years in office, he was able to temper this later in his tenure, as can be seen by his calm and calculated dealings with Pitt to work against Howe, contrasted to his quarrels with Sandwich and outright hostility to Howe during their initial years in office together. Middleton also managed to swallow his pride eventually to begin to undo the potentially damaging proposals and measures he had championed during the American War. Because of these flaws though, Talbott is critical of Middleton's work as Comptroller, saying that

Middleton's sweeping claims for coppering and the carronade exaggerated their merits. Impatient of criticism, he brushed aside the reservations of superiors and subordinates who worried about corroded bolts and Ordnance officers sceptical of the carronade's promise...Constantly reiterating his warning that the risk of losing a major encounter at sea outweighed the dangers of innovation, he persuaded the Navy to adopt, at the height of a great war, an untried technique for preserving ships' bottoms and an untested weapon. The great encounter Middleton warned against never took place.<sup>381</sup>

Many of these claims, however, do not hold up well under close scrutiny, or can be mitigated somewhat by historical context that is not provided by Talbott. While it is true that Middleton was too easily taken in by the promise of the watertight seal, if the dockyards had been more thorough in their work it might have succeeded far better, as reports from many different ships showed varying rates of corrosion, regardless of how

<sup>380</sup> Syrett, Shipping and the American War p. 24.

<sup>381</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 69.

long the ship had been coppered.<sup>382</sup> The Navy Board provided comprehensive instructions on how to ensure that the watertight seal would provide adequate protection, but exigencies of war meant that sufficient time and supervision could never be given to the process. Also, to say that the sheathing of ships in copper was untried is a gross misrepresentation of the trials of the previous twenty-five years. A great deal of information had been gathered, the problem of corrosion was not a new one to be faced by the time Middleton became Comptroller, and it was only after the discovery of the watertight seal that the Navy Board recommended that coppering be extended to ships of the line.<sup>383</sup> While Middleton should, under perfect circumstances, have waited until the seal could be more extensively tested, the possibility of providing coppered ships safely for a beleaguered Navy could not be overlooked as Britain languished under siege at sea.

With reference to the carronade, and the concerns of the Ordnance officers over its usefulness, additional context is required. Trials were made of the carronade at Woolwich Arsenal in late June and early July 1779,<sup>384</sup> and later, against long guns at Landguard Fort in July 1780<sup>385</sup> after which the Ordnance Board were convinced that the carronade was an insufficient weapon and could never be a replacement for the long guns traditionally mounted on ships.<sup>386</sup> This, however, was a case of the Ordnance officers misunderstanding the use of the carronade. It was never originally intended as a replacement for the traditional long guns, but rather as a supplementary gun to be used on the upper decks for use in close action, to shred sails and kill men with langridge shot or create huge splinters using round shot. That some frigates later armed themselves exclusively with carronades is incidental, the fact remains that the weapon was never intended as a replacement for the long gun. Added to these facts were the testimonies of naval officers who had seen first hand in action at sea how effective the new guns could prove to be, a far greater measure of merit than that capable of being provided by land-bound artillerymen, however much professional knowledge they may ostensibly possess.<sup>387</sup> Because of these facts, Middleton's dismissal of the concerns of the Ordnance Board remains just.

<sup>382</sup> Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing' p. 305.

<sup>383</sup> See Cock 'The Finest Invention in the World.'

<sup>384</sup> For the reports see National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, ADM/B/199, Navy Board to Admiralty, 28 June 1779, and NMM, MID/9/2 for the report of Captain Daniel Grose, Royal Artillery.

<sup>385</sup> National Archives, Kew, ADM 7/940, 'A general Comparative Abstract of the Round Shot Experiments with Carronades and Sea Service Iron Guns carried on at Landguard Fort in July and August 1780 under the direction of Lieut. Colonel Abraham Tovey.'

<sup>386</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, MID/9/2, Ordnance Board to Admiralty, 21 October 1780; Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean* p. 421

<sup>387</sup> One testimony that Middleton particularly liked to refer to is to be found in National Maritime Museum

Finally, the great encounter that Middleton warned against did eventually happen, both at the Battle of the Saintes in 1782 and then the Glorious First of June in 1794. In both battles coppered ships provided the speed and manoeuvrability to allow the British to catch and break the line of the French. While the First of June came eleven years after the American War ended, it was Middleton's innovation of coppering that allowed the battle to take place, giving Howe the ability to take the weather gauge and break the line. In both battles the coppering of the British fleet would have allowed far more comprehensive results had the commanders of the two actions, Rodney and Howe respectively, been keener to continue pursuit. As it was, the age and caution of the commanding officers forced the British fleets to regroup and break off pursuit at the conclusion of both battles, thus negating key British speed advantages in pursuit. Without Middleton's work to copper the fleet, Britain would have been unable to mobilise sufficient ships to protect the Caribbean with the fleet under Rodney in 1782, nor would the British fleet have been able to catch the French and force an action. If the Saintes had not ended in a victory for the British, it remains very likely that the French and Spanish would not have accepted so lenient a settlement in 1783, allowing Britain to retain all her pre-war assets besides Florida and Tobago. It also meant that Britain was in a far stronger position during the peace due to the final successes at sea of the British fleet, brought about through coppering.

Middleton's final months as Comptroller were doubtless unhappy, stressful and disappointing affairs. The legacy of a fleet readied for anything, victory over the obstinacies of Howe and Keppel and a promotion to rear-admiral were lessened by the blow to his hopes of reform so carefully managed over the previous eight years. Seeing no way of managing to continue his work with a Board that now opposed him since the truth had become known about his involvement with the proposed abolition of fees and gratuities in the office, as had been threatened in 1782, Middleton offered up his resignation to Pitt and Chatham in a final desperate bid to force them to act on reforms. It did not work, and Middleton left office in May 1790, for his successors to take the plaudits for the way in which the Navy mobilised in 1793. He was not forgotten, however, nor did he shut the door firmly behind himself. His relationship with Pitt, so useful in securing his flag, and the vehicle by which he could influence the Government's naval schemes during

Archives, Greenwich, MID/9/2, MacBride to Navy Board, 12 January 1781. Captain MacBride claimed that 'no musquetry on the Poop, Gangways, or Tops can withstand them in Close Action and even out of Musquet Shot.'

the 1780s, allowed him to continue to send advice and recommendations to Whitehall, as what Gardiner has described as a 'Shadow First Lord,'<sup>388</sup> in view of Chatham's lack of outright knowledge about the naval departments. This advice included aspects of administration such as how best to maintain the fleet he had worked so hard to assemble, how the fleet might be best managed from the Admiralty (a throwback to his recommendations to Sandwich during his early years as Comptroller), a breakdown of how best to mobilise the fleet during the Nootka Sound crisis of 1790 and, perhaps most importantly once war with Revolutionary France had broken out, what was to be done regarding Toulon, and what information regarding the French fleet and their state of supply might be obtained while the port lay in British hands. All of this ensured that in the early years of the French Revolutionary War, Middleton was able to secure his position in naval administration once again through his political networks and owing to the respect the politicians he worked with had for his prodigious talents and professional knowledge, and their gratefulness to him for bequeathing a fleet capable of standing against France, Spain and the Batavian Republic on equal terms.<sup>389</sup>

While the Navy Board had been the most professional of the administrative Boards when Middleton became Comptroller, there were nevertheless improvements that could be made. The further closing of the naval administration to non-professional administrators was a welcome step forward with regard to the hiring, management, and direction of transports for the armed forces that vastly improved efficiency and lowered overall costs. The increased hours and more structured approach to daily routine that Middleton brought also helped the Board during the critical years of the American War, and also convinced Middleton that structural changes were necessary in order for the various departments of the shore establishment to deal most effectively with the vastly increased amount of business that a growing Navy brought with it. Innovations such as coppering were also an important change in attitude for a traditionally minded, conservative board such as the Navy Board, forcing it to look to the future and trial technologies and processes that had not been fully proven in order to meet the challenges they were faced with. This also meant that the Navy Board had to be far swifter in how it changed its processes and orders with regard to the dockyards, as critical information about how coppered ships actually

<sup>388</sup> Gardiner, The British Admiralty p. 182.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>389</sup> Murray, Sir A.R., G.C.B., 'The Admiralty VI' in Mariner's Mirror 24 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1938) July 1938, pp. 329-52, pp. 339-40. T.C.W. Blanning, The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802 (London, 1996), p. 212. Blanning describes the dockyards as being characterised by 'greater efficiency in management, economy in the use of resources and professionalism on the part of the officials – at a time when their French equivalents were being ravaged by pilfering and neglect.'

dealt with everyday occurrences, such as weighing anchors had to be acted on quickly. Finally, the time spent at the Navy Board enabled Middleton to begin a lengthy and comprehensive digest book of all the standing orders sent to the yards, compiling and organising them together under separate headings. This work would not be acted upon again until 1804, but it would lead to the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy being set up, a body which, with Middleton as chairman, would do much to alter, adapt, and improve the ways in which the shore establishment was run. In many ways, Middleton's Comptrollership achieved both a great deal and very little, for while the ways in which the Board and dockyards operated were improved and tinkered with, and a complete overhauling of the condition of the fleet under their charge was effected, the major changes to the Board's structure, while put forward by Middleton, would not be implemented until 1796 onwards, and the Board would never again possess such a preponderance of professional knowledge when compared to the Admiralty. The reasons for this are twofold; firstly there would not be a Comptroller with Middleton's appetite for business, drive, and administrative flair until Sir Thomas Byam Martin took the office in 1816; and secondly, the Board of Admiralty would undergo its own professionalisation during the 1790s, caused in no small part by Middleton's influence and changes, as shall be seen presently.



## Sir Charles Middleton as First Sea Lord

Middleton's time at the Admiralty during the 1790s was short, at just eighteen months, from May 1794 to November 1795. This was not as short as his future tenure as First Lord, but certainly not the kind of length of service that he had enjoyed during his Comptrollership. Given twelve years in the latter post to effect change, increase professionalism, and make his mark on the service, Middleton was easily able to master the department in which he worked, and was able therefore to suggest reforms to cause it to work more efficiently, improve the condition of the fleet in a time of peace, with an administration sympathetic to the measures he championed. Due to the differences in political influence, professional knowledge, and scope of business between the Navy Board and the Board of Admiralty, it is greatly to Middleton's credit that his first posting at the Admiralty also carried the same kind of control, reformative mindset, and influence on the service afloat and ashore that he had previously achieved in administration. While Middleton was unable in his first stint at the Admiralty to force through such landmark measures as he had previously, such as coppering, carronades, and the reforms he suggested to Shelburne, Pitt, and the Commission on Fees, there are still far more examples of Middleton's work and influence during this period than one would expect of a first-time appointee who only held office for eighteen months. These examples include the wholesale overhaul of the way in which the office did business, the ways in which the admirals were managed by the Admiralty, and the overseeing of the dispositions of the fleet and the constant resupply required for blockade duty. Also notable was a continued push for efficiency through reform, with the investment of Sir Samuel Bentham as Inspector-General of Naval Works owing much to Middleton's foresight and influence on the service and Admiralty Office.<sup>390</sup> While these measures may initially seem noteworthy but not ground-breaking, these reforms were hugely significant in the broader picture of Middleton's overall career as it affected the professionalism of the shore establishment. They followed on from his work when Comptroller in terms of how he pursued his policies, and would form the basis of increasing Admiralty professionalism over the course of the following decade, allowing Middleton to further cement the Admiralty's place at the head, rather than the centre of the naval shore administration when he came to be First

<sup>390</sup> Julian S. Corbett, (ed.), Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801, Volume I Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XLVI (1913), pp. 45-47 Memo by Middleton, dated 25<sup>th</sup> June 1795.

Lord and chairman of the Commission of Revision in 1805. Although Middleton was not able to do all he would have liked to regarding how the Admiralty Office operated, predominantly due to Spencer's arrival at the Board in December 1794 and his rejection of Middleton's influence from that point, important initial measures to improve work-rates and working habits, both within the office and in relation to the overall service, were put in place, ready to be taken further at a later date.

The Admiralty was a very different office to the Navy Board in terms of the professional expertise and length of tenure of the officials appointed to the Board. At all times at least one of the junior Lord Commissioners was a naval officer, but at times it was no more than that; even during the early years of the American War, Sandwich only had Admiral Palliser and then Admiral Man to assist him at the Board. Two former Comptrollers had sat on the Board before Middleton acquired his seat, Sir Charles Wager (Senior Naval Lord 1730-33, First Lord 1733-42) and Sir Hugh Palliser (First Sea Lord 1775-79), but other than this, professional administrative expertise from the subsidiary Boards did not feature at the Board of Admiralty. The real knowledge of the workings of the Board lay within the secretariat, and the Admiralty Secretary himself. J.M. Haas says that the Secretary was in charge of the office and that he was

[A]s a rule, the only official thoroughly familiar with the Board's business; indeed, all First Lords depended heavily upon his knowledge of naval administration...Since there were only four Secretaries between 1694 and 1795, they provided a continuity of administration which otherwise was lacking.

Politics, rather than professional knowledge, was how the Lord Commissioners and First Lord acquired their positions and as administrations changed, so too would the positions on the Board of Admiralty; though knowledge was certainly the main reason behind Middleton's appointment, the fact that he was a previous Tory M.P. with connections to Pitt mattered greatly and it would be quarrels with a Whig politician that would lead to his exit from the office. As a former head of a civil administrative Board himself, Middleton would not have been as dependent on the knowledge of the Secretary as other Lord Commissioners, assisting him in taking control of the office so quickly. Middleton's appointment also coincided with the Admiralty beginning to take a greater supervisory role over the naval shore establishment under its authority. While outright knowledge of the intricacies of the work done by subordinate Boards and the Royal Dockyards was still lacking to a degree, the succession of government reports, commissions, and select committees would assist in providing that knowledge and understanding over the course of the 1790s and early-nineteenth-century.<sup>391</sup>

Upon the outbreak of war with France, Lord Chatham, the First Lord of the Admiralty since 1788, and acknowledged as able but lazy,<sup>392</sup> required a man present at the Admiralty office who was well versed in naval matters and administration of the shore establishment in particular.<sup>393</sup> In Middleton, Chatham and Pitt had the man they required, ready and willing to serve once more and so, in May 1794, he was drafted on to Chatham's Board of Admiralty. He would remain in office for less than two years, but in that time he had the opportunity to witness first hand how the Admiralty Office worked and what measures, changes and reforms it required according to his own exacting standards to increase the professionalism of the operation and bring it to a state of efficiency. While Middleton did not therefore have either the time or position at this stage of his career to make any lasting changes to the ways in which the Navy ran, this short period in office served as an essential bridge between his Comptrollership and his later position as First Lord of the Admiralty. The time also gave him an opportunity to show himself to be a capable strategist, able to effectively direct the fleet from the Admiralty and appreciate how the fleet needed to be used to defeat the enemy, a trait that would prove essential when he came to be First Lord a decade afterwards.

## The Situation in 1794 and Middleton's Measures Whilst in Office

During the 1780s Middleton was one of the most able and energetic Comptrollers that Britain would ever see, and his work was the defining factor in maintaining British naval

<sup>391</sup> Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 190-91.

<sup>392</sup> John E. Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor: Sir Charles Middleton and the King's Navy, 1778-1813* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 129. Talbott also states that Chatham was told upon entering office that he could rely for professional knowledge and guidance upon Sir Charles Middleton as Comptroller. See also Jonathan R. Dull, *The Age of the Ship-of-the-Line: The British and French Navies, 1650-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), p. 139. Dull calls Chatham 'a political lightweight who had lost the respect of the navy and his fellow cabinet ministers.' Finally Earl Stanhope, *Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt with Extracts from his Papers: New Edition in three volumes, Volume I* (London: John Murray, 1879), pp. 298-99. Stanhope says that Chatham's appointment was "in the first instance well received by the public, [it] did not by any means fulfil the expectation it had raised. As First Lord of the Admiralty the brother of Pitt showed but little aptitude for business, and none at all for debate; and from his want of punctuality in his appointments he came to be often nicknamed 'the late Lord Chatham.'" For his biography see Christopher Doorne, 'Pitt, John, second earl of Chatham (1756–1835)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22330, accessed 19 July 2016]

<sup>393</sup> Julian S. Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar (London: Longmans, 1910), pp. 69-70.

power at the level it had managed to achieve by the end of the American War, rather than allowing it to dwindle in the face of continued building from France and Spain.<sup>394</sup> Added to this position of strength, by the time Britain entered the war against Revolutionary France in 1793, the old French naval officer corps had been severely depleted of its talented officers, as the émigré began to flee the country, meaning that the British fleet was ascendant in terms of quality of ships and crew.<sup>395</sup> This development, however, would not be fully understood for years, and the British could in no way have been aware of the scale of the upheaval present in the French navy, as news of military operations and the state of their armed forces had ceased to come from France as it descended into turmoil and civil unrest.

Upon joining the French Revolutionary War, Britain, in stark contrast to the situation faced at the outset of the American War, was able to send a sizeable fleet in a good state of supply and repair to sea, with only the perennial problem of manning holding the fleet back in mobilisation.<sup>396</sup> The Dutch armament of 1787 and subsequent Nootka Sound and Ochakov Crises of 1790-91, had allowed the fleet to practice the procedures unused since 1778 and had permitted the administration, and the public at large, to see how well prepared the Royal Navy was after a decade of peace in which money and sound administration had been applied to their fullest advantage.<sup>397</sup> While cumbersome, the great military machine that was the Royal Navy was able to be swiftly mobilised through well-honed procedures. Completing the difference between the situations was the fact that Spain and the United Provinces, for so long the necessary allies of France to bring the combined powers up to parity with Britain's strength, began the French Revolutionary War in opposition to the new French Republic, and in tenuous alliance with Britain.<sup>398</sup>

In 1794 Middleton finally got the seat he had coveted during his time at the Navy Board. He was elevated to the Admiralty under Lord Chatham due to his habit of sending advice

<sup>394</sup> Jan Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860 Volume I* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1993), pp. 271-73 – Tables 23:13, 23:14; pp. 278-81 – Tables 23:16-23:21.

<sup>395</sup> A.T. Mahan, The Influence of Sea Power Upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812 (London: Sampson Low, 1893) pp. 39-69. T.C.W. Blanning, The French Revolutionary Wars, 1787-1802 (London, 1996), pp. 197-99.

<sup>396</sup> J.K. Laughton, (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron, 1758-1813, Volume III* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXIX (1911), pp. 15-21, On the State of the Navy, draft, dated April 1803.

<sup>397</sup> For a concise run-down of how this was achieved, see P.L.C. Webb, 'The Rebuilding and Repair of the Fleet, 1783-93' in *The Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research Volume 50* (London: Longmans, 1977), pp. 194-209.

<sup>398</sup> Piers Mackesy, 'Strategic Problems of the British War Effort' in Dickenson, H.T. (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1989) pp. 152-53.

and information to those in office even when he himself was no longer in the public service. As detailed previously, in October 1793 he had sent several memoranda to Lord Chatham, detailing what should be done while Toulon remained in British hands, how best to keep the fleet in good condition now ships were once again called to cruise off Brest, 399 advising how the fleet might best be utilised from the Admiralty and, perhaps most importantly, outlining the best ways in which to outfit, man, and mobilise the fleet that he had worked so hard to furnish the country with over the course of the preceding decade.<sup>400</sup> He entered into few particulars, preferring that 'experienced men' ascertain the meaning of his hints, by which he clearly did not mean Chatham himself, but rather the professional naval members of the Board under him.<sup>401</sup> Perhaps Middleton, having worked under Chatham during the last two years of his Comptrollership and, frustrated by the minister's inaction concerning the reports of the Commissioners on Fees, did not trust the Earl to possess the knowledge to fully understand his advice. It was most likely as a result of communications such as these that Pitt and Chatham decided to bring Middleton into the Admiralty as Third Sea Lord in May 1794.<sup>402</sup> While he held a lower post than others, Middleton was the senior professional naval member of the Board present at Admiralty House in London, as the other professional naval members of the Board held active service commissions alongside their positions at the Admiralty. Middleton would be promoted to First Sea Lord in March 1795.403

Julian Corbett postulates that Middleton was brought in as professional advisor to Chatham to satisfy public opinion. This theory draws on Middleton's popularity due to his standing in the service, despite never having flown his flag afloat, and the acknowledgement from the public that his work and influence had bequeathed Britain a

<sup>399</sup> J.K. Laughton (ed.), Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813, Volume II, (Publications of the Navy Records Society, Volume XXXVIII, 1910), pp. 353-56, letter dated 6<sup>th</sup> October 1793 – Middleton to Lord Chatham, Rough Copy, Autograph; pp. 356-60, letter dated Teston, 13<sup>th</sup> October 1793 – Middleton to Chatham.

<sup>400</sup> John B. Hattendorf, R.J.B Knight, A.W.H Pearsall, N.A.M Rodger, & Geoffrey Till, (eds.), *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 131 (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1993), pp. 338-41, Naval Resources at the Start of the War 1793, Draft Memorandum by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, undated (October 1793).

<sup>401</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II, pp.360-68, Memorandum dated October 1793 - Middleton to Chatham.

<sup>402</sup> Leslie Gardiner, *The British Admiralty* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1968), p. 182; p. 188. While Middleton held this official position, Leslie Gardiner claims that Middleton was brought back as an 'advisory' Lord Commissioner, with undefined status that Middleton moulded to suit his needs. This though seems unlikely considering the structure of positions at the Admiralty but may be more indicative of the relative amount of work that Middleton took upon himself, rather than Middleton being given no clear picture of his place in the Admiralty.

<sup>403</sup> J.C. Sainty, *Office Holders in Modern Britain IV: Admiralty Officials, 1660-1870* (London: Athlone Press, 1975) pp. 25-26.

fleet to look upon with pride at the outset of a war.<sup>404</sup> Chatham's known laxity of application to work in public office, and his lack of knowledge of the particulars of a critical professional service, would also have played a key part when seeking to satisfy the press and public at a time of war.<sup>405</sup> By these means Chatham would be able to stay in office, allowing Pitt to keep an ally within Government, whilst Middleton would provide the knowledge required at the Admiralty concerning how to operate the fleet.

Whilst the assessment and management of public opinion of the Government as a whole, but particularly the military departments, was always a critical factor at the outset of hostilities, it seems unlikely that the sole reason Middleton was brought into office was to reassure the public, although that factor may well have been considered when the decision was taken. The reality may well be that both Pitt and Chatham realised that Middleton was the best man to organise and improve the efficiency of the department, which had received very little in the way of professional reform throughout its history, to put it on a war footing capable of meeting the demands of the larger-scale war that the late-eighteenthcentury had brought, and that political considerations and satisfaction of public opinion were merely important by-products. Middleton had proven that he was the best man in the country to organise the way in which the shore administration worked, and a seat at the Admiralty would allow him to oversee more than just the Navy Board, whilst giving him the authority to make decisions and implement measures himself, with direct communication between himself and Chatham at the same Board. There was also the fact that Middleton clearly had firm and comprehensive ideas about exactly what should be done with not just the shore establishment, but also the fleet at sea due to his lengthy and far-reaching memoranda to Chatham during his three years out of office.

Upon Middleton's arrival at the Admiralty, he unsurprisingly found that Chatham's attendance at the office was not what he thought sufficient to carry on the business, particularly in light of his hard-working establishment at the Navy Board and his disdain for the working habits of all previous First Lords he had served under. He also found

[N]o regular time fixed for beginning business nor any plan formed for carrying it into execution. The office extremely defective in attendance, and no dependence whatever in anything being carried into

<sup>404</sup> Sir A.R. Murray, G.C.B., 'The Admiralty VI' in *Mariner's Mirror 24* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1938) July 1938, pp. 329-52, pp. 339-40.
405 Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*, pp. 69-70.

execution...I therefore fixed the hours between 12 and 2 for reading and minuting the public letters with the Secretary, and notice was given in office to prevent interruption at this time.<sup>406</sup>

Because of this, and Middleton's own nature, the larger part of the business of the office fell into Middleton's willing hands, which perhaps would not have happened if the original intention had been for Middleton to act as a professional advisor to Chatham, and not the impetus and core strength of the Board.<sup>407</sup> It is also significant that it was Middleton, and not another senior politician, such as a Secretary of State, who took control of the Admiralty's business. Earlier in the eighteenth-century, it had not been unusual for a Secretary of State to issue orders directly to Commanders-in-Chief of fleets and correspond directly with naval officers.<sup>408</sup> By the 1790s, however, the roles of the Secretaries of State for Home and Foreign affairs had been definitively set out in 1782 under Shelburne, and the general burden of work for all Cabinet ministers meant that they had little time or inclination to concern themselves intimately with matters that did not immediately concern them.<sup>409</sup> Along with this, a lot of power now resided in decisions made at Cabinet meetings and, if the Cabinet could be content that Middleton had the situation in hand, they would be more inclined to leave him to work, even if that meant that Chatham, as the minister, had to take a back seat.

When brought into office, as he had previously set out in his memorandum of October 1793,<sup>410</sup> Middleton continued one of his lines of policy begun as Comptroller: that of protection of British trade as a central facet of naval strategy. Middleton was convinced of the unwillingness of France to meet the British fleet, and that therefore the most important need was to protect Britain's commercial interests, saying that

Their [France's] interest will not be to appear at sea with fleets, but in numerous and active squadrons proportioned to the object they may have in view...In a war of this kind, which I cannot look upon in any

<sup>406</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures: Enclosure I.

<sup>407</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures: Enclosure I.

<sup>408</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)* p. 23 409 Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* pp. 24-26.

<sup>410</sup> Hattendorf, Knight, Pearsall, Rodger, and Till, *British Naval Documents* pp. 338-41, Draft memorandum by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, undated [October 1793] 'Naval Resources at the Start of the War, 1793.' Middleton saw the war, as many did, as a short-term conflict and not in terms of the worldwide power struggle it would become. Due to the paucity of ships and naval stores the French possessed before being joined by Spain and the Batavian Republic later in the war, Middleton had reasoned that the French would therefore look to attack British trade in order to force her out of the war and augment their own naval supplies.

other light than a war against trade...it will be necessary to have a very large number of frigates, sloops, brigs and cutters, and no more line-of-battle ships than are sufficient to overawe those of the enemy.<sup>411</sup>

Owing to there being too many reasons both strategic and economic against a close blockade at the outset of the war, a loose blockade at Spithead and Torbay was considered preferable both by the Government and Lord Howe, the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel fleet.<sup>412</sup> To that end, the Admiralty, led by Middleton's influence and experience, began to look to the protection of trade and the convoy system as their primary concern,<sup>413</sup> as experience from previous eighteenth-century conflicts taught them that France would prefer to strike at Britain's vulnerable economy and merchant shipping, rather than risk a decisive action upon the seas.<sup>414</sup> Middleton's understanding of the strategic situation regarding how the fleets should best be used can be seen dating back to 1779, when he urged Sandwich to provide for the defence of the West Indies, as Britain's enemies could not be contained in home waters at that time, and he realised that the sugar islands were the keys to the war.<sup>415</sup> Middleton's long experience and memory of the systems practised during the Seven Years' War allowed the Admiralty to determine where the French would be most likely to prey upon British trade at the time, and defend against it accordingly.<sup>416</sup> This was an exercise primarily in logistics, an area that Middleton excelled in. Along with input from his protégé and long-term correspondent Philip Patton,<sup>417</sup> Middleton kept lists of the ships in service and distinguished ships of the line from frigates,<sup>418</sup> segregating those ships that had been more than two years without being docked, in order to more accurately predict which stations ships would need to be withdrawn from for repairs, so that

<sup>411</sup> Hattendorf, Knight, Pearsall, Rodger, Till, *British Naval Documents* pp. 338-41, Draft memorandum by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, undated [October 1793] 'Naval Resources at the Start of the War, 1793.'

<sup>412</sup> Roger Morriss, (ed.), *The Channel Fleet and the Blockade of Brest, 1793-1801* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 141 (Ashgate Publishing Limited: Aldershot, 2001) pp. 2-11

<sup>413</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 30-31 – letter dated 3 July 1793, Admiralty to Admiral Richard, Earl Howe; pp. 32-33 – letter dated 13 August 1793, Admiralty to Howe; pp. 34-36, letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 1794 – Admiralty to Howe. See also Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principals of Maritime Strategy* (Greenwich: Conway Maritime Press, 1972), p. 209.

<sup>414</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 3-4; p. 22.

<sup>415</sup> G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen (eds.), *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782 Volume III, May 1779-December 1780* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXV (1936), pp. 172-77, memorandum in Middleton's hand, undated (presumably between 1-15 September 1779).

<sup>416</sup> Middleton had set this out in his memorandum to Chatham of October 1793. He covered the entirety of the globe, from China to Newfoundland, pushing for more small ships and craft to be commissioned rather than line-of-battle ships in order to counter a French war on trade. He based the disposition of the fleet on a purely logistical basis, weighing the size of the British fleet needed based on French opposition and the numbers of ships that would need to be off station at any one time for victualling and refitting.

<sup>417</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II, pp. 386-92, letter dated Tichfield, 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1794 – Sir Philip Patton to Middleton.

<sup>418</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 394-401 – Statements I-IV.

replacements could be organised to ensure that Britain's strength was maintained at all times.<sup>419</sup> This was something new to the Admiralty, though it might seem perfectly standard to a modern bureaucracy, and required a man of considerable professional knowledge and foresight to appreciate, something that was not always present at the Admiralty in times of war. It also required a man who was capable of combining that professional knowledge with a bureaucrat's appreciation of administrative limitations concerning what was and was not possible from the shore establishment, along with a strong grasp of logistics and realistic timescales for work to be done. While several men could have combined to create a Board possessed of all these talents and knowledge, Middleton was the only man capable of combining all aspects in a single office, thus eliminating the need for arguments or damaging compromises to be made by one aspect to satisfy the others.

Middleton had realised that British strength needed to remain constant on every station where forces were posted, in order that the enemy remain reticent to come out of port or, if they did emerge, that the British fleets could meet their enemies on equal footing. The ability to predict when and where ships might require time in port would be essential, and would mean that crews did not need to be shifted from one ship to another as much, with far less emergency outfitting of ships in Ordinary to replace those coming back from sea in large numbers due to wearing out. Middleton was likely the first man to appreciate these facts and drew up extensive tables for the British forces required on each station.<sup>420</sup> For example, Middleton estimated that at Brest the French possessed four ships of 110-guns, five of 80-guns, and twenty-seven of 74-guns. Opposed to this should be five British ships of 100-guns, eight of 98-guns, two of 80-guns, and forty-two of 74-guns. Added to this were the numbers actually available to oppose the enemy from those presently in commission, and how many ships in commission were in actuality kept off the enemy's ports.<sup>421</sup> Finally, a list of ports in which the ships could be refitted was added, along with the stations that might be kept for best chance of catching the enemy's squadrons at sea and protecting the trade. Identical lists were provided for both ships of the line, and frigates and smaller ships for the ports of Brest and Toulon,<sup>422</sup> with St. Malo, Cherbourg, and Dunkirk added for the smaller ships.<sup>423</sup> It was a most comprehensive list, and included the

<sup>419</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 402-08, Arrangement of the Fleet dated June 1794

<sup>420</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest, pp. 25-26.

<sup>421</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II p. 394, 'Statement I'.

<sup>422</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II p. 394, 'Statement I'.

<sup>423</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II p. 396, 'Statement II'.

numbers of ships that Middleton assumed would be in port at any one time to refit, repair, and re-victual. Two final lists were provided, firstly for stations around the globe that had no enemy force to oppose, but required defending nonetheless, such as Newfoundland, the East Indies, Ireland, the North Sea, and the North American Coast,<sup>424</sup> and finally a list of convoys that would be required with the probable time of absence for any convoy escorts.<sup>425</sup> These views on how best to protect the trade had their origin in the ways in which Middleton acted to protect trade in the West Indies during the Seven Years' War as a frigate captain, when he drew up similar ways in which to make best use of his forces in the area, how the enemy might be opposed, and how to achieve the greatest level of efficiency, a task most frigate captains detested.<sup>426</sup>

This sort of book-keeping and bureaucratic office-work would enable the Admiralty to be far more certain of its position when dealing with the fleet put under its charge and, with the facts and figures established, methods of business and professional codes of practice could start to be assembled when forming naval policy along with dictating the work that would be required by the dockyards to keep the requisite forces at sea. By giving the Admiralty the knowledge regarding how the dockyards repaired and outfitted the fleet, the senior Board would no longer be at a disadvantage when coming to deal with the Navy Board, who until this point were the only institution that dealt with the dockyards and understood (if only loosely at times) the ways in which they worked. It also allowed the Lord Commissioners to be more confident in their dispositions of the fleet, rather than relying on the Commanders-in-Chief on station to possess the knowledge of how best to position their ships and cruisers. While the Navy's officers remained as knowledgeable and strategically astute as ever, the Admiralty was now better able to appreciate the work that these men did on station, more particularly on foreign stations, where Admiralty control could not be as comprehensive as in home waters.

The overall preferred policy of cruising, loose blockade, and trade protection can be seen as most obvious following the battle of the Glorious First of June. Despite the fact that the French fleet had been beaten, enough of their ships remained to pose a serious threat. Instead of ordering the Channel fleet to sea again at the earliest possible opportunity, however, the Admiralty rather urged Howe to ensure that trade and convoys, particularly

<sup>424</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II p. 398, 'Statement III'.

<sup>425</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II p. 400, 'Statement IV'.

<sup>426</sup> Roger Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham 1726-1813, An Administrator Reassessed' in Peter Le Favre, and Richard Harding, (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000) pp. 301-23, p. 306.

those of the East India Company, were protected.<sup>427</sup> To that end, Cornwallis was ordered to sea again with fourteen ships, not to blockade the enemy in port but to spread across the Bay of Biscay to escort convoys. Finally, in December 1794, during the power vacuum created at the Admiralty prior to Lord Spencer's appointment, and in the absence of a First Lord to carry suggestions on naval policy to the Privy Council, Middleton wrote to his cousin, Henry Dundas, at that time the Secretary for War, again insisting on a strong policy of trade and convoy protection.<sup>428</sup> By this point, Middleton had also realised that which the Admirals on station had; that frigates and small craft would be essential in preventing the French from continuing their coastal trade and gaining naval supplies as hostilities continued. While Middleton did not specifically mention blockade, he did say that the French coast must be guarded.<sup>429</sup> These were important steps as the conflict progressed which showed the benefit of Middleton's professional knowledge at the Admiralty, ensured that the Commanders-in-Chief did not understand more of their profession than the Admiralty did, and enabled the Board to direct their admirals rather than take direction from them, or allow the admirals to act on their own initiative, as had previously been the case. By eventually following these policies, first put forward by Middleton, Britain was able to secure the position she had not been able to achieve during the early years of the American War, namely the position of strength and organisation necessary to protect her own trade whilst harassing that of the enemy. The French relied upon coastal trade to keep the French navy resupplied as the land routes were not up to the task of enabling large amounts of supplies to reach the dockyards, situated as they were a long way from major population centres. Moreover, Middleton was advocating a policy of 'strategic interdiction', as modern parlance might refer to it. By raiding the French merchant shipping, and effectively closing the French Atlantic ports to outside craft, the British were able to effect 'strategic interdiction' of the French navy's ability to regain the supplies they so desperately needed, and therefore effectively wage war at sea in the wake of a defeat such as the Glorious First of June, when much of their masts and rigging had been damaged. This would prove to be significant, as when the Brest fleet would put to sea in the future, damage from the battle that had not been repaired would prove to cause more damage than anything else, with ships running on board each other, falling out of formation, and foundering on the rocks.

<sup>427</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 44-5 - letter dated 14 June 1794, Admiralty to Howe.

<sup>428</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 48-49, letter undated (late 1794, November/December) – Middleton to Dundas.

<sup>429</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 49-50 – letter dated 10 December 1794, Middleton to Dundas.

During the next eighteen to twenty-four months, the autonomy afforded the French by the lack of an established blockade meant that the threat from the Brest fleet, even after the Glorious First of June, affected the ability of the British fleets to support the war effort in the colonies and the protection of trade.<sup>430</sup> This autonomy also allowed the Croisière du Grand Hiver to take place and, while the badly maintained state of the French fleet and untrained crews meant that three ships of the line were lost, including the *Républicain*, a 110-gun first rate, seventy British merchantmen and a 20-gun frigate (the Daphne), were captured, while in November the 74-gun Alexander had been captured by the French as she and the *Canada* (74) escorted a convoy home from Lisbon.<sup>431</sup> Middleton was still the senior professional lord at the Admiralty at this time, and drew up further plans for the distribution of British naval forces as the war developed, harking back to the dispositions used by the British during the Seven Years' War, when British superiority afforded safety to the merchant marine from all save privateers and opened the French colonies to attack.<sup>432</sup> He did not keep to the same plans that he had initially come up with, but adapted, reacting to the changing nature of the war, and based his new fleet distributions on the strength that he saw present in the French fleet even in the aftermath of a defeat, proving the worth of professional sea knowledge at the Admiralty.<sup>433</sup> Middleton provided this during his spell as First Sea Lord, and in future would ensure that someone who possessed this sort of expertise was always in place at the Admiralty, and in charge of fleet movements. In the course of these dispositions he also held firm to another aspect of his continuing naval policy: that of a strong Western Squadron to ensure adequate defence at home before all else.<sup>434</sup> This was a point of policy that strongly echoed that of Sandwich and the ways in which he utilised the fleet during the American War. It was also a logical argument, for ships from the Western Squadron could keep the French in port, meaning that strong fleets did not need to be sent to the West and East Indies as the enemy would not be there in force. If the French escaped the net, then British ships could be dispatched after them from a strong central base.

<sup>430</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 6-11.

<sup>431</sup> Roger Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1760-1850: Public Trust and Government Ideology* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), p. 20.

<sup>432</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 16-19, letter dated 28th December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer.

<sup>433</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 392-402, letter dated Tichfield, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1794, Sir Charles Middleton to Philip Patton.

<sup>434</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 16-19, letter dated 28<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer. Middleton laid down that a squadron of two-deckers and frigates should be stationed at Cork, with another of two-deckers only at St. Helens and Cawsand Bay, with a final squadron of heavy frigates at Falmouth. A fourth, separate squadron of smaller ships should be stationed at Yarmouth Roads and Leith for the protection of the Baltic trade.

When Earl Spencer came to the office of First Lord in December 1794, Middleton submitted to him a memorandum of these same plans that he had previously given to Chatham, in which he once again laid down how and where the British fleet might be stationed to annoy the trade of the enemy whilst protecting that of Britain. Ships were to stay out for five weeks, he recommended, and then be replaced upon coming into port to refresh and replenish.<sup>435</sup> The significance of this comes when one appreciates that it was predominantly Middleton, a professional naval administrator, who was overseeing British naval strategy at this time, not the politician occupying the office of First Lord of the Admiralty. While the King in Council was the body that decided on the courses of action to be taken regarding war at sea, the matter of how the fleets were disposed of seems to have been left to Middleton to implement until Spencer's arrival at Admiralty House. While, in the event, Spencer did not appreciate a subordinate running his department for him, and he was to accept Middleton's resignation less than a year later, it would seem unlikely that he paid no attention to the stream of professional knowledge that his senior sea lord could provide him with, even if he did not appreciate the manner in which it was given.

After Spencer took office, Middleton did not relent in his exertions to professionalise the Admiralty, but extended the search for greater efficiency regarding fleet dispositions past the Admiralty Office and began to look at the service afloat, more particularly the officers in command, examining the possibility of greater top-down authority. He had made a point in his initial address to Spencer,<sup>436</sup> and also in letters to Dundas,<sup>437</sup> that the Admiralty should exert more influence and authority over the Admirals afloat. Middleton also realised the need for greater efficiency in deployments of frigates and smaller ships, recommending that no more be sent to accompany convoys to the Mediterranean, as line-of-battleships from the squadrons commanded by Admirals Hotham and Mann could be used for the purpose now that those admirals had joined their commands.<sup>438</sup> When the expedition to the West Indies under General Abercromby was due to get underway, Middleton was once again hard-pressed to make the numbers of frigates available equal to

<sup>435</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 16-19, letter dated 28th December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer.

<sup>436</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures. Middleton wrote that 'It is by a strong and decisive Board only that the discipline of the fleet is to be restored, and the officers of all ranks must be brought to know that submission in service must be observed and attended to.'

<sup>437</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 48-49 – letter undated (late November/December 1794), Middleton to Dundas. Middleton wrote 'The fleet must be at liberty to act or we are undone. The Admirals must be directed by the Admiralty and not the Admiralty by their officers.'

<sup>438</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 43-44, letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1795 – Memo. By Middleton.

the task, being unable to provide separate convoys for the regiments from Ireland and Britain, causing delays.<sup>439</sup> He was also unimpressed with the work of Sir Sidney Smith (as he would be again a decade later). Smith was working with a small squadron of his own, outside of the jurisdiction of Lords Howe and Bridport and, in Middleton's estimation, taking up resources that would be far more effectively and efficiently used elsewhere.<sup>440</sup> In a letter to Spencer he bemoaned the fact that, no matter how well planned the Admiralty's deployments were, they would be upset by Admirals on station who detained ships coming under their command. Middleton displayed his customary insight into the overall situation when he declared

It is this system of unlimited conquest that cripples us everywhere and diverts the fleet from its natural use. It is like a farmer wishing to occupy a large farm without money to manage it. The consequence is that he begins a beggar and ends a ruined man. Our situation is truly similar: once behindhand and always behindhand. And but for this system, half the number of ships now employed in the West Indies and on army convoys would have been sufficient, and the French been prevented from sending a ship to sea.<sup>441</sup>

Despite initially viewing the conflict with France as a war against trade, Middleton was most likely the first man to appreciate the scale of the task that Britain had before her in fighting the French, working with information gathered in the aftermath of the Glorious First of June and the strength of the enemy during that battle, even in a losing cause. He also realised that, despite the fact that upwards of ninety ships had been in good condition for service on the eve of war, with stocks, supplies, and furniture ready to be embarked upon those ships, many still remained in dock, with the want of men the supreme cause,<sup>442</sup> and recommended to Spencer that no more ships be commissioned until those already in commission were fully manned.<sup>443</sup> This was a line of policy he would continue to urge on the First Lord throughout his time in office, as he realised that want of seamen for the Navy was brought about by a finite pool of men, who were required not just for the Navy, but for the merchant fleets as well.<sup>444</sup> He did realise though that the problems caused by a lack of

<sup>439</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 50-54, letter dated 1st July 1795 – Middleton to Spencer marked private.

<sup>440</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 44-45, letter dated 24th June 1794 – Memo by Middleton.

<sup>441</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 50-54, letter dated 1st July 1795 – Middleton to Spencer marked private.

<sup>442</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 45-46, letter dated 27 June 1794 – Sir Charles Middleton to Philip Patton.

<sup>443</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 16-19, letter dated 28th December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer.

<sup>444</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 42-43, letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> June 1795 – Memo. By Middleton for Spencer; pp. 48-50, letter dated 30<sup>th</sup> June 1795 – Memo by Middleton.

ships due to want of men could be alleviated somewhat by keeping the French in port, as can be seen in a letter sent to Philip Patton;

The manning of the navy speedily, and lessening the number of invalid discharges and desertions, are the great, and I think practicable objects; but these I refer till I have the pleasure of seeing you, and in the meantime confine myself to blocking up the enemy's ports.

This measure may be made more clearly essential by reverting to what was actually done from the year 1757 to the year 1762; for although several expeditions were undertaken during that period, they were subservient to blocking up and opposing the enemy at home, which were the first considerations, and which were truly the foundations of our successes throughout the whole war, when the fleets were kept off Brest and in Quiberon Bay.<sup>445</sup>

Middleton also had the prescience to predict something close to the eventual system of close blockade that would be implemented by Lord St. Vincent from 1800 onwards. In the aforementioned letter to Patton, who was then at the Transport Board on Middleton's recommendation, Middleton spoke of the idea of having ships relieved alternately, with two sets of flag officers present in the Channel fleet. By this method ships would spend three-quarters of their time at sea, and one-quarter in port 'relaxing' and refitting, in order to prevent wilful negligence by the crews and officers so that the fleet would have to put back into port to repair. While Middleton postulated that three-decked ships might be able to overwinter in port, two-decked ships and frigates should remain on station off Ushant in easterly winds, and shelter in Torbay in westerly winds.<sup>446</sup> Only in July 1795 were orders for patrols and cruising squadrons, though not a true blockade, given to Lord Bridport, then commanding the Channel fleet afloat.<sup>447</sup> These orders called for ships to operate in reliefs, and bore more than a passing resemblance to the ideas given to Dundas by Middleton in December of the previous year.<sup>448</sup> The blockade system was imperfect, however, as refreshments were inconsistent and the blockade deeply unpopular with the commanding officers,<sup>449</sup> with the consequence being that the Admiralty was forced to recall the fleet after

<sup>445</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 45-46, letter dated 27 June 1794 – Sir Charles Middleton to Philip Patton.

<sup>446</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 45-46, letter dated 27 June 1794 – Sir Charles Middleton to Philip Patton.

<sup>447</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 95-96 - latter dated 14 July 1795, Spencer to Bridport.

<sup>448</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 49-50, letter dated 10 December 1794 – Middleton to Dundas.

<sup>449</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest p. 141 - letter dated Admiralty 6 January 1796, Seymour to Spencer.

a three-month cruise: a time period already felt too long by both Admirals Bridport and Gardner,<sup>450</sup> although Admiral Harvey was to stay on station with eight ships of the line.<sup>451</sup>

The system would later be perfected due to a number of factors that were not present during Middleton's time at the Admiralty. For one, Admirals Bridport and Gardner, and Lord Howe, the nominal Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet, did not believe, as St. Vincent would, in the system of close blockade or constant cruising. Spencer, as First Lord, did not as yet possess the confidence to force the Commander-in-Chief to obey the orders given to him even if they proved unpopular. Finally, by the time St. Vincent came to the Channel Fleet, the situation in the war had changed significantly from a war on trade, with Britain as a mere supplement to the power of Spain, Austria, and Prussia, in the War of the First Coalition, to Britain taking the lead in the struggle to contain the expansion of Revolutionary France and Napoleon in the War of the Second Coalition. Middleton's measures therefore were valid, and perhaps more necessary than those around him were willing to accept, but the situation had not developed to the stage where such measures would be implemented. Once again, Middleton looked further into the future than those around him, and perhaps wished to prevent, rather than react to, the movements and strategies of Britain's enemies.

In addition to these measures concerning cruising squadrons, and blockading the enemy in port where the Royal Navy was traditionally at its strongest, Middleton also displayed his predilection for a strong home presence by suggesting that flagships on foreign stations other than the Mediterranean should be no larger than 64-guns, due to the fact that the French fleet was concentrated, and could be contained in, Brest and Toulon. Therefore, with strong squadrons made up of the largest British ships watching those ports, no French fleet could make a run for the colonies without being chased by ships from the Channel or Mediterranean fleets.<sup>452</sup> Larger ships were also unnecessary on foreign stations unless an enemy battle-fleet was present due to the nature of service in those parts of the world. Owing to the convoys and colonial trade that passed from the West and East Indies to Europe, many privateers and smaller ships prowled the waters in those regions, craft that ships of the line would find impossible to catch unless they attacked a convoy under their escort. Ships of the line were best kept in battle-fleets to engage the battle-fleets of the enemy, not cruising the Caribbean or Indian Ocean searching for frigates and sloops, a fact

<sup>450</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 120-21 – latter dated Royal George, at sea, 26 August 1795, Bridport to Admiralty; p.122 – letter dated Queen, at sea, 29 August 1795, Gardner to Bridport.

<sup>451</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 124-25 - letter dated 1 September 1795, Admiralty to Bridport.

<sup>452</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 45-46, letter dated 27 June 1794 - Sir Charles Middleton to Philip Patton

that had been made very obvious at the start of the American War, when a lack of smaller ships in home waters forced ships of the line to patrol trade routes.

## The Politics of Office and Middleton's Ability to Effect Changes

Middleton was the highest ranking professional lord present at the Admiralty but still did not hold any supreme authority over the department under Chatham's tenure as First Lord, as Middleton held the post of Third Sea Lord and should not have been in command of the office. While his situation had improved, in that he actually sat on the senior Board and could have his voice heard directly, he was still, for the most part, an advisor, and he still needed to use his political networks to gain the ear of those in power capable of enacting the measures Middleton thought necessary. He therefore could be found writing to others, such as his cousin Henry Dundas, to ask for help in legitimising his requests and decisions. When the cruises of 1794 were finished and the fleets returned to port for the winter, but before Spencer was confirmed as the new First Lord, Middleton wrote urgently to Dundas,

Give me power sufficient to command attendance at the Office and that no interruption may be given in the two hours which I have got fixed for letter reading and minuting; let no more ships be commissioned till those now in port without men are brought into service. Prepare when Parliament meets to give us aid in bringing forward those ships and who will require 10,000 men. If those particulars are attended to and I am allowed one sea officer of knowledge and application to assist me I will take the responsibility under Providence upon myself. But without attention to the means I have pointed out I see very little prospect of ending this war with credit.<sup>453</sup>

From the tone of this letter, it is clear that Middleton's appetite for business had not diminished since he left the Navy Board, and the measures he was pressing Dundas to assist him with bear very close resemblance to the measures he pushed Sandwich and North for in 1779-82 with regard to asking for additional men with professional naval knowledge to assist him in his business. It also highlights Middleton's desire to further professionalise the Admiralty. Set hours for letter-reading and minuting would mean that rhythms of office-work could be set and further procedures built around them, a necessity for streamlining of practice and increased efficiency. Increasing the quantity of professional sea knowledge available at the Board would also improve the business, much

<sup>453</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 48-49 – letter undated (late November/December 1794), Middleton to Dundas.

as Middleton had found at the Navy Board a decade earlier. By 1794 though, it had become apparent that Chatham was no longer a viable option to retain as First Lord during wartime and the increased amount of business that war brought.<sup>454</sup> Because of this, the much younger and more energetic Earl Spencer was appointed to be First Lord. An inevitable power vacuum existed in the weeks until Chatham's successor was appointed, and it seems entirely possible that Middleton was forced to act as *de facto* First Lord during this time, being the senior and most active professional lord at Whitehall. Because of this we see the letters to Dundas, attempting to gain the political leverage required to push through his ideas and policies for the service during the winter, urging them through based on his self-proclaimed professionalism,<sup>455</sup> which he ordinarily would have been unable to do as such a junior member of the Board. Middleton may well also have been attempting to prepare the ground for any incoming First Lord, in order that whomever it was would be able to slot quickly and easily into an office system and method of business moulded by Middleton. As will be seen, however, any such thoughts that Middleton might have held were swiftly quashed by the incoming First Lord.

Spencer was a leading member of the Portland Whigs, the more conservative wing of the opposition Whig party, which had split from the more liberal Foxite Whigs in January 1794, and joined with Pitt in July to strengthen the Government at the outset of war with France. Initially invested as Lord Privy Seal as one of five cabinet positions given over to the incoming Whigs, Spencer was moved to the Admiralty soon thereafter. A young civilian (he was only thirty-five when he took the post), Spencer brought a very different attitude to the department than the outgoing Chatham. He was also determined to administer his own office, rather than let others do it for him.<sup>456</sup> This created problems as, by the time Spencer was being placed in office, Middleton had begun to mould the Board into what he considered a businesslike establishment, fixing the tasks to be performed by the various departments and the hours in which they were to be done, much as he had done at the Navy Board upon becoming Comptroller.<sup>457</sup> The Admiralty Office's hours had never been permanently fixed, nor were they as long as those that the Navy Board undertook, due to the fact that the work the professional, subsidiary Boards did prevented any need for the

<sup>454</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 136.

<sup>455</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 15-16, letter dated 20th December 1794 – Sir C. Middleton to H. Dundas.

<sup>456</sup> Gardiner, *The British Admiralty* p. 188. Gardiner sees Spencer as considering himself "more than 'first among equals', more than a chairman of the Board" and someone who expected subordinates to keep to their places rather than challenge his views and commands.

<sup>457</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures: Enclosure II.

Admiralty to overhaul itself in any great measure before the significant increase in workload that the last decade of the eighteenth-century brought. Middleton though had been unimpressed with the work that the Admiralty got through since Sandwich's tenure as First Lord,<sup>458</sup> and resolved very quickly to fix proper hours for the clerks to arrive at work, their general conduct during the working day, and to set down a schedule for the work carried out by the office.<sup>459</sup> He had advice prepared on how best to deal with the various letters that came into the office and in what order they should be read, minuted and acted upon. He urged that a system for collecting and arranging information be implemented, which would eventually come to pass in 1809 when the Admiralty Record Office was instituted. At this time there was a Paper Office, where records were stored, but they were rarely, if ever, consulted and were undigested, with many older volumes simply sitting and gathering dust, and ships' journals lodged as 'waste paper.'<sup>460</sup> Finally, he called for lists to be made of all the Warrant Officers, applications from Captains and Lieutenants, all clerks, their business and location when out of hours, and of all books in the office. Middleton himself had begun a minute book, as one had not been kept for over forty years.

Many of these things would seem perfectly normal, such as the use of a minute book within the office, and no visitors allowed in during working hours, but in terms of eighteenth-century administration, the changes Middleton made were unusual but essential for the Admiralty to become more professional. Middleton pushed the office toward efficiency of information-flow and working arrangements in all things from attendance and sending of letters and orders, to promotions, and the number and content of books in the office. It was his opinion that, as he told Spencer in one of his earliest letters to the First Lord,

If we think of going on without system, without energy, and without attention to economy in every branch of the navy where it can be exercised (and they are numerous), we must fall under the great weight of maritime power that is now preparing against us.<sup>461</sup>

<sup>458</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 2-6, letter dated 1779 - Middleton to Sandwich.

<sup>459</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December – Middleton to Spencer with two Enclosures: Enclosure II 'Project of Business.'

<sup>460</sup> Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* p. 38; pp. 45-46. The Admiralty Record Office was instituted by the Honourable W. Wellesley-Pole, with John Finlaison, the new head of the office, coming up with the index and digest system to be used. Hamilton acknowledges that Middleton was the first to come up with the idea of a digest for the records, but not a full Record Office.

<sup>461</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 16-19, letter dated (received) 28th December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer.

In the lead-up to Spencer's appointment Middleton held no illusions about his place in the office, but he clearly held the belief that his wealth of experience and expertise in the running of an office associated with naval administration would ensure that his methods of management would be adopted. In his own mind this supposition may well have been justified, for Pitt and Chatham had relied heavily upon his professional knowledge and had brought him back into office because of it. Sandwich had also valued it, even if he had not always acted upon Middleton's recommendations, and Howe had eventually paid the price for opposing Middleton when Pitt asked him to resign his office in 1788.<sup>462</sup> There was also the fact to consider that the First Lord was nominally just a member of the Board, and, while he was considered *primus inter pares* by the late-eighteenth-century, it did not necessarily follow that the First Lord would be responsible for the way in which the office ran.

In the first lengthy memorandum of advice and recommendations he sent to Spencer, Middleton was at pains to clarify that the advice written within was not specifically aimed at the young minister but rather was 'intended to give early information to the succeeding First Lord'<sup>463</sup> whomever that may have been. Middleton clearly expected Chatham's successor to be unaccustomed to the service and to the responsibilities the First Lord would have, which he was correct in judging. The way in which he wrote, moreover, betrayed the fact that Middleton had a very clear idea as to what constituted a good First Lord,<sup>464</sup> and he based much of what he wrote on what had passed between himself and four successive First Lords between 1778 and 1794, such as his claim regarding promotions within the service; 'it has been managed in a most irregular and incorrect way and the service and office has felt the consequences of it.<sup>465</sup> Tellingly though, Middleton claimed to have prepared measures to remedy the situation, and also mentioned that, while Admiral Affleck had been managing promotions and political patronage when Middleton came to the Board; 'I have never interfered further than to prevent from inadvertence injustice and improper appointments,<sup>'466</sup> clearly showing that Middleton had put himself in charge of patronage issuing from the Admiralty, even if another member of the Board remained in nominal

<sup>462</sup> For an account of Middleton's relationships with these two men see Chapter two and for his work as Comptroller under them see Chapter three.

<sup>463</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 43-44, letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1795 – Memo. By Middleton.

<sup>464</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures.

<sup>465</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19th December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures.

<sup>466</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures.

charge. It is small wonder therefore, that when he became First Lord in 1805 Middleton had many policies and changes that could be effected immediately, and held his own counsel regarding the proper manner in which promotions should be carried out, which brought him into conflict with Admirals such as Cornwallis following the Campaign of Trafalgar.<sup>467</sup> This conflict over control of patronage, and Middleton's stubborn adherence to promotions based on merit rather than political considerations, would further derail the relationship between Middleton and Spencer, for the latter had a great many Whig followers crying out for patronage and opportunity, and in order to satisfy them Spencer had to move Middleton out of the office.

Many of the measures that Middleton pushed Spencer to adopt and consider were both hang-overs from his years as Comptroller, and precursors to measures he would implement as First Lord, such as his insistence that the subsidiary Boards required proper regulation,<sup>468</sup> something that Middleton would have detested if forced upon him as Comptroller. Now he was out of that office and unable to personally manage the Navy Board, he clearly had little faith in the men who succeeded him to continue the work he had begun during the 1780s and, by setting down the ways in which the Admiralty regulated the subsidiary Boards, he could continue to affect their management. Along with this recommendation was the suggestion that the reports from the Commission on Fees should be reconsidered, as they had been with the Select Committee of the Privy Council for two years at that point<sup>469</sup> and Middleton was still convinced of the need for them to be implemented.<sup>470</sup> Many of his recommendations also starkly contrasted with his own behaviour when he was made First Lord a decade later, such as his insistence that Spencer should refer almost all official business to be considered by the Board as a whole, thus increasing its power, while not diminishing that of the First Lord himself.<sup>471</sup> As First Lord though, Middleton would take a large part of the business of the Board upon himself, and purposely split the general

<sup>467</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 281-82, letter dated Ville De Paris: at sea, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1805 – Admiral Cornwallis to Lord Barham; pp. 283-84, letter dated Admiralty, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1805 – Lord Barham to Admiral Cornwallis; pp. 284-85, letter dated Admiralty 13<sup>th</sup> November 1805 – Lord Barham to Admiral Cornwallis.

<sup>468</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19th December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures.

<sup>469</sup> J.R. Breihan, 'William Pitt and the Commission on Fees, 1785-1801', in *The Historical Journal Volume 27, Issue 1, March 1984,* (Published online 11 February 2009 pp. 59-81), pp. 72-74.

<sup>470</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19th December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures.

<sup>471</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I*, pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures.

business between the various Lords of the Admiralty.<sup>472</sup> Perhaps he felt by 1805 that the professionalism of the Admiralty had been increased from its position in 1794-95 to the extent that individual members were then capable of specialising in their work, especially as he had hand-picked several of them. On the other hand, perhaps in 1794 he wished to more closely supervise the work that the Board did, and did not trust a young landsman to know the best courses of action to take, a suspicion that would soon be vindicated on Middleton's part. What it does indicate though, is that Middleton was determined to attempt to hold on to the power and influence that he had acquired at the Admiralty before Spencer's appointment, a situation that Spencer himself could not allow to continue.

Spencer and Middleton butted heads over a variety of matters, as Spencer's inexperience with the established formalities and prerogatives of the fleet came to the fore, and Middleton's obstinacy, unwillingness to be overruled by his superiors, and inability to admit his own faults created a frosty atmosphere. Matters were not helped by the fact that, as a leading Whig politician, Spencer was hardly likely to have been willing to listen and be overly influenced by an old Tory political ally, kinsman of Dundas and close confidant of Pitt, regardless of the Portland Whigs' position at the time within Government. Middleton's cousin, Henry Dundas, had appreciated the possibility that such a situation might occur and had written to Spencer before he entered office, almost warning him of the difficulties that might be expected from working with Middleton.

It will be proper for me to have a very confidential conversation with you on the subject of Sir Charles Middleton. He has very great official talents and merit, but he is a little difficult to act with from an anxiety, I had almost said an irritability of temper, and he requires to have a great deal of his own way in doing business in order to do it well.<sup>473</sup>

Dundas perhaps predicted the inevitable conclusion to the two men being forced to work together when he warned Spencer that

I cannot help entertaining doubts how far under all circumstances it would be right to urge him to remain, and at the same time I cannot help feeling that his retiring from the Admiralty at this time would be an irreparable loss.<sup>474</sup>

 <sup>472</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 76-79 – Conduct of Business dated Admiralty, May 1805 (National Archives – Admiralty Minutes no. 256) dated Admiralty May 1805.

<sup>473</sup> Corbett, *Spencer, Vol. I* pp. 5-7, letter dated Wimbledon 14<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Dundas to Spencer, marked very private.

<sup>474</sup> Corbett, Spencer, Vol. I pp. 5-7, letter dated Wimbledon 14th December 1794 - Dundas to Spencer, marked

Dundas had reason to be apprehensive, for while Middleton's advice to Spencer was sound, well-reasoned, and based on his long experience in a service which had not evolved significantly since he had last served afloat, the bustling, brusque, and high-handed manner in which it was delivered made Spencer feel, probably correctly, as though Middleton was attempting to usurp his position as the man in charge of the business at the Admiralty, as Middleton had done under Chatham's tenure.

Despite this, Middleton's ideas did start to carry weight with Spencer and the way in which the Admiralty started to make itself a more professional body, as shown by the Admiralty beginning to take charge of the conduct of the officers under its command and adopting a more hands-on approach to the movements and discipline of the home fleets.<sup>475</sup> This was first broached by Middleton in his initial address to Spencer upon the First Lord entering office, as he claimed that

It is by a strong and decisive Board only that the discipline of the fleet is to be restored, and the officers of all ranks must be brought to know that submission in service must be observed and attended to.<sup>476</sup>

The instructions given to Commanders-in-Chief on foreign stations, first dispatched under Middleton as First Sea Lord in 1795, can still be seen in 1799, for example, as found in the instructions given to Admiral George Elphinstone, later Lord Keith, first when dispatched to the Cape of Good Hope,<sup>477</sup> and then to the Mediterranean.<sup>478</sup> The ways in which Middleton administered the admirals clearly made an impression, to the extent that the same instructions remained in circulation under Spencer's Admiralty, four years after Middleton had left office.

The first casualty of this new, harder-line approach was Lord Hood, then Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet. Hood had written to the Admiralty in late April 1795 as he prepared to return to his station, to complain of his lack of ships relative to the overall

very private.

<sup>475</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* p. 26; pp. 48-9 – letter undated (late November/December 1794), Middleton to Dundas; pp. 49-50 – letter dated 10 December 1794, Middleton to Dundas.

<sup>476</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December – Middleton to Spencer with two Enclosures: Enclosure I.

<sup>477</sup> W.G. Perrin, (ed.), *The Keith Papers: Selected from the Letters and Papers of Admiral Viscount Keith Volume I* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXII (1927) pp. 246-47, letter dated 21<sup>st</sup> March 1795 – Admiralty to Elphinstone (signed Chas. Middleton, H. Seymour and J. Gambier).

<sup>478</sup> Christopher Lloyd, (ed.), *The Keith Papers, selected from the papers of Admiral Viscount Keith Volume II* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XC (1950) pp. 391-92, letter dated 26 November 1799 – Admiralty to Keith.

strength of the French presence in Toulon.<sup>479</sup> While Hood did not directly criticise the Admiralty for their stationing of ships to his squadron, he made it very plain that he considered himself unable to oppose the enemy, casting serious doubts on the ability of the British fleet to win the naval war against France and to hold the Mediterranean. Hood's views were based on the facts that the French were launching new ships, the Toulon fleet had been joined recently by a contingent from Brest, and that the British fleet was lacking in masts, spars, and men, with the loss of both the *Illustrious* and *Berwick* (74s) to wreck and capture respectively reducing its operational strength yet further. There was more than a slight element of face-saving on Hood's part as he desired to have his opinions publicly put on record in writing,<sup>480</sup> and he resolved not to add disgrace to His Majesty's forces under his command, rather than attempt to add lustre to them, claiming that he was unable to do the job he had been commissioned to do unless the Admiralty gave him more resources, due to the numbers of the enemy present in the theatre.<sup>481</sup>

At this moment, Spencer was given an opportunity to enact a political switch of commanding officers, with the covering excuse of enhancing Admiralty control over the officers, and deemed it necessary to remove Hood from his command. This was a significant act as Hood was a high profile officer, held in high regard by the King and other admirals, Nelson in particular, and was a firm Tory supporter, with allies in both Pitt and Chatham, on whose Admiralty Board he had served. Despite this, however, his family had little political influence of its own; he and his brother, Alexander, Lord Bridport, owed their positions within the service to promotion of merit. Despite the relatively measured tone of his letter to the Admiralty, Spencer considered that the outburst was damaging enough to the image of the Board that he decided to take action. In a move that showed the political overtones of the move, Hood's replacement, Sir John Jervis, was a Whig who had, until January 1794, held the seat for Chipping/High Wycombe in Parliament through the interest of Lord Landesdown, who controlled the borough. Throughout, Spencer maintained that he had not removed Hood lightly, but had been forced to do so for the good of the service, and wrote to the King personally in order that his Majesty might understand why such action had been deemed necessary because, as Spencer put it, he was

<sup>479</sup> Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest* pp. 60-1 – letter dated 28 April 1795, Victory, St. Helens, at sea, Samuel, Lord Hood to Admiralty. J.K. Laughton, (ed.), *The Naval Miscellany Volume I* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XX (1902) 'Extracts from the Papers of Samuel, First Viscount Hood' pp. 221-58. pp. 243-44, letter dated Victory, St. Helens: 28<sup>th</sup> April 1795 – Lord Hood to the Secretary of the Admiralty.
480 Laughton, *Naval Miscellany Volume I* pp. 245-46, Memorandum by Lord Hood.

<sup>481</sup> Laughton, Naval Miscellany Volume I pp. 244-45 - Lord Hood's Statement.

Fully persuaded that the discipline and subordination so necessary to be maintained between the Board of Admiralty and the officers...would be entirely at an end, if public and official representations of this kind were allowed to pass unnoticed.<sup>482</sup>

This had not been the usual system of command between the Admiralty and commanders on station. Howe, for example, during the early years of the American War, when he was Commander-in-Chief of the North American station, had frequently written back to the Admiralty pleading for ships of the line to be sent to North America, forever concerned about his ability to oppose the enemy and assist the Army, without being censured or recalled from his station. Keppel also, when taking command of the Channel fleet in 1778, had expressed concerns about his ability to oppose the French and had put back to port upon learning that the enemy were at sea in superior force on his first cruise. This recall of Hood, therefore, was to a great extent unprecedented, and marked a significant change in the actions of the Admiralty. While the politics of the situation are apparent, the excuse used, that of increasing the discipline of the admirals under the command of the Admiralty, would continue to be a facet of the ways in which the Admiralty changed over the French War.

Hood quitted the command in the Mediterranean but not without publicly denouncing the conduct of the Admiralty both in providing him with inadequate forces to oppose the enemy, and then in depriving him of the command, simply for conduct which, in the past, may well have been allowed to pass without censure, despite its insubordinate nature.<sup>483</sup> In a letter between Spencer and Lord Seymour, another Whig and member of the Board, brought in by Spencer in March 1795 while on active service with the Channel fleet, Seymour remarked

As to his Lordship's quitting the command I believe that it will be attended with no disadvantage whatever to the country and I believe the Navy in general will be pleased at his being taught that there are bounds to the authority of all officers which he had appeared to have lost sight of.<sup>484</sup>

In saying this, Seymour closely echoed Spencer's own sentiments concerning the conduct of the Admirals both on home and foreign stations, especially when their actions or words damaged the positions of the Admiralty and Government, showing the changing of the tone

<sup>482</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 31-32, letter dated Admiralty, 3rd May 1795 - Spencer to The King.

<sup>483</sup> Laughton, Naval Miscellany Volume I pp. 245-46, Memorandum by Lord Hood (undated).

<sup>484</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest pp. 61-62, letter dated 3 May 1795 - Seymour to Spencer.
of the Board, the ways in which Spencer was solidifying his position at the Admiralty, and preparing the ground to oust Middleton.

## Middleton's Departure from Office, and Inter-Departmental Interference

Middleton's departure from office was occasioned through a series of unfortunate events surrounding the ill-fated combined forces expedition to the West Indies, which a more experienced First Lord, better acquainted with naval matters, could have potentially avoided. As it happened though, events transpired against which Middleton felt so strongly that he professed he could not add his signature to the orders given by the Admiralty and was consequently asked to resign. The orders given concerned the nature of the man who was to lead the naval aspect of the combined operation, Rear-Admiral Sir Hugh Cloberry Christian (an officer of very junior standing in the service), and the matter of naval etiquette, a complicated and jealous system at the most harmonious of times. The man who was to be displaced by Christian as Commander-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands was a personal friend of Middleton's, Sir John Laforey. While at first glance it may be easy to interpret Middleton's opposition to the measures undertaken by the Admiralty as petulance over the treatment of his friend, as Corbett<sup>485</sup> and others<sup>486</sup> have pointed out, it seems far closer to the truth to see Middleton's resignation as a protest over the power the War Office was exerting over the Admiralty and the Navy. Henry Dundas was the Secretary for War at the time, and his experience in politics and senior standing in the ministry told against the younger, more inexperienced Spencer. There is also the matter of differing Party interests to consider when assessing the situation, a matter which Middleton perhaps did not factor in to his arguments. Along with this matter of interdepartmental politics, there was also the far more important matter of dissipation of naval forces, lack of adequate resources to fully cover the expedition while maintaining command of the seas at home and in this, Middleton was able to determine those nuances of naval warfare which inexperienced men such as Spencer and Dundas missed.<sup>487</sup>

Although the idea of striking a blow against the enemy's colonies, especially in the West Indies, was commonplace in most conflicts between any European countries, but especially

<sup>485</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 134-35

<sup>486</sup> G.J. Marcus, A Naval History of England Volume 2 – The Age of Nelson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), p. 83: Julian S. Corbett, Some Principals of Maritime Strategy (Greenwich: Conway Maritime Press, 1972), pp. 256-57. Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham' p. 320.

<sup>487</sup> Corbett. Spencer Vol. I pp. 50-54, letter dated 1st July 1795 – Middleton to Spencer, marked private.

Britain and France, Middleton believed that a large combined operation at that particular juncture was a misappropriation of force. Middleton had been complaining of a lack of men to man the existing ships in commission throughout June and July of 1795,<sup>488</sup> as the situation had worsened due to the Batavian Republic being forced to declare war on Britain in May, which necessitated the revival of a strong North Sea fleet. The Channel Fleet had also been otherwise engaged in attempting to support a French Royalist uprising near Quibberon Bay, while Spain's attitude was becoming more threatening, and Middleton saw that the situation in home waters was likely to change once again.<sup>489</sup> There existed the possibility that the force under Christian would be in the West Indies when Spain added her navy to that of France, making Britain inferior to the two power standard it had sought to maintain throughout the 1780s, instead of concentrated, and ready to strike a potentially decisive, pre-emptive blow the moment Spain showed her hand.<sup>490</sup> While the possibility existed that the threat to the colonies would draw the French out of port, it was unlikely that they would seek battle with Howe's Channel Fleet, and would most likely attempt to sail after the expedition, which it could potentially catch due to the fact that the naval vessels would have sail slowly in order to escort the troop transports.<sup>491</sup> Based on this, Middleton felt that it was folly to split the comparatively meagre forces available to the Navy across an ever increasing area, especially as the British still clung to the Mediterranean.<sup>492</sup> Despite this, it was felt by both Spencer<sup>493</sup> and Dundas<sup>494</sup> that France was too weak to effectually oppose the sending of any troop convoy to the colonies, and so planning went ahead regardless of Middleton's concerns.

It was to be the identity of the man the War Office wanted to lead the naval aspect of the campaign that caused so much consternation. The admiral on station as Commander-in-Chief of the Leeward Islands was Vice-Admiral Sir John Laforey, a man of senior standing in the Navy, if not universally liked.<sup>495</sup> He had previously been a figure of controversy

<sup>488</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 42-43, Memo by Middleton for Spencer dated 11<sup>th</sup> June 1795; pp. 43-44, Memo by Middleton dated 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1795; pp. 44-45, Memo by Middleton dated 24<sup>th</sup> June 1795; pp. 50-54, letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 1795 – Middleton to Spencer, marked private.

<sup>489</sup> Morriss, The Blockade of Brest, pp. 129-31.

<sup>490</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principals of Maritime Strategy* (Greenwich: Conway Maritime Press, 1972), p. 303. 491 Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 140-44, letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1795 – Admiral Christian to Spencer.

<sup>492</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 50-54, letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 1795 – Middleton to Spencer, marked private.

<sup>493</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 145-48, Memorandum by Spencer on Admiral Christian's Appreciation dated 24<sup>th</sup> August 1795.

<sup>494</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 148-49, Appreciation by Dundas dated Wimbledon, 24th August 1795.

<sup>495</sup> John E. Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor: Sir Charles Middleton and the King's Navy*, 1778-1813 (London: Frank Cass, 1998), p. 139. British Library Archives Add. MS 75775-75868, Admiralty Althorpe Papers. Vols. cdlxxv-dlxviii. Correspondence and papers of Spencer as First Lord of the Admiralty; 1640-1801, but chiefly 1794-1801. Letter dated 12 October 1795 – Dundas to Spencer.

within the Navy much as Middleton had, as he was also part of the cadre of officers that Howe had refused to promote in the ill-fated promotion of 1787 that had eventually cost Howe his office.<sup>496</sup> The War Office wanted a man far more agreeable to their tastes, along with those of their commander Major-General Ralph Abercromby, but their man, Christian, was a man who had only just received his flag and was one of the most junior officers in the flag ranks.<sup>497</sup> In addition to this, he would be extremely junior to Abercromby, who was himself a relatively junior general, but who had held his rank since 1787. One of the main reasons that the War Office favoured Christian so much was his work at the newly formed Transport Board, where he had gained experience in the Transport service that would be invaluable in assisting with moving great numbers of troops and supplies to the West Indies and employing them in amphibious operations.<sup>498</sup>

The selection of Christian to command the expedition to the Leeward Islands would ordinarily have required him to be appointed Commander-in-Chief to ensure his authority. Replacing Laforey with Christian, however, was an unprecedented measure when considering their respective seniority, and Spencer thought that the situation would be far better resolved by permitting Laforey to remain as Commander-in-Chief while Christian operated on his station, but with orders that Christian was in no way to be subject to Laforey's authority. The idea of having an admiral on a foreign station not answerable to the Commander-in-Chief, however, was unusual and disrespectful in the eyes of the service, as Commanders-in-Chief of foreign stations acted with the authority that the Admiralty did in home waters.<sup>499</sup> It could have been perceived that having a junior officer commanding a fleet of ships outside the jurisdiction of the Commander-in-Chief would undermine the senior officer's authority, especially if the senior officer felt that the ships in question would be of more use in his own squadron. Additionally, there was the question of whether the junior officer would report to the Commander-in-Chief as well as the Admiralty, in order to let both authorities know what measures were being taken, and, critically, whether or not he would be eligible to dispense patronage to officers in his squadron. These were important issues for the hierarchical, proud, and jealous officer

<sup>496</sup> J. K. Laughton, 'Laforey, Sir John, first baronet (1729?–1796)', rev. Alan G. Jameson, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn., Jan 2008

<sup>[</sup>http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15878, accessed 22 Feb 2016]

<sup>497</sup> Kenneth Breen, 'Christian, Sir Hugh Cloberry (*bap.* 1747, *d.* 1798)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Oct 2008

<sup>[</sup>http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5357, accessed 22 Feb 2016]

<sup>498</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor pp. 138-39.

<sup>499</sup> Talbott, The Pen and Ink Sailor p. 139.

corps of the Royal Navy at the time. The idea that Christian might replace Laforey with no disciplinary reason to recall the senior admiral, as Middleton cautioned, had the potential to create deep feelings of resentment, mistrust and unhappiness within the officer classes.<sup>500</sup> Similarly, the option then put forward that Laforey would remove to Jamaica to become Commander-in-Chief of the Caribbean, with Admiral Parker at Jamaica removing to command the forces at Sainte Domingue, was still a case of shuffling senior officers around in order to better accommodate a junior and again, highly disrespectful to the senior officers involved. Spencer's proposition that Abercromby and Christian would operate under Laforey's command, with the senior admiral ordered not to interfere, was insufficient for the War Office however, who proved to be ignorant of all naval tradition and with little respect for the officers of the senior service, as Dundas believed that simple unpopularity within the service was sufficient grounds to recall Laforey, and claimed that 'it is really too deep a stake we are contending for to be put at risk by the etiquette of rank.'<sup>501</sup>

By doing this it can clearly be seen that Dundas in the War Office was applying Army principals to the naval service, which did not operate in the same ways and, while the Admiralty was beginning to exert more authority over the officers under its command, the rules and etiquette still needed to be followed, lest admirals choose not to serve because of slights coming from high command. While Dundas could recommend to Spencer to take the responsibility of appointment upon himself, and in doing so placate the more senior officers in the service, as Dundas himself had done with the Army,<sup>502</sup> (Abercromby was only a major-general, owing to his decision not to serve during the American War because of his sympathies towards the rebels), that course of action held no sway within the older service. Worse still, Spencer had little chance of changing Dundas's mind, while Pitt was becoming concerned<sup>503</sup> and Abercromby was also urging that only he and Christian should be the officers on station, with Christian in command of the Leeward Islands.<sup>504</sup>

Meanwhile Spencer, urged by Middleton that such measures were unprecedented and unfair to Laforey, attempted to reason that Christian had no such problems with the proposed arrangements of working under Laforey and tried to make Dundas understand that it would be preferable for Laforey to resign from the command rather than be forced to recall him with no charge to bring against him, however unpopular he was in the West

<sup>500</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 182-83, letter dated 23rd October 1795 – Middleton to Spencer.

<sup>501</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 168-70, letter dated Wimbledon, 12th October 1795 - Dundas to Spencer.

<sup>502</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 168-70, letter dated Wimbledon 12th October 1795 - Dundas to Spencer.

<sup>503</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 172-73, letter dated Walmer Castle, 18<sup>th</sup> October 1795 – Dundas to Spencer marked private.

<sup>504</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 171-72, letter dated Southampton, 16th October 1795 – Abercromby to Dundas.

Indies.<sup>505</sup> He also claimed that if the situation had been made more plain to him when the combined operation was proposed he would not have suggested so junior an officer as Christian to lead the fleet,<sup>506</sup> as his plan was for the junior officer to work under Laforey, a measure which, while unusual, did hold precedents, though perhaps not with the added complication that the Commander-in-Chief could not interfere with the junior's arrangements, and could have been made to work. Unfortunately though, when Spencer tried to make it a measure for the Cabinet to decide upon,<sup>507</sup> Dundas forced him into a decision, threatening to order Abercromby to serve against his wishes if Laforey was retained,<sup>508</sup> and, faced with such overwhelming opposition, Spencer relented and recalled Laforey,<sup>509</sup> forced into a humiliating climb-down by the War Office, although from erased passages in a draft letter to Dundas he clearly felt that the latter had overstepped his authority by interfering with the Admiralty.<sup>510</sup> In the end the command of the Leeward Islands station was given to Cornwallis, not to Christian, but as Cornwallis was detained at the time, he would not be able to take up the new command for several months, thus giving Christian and Abercromby time to operate in the West Indies. The whole episode is significant in showing just how political an office the Admiralty still was in comparison with the level of professionalism it possessed. A more bureaucratic and professional Board, such as the Navy Board, was closed to outside interference and the opinion of the amateur, meaning that very few people, save the Admiralty, would have had the knowledge or information required to argue with the decisions made by that Board, whereas the Admiralty was open to constant criticism from within the Cabinet, in Parliament, and by the wider public also due to the political nature of the business it dealt with. The opinion of the First Lord of the Admiralty, and by extension, the Board of Admiralty as a whole, was made subservient to that of the Secretary for War during this episode in matters regarding the naval service. Even if the opinion of Spencer himself, a Whig and relative newcomer to government office, was not taken above that of Dundas, right hand man of Pitt and a man who had proven his administrative worth, the opinion of the Board, especially when the identity of its senior professional member was taken into

<sup>505</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 173-76, letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1795 (draft) – Spencer to Dundas. 506 Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 173-76, letter dated 19<sup>th</sup> October 1795 (draft) – Spencer to Dundas.

<sup>507</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 173-76, letter dated 19th October 1795 (draft) - Spencer to Dundas.

<sup>508</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 176-78, letter dated Walmer Castle, 20th October 1795 - Dundas to Spencer, marked private.

<sup>509</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 418-20, letter dated Admiralty, Friday 23rd October 1795 - Earl Spencer to Middleton.

<sup>510</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 179-82, letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> October (draft, much corrected) – Spencer to Dundas.

consideration, should have been enough to have convinced an outsider to back down. As it was though, the professionalism of the Board of Admiralty was not sufficiently established by the mid-1790s to convince other members of Government that it knew best in matters regarding the Navy.

Once the order had been dispatched to recall Laforey, Middleton was dismayed and made no secret of that fact to the First Lord.<sup>511</sup> He also immediately saw through the means by which Spencer had attempted to extricate himself from the situation, and raised the pertinent issue of the age and health of admirals serving as Commanders-in-Chief, as Spencer had used the issue of Laforey's health as the lever by which he could extract him from the Leeward Islands command. As Admiral Howe was on shore at the time whilst in nominal command of the Channel fleet despite several attempts to resign the command, was never to go back to sea, and had not been on board the fleet in some time, Spencer's excuse looked thin at best. Middleton also attempted as best he could to remove himself from the matter by claiming that 'my reputation is too much concerned to take an active share in the business.<sup>512</sup> Spencer though was not prepared to have his senior professional lord distance himself from the measure, as he wished for a united front in his office in order that his position be as strong as possible in the face of any potential backlash over his handling of the measure.<sup>513</sup> It also surely did not pass Spencer by that here was an opportunity to attempt to subdue Middleton's influence in the office by having him submit to his authority as First Lord. Middleton, obstinate as ever, refused to back down and offered his resignation in two letters to Spencer when no compromise was forthcoming from either man.<sup>514</sup> It is even possible that Spencer counted on Middleton's resignation when he ordered him to sign the command to Laforey, preferring to only fight battles outside the Admiralty with other departments rather than constantly be at odds with his senior sea Lord, who, despite the situation with Dundas, still had strong Tory leanings.

Despite the fact that Middleton had backed himself into a corner whereby resignation was the only possible outcome, and Spencer found himself forced into accepting it, he apparently did so only with a heavy heart and a sense that he was losing a valuable member of his Board, even if the man had been very stubborn and difficult to work with. Rear-Admiral James Gambier, Middleton's nephew and a member of Spencer's Board of

<sup>511</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 182-83, letter dated 23rd October 1795 – Middleton to Spencer.

<sup>512</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 182-83, letter dated 23rd October 1795 – Middleton to Spencer.

<sup>513</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 421-22, letter dated Admiralty, Sunday night, 25<sup>th</sup> October 1795 – Lord Spencer to Middleton.

<sup>514</sup> Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* p. 183, letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> October – Middleton to Spencer: p. 184, letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> October – Middleton to Spencer. Also in Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* p. 422.

Admiralty since 7 March 1795, wrote to Middleton a short while after his resignation had been accepted to say of the state of the office, "[Spencer] regretted exceedingly your loss, which could not be replaced by anyone."<sup>515</sup> As true as this was, it was also the end of Middleton's tenure in naval administration officially for the next nine years, although unofficially the old man never lost touch with the service or the needs of the shore establishment, always keen and able to offer an opinion whether asked for or not.<sup>516</sup>

This short but highly consequential episode shows much about the ways in which Middleton viewed the service, how it should be run, how he viewed the aptitude of the First Lord and other civilians, and the lengths to which he was prepared to go in order to maintain his beliefs about what was best for the service. It also becomes significant when one compares what Middleton was campaigning for at the Admiralty in 1795 with what he pushed Sandwich to adopt during the American War, and finally with what he himself would later do as First Lord during the Napoleonic War. The time spent as a Lord Commissioner gave Middleton first-hand experience of naval strategy and reinforced his opinions as to the best methods of administering the active service. While the situation between Middleton and Spencer could have been handled better, both were proud men with differing political networks, and deference and humility were not in their characters. This correlates with Middleton's constant quarrels with Howe, and the differences which Middleton and St. Vincent would later find in their ideas on reform of the shore establishment. Middleton showed in this instance, as he would throughout his career, that he was completely of the opinion that landsmen had no place in running the Navy afloat or ashore without listening to and acting upon professional naval opinion. Middleton's views on how best to prosecute the war came to the fore at this time also, and gives a clear understanding of how he clung to his principles and policies of a strong home presence until the enemy was broken, with protection of home trade foremost in his mind at all times. Just as he resented the fact that the fleet was split between the Americas and Europe during the American War, so he railed against the possibility that such an occurrence could be brought about again during the French War.

The short time Middleton spent as First Sea Lord highlighted some of the best and worst aspects of his character and work ethic. He felt neglected and unsupported by Chatham, about whose application to business he was highly critical but, as during his tenure as

<sup>515</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 5-6 – letter dated Admiralty, 29<sup>th</sup> October 1795, R-Admiral Gambier to Middleton.

<sup>516</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 12-13, letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> August 1798 – Middleton to Mr. Fordyce; pp. 15-21 – On the State of the Navy dated April 1803.

Comptroller, he found that the new First Lord was much worse, but in a very different way. Middleton felt constrained and stymied under Spencer, a man who refused to listen to or be swayed by him on many important matters, and moreover who Middleton thought did not appreciate his wide array of talents; a fact he was keen to convey to Chatham upon resigning his office.<sup>517</sup> Nonetheless, the time spent ordering the disposition of fleets, regulating the Admiralty Office, and working with those in Government during 1794 and the early stages of 1795 showed that Middleton had lost none of his talents, and provided him with keen insight into the workings of the operational side of the Navy, which he would then be able to use to best effect when orchestrating the Campaign of Trafalgar a decade later. His work forms a neat bridge between his early formulations of active naval policy in his urgings to Sandwich, and his mastery of naval disposition a decade later as First Lord. The posting as First Sea Lord gave Middleton essential hands-on experience and also allowed him to begin the ways in which the Admiralty would exert greater control over its admirals. While Bridport, Howe, and Hood all resisted and resented the increased interference, as they saw it, from the Admiralty, it allowed Admirals such as Cornwallis, Collingwood, and Calder to become accustomed to such authority by the time Middleton became First Lord.

Middleton's work at the Admiralty is unusual for the time, as it shows a subordinate firstly take over the running of a department from the nominal minister in charge but also saw Middleton argue with his new First Lord when Spencer decided to take the lead in the department. What is more unusual is the way in which Middleton was able to so accurately dispose of the fleets, and to organise the service at sea within a month of coming into office to oppose the French in the lead up to, and aftermath of, the Glorious First of June. While Middleton had served as a post-captain in both frigates and guard-ships, his first-hand knowledge of fleet actions and fleet command was non-existent. Despite this, he was able to use his seaman's knowledge of the capabilities of ships on station, and his administrative and logistical flair to use the fleet as a true staff officer, capable of thinking in terms of tactical and strategic fleet operations, while able to recognise the work that needed to be done on shore to keep that fleet in supply and repair at all times so that the French might be contained in port. He realised that it was not simply through winning naval battles that Britain would win the war, but through the relentless pressure of blockade together with trade protection and harassment that Britain would emerge victorious. While there were to

<sup>517</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 6-8 - letter dated 8th November 1795, Middleton to Chatham.

be several more fleet actions throughout the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Middleton was correct in his assertion that the greatest threat the French navy could pose to Britain was to her trade.

Middleton's work was also a significant part of the change within the Admiralty Office during the 1790s, which saw the Board gain more professional knowledge, and act as the head office, rather than central office, of the naval shore administration. His call for the Admiralty Office to adhere to fixed working hours, the keeping of a minute book, and the banning of visitors during working hours all bore the hallmarks of how he had improved the working habits of the Navy Board during his first years as Comptroller, and foreshadowed the wholesale reform of the Admiralty Office he was to make a decade later. The final, and perhaps most important change, came in the discipline and deference he demanded the admirals on station give to the Admiralty, as he saw the necessity of dictating to the admirals exactly how, when, and where their ships should be used as essential to the British war effort, as the fleet strained to maintain their policy of keeping the seas and blockading the enemy, along with trying to keep pace with the ever-expanding enemy fleets arrayed against them. Without this control, frigates might be allowed to go on cruises by the Commanders-in-Chief as favours for the young captains that served under them as a kind of patronage. While this practice could bring a young captain a fortune in prize money, it also meant that any tightly organised systems that the Admiralty hoped to use to constrict the French trade and prevent their enemies from resupplying would be sabotaged from within. By controlling the movements of fleets, ships, and officers, the Admiralty created ill-feeling between themselves and several high ranking admirals who had made their names in previous wars, and had been expecting the same sort of autonomy that had been afforded their predecessors. Creating this greater control, however, did allow the strained resources of the Royal Navy to be used to their greatest advantage, and offset, at least to a degree, the numerical disadvantage the British found themselves at. This illfeeling and autonomy of Commanders-in-Chief of home stations had almost disappeared by the time Middleton became First Lord, and he could be confident of where he deployed the fleet, knowing that the ships he stationed would remain on station. The leg-work he did and the ideals he promoted in 1794-95 bore him fruit a decade later, and enabled him to complete the work he had begun.

Overall, the calm and organised way in which Middleton led the Admiralty through the opening few months of Great Britain's involvement in the French Revolutionary War allowed the British to make best use of the fleet that he had given to the nation. His work

showed the beginnings of his supreme grasp of naval strategy through logistics and administrative experience that would be shown to its greatest extent a decade later. His use of the fleet ensured that the French couldn't effectively oppose the British after the Glorious First of June, as his policy of strategic interdiction ensured that they could not resupply as they needed to. Middleton's policy of ensuring that the administration controlled the admirals meant that the British were able to best exploit the position of ascendancy they had been granted at the outset of the war through French weakness coupled with British strength. In addition, the measures taken to improve the professionalism of the Admiralty Office were very important in allowing the senior office to become assured in the business that it did and increase the quantity and quality of the knowledge available to the Board. Simple measures such as fixed working hours, a minute book, and elimination of distractions during working hours made the Admiralty into a far more professional governmental department, and began to take it away from the political, amateuradministrator state it had been in for so long. Establishing the office's supreme authority over subsidiary Boards and the officers that it employed was another essential step towards giving the naval shore establishment a professional structure and also laid the groundwork for Middleton to set down comprehensively what was required in professional terms for a man to be a Lord Commissioner in the early-nineteenth-century.



# Lord Barham's Reforms at the Admiralty

When he came to the Admiralty in 1805, a decade after he had last been in government office, Middleton, as has so often been stated, was seventy-nine years of age, but still had all his mental faculties about him. While he had been far from naval administration during the remainder of the 1790s, his ties to certain people within Government remained strong through the networks he had established as a younger man. Men such as Pitt and Dundas retained high opinions of his work, his legacy of a fleet well-prepared for conflict was still held in the minds of politicians, and men such as his nephew, James Gambier, and his fellow Scot and long-time colleague Philip Patton owed him allegiance through family, kinship, and patronage. The work that Middleton did at the Admiralty in both an advisory and hands-on capacity would be pivotal in allowing Britain to recover from the slow start to the Napoleonic War caused by Lord St. Vincent's enquiries during the Peace of Amiens.<sup>518</sup> Middleton's reformative work shaped the structure of the Admiralty Office for the next twenty-five years, and would contain many changes that forced the naval shore administration to operate in very different ways to what had gone before. In just nine months, Middleton was to change both the course of a war, and the face of naval administration once again, pursuing the work that he had begun over thirty years previously.

Clive Wilkinson defined the position of the Navy and its administration in the eighteenthcentury as

Not some autonomous monolith that defended the country...it existed within parameters defined by a political system...constrained by physical boundaries defined by resources available both material and financial and by an infrastructure that tended to expand at a slower rate than the growth of the fleet itself. It was sustained in much of this by vested interest and the force of public opinion.<sup>519</sup>

If one accepts the veracity of this statement and, considering the speed at which reforms were adopted in eighteenth-century government it is difficult not to, then the work that Middleton managed at the Admiralty during such a short time as First Lord must be

<sup>518</sup> Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 193-98.

<sup>519</sup> Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (The Boydell Press: Woodbridge, 2004) p. 8.

considered remarkable, and indicative of the influence and expertise of the man. To overhaul the way in which the Board was organised and did business, at the outset and crisis point of a great war, was a notable achievement, more especially considering that the vast majority of Middleton's changes survived until the complete overhaul of the naval shore administration in 1832. The speed at which the changes were implemented was helped by the fact that Middleton had spent years working at reforming the naval shore establishment and had worked on other schemes that had not been acted upon during his earlier career. He also had a clear picture in his mind of what was required of a first-rate naval administrator by the time he came into office as First Lord due to years spent working under, and alongside, a variety of First Lords, and could define what he meant by a 'man of business' when it came to naval administration; namely a man who could look to the future and be mindful of what might be required, able to put measures in place to provide for these eventualities at the earliest opportunity. Needless to say, Middleton saw his usual methods and workloads as essential to this definition, but considering his successes up to that point and the work he was to do during his nine months in the job, it is difficult to argue against his assertion that method and unremitting application were essential to the make-up of a 'man of business.'520

### The Beginnings of Middleton's Reintegration to Naval Shore Administration

In 1803, after nearly a decade out of the Admiralty, Middleton, perhaps due to correspondence or meetings with William Pitt,<sup>521</sup> had decided to set down his own version of the state of the Navy just a month before hostilities broke out again and it was clear that the nation was preparing for war once more. This address on the state of the Navy also detailed matters of personal experience, as it covered the progress of the Navy since his own investment as Comptroller, there being many similarities between the situation in 1778 and that in 1803, as Middleton detailed,

<sup>520</sup> J.K Laughton, (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron, 1758-1813, Volume III* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXIX (1910), pp. 66-72 – letter dated Teston 17<sup>th</sup> March 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville.

<sup>521</sup> Middleton wrote to his secretary to request papers and information gathered over the previous years before he went to meet with Pitt on the subject of defensive operations which Middleton claimed 'would naturally lead to the state of the Navy.' Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* p. 22 – letter dated Teston, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1803, Middleton to J.D. Thompson.

At that time [1778] I found the dockyards empty of stores, the total value therein not amounting to £500,000, and our number of serviceable ships very inadequate to our wants. The only remedy I could devise was building to as great an extent as possible, during the war, in the merchant yards, and repairing as fast as possible in the King's; a measure that will be found...to be of equal expediency in time of peace, as in time of war, and to which too much attention cannot be paid.<sup>522</sup>

While this address on the state of the Navy must be taken as a treatise on Middleton's own accomplishments, and reads more as a list of greatest achievements rather than setting out any truly new material, the methods that he used to augment the Navy during the American War were also measures that could be (and eventually were) used after St. Vincent's departure from office by both himself and Lord Melville to augment the fleet during the early years of the Napoleonic War. These were measures such as hiring more apprentices, shipwrights, and caulkers, and repairing ships as soon as possible using temporary measures if necessary, utilising the merchant yards for building, and leaving ships to season on the stocks. Middleton finished his appraisal by saying that more ships needed to be built in the merchant yards, with the Royal yards given over entirely to repairs and the construction of the largest, three-decked ships, until the number of serviceable ships in the Navy reached one hundred sail of the line. He also lamented the fact that, since 3,117 shipwrights took seven years to repair the fleet in peace, with 18,000 serving seamen during the 1780s, it was likely to take much longer to achieve a high state of repair in the fleet in wartime with only the 2,900 shipwrights then employed, with upwards of 50,000 seamen afloat, and barely any building being undertaken in the merchant yards.<sup>523</sup>

All of these remarks proved to anyone who read his address that Middleton had lost none of his nous regarding the best ways in which the Navy was to be administered, knowledge that was particularly relevant to Pitt as he moved openly into opposition to Addington's ministry because it gave him ammunition to use against St. Vincent and the ways in which he had rather run down the Navy over the preceding eighteen to twenty-four months.<sup>524</sup> Even if there was nothing new within Middleton's address, it still highlighted the fact that he could turn his mind to the job presently at hand, and find ways of using his methods of business to improve the fortunes of the Navy.

<sup>522</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 15-21 - On The State Of The Navy, dated April 1803.

<sup>523</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 15-21 – On The State of the Navy dated April 1803.

<sup>524</sup> C. I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 29: Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards* pp. 197-98.

Once Pitt returned to power in 1804, he turned to his long-time political friend and ally Henry Dundas, who by then had been created the Viscount Melville, to replace Lord St. Vincent as First Lord. Melville had great experience in politics, Government, the workings of the Cabinet, and believed that he knew how to prosecute a war, but the office of First Lord required yet another skill-set: that of knowledge of the sea, how the officers should be treated, and what a fleet needed to be able to stay afloat. It was obvious that Melville was largely ignorant of how the Admiralty and the Navy differed from the War Office and the Army from his dealings with Spencer regarding the expedition to the West Indies in 1795. As Melville came into office it was clear that St. Vincent's vicious cutbacks and damaging enquiries into the workings of the dockyards during the eighteen months of tentative peace had put the Navy well behind in preparation for any future conflict, as time that could have been spent repairing and refitting the fleet had been spent searching for corruption and malpractice.<sup>525</sup> As a consequence, Melville could ill be afforded the amount of time that might ordinarily have been necessary to acquaint a new minister with the running of the office, and how best to administer the fleet. An expert was required with intimate knowledge of fleet administration to assist the new First Lord. Because of this, both Pitt and Melville decided to call upon the peerless knowledge and experience of Melville's cousin, Sir Charles Middleton. In 1804 Middleton held the rank of Admiral of the White Squadron and had few officers superior to him in the service. Certainly, in terms of experience in dealing with the administration of the Navy, there was nobody more qualified in the service either serving or retired. Melville was well aware that Middleton had kept himself informed of the state of the fleet due to receiving several memorandum and letters of advice during the decade that Middleton had spent out of office.<sup>526</sup> The advice was almost always sound and clearly thought out, and Melville and Pitt had no reason to suspect that the old admiral's abilities had faded with age.

Middleton's long-time secretary J.D. Thompson wrote of the situation surrounding the change of administration in 1804,

<sup>525</sup> David Bonner-Smith (ed.), Letters of Admiral of the Fleet The Earl of St. Vincent Whilst First Lord of the Admiralty, 1801-1804 Volume II Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXI (1927), p. 289, letter dated 14 May 1803 – St. Vincent to Admiral Cornwallis. N.A.M. Rodger, 'The Significance of Trafalgar: Sea Power and Land Power in the Anglo-French Wars' in David Cannadine (ed.) Trafalgar in History: A Battle and its Aftermath (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006) pp. 78-89, p. 86.

<sup>526</sup> Julian S. Corbett (ed.) Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty 1794-1801 Volume II Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XLVIII (1914), p. 269, letter dated Wimbledon, 31<sup>st</sup> January 1798 – Dundas to Spencer; pp. 269-72, letter dated Felton, 28<sup>th</sup> January 1798 – Sir Charles Middleton to Dundas.

Mr. Pitt was again at the head of H.M. Government [and] it was determined by Mr. Pitt and Lord Melville, now placed at the head of the Admiralty, to consult Sir Charles Middleton on all matters connected with the restoration of the fleet, which was found, on the renewal of hostilities in 1803, to be in a very dilapidated state.<sup>527</sup>

Middleton was able to bring immediate professionalism to Melville's Admiralty, by being able to advise the First Lord on the exact structure and make-up of his Board.<sup>528</sup> While Sir John Colpoys had no prior connection to Middleton, he had served as Commander-in-Chief at Plymouth yard in 1803, giving him knowledge of the shore administration's processes. James Gambier had experience as a Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty under Spencer, while Middleton was still at the Board no less, had received high praise for his performance as captain of H.M.S. *Defence* (74) at the Glorious First of June, and had served afloat under Cornwallis in the Channel Fleet in 1801 and after that as Commander-in-Chief of Newfoundland. Philip Patton had plenty of experience in administrative offices, having served at the Transport Board from 1794-95, worked with Middleton on matters of signalling during the 1780s as well as contributing to Beatson's *Naval and Military Memoirs of Great Britain*, with Middleton personally encouraging his private work and memos on the administration of the Navy, no small endorsement. He also had served at sea during the nineteenth-century as second-in-command to Lord Keith in the Downs from December 1803 until his appointment to the Admiralty in May 1804.

As such, as soon as Melville was officially inducted into the office on 15 May 1804, a memorandum of significant length was sent from Middleton to Melville<sup>529</sup> outlining the older man's recollections of his time as Comptroller, his work to make good the defects in the service during and after the American War of Independence, and what Melville might do to alleviate the problems left by St. Vincent. While this memorandum again reads like a list of previous accomplishments, the advice and experience was in no way outdated, as when Melville came into office in 1804, many of the issues facing the fleet were similar, if not identical, to those that Middleton himself had had to deal with as a result of a lack of investment, action, and organisation in the dockyards and fleet in 1778. Stocks and supplies for the fleet were running low, the general repair of the fleet had not been

<sup>527</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 272-75 – Memorandum for Mr. James (the pioneering naval historian William James, who would do much to promote the work that Barham did in his *Naval History of Great Britain*), written by J.D. Thompson, no date.

<sup>528</sup> I. Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty' in *Mariner's Mirror LXIV* (Greenwich: Staples Printers St. Albans at The Priory Press, 1978), p. 221

<sup>529</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804.

adequately attended to, and many of the smaller rates and unrated vessels had been sold,<sup>530</sup> meaning that the number of ships that Britain was able to send to sea could not match the combined power of France and Spain, for although Spain was not officially at war with Britain in 1803, and would not join the hostilities for another year, the Spanish threat could not be ignored by Britain owing to the previous three Treaties of San Ildefonso and the Treaty of Aranjuez between France and Spain. The situation in the yards was also bad, with St. Vincent having dismissed scores of dockyard workers, meaning that relations between the Admiralty and the subsidiary Boards and dockyards were at an all-time low. In short, Middleton had seen almost this exact situation nearly thirty years ago, and he had managed to turn matters around at that time. He was also one of the few men who had been a part of the British recovery effort still alive to recount the situation and what was done to resolve it. This stream of knowledge, insight, and advice was to continue throughout Melville's time in office, even as the veteran politician became well-versed in the naval aspects of his new posting.<sup>531</sup> Throughout there was the usual Middleton selfaggrandisement, and occasional bitterness, such as when Middleton spoke about his successor in the office of Comptroller being able to take the credit for the speedy outfitting of the Navy for the French Revolutionary War, or the lack of action taken on the recommendations of the Commission on Fees.<sup>532</sup> If, however, there is any sense of inflation of importance in this memorandum to Melville, (such as Middleton's own appraisal of the office of Comptroller and the manner of man required to fill it), the underlying truth is that much of the readiness achieved by the Royal Navy during the late 1770s and 1780s, and the ability of the Navy to carry out operations in a good state of repair during the 1790s, owed more to Middleton than any other man. By July 1804, guided by Middleton's knowledge and advice, combined with his usual assiduous application to administration, Melville set down his plans to strengthen the fleet, marking the necessary application, time, and forethought in husbanding of available resources that would be required to arrest the recent decline of the Navy. In nearly every statement, echoes of Middleton's thoughts,

<sup>530</sup> David Bonner-Smith, (ed.) *Letters of Admiral of the Fleet The Earl of St. Vincent whilst First Lord of the Admiralty 1801-1804 Vol. 1* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LV (London 1922) pp. 147-48. letter dated 20 October 1801 – St. Vincent to Nelson. St. Vincent told Nelson he had directed the Navy Board to dispose of all gun vessels out of repair, saying 'the twenty last built are efficient and will be useful in Peace.'

<sup>531</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty', pp. 217-233. p. 219.

<sup>532</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 - Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804.

policies, and previous actions show, almost paraphrasing much of Middleton's earlier correspondence with him.<sup>533</sup>

Melville and Pitt needed to use the talents and knowledge that Middleton possessed in order that the fleet might be speedily made ready for war. Extra ships capable of going to sea were a deterrent in themselves, as they allowed the ships in best condition to cruise instead of being used for harbour duties and home defence, as well as providing additional ships to stand in the line of battle if necessary. By hastily repairing the ships in Ordinary, Melville's Admiralty was able to make three ships of 98-guns available for duty, along with three of 80-guns, eleven of 74-guns, five of 64-guns, and eleven frigates. While similar to the measures Middleton had applied in 1778-81, this time

The method adopted was that of strengthening some of these by diagonal beams, doubling others and applying both these measures to some of those in the worst condition, as recommended by Mr. Snodgrass, the surveyor of the E.I. Co. in a public letter addressed to Lord Melville as president of the board of control and the court of directors in 1797.<sup>534</sup>

Most famous of all the ships repaired in this manner was the 64-gun *Africa* which took part in the Battle of Trafalgar. As Thompson stated though, without the addition of these twenty-two ships of the line, fit as they were only for home or Channel service, the Royal Navy would have been comprehensively outnumbered by her enemies' navies and the Admiralty would not have been able to make the dispositions that made Sir Robert Calder's action at Cape Finisterre, Trafalgar, and the victories of both Sir Richard Strachan and Sir John Duckworth possible, by which the enemy lost thirty-one sail of the line, five frigates and five corvettes in the space of six months. Middleton's influence in these matters concerning Melville's Admiralty has sometimes been overlooked by historians such as Colin White,<sup>535</sup> Sir John Barrow,<sup>536</sup> and Roger Knight,<sup>537</sup> who do not look closely at exactly how these matters came to be implemented, content as they are to credit Melville, already

<sup>533</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III, pp. 40-48, Memorandum by Lord Melville dated Wimbledon, 3rd July 1804.

<sup>534</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 272-75 – Memorandum for Mr. James (unknown recipient, written by J.D. Thompson) no date.

<sup>535</sup> Colin White, "'Eager and Happy to Exert Themselves in Forwarding the Public Service'; The British Fleet at Trafalgar" in Harding, Richard (ed.), *A Great and Glorious Victory; New Perspectives on the Battle of Trafalgar* (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2008), pp.30-40: 115-16, pp.30-31.

<sup>536</sup> Sir John Barrow, An auto-biographical memoir of Sir John Barrow, bart., late of the Admiralty: including reflections, observations and reminiscences, at home and abroad, from early life to advanced age (London: J. Murray, 1847), p. 217

<sup>537</sup> Roger Knight, 'The Fleets at Trafalgar: The Margin of Superiority' in David Cannadine (ed.) *Trafalgar in History: A Battle and its Aftermath* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006) pp. 61-77, pp. 68-70.

an excellent administrator, with the way in which the fleet was brought from a state of unpreparedness without pausing to consider who may have been the power behind the throne in Melville's Admiralty.

In his initial memorandum, Middleton was also able to advise Melville on the best course of action when considering the timber merchants, and the remedial work that needed to be done to improve relations between said merchants and the Admiralty. During St. Vincent's administration, the timber entering the Royal yards had been subjected to far greater scrutiny than before, and any irregularities were met with a practice of rejecting the whole load, or having a drastically reduced price enforced upon it.<sup>538</sup> This was a scheme based on proposals by Samuel Bentham in his capacity as Inspector-General of Naval Works and involved appointing 'timber masters' to the yards, who were placed in sole charge of the receipt, storage, and conversion of timber. While the greater regulation of materials entering the Royal yards was a welcome step, the timber masters were extremely heavyhanded in their methods, rejecting entire loads of timber for the tiniest defects as they feared that they would be held personally responsible for any reports of bad timber.<sup>539</sup> This meant that the timber merchants eventually did not wish to do business with the Admiralty and Royal yards, and formed the Timber Trust in order to unite against what they perceived as St. Vincent's tyranny regarding the supply of materials to the yards, thus drastically reducing the existing stockpiles, and increasing the price of what little timber remained available.<sup>540</sup> From 88,000 loads in the late 1780s, the timber stockpiles had dropped to 42,000 loads by 1801, and from there to 37,000 loads by 1803, with St. Vincent doing little to alleviate the problem during his remaining time in office, even as war broke out anew. Instead of the three years' supply provided for by Middleton in 1790, there was barely sufficient for nine months by the early-nineteenth-century.<sup>541</sup> This episode also accelerated the breakdown in relations between St. Vincent and Sir Andrew Snape Hammond, as the Comptroller and the Navy Board attempted to mediate and convince the Admiralty to relax their approach. Appeals to private landowners and Admiralty approved tours of the Royal Forests provided paltry returns, and the resulting artificial shortage of timber forced the

<sup>538</sup> Robert Greenhalgh Albion, *Forests and Sea Power: The Timber Problem of the Royal Navy 1652-1862* (Hamden, Conneticut: Archon Books, 1965), pp. 320-23

<sup>539</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 88-89.

<sup>540</sup> Albion, Forests and Sea Power p.317; pp. 320-23; pp. 378-79

<sup>541</sup> P. K. Crimmin (ed.), 'The Supply of Timber for the Royal Navy, c.1803-c.1830' in Susan Rose (ed.), *The Naval Miscellany, Volume VII* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 153 (Ashgate, 2008), pp191-234, pp. 198-99, letter dated 30 March 1802 – Navy Board to Admiralty Secretary; Albion, *Forests and Sea Power* pp. 378-79.

Admiralty and Navy Board to look to overseas markets for their timber stocks,<sup>542</sup> but any timber imported was later found to be of very sub-standard quality, rendering it useless.<sup>543</sup> In order to mend the relationship that had been allowed to sour during St. Vincent's time as First Lord, Melville immediately proposed

To apply such remedy as may appear necessary, also to give such advance on the present contract prices as to enable the contractors to meet the advance in price which has taken place all over the kingdom [and] to import as much foreign oak timber as can be procured from all parts of the world for the purpose of being used in repairs of all old ships so as to reserve the English oak entirely for the building of ships, or giving a slight repair to those of the best condition.<sup>544</sup>

One cannot help but discern the Middletonian attitude displayed within Melville's discourse of the best way in which to utilise available resources and finances in order to meet an impending crisis, especially with regard to how the timber stocks might be rebuilt; professional naval administrative knowledge that any man unaccustomed to the service could not be expected to possess. What followed was a run-down of all foreign ports that might realistically be expected to furnish oak timber suitable for ship-building from Canada to northern Europe to the Mediterranean.<sup>545</sup> All of this was knowledge that only a man closely connected with the process of timber supply and shipbuilding could have been expected to possess, and shows how closely Middleton's policies and knowledge became Melville's policies and knowledge. There is also the fact to consider that Middleton had been intricately linked with the timber supply for the Royal Navy for many years, and indeed had chaired the Commissioners of the Land Revenue set up in 1787 to investigate the supply situation of English Oak, paying particular attention to the Royal Forests and what should be done with them. Robert Albion, said of the commission,

That eleventh report [of the commission] is the most comprehensive study of the problem that can be found, for Middleton was thoroughly conversant with the subject and approached it from every angle. Questionnaires were sent to every county, and to the naval purveyors and timber merchants, to determine the causes and extent of the oak shortage. Eminent shipwrights were called upon for suggestions on

<sup>542</sup> Bonner-Smith, *St. Vincent Vol. II*, p. 187, letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> May 1802 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond, marked secret; p. 190, letter dated 18 July 1802 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond.

<sup>543</sup> Bonner-Smith, *St. Vincent Vol. II* p. 204, letter dated Rochetts, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1803 – St. Vincent to John Larking; p. 236, letter dated 19 April 1804 – St. Vincent to John Larking.

<sup>544</sup> Crimmin, 'The Supply of Timber', pp. 203-05, enclosure in letter dated 4 July 1804 – Lord Melville to Marquess Wellesley.

<sup>545</sup> Crimmin 'The Supply of Timber' pp. 203-05, enclosure in letter dated 4 July 1804 – Lord Melville to Marquess Wellesley.

methods of economising in the use of naval timber through improved construction and the prevention of dry rot.<sup>546</sup>

It would therefore seem that the best authority in the country, and perhaps in Europe, on how to supply timber for the Navy, was Middleton. Because of this it would seem implausible indeed that Melville should simply take his own view on the situation and not consult his cousin on such an important matter, especially considering Middleton's expertise in it. Corbett agrees with the assessment that Middleton's knowledge, opinions, and policies became those of Melville, by saying that 'by no other means can we account for the precision and balance with which the best traditions of the service had been embodied in the strategy of the war.'<sup>547</sup> Laughton, the man who has been perhaps most closely connected with Middleton's advice since his days as Treasurer of the Navy in 1783, seeing him as 'the embodiment of naval wisdom.'<sup>548</sup> Laughton also claimed that several of the memoranda that were issued under Melville's signature can be seen to owe their influence directly to Middleton rather than the First Lord<sup>549</sup> and, from their style and knowledgeable content, it is difficult to gainsay him.

Although Melville was a great administrator in his own right, it was Middleton who provided so much of the impetus that Melville's Admiralty needed during its early months to ensure that the terrible state of readiness that the fleet found itself in could be repaired swiftly. Middleton's knowledge of how to repair ships swiftly and give them sufficient strength from temporary procedures gave worn out ships a few extra years of life, which meant that the strength of the fleet could be increased very quickly. The Snodgrass system of doubling and bracing was not an altogether new one to Middleton's eyes, and bore a resemblance to his own measures during the American War.<sup>550</sup> Middleton's knowledge of the timber situation, and his work in the past with the timber merchants when he supervised

<sup>546</sup> Albion, Forests and Sea Power, pp. 135-37.

<sup>547</sup> Julian S. Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar (London: Longmans, 1910), p. 71.

<sup>548</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>549</sup> See Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 40-48 – Memorandum by Lord Melville dated Wimbledon, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1804. If Melville did not heavily re-use or paraphrase Middleton's earlier work here then he must have been far busier than any previous First Lord in his first two months in the seat in order to gather the necessary information presented on the state of the fleet, the workload of the yards and what was necessary to arrest the decline. Many of Middleton's policies that he had followed for years and implemented during the 1780s were put forward as the way the Admiralty wished to proceed under Melville.

<sup>550</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804. Middleton said of the measures during the American War 'I determined on a measure that had never before been attempted – and which was, to bring every ship in ordinary into service of some kind or other; to listen to no excuses, but to double and patch them up so as to make them equal to temporary and home services.'

the restocking of three years' war consumption of timber in the dockyards, along with knowledge of how and where to contract from abroad, alleviated the damage done by St. Vincent's Timber Masters and the draconian standards applied rigidly to all timber merchants. Finally, Middleton's intimate knowledge of the work that the subsidiary Boards did allowed him to assist in the smoothing of relations between the various shore departments once more, as he advised Melville to appreciate the opinions and advice that such professional organisations could provide.

Through Melville's reliance on Middleton during the earliest month of his tenure as First Lord, a lack of permanent professional naval administrative knowledge within the Admiralty can be discerned. The Admiralty was too open to the presence of the naval amateur, as Melville certainly was when he arrived as First Lord, to possess a reserve of men intimately involved with the various aspects of naval administration, as was the case at the Navy and Victualling Boards. As a result, essential knowledge such as Middleton possessed was not always present at the Board, and required someone to have been appointed specifically because they had that knowledge. Due to Lords of the Admiralty still being political appointees, administrative professionalism was not the most important of considerations when a First Lord came to draw up his Board of Admiralty. Middleton's reforms to the Admiralty would begin to change this balance and make it much more desirable for a Lord Commissioner to possess professional expertise, close the office to serving officers who preferred to remain at sea rather than dedicate themselves to an administrative post, and begin to bring the shore establishment closer together, allowing osmosis of professional knowledge, or at the very least, appreciation of whom to turn to when any administrator required advice.

### The Beginnings of Middleton's Final Reforms to the Shore Administration

When the sixth report of St. Vincent's Commission of Naval Enquiry, on the subject of Plymouth and Woolwich dockyards was published, Middleton's correspondence with Melville took on a more urgent tone. The report had been distributed by the Navy Board to each of the Commissioners of the various dockyards, with an instruction simply 'to avoid in future the irregularities herein pointed out.<sup>551</sup> It was obvious to someone with experience of how the dockyards worked that this sort of vague and simple order was most likely to

<sup>551</sup> National Archives, Kew, ADM 106/2515, Standing Orders to the Yards 1804 – Letter dated 23 July, from the Navy Board.

produce limited or negligible results, though such an instruction was perhaps the most likely course of action from the Navy Board at the time due to the exigencies of remobilisation. The Commission of Enquiry's report had recommended that the orders and instructions to the dockyards be revised and digested, in order to prevent the irregularities occurring, rather than rely on the overworked Navy Board and dockyards to improve the efficiency of the situation on their own initiative, especially as the Board was still resentful of St. Vincent's dealings with it. Middleton therefore wrote to Melville as he saw an opportunity to impress on the First Lord the digests of the Navy Board's instructions to the dockyards that he had made in a private capacity when Comptroller.<sup>552</sup> Middleton still possessed those digests as nothing had been done about them in the intervening decades, and now an opportunity for reform was at hand. This work would form the first aspect of business for what would become the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, which would comprehensively set out the instructions that were to pass between the Navy Board and the superior and inferior officers of the Royal yards. Indeed, they would remain unchanged until well into the nineteenth-century.<sup>553</sup> These revised instructions would serve to force the various yards to conform to a central protocol and a uniformity of procedure, thereby solidifying the Navy Board's control over the work undertaken by the yards, control which had been allowed to lapse due to the mass of undigested, confused, and conflicting stream of Standing Orders issued since the midseventeenth-century. By setting down these uniform orders and instructions so clearly, along with the fact that the Commission of Revision's reports went into detail on the problems of management facing the subsidiary Boards, succeeding Admiralty Boards were thus able to better appreciate the work that the Navy Board did, and the relationship it held with the dockyards. The result was to be greater understanding between the two Boards, something that had been sorely lacking since the first days of the Board of Admiralty in the first decade of the eighteenth-century.554

To begin with though, while Melville accepted and concurred that reform was required in the wake of the Commission of Naval Enquiry's report, he attempted to demur from the measure, unsure of the wisdom of committing to the wholesale reform of such a complex organisation as the dockyards now that hostilities had begun again. Middleton though would not be denied his opportunity and pressed Melville on the matter, reasoning quite

<sup>552</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 200.

<sup>553</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards p. 186

<sup>554</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 185-86.

rightly that the improvement of public offices was more critical at that time than any other, promising his own assistance and that of men he would name who were 'qualified for the purpose'.<sup>555</sup> Melville found himself unable to retract from his earlier support of the measures, and all of this meant that in September 1804, Middleton's friend, secretary, and regular correspondent J.D. Thompson, the naval officer for Leith at the time, was assigned to the Navy Board with a clerk, and a remit to revise, concentrate, and arrange all the Standing Orders issued by the Navy Board to the dockyards since 1793, following the formulae that Middleton had set out in his digest books, with Middleton having done the bulk of the work on Orders which had been issued earlier in the century already, during the 1780s. While this arrangement was clearly intended as an internal affair at the Navy Board, and the reforms and digestions were originally only slated for those Orders sent by the Navy Board to yard officers, by November 1804 Middleton had decided that it would also be wise to revise and digest the Orders that the Navy Board sent to sea officers. This would ensure that the Board did not have separate ways of issuing Orders to separate officers, thus speeding up the administrative process and providing a template to which the Board could easily refer when drafting new, or revising older Standing Orders, regardless of the recipient.556

Following on from the work that had been begun with the revisions to the Navy Board's Standing Orders in the latter half of 1804, it became clear to both Melville and Pitt by the turn of 1805 that Middleton had far more to offer the service than simply giving advice to the First Lord and providing the basis for digest books, especially as Melville was starting to settle into the work of the office, armed as he was with a great deal of written expertise by that point. At once they saw the potential to continue to investigate and improve the efficiency and organisation of the shore establishment without the need to renew St. Vincent's damaging Commission of Enquiry by utilising Middleton's lengthy list of talents to comprehensively streamline and reform all naval departments, not just a single office or part of the machine. A proposition was put forward that a new Commission should be established to deal with the various reports that had been generated since the middle of the 1780s from various previous Commissions. When George Rose, the Paymaster-General and former midshipman from 1758-62,<sup>557</sup> was approached for his opinion on Middleton's involvement in the Commission he replied that the latter was

<sup>555</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 200.

<sup>556</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 200.

<sup>557</sup> Roland Thorne, 'Rose, George (1744-1818)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University

Really...beyond comparison the best man that could be found for one of them [the commissioners], probably the Chairman...,no man living stands higher in the public opinion for the faithful, able and diligent discharge of the duties of the station he filled.<sup>558</sup>

With such glowing endorsements, coupled with Pitt's own personal experience of Middleton's talents, the Government set up a Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, with Middleton as chairman; a commission designed to work with, not against the establishment, and promote efficiency and merit throughout the system, bringing the shore service into greater working harmony. This was in stark contrast to St. Vincent's Commission of Naval Enquiry, which had sought to undermine the dockyards and Navy Board, and punish negligence and corruption wherever the previous First Lord found it, and St. Vincent had a habit of finding corruption and iniquity everywhere he chose to look.<sup>559</sup> Middleton was unimpressed with the work St. Vincent had done and made no secret of it:

The papers are very civil to us [the new commission], but they don't like to give up Lord St. Vincent's share of the merit, although he certainly had no clear view of the business; and whatever his intentions might be, it would have been impossible to have carried them into execution without a new regulation of the board and all its branches.<sup>560</sup>

The first draft of the Commission focussed mainly on the dockyards, with Middleton nominating J.D. Thompson and John Fordyce to assist him. Fordyce was the Surveyor-General of Land Revenue, a fellow Scot, born of an Edinburgh lawyer, director of the Bank of Scotland from 1759-61, recently M.P. for Berwick-upon-Tweed, and had worked with Middleton previously in 1788, when Middleton had worked on the supply of timber from crown lands. Fordyce remained on the Commission of Land Revenue from its inception, and became Surveyor-General in 1793.<sup>561</sup> Pitt though then altered the second draft of the Commission, vastly increasing its scope for effecting reform throughout naval administration, taking accounts and other inferior offices within its remit, no doubt

Press, 2004; online edn, Sept 2013 [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24088, accessed 21 May 2016]. 558 Quoted in Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, p. 200.

<sup>559</sup> Bonner-Smith, *St. Vincent Vol. II* p. 167, letter dated 19 March 1801 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond, Bart. (Comptroller); pp. 171-72, letter dated 29 April 1801 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond; pp. 181-82, letter dated 18 January 1802 – St. Vincent to Sir Andrew S. Hammond marked secret.

<sup>560</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III p. 58 – letter dated Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1805, Middleton to J.D. Thompson.
561 J.M. Collinge, 'Fordyce, John (1735-1809), of Ayton, Berwick' in R.G. Thorne (ed.) The House of Commons, 1790-1820 Volume III (London, Boydell and Brewer, 1986) pp. 788-90.

persuaded by experience that a commission led by Middleton's professional knowledge and experience could do much more than previous commissions. Because of this, Middleton instead nominated two admirals, Sir Roger Curtis, and William Domett, to assist him, along with Fordyce and Ambrose Serle, a visitor to Teston in the early years of Middleton's Evangelicalism, a Transport Commissioner, and another man whose career Middleton had had a great influence upon. While Thompson was left out, six months later he obtained a permanent post as a Commissioner at the Navy Board where he would remain until 1829. The final mandate for the Commission could hardly have been more fitting for Middleton. It was, in essence, to create a set of instructions for the running of all the departments within naval administration, paying particular attention to the use or misuse of monies and stores, in order to better organise the establishment in view of the vastly expanded state of the Navy in the early-nineteenth-century.<sup>562</sup> Middleton and his Commission were also given the task of adapting and implementing any of the as-yet unadopted proposals from the Commission on Fees, the Commission of Naval Enquiry, and the Select Committee on Finance, allowing Middleton the opportunity to recommend that any practicable measures be carried out, but also giving him the ability to refuse and discard any measures that were felt to be impracticable upon reflection by men who could comment professionally on the matter.<sup>563</sup> By doing this, Middleton had absolute control over the work that had been done since the 1780s on the subject of revision and reform in the public offices under the jurisdiction of the Admiralty. Later in the year, once placed into the office of First Lord, he could ensure that even matters to do with the Admiralty itself were taken into consideration immediately with no opposition, and could amend the work that had been done in his absence from administration to his own specifications.

Middleton had no illusions as to what state he and his new Commission would find the Navy and shore administration in, as he had made similar requests for reforms during the 1780s, only to see them fall by the wayside or implemented piecemeal during the 1790s, and certainly not to the extent and standard that he himself would have wished.<sup>564</sup> He also held much of the blame for the state of the Navy in 1803-05 over the heads of Lords Spencer and St. Vincent for their handling of the Admiralty during the French Revolutionary War and Peace of Amiens.<sup>565</sup> It is also entirely possible that, having worked

565 More can be seen of this in tables and statements made by Middleton in his address on the state of the Navy from 1803, where he compared the numbers of shipwrights, loads of timber, ships built and repaired between

<sup>562</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 201.

<sup>563</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards p. 201.

<sup>564</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 55-57, letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1804 – Middleton to J.D. Thompson.

so hard to recover Britain's state of readiness during the 1780s, it galled Middleton more than most men to see the state of preparation he had worked so hard to achieve frittered away over eight years of war.<sup>566</sup> Along with the state of the Navy, Middleton was also unimpressed with the ways in which his proposed amendments to the constitution of the Navy Board, first put forward in 1787 as Comptroller, had been implemented in 1796, and the ways in which the reforms in the dockyards had been implemented in 1801 under Spencer. He believed that had they been acted upon straight away, far fewer of the present administrative problems would have occurred.<sup>567</sup> He also believed that the bulk of the changes, implemented by the Bentham-Nepean revisionary work, had 'sadly garbled' them to suit the views of 'interested individuals,'<sup>568</sup> another attack on the influence of politics within the naval departments, as he declared 'politics mix with every thing and therefore nothing is done as it ought to be.'<sup>569</sup>

Middleton also demonstrated, as Sandwich had done over thirty years before,<sup>570</sup> an ability to look not just forward to determine what should be done, but backwards as well when determining who to blame for the current situation.<sup>571</sup> When Melville was attacked in the House of Lords on the score of neglect, following the tardy re-mobilisation of the fleet at the resumption of war in 1803-05 in comparison to 1793, Middleton realised that the opposition was keen to blame Melville, as he was Pitt's closest political ally. Just as with Sandwich's administration in 1778 though, the blame could not be imputed solely to Melville's administration because the previous administrations of St. Vincent and Spencer had done so much to undermine the state of the Navy during the final years of war and the subsequent eighteen months of tenuous peace that St. Vincent himself had badly misjudged as being acceptable and permanent. As Middleton stated,

- 566 Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 66-72 letter dated Teston, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville. 567 Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 55-57, letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1804 Middleton to J.D. Thompson.
- 568 Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 24-39 Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804.

<sup>1766, &#</sup>x27;73 and '83-89 and finally compares the state of the Navy when he left the office of Comptroller to the state the Navy had fallen into by 1803. Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 15-21 – On The State of the Navy, dated April 1803.

<sup>569</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 55-57, letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December 1804 – Middleton to J.D. Thompson.

<sup>570</sup> G.R. Barnes and J.H. Owen (eds.), *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782 Volume II March 1778-May 1779* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume LXXI (1933) pp. 253-281 'A Debate in the House of Lords 23 April 1779'. This discusses the motion called by the Earl of Bristol for the removal of Lord Sandwich from the Admiralty, during which Sandwich drew significant attention to the state in which he claimed the fleet was left to him.

<sup>571</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804.

The mischief was done before the present [Melville's] Admiralty came into office; and the question now is, to whom shall we impute the blame? When the last Admiralty went out, what was the state of the fleet as to building and repair? What were the means left for keeping it afloat and capable of service?<sup>572</sup>

Middleton was only too capable of providing the answers to these questions and did so, in order than Melville might have some facts and statistics to back himself up with in the debates in the Lords,<sup>573</sup> a move not dissimilar to what was done when providing Sandwich with similar information in 1778-79.<sup>574</sup> These neglects that Middleton listed can be seen as a good indicator of his perception of the requirements of a First Lord and professional naval administrator, which he set out by saying 'forethought is a sure talent and very seldom possessed; without that quality, added to method and unremitted application, no man can have a title to being called a man of business.<sup>1575</sup> These necessary duties of a naval administrator also bear a strong resemblance to the ideals he impressed on Pitt when he first came to power,<sup>576</sup> such as use of merchant yards, stocking of general timber, and an aversion to the mass discharge of men following peace. While he accepted that St. Vincent's reforms and enquiries would have procured much good to the service had they been carried out in times of secure peace, he lamented the fact that they had done so much to retard the readiness of the Navy in 1803 and ended by commenting

I am persuaded Lord St. Vincent must have thought [the peace] secure when he attempted this method of reform. On any other ground, it was madness and imbecility in the extreme.<sup>577</sup>

St. Vincent seems to have been narrow-minded, one might even say blinded, in his view that the Treaty of Amiens would lead to a lasting peace in Europe. In retrospect it seems impossible that anyone as well-connected as St. Vincent could have been convinced of this, but his orders to demobilise the fleet upon hearing only of the preliminaries of peace, without waiting for full ratification, shows how clear his conviction was that there was to

573 Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 66-72 - letter dated Teston, 17th March 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville.

<sup>572</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 66-72 – letter dated Teston, 17<sup>th</sup> March 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville; Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, Series I, Volume IV, Lords Debates, cc. 18-24, Lords Sitting of 14 March 1805, 'State of the Navy'; cc. 145-57, 'State of the Navy'.

<sup>574</sup> Barnes and Owen, Sandwich Vol. II pp. 262-63, Paper D in Middleton's writing.

<sup>575</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 66-72 – letter dated Teston, 17th March 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville.

<sup>576</sup> J.K. Laughton (ed.), Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813, Volume II, (Publications of the Navy Records Society, Volume 38, 1910), pp. 197-208, letter dated 31<sup>st</sup> December 1785 – Middleton to Pitt, including Mr. Pitt's Queries.

<sup>577</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 66-72 - letter dated Teston, 17th March 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville.

be peace.<sup>578</sup> St. Vincent's desire for peace was not just borne of a dislike of war, but also the fact that it allowed him the breathing space necessary to step away from the constant motion of warfare and concentrate on the reforms he was convinced were essential in the dockyards:<sup>579</sup> reforms which could not be carried out in war due to the upheaval they were to cause and the amount of workers that would need to be laid off, causing very little work to be done during the investigations. Earlier in 1801 he had written of his desire and intention to set about reforms

The inroads and abuses which have crept into every department of the Navy, require a strong hand to crush: regardless, as I am, of the unpopularity which attaches upon all attempts to correct abuses, I am determined to support the Board, *coûte que coûte*, in every strong measure which it is judged fit to take, whenever these evils present (which God knows happen frequently), and by that means lay a foundation for my successor to restore the Navy to its pristine vigour.<sup>580</sup>

While Middleton acknowledged that the Commission of Naval Enquiry had done good work in bringing these abuses to light, enabling the new Commission of Revision to devise checks and balances for the future, he believed that the attacks on the Navy Board Commissioners were

Illiberal and in many parts unjust for, notwithstanding the very great remissness of the dockyard officers and the abuses committed by themselves and instruments, it was out of the power of the Navy Board...to prevent them.<sup>581</sup>

St. Vincent had attempted to ensure that the Navy Board felt the full weight of the new responsibilities given to each Commissioner by the reorganisation of 1796, and held the Board personally responsible for all irregularities, frauds, corruptions, and inefficiencies he discovered in the naval shore establishment. Had he felt himself able, he would have replaced a great many of the members of the Board, or perhaps done away with it altogether.<sup>582</sup> In this, however, he was stopped, much as Howe had been fifteen years previously, by the fact that, while the members of the Board were appointed by the First Lord, once in office they could not easily be removed. While the relationship between the

<sup>578</sup> Bonner-Smith, St. Vincent Vol. I, p. 147-8.

<sup>579</sup> Bonner-Smith, St. Vincent Vol. II, pp. 171-72, letter dated 29 April 1801 - St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond.

<sup>580</sup> Bonner-Smith, *St. Vincent Vol. I* p. 339. Letter dated 29 March 1801 – St. Vincent to Rear-Admiral Duckworth.

<sup>581</sup> Quoted in Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 201-02.

<sup>582</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 196.

two Boards had never been more strained, a positive outcome for the management of the Navy was that the brief period of St. Vincent's Admiralty ensured that the Navy Board was once again made to feel completely responsible for the conduct of the Royal dockyards.<sup>583</sup>

As Chairman of the Commission of Revision, Middleton was able to propose a more rounded and fulsome set of amendments beneficial to the entire naval establishment rather than a single office, and was able to authorise them personally once he became First Lord and received the agreement of the King.<sup>584</sup> In the case of the Navy Board, while the Board had already been reorganised in 1796 along the lines that Middleton had proposed, the years from 1796-1805 had seen the business passing through the Navy Office increase by unprecedented amounts, meaning that a large amount of the work fell seriously into arrears.<sup>585</sup> Middleton's expert committees were stymied by the necessity of having their work checked by the Board as a whole, which might have been workable in the 1780s, but slowed matters down too much with the increase of business that the French Wars brought. The result was that the Commissioners still felt able to pass on responsibility and refer major issues to the Board as a whole. The expedient of the Comptroller 'superintending the whole' was also unworkable, due to the expanded business of the Comptroller's department. Nevertheless, several offices that had been near sinecures at the time of Middleton's resignation as Comptroller had been turned into efficient offices by the time Melville came to the Admiralty through a combination of Middleton's recommended reforms, and St. Vincent's furious exhortations.<sup>586</sup> Without St. Vincent to constantly harry the Board, however, measures would need to be taken to ensure that a suitable work-rate could be maintained thereafter.

Therefore, after several years of the changes being allowed to embed themselves, Middleton was able to see more clearly which officers should be charged with which duties and, as a consequence, several officers received greater powers in their respective committees and departments, with their backgrounds specified in Middleton's typical fashion.<sup>587</sup> The Deputy Comptroller was given superintendence of affairs in the Committee

<sup>583</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 150-51.

<sup>584</sup> More of this will be seen later in the chapter along with extracts and references to the official letters that passed between Barham and George III. For an overview of the situation see J.M. Collinge, (ed.), *Office Holders in Modern Britain VII – Navy Board Officials 1660-1832* (Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1978) pp. 12-15.

<sup>585</sup> J.M. Haas, A Management Odyssey: The Royal Dockyards, 1714-1914 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), p. 51; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 181-85.

<sup>586</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 150.

<sup>587</sup> See Fourth Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy

of Correspondence and the First Commissioners of the Committees of Accounts and Storekeeping were given superintendence of their affairs also. This was to relieve the Comptroller of the necessity of being the sole superintendent of all business at the Board as Middleton had at first intended, as the increased work had overloaded the Comptroller's department.<sup>588</sup> The First Commissioner of Accounts was recommended to be versed previously in accounting, and the First Commissioner of Store-keeping was to be a naval officer.<sup>589</sup> Two extra members were also to be added to the Board: firstly a naval officer to superintend the payment of seamen at the Pay Office, in the Thames, and at the offices at Deptford and Woolwich; secondly the Inspector-General of Naval Works was to be added to the Board.<sup>590</sup> The secretariat of the Board was also enlarged as three new secretarial positions were created, with more permanent clerks employed in the Secretary's Office as a consequence of the work of the Board once again being swelled by the demands of almost constant war and the enlargement of the fleet.<sup>591</sup> Additionally, a new Office for Foreign Accounts was created at this time.<sup>592</sup> Finally, the salaries of all clerks were increased, with pensions allowed to them.<sup>593</sup> This was important work, as it finally brought the Navy Board's constitution to a level of professionalism comparable to those departments first instituted in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-centuries with regard to their structures of salaries and pensions,<sup>594</sup> with older clerks encouraged to seek retirement, together with the new expedient that younger, more able clerks could be promoted over the heads of less able, but older clerks, as length of tenure now also provided greater salaries, whereas previously only higher positions in the office conveyed greater remuneration. These changes enhanced the Board's ability to work smoothly and efficiently during times of war, and were essential in allowing the dockyards to effectively maintain the fleet. While the Navy Board's work, and the state of the fleet, had been acceptable during the 1790s despite the Board's structure remaining the same as during the previous century, as the great state of readiness that Middleton had left the fleet in mitigated this circumstance

<sup>(</sup>London: W. Winchester and Son, 1806-07), for all the changes recommended to be made to the establishment of the Navy Office, in particular pp. 8-19 on the duties of the Commissioners of the Board. See also Collinge, *Office Holders in Modern Britain VII*, pp. 12-15.

<sup>588</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Revision pp. 13-14.

<sup>589</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp.15-16.

<sup>590</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 18-22.

<sup>591</sup> See *Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Revision*, pp. 36-40 for the new arrangements of the secretaries at the Board.

<sup>592</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Revision, p. 40.

<sup>593</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 65-71; Collinge, Office Holders in Modern Britain VII, pp. 12-15.

<sup>594</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989), p. 89.

somewhat, but the dilapidated state of the fleet, storehouses, and dockyards in 1803-05 shows that this state of inaction and inefficiency would have consequences if left too long. Middleton was one of only a few men who could have appreciated the need for the structure of the Navy Board to be revised again, as he saw the workload that the shore establishment was faced with in 1805, and realised that the size the of the Navy Office would need to be enlarged yet further in order to facilitate optimum efficiency. By making these changes so early, Middleton was able to ensure that the maintenance of the fleet was continued over the course of the war. The specification of the background of certain members also meant that the right men would be placed in the right offices, with little to no time required to acquaint themselves with the type of work that they were required to do in their new office. This further closed the positions of Principal Officers and Commissioners to those men who were not previously trained or experienced in the work that the Navy Board did, and concentrated the professionalism of the Board.

Under Melville's Admiralty initially and then under Middleton's, the attacks on the Navy Board stopped, and a more reasonable and regular relationship between the two Boards was resumed. An aside to this development was the removal of the Inspector-General of Naval Works, Sir Samuel Bentham, to a post in Russia in order to pursue the possibility of contracting for ships in the Russian yards.<sup>595</sup> Bentham disagreed with the Navy Board's way of doing business, believing that only through individual responsibility could corruption be eliminated.<sup>596</sup> Bentham was therefore frequently brought into conflict with the Navy Board's proposals, and also infringed on the Navy Board's traditional position in administration by being asked by the Admiralty to recommend for promotion any deserving men whom he worked with in the yards. Any loss of influence in the matter of promotions and patronage also, naturally, caused a loss of control over the dockyards for the Navy Board. Spencer apparently showed no real bias, but it became clear that St. Vincent favoured Bentham over the Navy Board, another aspect of the breakdown in relations between the Admiralty and Navy Board during that period.<sup>597</sup> Under Melville, with Middleton's guidance, Bentham's opinions were no longer taken above the views of the Navy Board; both understood that Bentham's criticisms of the Board and work on the dockyards was more of a hindrance than an aid at that time.<sup>598</sup> The end result was that the Commission of Naval Revision reviewed the office of Inspector-General in 1807, coming

<sup>595</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 213-14.

<sup>596</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 213.

<sup>597</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 213.

<sup>598</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 213.

to the conclusion that such an office was no longer required as an independent entity. Bentham's post was finally abolished and he was moved to a role amongst the members of the Navy Board in 1808, where he never again possessed the influence that he had wielded when attached to the Admiralty.<sup>599</sup> The office would finally be abolished completely upon Bentham's retirement in 1812.<sup>600</sup>

In a demonstration of Middleton's appreciation of the need for the shore establishment to operate as one, while he had at first approved the idea of a post such as Bentham held, on the basis that the technology and work-rate of the dockyards would be improved, he clearly did not hold with the idea of any man causing friction between departments, and had no qualms about shutting his office down.<sup>601</sup> The merits and vision of one man could not be allowed to disrupt the smooth workings of the whole. In this move, Middleton demonstrated his difference from Bentham. While Middleton, like Bentham, was an advocate of meritocracy, forward thinking and future planning, technological innovation, improved efficiency, and, at times, individual responsibility, he also realised, seemingly unlike Bentham, that any man within a government department, especially one of those pertaining to the Navy, had to work within a pre-set organisation, with pre-set rules, hierarchy, and limitations. To butt one's head against that structure when without the power to effect changes personally, especially during a period of near constant warfare, would avail a man of naught. Middleton had found this out to his cost in his quarrels with Sandwich over dockyard appointments in his early career ashore. Railing against the established ways, and insisting on the superiority his own view achieved nothing but a worsening of relations between two critical men and Boards at a time of crisis for the country, and might have seen a less patient man than Sandwich advocate for Middleton's removal from office, as happened under Howe's Admiralty. From that point onwards, Middleton had realised that the best ways in which to change matters were more cooperative, less overtly revolutionary, and would take more time. Men and departments would need to be worked with, and shown gently what might be done more easily and less expensively, and, ironically, considering Middleton's intense dislike of the presence of politics within the shore establishment, with government backing being an essential point of validation to any matters, either through the Cabinet or a Parliamentary Commission. Bentham's demands, dismissal of the Navy Board's talents, and unwillingness to adapt his

<sup>599</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Revision, pp. 19-22.

<sup>600</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 213-15.

<sup>601</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 210-16.

views and schemes to the situation Britain found itself in during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars might be seen as being the traits of a man ahead of his time. While this might be true, it also shows a man incapable of working within his own time, and ultimately as a man who failed to do what he might have done, for the sake of his own pride and hubris, when many around him saw that what he proposed was unworkable in the present circumstances.<sup>602</sup>

Middleton realised that guarrels and breakdowns in communication between Boards and organisations such as the timber merchants or dockyards could only serve to hinder the Navy as key decisions would take longer to be made, and the essential discourse between departments on the best ways to go about matters would be destroyed. Middleton had seen first-hand the problems that could be caused by such situations, and knew full well that if Pitt had not been in power during his Comptrollership, the frosty relations between Howe's Admiralty and Middleton's Navy Board would have seriously hindered the Navy's state of readiness come 1790. The state of the fleet in 1803 bore those fears out. St. Vincent was not sympathetic to the work that the shore establishment had to do, ignorant of the cumulative experience at the subordinate Boards, unaware of the methods by which they administered the Navy, and had come into office firmly of opinion that corruption pervaded every part of the administration.<sup>603</sup> He treated his own Board of Admiralty much as a senior admiral might treat his junior officers; expecting his orders to be carried out to the letter and would brook no argument. In the case of the Navy Board, and many other subordinate civil boards, he saw only recalcitrant, lazy, and wilfully disobedient landsmen, and was unconcerned with the difficulties, responsibilities, working methods, and professional expertise that these Boards possessed.<sup>604</sup> St. Vincent resolved to aggressively bring the Navy Board around to his ideas of how the shore establishment was best run. By December 1802 through January 1803, the Admiralty and Navy Board no longer communicated informally, due to misunderstandings regarding the contracting for the

<sup>602</sup> Haas, *A Management Odyssey*, pp. 64-65; p. 187. Haas says that for Bentham to have implemented his principals of clear lines of authority, individual responsibility, and full and accurate information into a very big and complex organisation would have required 'a quantum leap' and that they had still not been realised fifty years after the recommendations of the Commission of Revision had been implemented. He also speculates that such ideals were perhaps beyond the knowledge and ability of the day to put into practice. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* pp. 39-40. Hamilton says of Bentham that, while he was a man who looked further ahead, he had a tendency to reduce, in his mind, the lengthy teething stages between the conception and successful inception of new technologies or methods of administration.

<sup>603</sup> Crimmin, 'The Supply of Timber', p. 193.

<sup>604</sup> P. K. Crimmin 'John Jervis, Earl of St. Vincent, 1735-1823' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding (eds.) *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth* Century (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 325-350, pp. 345-46; Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, pp. 148-49.

building of ships,<sup>605</sup> with the relationship slowly worsening. The situation culminated with Sir Andrew Snape Hammond declaring in the Commons in June 1803 that 'there had been so strong a prejudice that it was impossible to go on as things now stood' which he later amended to 'the navy board was not thought so well of by the present Admiralty as by their predecessors.'<sup>606</sup>

By removing the blocks to that harmony which was essential for the fleet to be run at optimum efficiency, Middleton ensured that matters could, and would, go on more smoothly, and that each department was able to work and communicate freely with the others, by repairing those relationships that had broken down over the past three years since St. Vincent came to the Admiralty.

### The Impeachment of Lord Melville and Middleton's Path to the Admiralty

When Melville was impeached by the House of Commons for irregularities concerning the conduct of the Paymaster of the Navy, Alexander Trotter, while under the supervision of Melville,<sup>607</sup> it was decided by both Pitt and the outgoing First Lord that only one man was fit to continue the work begun by the Admiralty in 1804 and that was the man to whom was owed the majority of the influence in those measures, Middleton himself.<sup>608</sup> It was not a popular appointment amongst many in politics at the time, both within and without the Government; the King wished for Chatham, Charles Yorke or Castlereigh; Henry Addington, now created the Viscount Sidmouth, wanted the Earl of Buckinghamshire to fill the role, and wrote to Pitt declaring 'I deplore the choice which you have made. It will, I fear, have the effect of weakening and lowering the Government,'<sup>609</sup> and Pitt needed Sidmouth's support at the time.<sup>610</sup> The only other political figure that would have been acceptable to Pitt was Lord Hawkesbury, but he preferred at the time to remain as Home

<sup>605</sup> Bonner-Smith, *St. Vincent Vol. II* pp. 202-03, letter dated Rochetts, 2 January 1803 – St. Vincent to Sir A.S. Hammond.

<sup>606</sup> Crimmin, 'John Jervis, Earl of St. Vincent' pp. 346-47.

<sup>607</sup> While no public money had been lost as a result of Trotter's dealings, the old principle of being able to use public money as private funds was vastly outdated by the end of the eighteenth-century and, moreover, Melville had been an outspoken critic of the practice for many years in Government and had taken steps to attempt to ensure that it no longer occurred. Although it would seem fairly evident that Melville neither knew about nor profited from Trotter's actions, the circumstance of having a subordinate utilise public money in this way was too damaging for Melville, especially as the Opposition at the time were seeking for any way in which to weaken Pitt's Government. In his right-hand man, they found a target they could not resist.

<sup>608</sup> Earl Stanhope, *Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt Volume IV* (London: John Murray, 1862), pp. 287-90.

<sup>609</sup> Stanhope *Life of Pitt Vol. IV* pp. 288-89, letter dated Richmond Park, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1805, half past twelve – Lord Sidmouth to Mr. Pitt.

<sup>610</sup> Corbett, Campaign of Trafalgar (London: Longmans, 1910), pp. 71-72.

Secretary and Leader of the House of Lords, and there was felt to be considerable difficulty in replacing him in that position in any case.<sup>611</sup> Any other naval figures were out of the question also: Lord Hood had been out of favour since his recall by Spencer in 1795; Lords Gardner and Cornwallis severely lacked administrative abilities and experience; and Lord Keith was too junior to both Gardner and Cornwallis to appoint without offending at once the senior admirals at a critical time in the war, with the very real possibility of causing both to strike their flags.<sup>612</sup>

There was, however, also the question of continuity of policy to be considered at such a critical juncture for the country. With the threat of invasion seeming a possibility, even if a very remote one to those people well-versed in naval warfare and the capabilities of landing craft, the Navy needed to be in a strong position, with a strong and experienced head to lead it. It was acknowledged by those in Government that Melville's time in office and the measures he had implemented owed a great deal to Middleton. William Wilberforce recorded that in a conversation with Middleton, the latter had revealed that Melville had requested that Pitt recommend him to the King to succeed as First Lord. Of the arrangement, Wilberforce remarked that Middleton 'would be most likely to carry forward Lord Melville's plans which are in fact Sir Charles's for the naval force of the Kingdom.'<sup>613</sup> This opinion can also be found in a letter from Lord Harrowby, the Foreign Secretary, to Lord Bathurst, the Master of the Mint, who, while describing the appointment as having 'the air of a patch' also said that

He [was] in perfect force as to intellect, and intimately well with the present naval lords, and would carry on Lord M[elville]'s general schemes in the Admiralty, on which he has been much consulted, and to which all mankind do justice.<sup>614</sup>

Even the man thought best suited for the job as a politician, Charles Yorke, Home Secretary under the Addington Ministry, delivered a fulsome tribute to the skills and experience of the old seaman, saying

<sup>611</sup> Historical Manuscripts Commission *Report on the Manuscripts of Earl Bathurst* (London, 1923), p. 45 – letter dated London, April 21 1805, Lord Harrowby to Lord Bathurst. (Hereafter H.M.C. Bathurst)
612 H.M.C. Bathurst, p. 46, letter dated London, April 21 1805 - Lord Harrowby to Lord Bathurst.

<sup>613</sup> R.I. Wilberforce, S. Wilberforce, (eds.) and W. Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce: In Five Volumes, Volume III* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1839), p. 223.

<sup>614</sup> H.M.C. Bathurst p. 45-7, letter dated London, April 21 1805 - Lord Harrowby to Lord Bathurst.
I was not aware that at his advanced age his health and faculties were equal to such a post; if they are he is indisputably the fittest man that could be chosen to occupy it at this time. His abilities were always considered great, his experience is consummate, and he has few equals in application and method of business.<sup>615</sup>

The issue was only settled with Pitt's promise to those opposed to the measure that Middleton's appointment was only temporary and designed to enable continuity of policy at a critical time in the war effort. Middleton was old enough and senior enough in the service, with a great many political connections, to make him above jealousy in the service, if not above ridicule in politics: 'a superannuated Methodist' Thomas Creevey famously denounced him as, upon hearing of the appointment.<sup>616</sup> It is also difficult to ascertain how much Middleton truly relished the prospect of finally sitting in the seat of greatest power in the Navy.<sup>617</sup> Though he had long coveted, and finally received, a place on the Admiralty Board, and had never been short of suggestions towards how the Navy was best run, there are few if any remarks towards Middleton's own ambitions towards the office of First Lord.

There were though, two things that attracted Middleton towards accepting Pitt's offer: firstly was the opportunity to personally oversee the implementation of many, if not all of the measures he was desperate to see introduced to the naval shore establishment, which had been taken in hand by Melville recently. Middleton had also realised that only through the full implementation of those measures could the secure foundation be formed for British naval power in the wake of St. Vincent's work. He proposed that he 'be placed at the head of the Admiralty for a few months or still less time, if I can accomplish the business sooner', and even offered to serve without salary in order that Melville's schemes be realised.<sup>618</sup> The second attraction was the promise of a peerage, first extended to him upon his return to public business with the Commission of Revision, with a critical

<sup>615</sup> British Library, *The Hardwicke Papers: Correspondence and Collections of the First Four Earls of Hardwicke and other members of the Yorke Family in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Add MS 35706, 26 April 1805).

<sup>616</sup> Thomas Creevey, H. Maxwell,(ed.), *The Creevey Papers: A Selection from the Correspondence and Diaries* of the late Thomas Creevey, M.P., born 1768 – died 1838 Volume I (London: J. Murray, 1903), pp. 35-37, letter dated London, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1805 – Thomas Creevey to James Currie.

<sup>617</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 72-3 – letter dated Teston, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville (Chatham Papers 365). Middleton wrote to Melville that 'I have no other wish towards the admiralty but to secure the peerage to myself and family, and to be assistant in carrying into execution the many salutary measures you have begun and which must be lost if not followed up with zeal and perseverance. The admiralty has no further charms for me, further than to serve and promote these objects.'

<sup>618</sup> British Library, *William Dacres Adam: Correspondence of William Pitt, the Younger* (Add MS 89036/1/14, 1805), letter dated Teston, April 15 1805 – Middleton to Pitt.

remainder to his daughters and their heirs to keep them in the future.<sup>619</sup> Ever keen to exploit an opportunity for his ambition, Middleton wrote to Pitt that

I should be wanting to myself if I did not point out this opening as the readiest for giving me the Peerage, and I cannot help flattering myself, that under your recommendation of my *many* [sic] years service and of the work I have undertaken, his Majesty could have no reasonable objection in making me an exception to the common usage of making peers.<sup>620</sup>

Pitt wrote to the King to request that Middleton be given the appointment of First Lord, if only for a time;

His habits and pursuits for a long number of years eminently qualify him for the superintendence of all that relates to improving and bringing forward our naval force; and the full knowledge he had of the plans which Lord Melville had put in train for that purpose, would prevent any interruption in the course of measures which had been honoured with your Majesty's approbation, and which promised so much lasting benefit to the service.<sup>621</sup>

Pitt also indicated to the King that Middleton would have no qualms about stepping down when the present danger to the kingdom was past and a better alternative then presented itself. For the matter of the peerage, Pitt logically stated that a Barony was to be expected at least for one holding so high and important an office, doubly so as Middleton could not be expected to take an active share in general politics, and would be of no use to the Government if he sat in the House of Commons.<sup>622</sup> As a result, the King was persuaded to ennoble Middleton, though he did so with reservations, and the caveat that the new Baron's attendance at Cabinet meetings should 'be confined to subjects regarding the navy',<sup>623</sup> and he was created Baron Barham of Teston Court in Kent and was inducted into the office of First Lord on 2 May 1805. One thing of note is that St. Vincent, as First Lord, had much

<sup>619</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 72-3 – letter dated Teston, 16<sup>th</sup> April 1805, Middleton to Lord Melville (Chatham Papers 365). British Library Archive Add MS 89036/1/14: letters dated Teston, April 14 1805 – Middleton to Lord [-]; Teston, April 15 1805 - Middleton to Pitt; Teston, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1805 – Middleton to Pitt; 24<sup>th</sup> April 1805 – Middleton to Pitt.

<sup>620</sup> A. Aspinall, (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III in Five Volume, Volume IV, January 1802 to December 1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 315-16, letter dated Downing Street, Sunday, 21 April 1805 – William Pitt to the King. British Library Archive *William Dacres Adam: Correspondence of William Pitt, the Younger* (Add MS 89036/1/14, 1805), letter dated Teston, April 15 1805 – Middleton to Pitt.

<sup>621</sup> Aspinall, *Correspondence of George III Vol. IV*, pp. 315-16, letter dated Downing Street, Sunday, 21 April 1805 – William Pitt to the King.

<sup>622</sup> Aspinall, *Correspondence of George III Vol. IV* pp. 315-16, letter dated Downing Street, Sunday, 21 April 1805 – William Pitt to the King.

<sup>623</sup> Stanhope, Life of Pitt Vol. IV, appendix, p. xxiii, letter dated Windsor, April 22 1805 - The King to Pitt.

the same arrangements made for his attendance at Cabinet meetings as Barham.<sup>624</sup> This shows that the reservations held about Barham's lack of outright knowledge of the workings of wider Government and national and international politics applied to professional sea officers appointed as First Lord more generally at that time, and were not simply confined to Barham.

## Barham's Measures at the Admiralty and The Commission of Revision

Barham's Admiralty was not simply an institution he entered and then altered to his own specifications. He had been intimately involved with naval administration in various offices and capacities for over twenty-five years by the time he took the head office, and the departments around the Admiralty bore many marks of his work in previous years, most notably the Navy Board and Royal dockyards. Because of this, Barham's work at the Admiralty can easily be seen not as a reaction to his findings upon coming into office, but a continuation of his policies formed over the course of many years, through experience, and trial and error. Just as with his time as Comptroller, we can see him as a strict taskmaster, exhorting others around and below him to greater things, attempting to improve the efficiency of the system of administration where wholesale change would be counterproductive, and overhauling it where incremental amendments would be insufficient. Barham was certainly old enough and senior enough in the service to be free from jealousy in his posting as First Lord, but he ensured that he would have a secure and superior position at the Admiralty through a combination, as Hamilton describes it, of 'birth, deference and faith.'625 This assessment holds a lot of truth when reviewing the men that Barham selected to sit on his Board as professional Lord Commissioners. Both Philip Patton and James Gambier were Barham's own protégés, men whom he had worked with and placed in offices before, including when he advised Melville on who might best fill the positions of the sea lords on his Board, and whose work and talents he had high opinions of.<sup>626</sup> More than that, Gambier was his nephew through marriage and a fellow Evangelical. He had largely been brought up by the Middletons, and Barham had lodged with him in London during his work assisting Melville, and whilst working for the Commission of

<sup>624</sup> Crimmin, 'John Jervis, Earl of St. Vincent', p. 344; Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar, p. 72.

<sup>625</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) pp. 7-8.

<sup>626</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty', p. 221.

Revision.<sup>627</sup> Even after becoming First Lord, Barham preferred to stay with the Gambiers rather than at Admiralty House. Gambier was also thirty years younger than Barham, indebted to him for his position in the administration, and Barham even remarked that he could not believe that his nephew 'would ever take part in opposition to any measures I was engaged in.<sup>2628</sup> Patton was a fellow Scot, at a time when connections such as that were widely cultivated in London. His father had also, like Barham's, been a collector of customs and he, like Barham, had had frigate service during the Seven Years' War, finally being appointed in 1776 to the Prince George (90) that Barham commanded at the time.<sup>629</sup> The two men continued their correspondence throughout Barham's Comptrollership, as Patton worked on matters of signalling in particular<sup>630</sup> and, in 1794, Barham secured Patton a seat on the newly formed Transport Board, where he proved his worth as an administrator.<sup>631</sup> The appointment of these two men ensured that Barham would have talented professional men working under him, but men who would never think to challenge the views and decisions of the man who had brought them into office both past and present. Of the previous Board, only Sir John Colpoys of the professional lords had resigned with Melville, and Sir John Borlase Warren had been nominated to succeed him. Barham however, considered him an idler in administration and immediately wrote to Pitt to say 'we had better have his chair than his company', and, while Barham was not completely happy with the choice of Lord Garlies,<sup>632</sup> he accepted that certain political accommodations had to be made at the time.<sup>633</sup>

Despite this, it would be unfair to say that Barham overpowered the men whom he presided over; perhaps overawed would be a better term. While it is unlikely that the actions of the members of the Board would ever run contrary to the wishes of the First Lord, it would be unfair to imagine that Barham's authority and views at the Board were absolute, with the men he chose under him simply yes-men, content to let the office run according to the First Lord's wishes. Additionally, a man such as Barham, advocate as he

<sup>627</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty', p. 222

<sup>628</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty', p. 222.

<sup>629</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty', p. 222.

<sup>630</sup> J.K. Laughton (ed.), *Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813, Volume II*, (Publications of the Navy Records Society, Volume 38, 1910), pp. 368-394, Correspondence with Philip Patton, 1784-94.

<sup>631</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty', p. 222.

<sup>632</sup> R.G. Thorne, 'Stewart, George, Viscount Garlies (1768-1834)' in R.G. Thorne (ed.) *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1790-1820 Volume V* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1986), pp. 271-73. Garlies enjoyed his work at the Admiralty, and worked hard at it, but he could also be disruptive, and was involved in a heated argument with Gambier that Pitt had to become involved in to settle.

<sup>633</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty' p. 221

was of meritocracy and having the right men in the right job, would never have selected men simply because of their connections to him. The very reason they had connections to him was because they had proven themselves as capable administrators in the past.

That Barham was able to take immediate charge of his office and start effecting changes alongside running the department puts him in exalted company. Few men had the skills necessary to be immediately acquainted with the job of running the Navy, as they had to deal with the superior professional knowledge of the subordinate Boards, the work of the Admiralty Secretary and political demands of the job. Only Anson and Sandwich stand out as the other men able to run the department from the outset, and for Sandwich, he gained the experience necessary to do so over successive periods as First Lord.<sup>634</sup> Corbett wrote that Barham was 'the man who, for ripe experience in the direction of naval war in all its breadth and detail, had not a rival in the service or Europe.'635 Barham's long experience with both the Navy Board and Admiralty allowed him to issue commands as soon as he took office, confident in his knowledge of how business was to be carried on in all branches of the naval service. His usual bustling, hard-working ethos again came to the fore even at his advanced age (though one must of course take his statements as slightly exaggerated) as demonstrated in a letter sent to Pitt, four months after taking the position, and by then well acquainted with the workload.<sup>636</sup> Roger Morriss describes Barham's correspondence through this time as indicating

[A] grasp on logistics at individual ship level. The painstaking thoroughness he brought to administration and the discipline he demanded in the dispatch and execution of orders was complemented by the easy grasp of a seaman for the demands of ship management...It was a fitting culmination to a career at the centre of the naval administration.<sup>637</sup>

In the first document of any note to be issued under the new First Lord one can see immediately the intention of Barham's reforms, and how they continued the work that he began at the Navy Board: the work that he wished to implement throughout naval administration;

<sup>634</sup> Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State* p. 20. G.J. Marcus, *A Naval History of England Volume* 2 – *The Age of Nelson* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1971), pp. 246-47; p. 252.

<sup>635</sup> Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar p. 72.

<sup>636</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 94-96 - latter dated Admiralty 3rd August 1805, Lord Barham to Mr. Pitt.

<sup>637</sup> Roger Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham 1726-1813, An Administrator Reassessed' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding, (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000) pp. 301-23, p. 321.

Whereas the present very extended scale of the naval service requires the greatest economy of time to keep the business of it under, it is Lord Barham's intention to make such a distribution thereof as may, on the one hand, secure a punctual discharge of all its duties, while on the other hand it will make the performance of it easy for the lords themselves.<sup>638</sup>

It is in this relatively short document that Barham laid down clearly and concisely what each member of the Board of Admiralty was to be responsible for, how they would work together, how each would affect the other, and the advantages that this new arrangement would bring. Of his own position, he simply wrote ' The First Lord will take upon himself the general superintendence and arrangement of the whole.' This bears close resemblance to Barham's ideas of the Comptroller's power at the Navy Board, and shows again his preference for a strong, clear presence at the top of a government Board, while foreshadowing the eventual implementation of an individually responsible head of the department later in the nineteenth-century. While the First Lord, as a Cabinet minister, had always possessed the ability to overpower his colleagues, the circumstance had never been set in writing before, and marked the acknowledgement of the power of the First Lord at the Board.

The First Sea Lord's powers were significant: he would do the same when the First Lord was absent. The First Sea Lord was Gambier, a man who had sat on the Board previously under both Spencer and Melville, and who had been greatly influenced by Barham. In setting the First Sea Lord's powers in this way, Barham created a Deputy First Lord, almost in the vein of his own position when Chatham brought him into office in 1794, during which time Barham took responsibility for both the running of the office and of the fleet. The normal duties of the First Sea Lord included attending to the correspondence of the ports and secret services, minuting all such letters and orders to be delivered to the Secretary. Crucially, and with the caveat of being subject to the approbation of the First Lord, the First Sea Lord could make fleet dispositions in both home and foreign waters, issue commands to Commanders-in-Chief, and distribute seamen and marines. In order to ensure that these dispositions were being adhered to, he was to compare the orders given with the records kept in officers' journals, noting any deviations and any reasons given. Finally, he was to keep himself appraised of all promotions made at home or abroad so as to note any improper appointments in concert with the Third Sea Lord. He was not to

<sup>638</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 76-79 – Conduct of Business dated Admiralty, May 1805 (National Archives – Admiralty Minutes no. 256) dated Admiralty May 1805.

make promotions himself, however, as that power remained invested in the First Lord alone. With regard to the shore establishment, the First Sea Lord was to attend to the state of the stores and equipment available, checking the Navy's weekly progress to keep himself abreast of the situation.

The Second Sea Lord, which was Patton at the time, was responsible for conducting, overseeing, and regulating the Admiralty's relationships and correspondence with the subordinate Boards, namely the Navy, Victualling, Transport, and Sick-and-Hurt Boards, along with Greenwich Hospital. Barham already had firm ideas on the best ways of doing this kind of work from his time as Comptroller, and had laid out the requisite information that the Admiralty would require in a memorandum to Chatham in 1793 when Barham was not yet in office.<sup>639</sup> The information came under several headings, with the ways in which the Admiralty could use this information also given. Barham therefore knew exactly how to ensure that the senior Board made the most of the superior professional knowledge of its subordinate Boards.

The Third Sea Lord, who at the time was Lord Garlies, was to superintend the appointment of all commissioned and warrant officers, an important function, and one that carried a large degree of influence, though all appointments were to be made under the inspection of the First Lord. Several caveats were mentioned, such as officers without ships as a result of shipwreck or capture being given priority of appointment to any vacancy, and the order that no officers, aside from the carpenter, should be appointed to any ships either building or undergoing a lengthy repair (previously a common practice: Barham himself had been made captain of the *Jupiter* (50) in 1778 when she was being constructed). No gunners were to be appointed to a ship that had not passed 'the usual examination' with no carpenter or boatswain permitted a ship if they could not write or keep accounts. The Third Sea Lord would keep records of all these appointments to be made, acquaint the First Lord of all promotions required.

Finally, the Civil Lords were given their duties as a whole, with no individual responsibilities assigned. They were simply to 'sign all the orders, protections, warrants and promiscuous papers daily issued from the office. They will also assist the Board with their advice.' The over-riding intention of the Conduct of Business with regard to the Civil Lords was that they should undertake the more menial tasks which were placed before the

<sup>639</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II, pp.360-68, Memorandum dated October 1793 – Middleton to Chatham.

Board in order to provide the requisite three signatures to menial official correspondence 'in order to keep the professional lords uninterrupted in the various important duties committed to their charge.'

This Conduct of Business marked a step towards the implementation of individual responsibility in the department, due to the individual Lord Commissioners being given specific tasks and areas of specialisation. While, in theory, any orders issuing from the Board had to be signed by three Lord Commissioners and counter-signed by a Secretary once they had been agreed upon by the Board as a whole, in practice, the fact that all the members of the Board of Admiralty were rarely present at any one time, together with the vastly increased quantity of correspondence passing through the Office, meant that only a fifth or less of all Admiralty correspondence bore the requisite three signatures. The compromise that had been reached was that the most important business should bear the signatures of three Lord Commissioners, but in all other cases the signature of the First or Second Secretary was sufficient.<sup>640</sup>

Although Barham had achieved a position where he could have autocratically enforced his will and designs on the administration, he still took pains to make it plain why such changes were necessary, and the benefits that such arrangements would bring compared to what had gone before, increasing the professionalism and working potential of the whole, with an emphasis very much on Barham's desire to have the right man in the right job. This document is immensely significant in the history of the administration of civil military departments in Britain, as this was the first recorded time that individual members of a board had been given clear individual responsibilities, both for the current members, and for any men in the future who filled those roles, thus allowing the correct men to be chosen for the position now that the responsibilities were known. Barham had tried via proxy to implement this sort of arrangement with Melville's administration, and indeed had secured the necessary three professional lords,<sup>641</sup> but no definitive set of recommendations or policy had been laid down regarding the responsibilities of the lords, nor had the idea of three professional to three civil lords been put forward as the only proper way to do business. Indeed, throughout the eighteenth-century the ratio had varied greatly, with as few as a single sea officer present at the Board, even during times of war, as was the case with Sandwich's Admiralty during the 1770s. This is not the first time that Barham's ideas on the best make-up of the Admiralty Board can be seen. In his initial memorandum to Lord

<sup>640</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, p. 11.

<sup>641</sup> Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty', p. 221

Chatham in October 1793, along with instructions on how best to organise and mobilise the fleet, Middleton also gave Chatham ideas on how best the board might be staffed.<sup>642</sup> He originally recommended that

I would propose not less than three seamen being employed there as commissioners: one to examine and report on the correspondence with the Navy Board, Victualling and Sick & Hurt; a second to examine weekly accounts, weekly progresses, returns from rendezvous, and the general fitting out of ships; and a third to examine journals, log books, admiral's arrangements of ships under their command, and home arrangements under the Admiralty. These three gentlemen will find full employment for their time and must therefore submit to close application<sup>643</sup>

This bears a striking resemblance to the orders and working arrangements that Barham laid down for the duties and responsibilities given to the three professional lords in his Conduct of Business, albeit with more focus given to the movement of fleets due to the rigours of war which had been ongoing for more than a decade since the original memorandum was written. The only changes of note were that the civil lords were assigned the duties of dealing with accounts, and the matter of promotions was added to the list of duties dealt with by the professional lords. Barham seems to have treated the members of his Board of Admiralty as a sort of professional staff under him, with Gambier as First Sea Lord acting almost as his Chief of Staff, directing the war in concert with Barham, while Patton and Garlies controlled the material and officers of the fleet.

Barham's Conduct of Business can initially seem quite dismissive of the abilities and capabilities of the 'pen and ink gentlemen' he had scorned in the past, and can be seen to have given too much work and responsibility to the professional lords, thus upsetting the balance of the work at the Board. Hamilton though, assists with the explanation of Barham's decision. At the time the Conduct of Business was being set down, only one civil member of the Board had the necessary skills, experience, and availability to function as a full Lord Commissioner. This was Philip Stevens, the former Admiralty Secretary. While Sir Even Nepean possessed the necessary skills, he was constrained in the time he had available by the hangover of work from his previous post as Secretary for Ireland.

<sup>642</sup> John B. Hattendorf, R.J.B. Knight, A.W.H. Pearsall, N.A.M. Rodger & Geoffrey Till, (eds.), *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 131 (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1993), pp. 338-41, Naval Resources at the Start of the War 1793, Draft Memorandum by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, undated (October 1793).

<sup>643</sup> Hattendorf, Knight, Pearsall, Rodger & Till (eds.) *British Naval Documents* pp. 338-41, Naval Resources at the Start of the War 1793, Draft Memorandum by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, undated (October 1793).

Finally, William Dickinson was the archetypal young, inexperienced minister; content to remain in the Admiralty for a short time in order to advance his career, not intending to spend a large amount of time in the post before attempting to move on to bigger and better things.<sup>644</sup> It is not without justice that Hamilton ends his appraisal of the civil lords under Barham by saying that their function was much as Canning described the junior lords of the Treasury, 'To make a House, to keep a House, and to cheer the Minister.'<sup>645</sup> While perhaps harsh in some aspects, particularly when considering the capabilities of Nepean and Stephens, the civil lords could not be expected to take on much more work than Barham assigned them at the time.

By making the First Lord the supreme authority, 'to superintend the whole' of the business of the office, Barham ensured that his position would be absolute and not merely a chairman of the Board, just as he had attempted to secure his position atop the Navy Board as Comptroller, only now he wielded the authority to enact such changes himself, without the need for long-winded commissions. The changes also meant that professional lords were far less likely to serve at sea, as had been the case as lately as Lord Spencer's Board during the French Revolutionary War, when Admirals such as Lord Hugh Seymour served in the Channel Fleet. While members were not forbidden from being absent, it was explicitly mentioned in the Conduct of Business that the work that they did not do would fall onto the other members of the Board, thus upsetting the balance, and in all probability meaning that any absentee Lord Commissioner would not remain in office for long. By setting the proportion of professional to civil lords and ensuring that those members would almost permanently be in attendance at the office, Barham was able to increase both the efficiency and professionalism of the Board as a whole. That the arrangement survived with only minor alterations under successive First Lords until 1832, shows that even though there was no official legislature determining the make-up of the Admiralty, Barham's reforms and policies were well thought out enough to merit repetition for the next thirty years.646

Barham did not stop at the Board itself, but decided to set down in legislature the working arrangements of the entire Admiralty Office, from the Secretaries downwards. While this did not materially change the ways in which the office worked, and in many cases merely reiterated what was already being done, Barham again sought to ensure that

<sup>644</sup> R.G. Thorne, 'Dickinson, William II (1771-1837)' in Thorne *The History of Parliament Vol. III* pp. 596-98. 645 Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, p. 10.

<sup>646</sup> J.C. Sainty, (ed.) *Office Holders in Modern Britain IV – Admiralty Officials 1660-1870* (London: The Athlone Press, 1975), pp.18-19.

such arrangements were codified and laid down ready for future administrators to benefit from, ensuring continuity of professionalism and working habits. The First Secretary was to supervise the entire office, which at that point included the Royal Marines Office, Royal Marines Pay Office, Hydrographer of the Navy, Naval Works Department, and the Secretariat of the Admiralty Board. This Admiralty Secretariat (to use the modern parlance - this way of referring to the clerks and secretaries was mid-to-late-nineteenth-century nomenclature), consisted of nine separate branches, comprised of the two Admiralty Secretaries and twenty-four clerks in 1805, and dealt with the Lords' and Secretaries' correspondence with officers, seamen and marines, other government departments, subordinate Boards, private companies, and other individuals. The clerks, aside from the specialist positions of the chief clerk and reading clerk, would also keep lists, accounts, and minute books, and would write out licenses, memorials, protections, and letters of marque.<sup>647</sup> While these arrangements may not have been the most efficient, and would be improved by successive chief clerks and Secretaries over the course of the succeeding decades, they worked well enough for the early-nineteenth-century without resorting to administrative upheaval.

This new organisation of the Admiralty Office may help to lend some explanation to Barrow's remarks about Barham's working habits in his autobiography. If Barham simply left the everyday business of the Board to the civil lords, and gave the professional lords specific duties to accomplish, then he could retire to his own private chamber in order to 'superintend the whole' and plan the crucial private and official letters and orders that would need to be sent to the admirals on station as the Trafalgar campaign began and evolved to its conclusion in October. Perhaps Hamilton sums it up best by saying that 'it is the stream of memoranda, minutes and orders that issued from his closet which bespeak his real power as First Lord.'<sup>648</sup> Barham did not need to attend everyday Board meetings when he trusted the men he had personally selected to constitute his Board to make good decisions and consult him where and when it was required. There were far greater matters both at sea and on shore that required his attention than the everyday business of the Board but Barrow, far removed from the First Lord's attention and the decision-making power of the Board, could not have known this, thus explaining somewhat his views of Barham's capabilities.

<sup>647</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, pp. 12-13.

<sup>648</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, p. 7.

Barham's work foreshadowed the reforms of 1832, which put supreme governance of the Navy into the hands of the Admiralty Office and can be seen as symbolic of the change occurring in administration as it moved from the eighteenth-century into the nineteenthcentury. At the time Barham took the position of First Lord, the movements of fleets, appointments of flag officers, and promotions to the highest ranks were decided on by the King in Cabinet, although the First Lord was a member of the Cabinet and his opinion usually carried great weight.<sup>649</sup> Barham's administration though was characterised by his close relationship with Pitt, often deciding on naval movements, promotions, and deployments outside of Cabinet, notifying Pitt, and then getting them ratified by the King either in advance or after the fact.<sup>650</sup> The running of the fleet was also to be more closely monitored by the Admiralty as can be seen in the newly defined responsibilities of the Second Sea Lord. Correspondence, often sent to Secretaries of State rather than to the Admiralty earlier in the eighteenth-century, had begun to be more centralised in the Admiralty Office during the 1790s until it had become the established norm in the earlynineteenth-century.<sup>651</sup> The Admiralty had been becoming more professional; Barham gave it the structure and working arrangements to solidify this growing trend. While in some cases, notably the Secretariat,<sup>652</sup> the orders he issued were merely confirmation of what had been the traditional practices, it was the measure of making them permanent that ensured that the department would not regress in future years and lose its way under the additional pressures to come. He also took measures to create a greater sense of priority and professionalism within the officer corps of the Navy.

It had long been the case that captains and admirals within the Royal Navy would hold seats in Parliament, indeed Barham himself had served in the Commons as M.P. for Rochester during the 1780s when Comptroller, although that had been whilst in a shore posting, not while serving afloat. Previous to Barham's administration though, it had been quite commonplace for those officers to absent themselves from their ships and have others act for them, even when their ships were under sailing orders, that they might attend Parliament. To prevent this from happening, Barham personally autographed an order stating

<sup>649</sup> Clive Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 20-23.

<sup>650</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, pp. 26-27.

<sup>651</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, p. 23.

<sup>652</sup> For more information on what the secretariat of the Admiralty Board was expected to do and actually did in this period see Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* pp. 12-13.

The Board having taken into consideration a practice lately introduced of indulging captains having seats in Parliament to be absent from their ships, while other captains are acting for them, and which not only creates much irregularity, but a heavy and unnecessary expense to the public: Resolved that no member of Parliament whose ship is under sailing orders or ready for sea, shall have leave of absence from his ship while under these circumstances.<sup>653</sup>

It was this order that transformed the relationship between an increasingly professional military service and the politics that Barham had claimed in 1786 'had got too great a hold on the service.'<sup>654</sup> Within a generation, it had become unusual to find an actively serving captain in the Navy who was also a Parliamentary candidate. Prior to the ruling, it had been unusual to find one who was not.<sup>655</sup> With captains and admirals no longer able to play or be influenced by politics, repeats of incidents like the Keppel-Palliser affair (which Barham would still have remembered well) could be avoided and political patronage could be reduced in influence.

Another example of Barham's ability to immediately influence the service with measures that improved efficiency and output, and which would outlast himself and several successive First Lords, was the work he did to amend working practices in the dockyards. The first measure was to induce the labourers to work by the piece by raising earnings for task-work (the erroneous name given to piece-work at the time) by twenty, to twenty-five per-cent.<sup>656</sup> Piece-work, or task-work to give it the early-nineteenth-century name, was the process by which work on a ship was divided up among various work-gangs of labourers, with the men being paid based on the work that they did, rather than a fixed day wage, with additional income provided for overtime.<sup>657</sup> Through his work as chairman of the Commission of Revision, Barham also recommended that the whole system of work by task be comprehensively overhauled, bringing the system up to date with the enlarged scale of the Navy and of naval building.<sup>658</sup> As an additional act, he put forward a proposal that a new office be instituted in the yards: that of a Master Measurer, to better calculate and

<sup>653</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III p. 79 - Order, Barham's Autograph.

<sup>654</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. II* pp. 28-30, letter dated [February 1781?] – Middleton to Sandwich (never sent), endorsed by Middleton dated January 1786.

<sup>655</sup> R.G. Thorne (ed.) *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1790-1820 in Five Volumes* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1986). Thorne indicates that a hundred officers served in Parliament over this period, some taking their seats as early as 1738, though none took their seats any later than 1806.
656 See *The Third Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's*

Navy (1806), pp. 204-07 for the new proposals for working by task.

<sup>657</sup> For more information on the ways in which task-work was first introduced into the dockyards by Sandwich see J.M. Haas, 'The Introduction of Task Work into the Royal Dockyards, 1775,'*The Journal of British Studies 8, 1969* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 44-68.

<sup>658</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 199-207.

distribute the earnings for the dockyard labourers in a professional capacity.<sup>659</sup> While it is difficult to accurately demonstrate the full effect these measures had on the output of the yards, it is possible to speculate with some authority. The tonnage of ships launched between 1805-1813 was almost double that of ships launched between 1793-1801: 73,337 tons opposed to 41,498 tons, and the average time taken to construct the most common type of ship of the line, the 74-gun third-rate, was reduced from just over four and half years to less than three years. By 1812 this increase in construction had influenced the Navy Board's conduct, to the extent that for the following year they had resolved to contract for no new ships of the line or frigates, but to rely wholly on the work performed in the Royal yards.<sup>660</sup> This is in marked contrast to the situations present in both the American War and the beginning of the Navy to attain the quantity of newly built and repaired ships it required.

In addition to these new initiatives, Barham was also afforded the opportunity to finish work that he had begun a decade previously as First Sea Lord. The kinds of reforms and revisions that a man such as Barham saw as necessary and worth spending time on, even during wartime, were generally not those that others would consider, as was the case with the instructions for the governance of naval officers in their military capacity. Remedial measures had already been put in place by Lord Spencer's Admiralty Board which, as previously detailed, bore close resemblance to Barham's own thoughts on the subject, and it is clear that Barham was considering setting his ideas down in writing rather than keeping them as a mere ethos to be followed. By September 1805, he had updated and corrected the original set of orders to the point where he felt confident in laying them before the King for His Majesty's approbation.<sup>661</sup>

A second example of this unfinished work can be found in the naval shore establishment at Cork. The Irish station was of key importance, as it was usually where convoys would depart from to various economic hubs around the world. Convoy escorts would also equip there and delays in getting underway were always costly and caused much disquiet on the part of the affected merchant captains. The Commander-in-Chief at Cork in 1805 was Lord Gardner, who wrote to Barham to again complain to the Admiralty about the fact that

<sup>659</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 209-11; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 30.

<sup>660</sup> More detail on the ways in which these measures impacted the work in the yards can be found in Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, p. 30.

<sup>661</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 98-102 – letter (draft) dated 25th September 1805, To The King.

ships leaving from Cork were required to get naval supplies from Kinsale, five leagues away, with coastal travel between the two impossible in southerly or easterly winds.<sup>662</sup> This created delays that could be stopped by adopting Haulbowline Island as a naval depot, a measure that Gardner had proposed to Sir Andrew Snape Hammond and Lords St. Vincent and Melville with no action taken on the matter. After two weeks Barham wrote back to Gardner to explain that he had begun to take action on the proposed naval depot on Haulbowline Island in 1795 when he had sent a surveyor to form plans and estimates which had been returned at £19,000. Of the laxity in adopting the scheme Barham said,

How it came to be dropped afterwards I cannot say, but the object is of such importance in a naval point of view, that I have directed its being taken up from where it was left off, by General Bentham and carried into immediate execution.<sup>663</sup>

This change would finally be ratified in 1811, transferring the Irish station's base permanently<sup>664</sup>.

Finally, in an example of Barham's policies being pursued even from his time as a captain in active service, he enforced divisions of a ship's crew under lieutenants that first appear in his Order Book for the *Ardent* in 1775.<sup>665</sup> While Howe had also managed such a system in 1759 and would again in 1776 and 1782, and Kempenfelt tried to take credit for the invention of the system, it was likely that he received the inspiration from Barham, with whom he corresponded far more frequently than the Admiralty. Barham, in the Orders and Instructions of 1806, finally enforced the reorganisation of shipboard life into divisions of men, enhancing discipline and efficiency of crews, a key measure when ships were frequently below their optimum complement and the skill of the men had to make up for lack of numbers.<sup>666</sup>

Barham was not merely content to push through reform in the Admiralty Office. Thus, when presented with the opportunity to effect changes outside of the Admiralty Office, he

<sup>662</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 212-13 – letter dated Cove, 21st October 1805, Lord Gardner to Lord Barham.

<sup>663</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* p. 214 – letter dated Admiralty, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1805, Lord Barham to Lord Gardner.

<sup>664</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 4.

<sup>665</sup> J.K. Laughton, (ed.), *Letter and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron 1758-1813 Volume I* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXII (1907) pp. 39-45, Captain's Order Book by Middleton dated 1775.

<sup>666</sup> Brian Lavery, (ed.), *Shipboard Life and Organisation*, 1731-1815 Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 138 (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 1998), p. 74.

proposed that the Sick and Hurt Board be amalgamated with the Transport Board,<sup>667</sup> an odd combination one might initially think, until one realises that the care for healthy prisoners of war had been transferred to the Transport Board from the Sick and Hurt Board in 1795.668 The Sick and Hurt Board was also notorious for the amount of debt it had accrued, which Barham believed owed to the Board being managed by medical professionals and not professional administrators such as businessmen, naval officers, or civil servants.<sup>669</sup> Barham felt that the situation could not continue as it was, even during wartime, when upheaval was generally avoided; perhaps the lack of chance of any lasting peace forced the Admiralty's hand.<sup>670</sup> The key members of the Sick and Hurt Board and any able clerks in the office who had proven their worth would be transferred over to the new amalgamation of the two Boards, with the remaining members allowed to retire on their full salaries, overall meaning that there would be a general saving of money, an increase in efficiency and very little operating time lost as a result.<sup>671</sup> As both Boards resided in Somerset House, the offices could be joined at once, with no movement of offices or officials from one end of London to the other required. Barham himself worked to set down, in a letter to the King, the new constitution of the Boards now they were to be joined together, also setting down who the members of the new Board should be, their responsibilities, requisite backgrounds, possible methods of operation, and how all of these would relate to the present system of two separate Boards.<sup>672</sup> With the King happy to approve Barham's proposed scheme to join the two Boards, the Admiralty (with Barham as First Lord) transferred the details of the operation and the task of preparing the two Boards for the changes to the Commission of Revision (with Barham as chairman) thus ensuring that the necessary time could be devoted to it, and also that Barham could be assured that the measures taken would be to his satisfaction.673

Barham had the confidence to push through these reforms born of a familiarity and past working relationship with William Pitt. In a letter from December of 1805, after the

<sup>667</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 122-24 – memorandum dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 1805 (draft by Thompson).
668 Barham had been a signatory to this order when it was first issued Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp 121-122 – letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 1795, L.C.A. to the Sick and Hurt Board.

<sup>669</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 124-30 - letter dated Admiralty 4th November 1805, To The King.

<sup>670</sup> The Sick and Hurt Board was by this time over £2.5 million in debt, with some of those debts stretching back over forty years, £1.5 million of that debt having been accrued since 1793. See Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 122-24 – Memorandum dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 1805.

<sup>671</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 124-30 – letter dated Admiralty, 4th November 1805, To The King.

<sup>672</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 124-30 - letter dated Admiralty, 4th November 1805, To The King.

<sup>673</sup> The final report was *The Ninth Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy* (1809), in particular pp. 16-21 which deals with the new organisation of the Sick and Hurt Board as a part of the Transport Board, how the changes came to pass, and why they were thought necessary.

business with the Sick and Hurt Board had been dealt with and the legislation could begin, Barham turned his attention to the other Boards, saying that he wished to give the public the advantage of his long experience in office and arrange the departments under the Admiralty in a way that ensured economy and dispatch, hoping to have 'as usual' Pitt's support and concurrence with his measures.<sup>674</sup> As Pitt was only to live another month Barham would never get the chance to push forward with his work as First Lord, but it shows the continuation of policy that he was setting out plans to progress his work beyond the Sick and Hurt Board. As chairman of the Commission of Revision, however, Barham would continue to be able to affect these Boards, though in a less direct way.

Measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the fleet itself were also passed by Barham both during his time as First Lord and as chairman of the Commission of Naval Revision. Drawing upon ideas first mooted by Bentham in 1798, Barham ordered the Navy Board in July 1805

To have regard in future to the advantage of the same masts, yards and sails being made to answer for a great number of ships, much inconvenience have arisen from the difference of the dimensions of such stores required for ships of nearly the same force.<sup>675</sup>

Standardised construction was something that would be achieved later in the nineteenthcentury, and would finally break the cycle of shipbuilding in Britain being carried out with a greater focus on tradition and past practice rather than applying innovation to new designs and using science in the building process. Barham would later cause the Commission of Revision to enquire into appointing a committee of naval officers to select such ships as could serve as models for future construction and rigging, but as shipwrights continued to modify ship designs, standardisation of design was not achievable during this period, even if the idea was sound.<sup>676</sup>

Turning our attention to the Commission of Revision, the Commission had already published its first report during this time, on the duties of yard Commissioners and Principal Officers in the Royal dockyards, and that had been accepted by an Order in

<sup>674</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* pp. 297-99 – letter dated Admiralty, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1805, Lord Barham to (?) Mr. Pitt.

<sup>675</sup> The National Archives, Kew, ADM 106/2237, 10 July 1805 – Admiralty to Navy Board

<sup>676</sup> See *Third Report of the Commissioners of Naval Revision*, pp. 193-99 for the Commissioners' thoughts on the building of ships, and pp. 198-99 in particular for the proposed system of standardisation; Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, p. 90.

Council of July 1805.677 Much was to be done though, and while he remained enthusiastic about the need for reform and change while he remained in office,<sup>678</sup> by March 1806, once he had left the Admiralty, Barham clearly did not feel that it was a worthwhile course of action to pursue any longer, considering as he did that the new Board of Admiralty and administration would wish to have little to do with any recommendations that he, or his Commission, could bring.<sup>679</sup> Barham was also unsure of the political intentions of the incoming First Lord, Charles Grey, and whether or not he intended to turn the reports of the Commission of Revision to his own ends, 'garbling' the work as Barham had previously denounced the work of the Bentham-Nepean reforms, which had drawn their basis from Barham's recommendations on the Navy Board and dockyards during the 1780s.<sup>680</sup> Barham also indicated in a letter to his secretary, J.D. Thompson, that he was 'ready to take wing the moment hostilities [between the Admiralty and Commission] begin. My credit is not concerned with continuing longer.<sup>'681</sup> Perhaps he had realised that the best chance to have his reforms implemented without lengthy and stressful debate and argument with the Government had died with Pitt, and it can hardly be surprising that he did not wish to repeat what he had been through at the end of his Comptrollership nearly twenty years earlier.

This is indicative that Barham relied greatly on his political networks to be able to bring about changes when he himself was not in high office. He had used them whilst in junior offices during the 1780s and whilst out of office in the 1790s into the 1800s, but by the time he left the Admiralty for the second time his political contacts were either dead, disgraced and out of power, or so far junior in the ranks that they themselves had far less influence than Barham himself. While Barham was political and partisan to the Pitt ministries, he gave his support only with the intention of furthering professionalisation of the naval shore establishment, for which he had to play the system at times in order to gain political support. He knew his and its limits, and was not ignorant of the ways in which politics worked, and he therefore realised that with Pitt's death and Melville's impeachment, his outright political power died also.

<sup>677</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 202.

<sup>678</sup> Laughton, *Letters of Lord Barham Vol. III* pp. 98-102, letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1805 – To The King (draft).

<sup>679</sup> National Maritime Museum Archive, Greenwich, MID/13/1/93; MID/12/1/91, Barham to J.D. Thompson.

<sup>680</sup> Laughton, *Letters of Lord Barham Vol. III* pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804.

<sup>681</sup> National Maritime Museum Archive, Greenwich, MID/13/1/93; MID/12/1/91, Barham to J.D. Thompson.

During the remainder of 1806, however, the prospects of the Commission began to improve as Grenville replaced Grey at the Admiralty in September, and the Admiralty began to distribute the revised instructions to the dockyards that had been recommended by the first report of the Commission.<sup>682</sup> While both Grenville and Grey were friends of St. Vincent, and opposed the Commission of Revision in principal, preferring St. Vincent's more hard-line approach, the interest of the King was also continuous throughout. This gave significant backing to the Commission, who could rely on George III to push for the recommended reforms to be implemented as they came, rather than reworked to suit the needs of the offices at the time, as a letter from John Fordyce to Barham in December shows.<sup>683</sup> From this time until the business of the Commission was wound up in March 1808, it was Fordyce who took on the bulk of the work, consulting with Barham only when his attention was required as a kind of absolute authority on naval matters. This was possible because of the knowledge that Fordyce had accumulated in the two years since the Commission had been set up, and his conviction that the service could only hope to survive and end the war against France with victory through thorough reform and swift implementation of changes. In this, his desire and drive rivalled Barham's own.<sup>684</sup> Once Grenville was replaced by Mulgrave at the Admiralty in April 1807 Fordyce began the long process of meeting with, and finally worrying Lord Mulgrave into accepting the reports of the Commission, the bulk of which had been completed by that time.<sup>685</sup> This was the work that was highly necessary if the reforms that the Commission proposed were to be adopted with haste, but it had been this work in particular that Barham no longer had the desire, and perhaps even capacity, to do. Thankfully, Fordyce was still young and capable enough to do what Barham had been able to do as a younger man as he learnt from and was guided by Barham's influence and experience. Although Fordyce began to fear, just as Barham had done, that no action would be taken on the reports,<sup>686</sup> during 1808 nine of the thirteen reports were adopted by Orders in Council, with two more taken up in 1809. While implementation would have to wait in some cases, and would require more work to be done in order that such changes could be made, Barham's work had, for the most part, finally been completed.

<sup>682</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 203.

<sup>683</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, MID/1/67/20, Fordyce to Barham.

<sup>684</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 203.

<sup>685</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 204.

<sup>686</sup> National Maritime Museum Archives, Greenwich, MID/1/67/51, Fordyce to Barham.

To go in to the minute particulars of the reports of the Commission, and to assess its impact over the course of the early-nineteenth-century, would require more time and space than this thesis allows, but the key points relating to the ways in which they promoted greater professionalism within the naval shore establishment may be summarised here. Much of what was proposed and implemented can be seen as a finalisation of Barham's measures for the shore establishment of the Navy, begun in the late 1770s during his quarrels with Sandwich over dockyard appointments. During the next thirty years, new innovations and ideas had been tried, but the exigencies of war meant that radical thinking was not preferred, and measures that simply got the existing establishment to work with a degree of efficiency were the order of the period. Of the work of the Commission, Hamilton remarks that though they were 'lacking in grand ambition, and dull because of detail, these kind of things were vital to the improvement of naval efficiency.'<sup>687</sup>

With regard to the dockyards, every yard official was provided with full instructions for the first time since the seventeenth-century, with the Standing Orders fully revised, digested, and codified under simple headings, and adapted to contain only those orders that the yard officers considered to be relevant to their offices in the early-nineteenth-century, thus using the professional knowledge of the men executing those offices to form the best judgement available.<sup>688</sup> These orders would form the basis of yard management until the mid-nineteenth-century.<sup>689</sup> More precise control over workers' pay was implemented, as time wages overall were increased, overtime was severely restricted, and piece-work was regularised.<sup>690</sup> Finally, in order to address the accusations of a lack of scientific knowledge and practice in the yards, the Royal School of Naval Architecture was established in 1811, though it would close in 1832.<sup>691</sup> Time-wages were, by the 1800s-1810s, not the chief means of paying the dockyard workers, most of whom were paid either by task or by piece. Nonetheless, they were revised by the Commission to be duel-rate, higher in wartime than in peacetime, and overtime was heavily restricted, in order that payment of dockyard

<sup>687</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, p. 42.

<sup>688</sup> The First Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy, (1806). The First Report set down the duties of the Master Attendant, Master Shipwright, Clerk of the Cheque, Storekeeper, Clerk of the Survey and Clerk of the Rope-Yard. See pp. 10-11 for the methods of compiling the new orders. The Second Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy (1806) set down all inferior officers, amounting to forty-three more officers (see pp. 5-6 of the report for the full list).

<sup>689</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 186.

<sup>690</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 199-207.

<sup>691</sup> *Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision*, pp. 183-87. The Royal School of Naval Architecture (called the Royal Naval Academy in the report) was part of the plans drawn up for the education of the superior class of apprentices; J.M. Haas, *A Management Odyssey: The Royal Dockyards*, 1714-1914 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), p. 50.

workers could be more regular.<sup>692</sup> The majority of work in the dockyards was carried on either by piece-work or task-work. The two methods of work were both different from simply paying the workers a flat day rate, and meant that workers were paid based on the work that they did. Task-work split a ship's construction into twenty-five separate parts or 'tasks' such as the keel, with workers being paid on their completion.<sup>693</sup> Piece-work measured the work that each man did that day, and meant that he could be paid for each individual 'piece' of the ship he completed, eventually leading to much more regular, weekly wage payments.<sup>694</sup> While St. Vincent's Commission of Enquiry favoured taskwork, Barham's Commission of Revision favoured piece-work, and Haas claims that this led to 'more than fifty years of controversy at the end of which the Commission of Enquiry was vindicated.<sup>695</sup> The preference for piece-work though was not borne simply of a distaste for St. Vincent's methods, but rather was formed from the experience of the Commissioners, and the recommendations of new manufactories in Britain's burgeoning private sector industry, all of whom advocated piece-work rather than a time-rate. The result was that a committee of master shipwrights were tasked with drawing up comprehensive tables for piece-work by 1811, the scheme being perfected by the work of John Payne at the Navy Board.<sup>696</sup> With task-work having been used for over thirty years by this point, flaws had been shown up in its use when trying to price up larger projects, meaning that the largest of ships were often priced too high, with smaller ships priced too low.<sup>697</sup> With the constantly changing designs and dimensions of late-eighteenth-century sailing ships, accurate estimations of costs proved difficult, if not impossible to achieve.<sup>698</sup> This new system for piece-work (still, misleadingly, called task-work) was implemented in 1809 with a new type of officer placed in the yards, that of a Master Measurer, who measured the work done by the piece in order to calculate wages.<sup>699</sup> This work was imperfect at inception, however, and required the exploits of John Payne who properly ordered the work and forced through its implementation at each individual yard, with the work finally being finished in October 1811.700

<sup>692</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, p. 204; p. 213.

<sup>693</sup> See *Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision*, pp. 200-202; Haas, 'The Introduction of Task Work into the Royal Dockyards', pp. 44-68.

<sup>694</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 202-07; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 207.

<sup>695</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, p. 54.

<sup>696</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 115-17.

<sup>697</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 199-200.

<sup>698</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 200-201; Haas, A Management Odyssey, pp. 55-57.

<sup>699</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 209-11

<sup>700</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 205-07.

The Royal School of Naval Architecture was a response to the difficulties experienced in the apprentice systems which had been in use prior to the 1800s. Due to St. Vincent's retrenchment policies during the Peace of Amiens, the apprentice schools proposed by Bentham and approved by Spencer were abandoned, meaning that incoming apprentices were from the very lowest levels of society and without any form of formal education due to the lack of any meaningful financial inducement to entry.<sup>701</sup> While the Commission of Revision proposed measures to deal with inferior apprentices (i.e. those with limited education on entry)702 they were never acted upon, but the proposed Royal School of Naval Architecture was established in 1811, and gave entrants a rigorous scientific and mathematical education in the morning, followed by practical lessons in the afternoon. While the school was to prove popular, the graduates it produced, who were immediately appointed quartermen, were highly unpopular in the yards due to the means of their entry and the highly factious nature of the yards.<sup>703</sup> While the school was to be closed in 1832 as a result, the principal foundation for the school's institution was always a valid one and made significant strides towards the full professionalisation of the corps of naval architects and construction workers that would finally be established in 1883, with the failure of the school not due to Barham misjudging the necessity of such an institute, but due to the failure of the dockyards to appreciate men of education and scientific principal in naval construction.704

Following on from the changes implemented in the dockyards in 1801, the Commission reiterated the new status of the resident Commissioner at the various Royal yards as being the man responsible for ensuring that all dockyard employees carried out the orders sent down by the Navy Board and to prevent abuses entering the system.<sup>705</sup> The Commission added to this that all letters sent by the Navy Board to the dockyards should be sent to the yard Commissioner, rather than directly to the dockyard official in question, with letters coming from the yards to the Navy Board similarly going through the Commissioner. This would allow the Commissioner to communicate with the Board by either a covering letter or annotating in the margins. In addition, the Commissioner was to write daily to the Board detailing the happenings at his yard so that the Board could satisfy themselves that the Commissioner knew his work and his yard, and meant that they could also be kept

<sup>701</sup> *Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision*, pp. 180-83 for 'The Present System of Education of Shipwrights'; p. 192; Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, pp. 110-113

<sup>702</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 187-93.

<sup>703</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, pp. 58-60.

<sup>704</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, p. 192.

<sup>705</sup> First Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 18-25.

appraised of the work that was being done in the yards on a regular basis, thus tightening the lines of communication and control.<sup>706</sup> These measures had the added benefit of clearly defining what the resident Commissioner's functions were to be and how his relationships with both the Navy Board and dockyard officers should be carried on. In order to give the Commissioner authority to command respect and obedience, he was given the power to suspend and recommend dismissal of workers, although the actual powers of dismissal were to remain vested in the Navy Board or Admiralty, depending on the particular worker's rank.<sup>707</sup>

In 1808 the Victualling Board was recommended to receive the expert committees first put forward by Barham in his memorandum to the Commission on Fees, but which had been turned down by Spencer in 1800, who preferred each Victualling Commissioner to have individual responsibilities, despite the protestations of the Board itself.<sup>708</sup> This attitude is the same as Bentham (whose appointment as Inspector-General had come about under Spencer's Admiralty) and St. Vincent (who favoured Bentham over the Navy Board). The upheaval that both Bentham and St. Vincent caused during their time in office though, meant that Barham and the Government as a whole had cooled to the radical ideals of individual responsibility by the time the Commission of Revision came to deal with the structures of the Victualling Board. Once again, Barham and Fordyce preferred the small, expert committee, a useful stop-gap between the large, unwieldy Boards of the lateseventeenth-century, and the transparent, accountable, individually responsible civil servants of the nineteenth-century. One reason for this was the general thought within Government that only Crown appointees could be truly responsible to the public and Parliament for their actions and therefore possess the authority to make important decisions. Clerks would rarely take initiative within departments; there was, as yet, no disinterested civil service to smooth the wheels of administration. The recommendation of the expert committee system was therefore almost natural in the context of the day in order to increase the efficiency of the few Crown appointees who sat on the Boards. Only at the Admiralty were clerks well-enough thought of to merit higher salaries and status, with

<sup>706</sup> *First Report of the Commissioners of Revision*, pp. 18-19, points 3 and 5; Haas, *A Management Odyssey*, p. 52.

<sup>707</sup> First Report of the Commissioners of Revision, p. 18, point 2.

<sup>708</sup> Tenth Report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy, (1809), pp. 4-5 for the Commissioners' (i.e. Barham's) disapprobation of the fact that, although the Victualling Board had been recommended to receive the same style of committee system as the Navy Board, nothing had been done; pp. 19-26 for the proposed constitution of the office in two expert committees: one for General Business (duties set down on pp. 26-28) and one for Cash and Accounts (duties on pp. 28-31); Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, pp. 31-32.

some decision making taking place in the Admiralty Office amongst clerks; even this was against strict protocol, but the process was winked at.<sup>709</sup>

The naval shore establishment also groaned by the 1800s under the weight of demand for salary increases, as those established during the 1780s and '90s had not been sufficient to allow for the price rises caused by the ongoing wars. Numerous petitions and go-slows (permitting longer working hours, thus requiring overtime payments, but ensuring that the jobs of the day were completed), were the results in the dockyards, whose pay-reforms have been noted, but the administrative Boards were finding it difficult to recruit and, crucially, retain the best species of clerk.<sup>710</sup> The heads of these Boards awaited only the verdict of the Commission of Revision and, in 1807, the Commission recommended higher salaries, more generous pensions and, most critically, increments of pay for longer service.<sup>711</sup> This meant that clerks were guaranteed higher salaries the longer they remained in any given position, promotion in an office was not the only way to obtain a larger salary. As a result, younger, more able clerks could be promoted over the heads of older men, who could be content with an increase in salary regardless.<sup>712</sup> More stringent entry requirements and refusal of increments to poor workers could also promote a culture of merit, hard work, and improvement.<sup>713</sup>

While Barham died in 1813 at Teston, he had lived to see the reforms he had worked so hard to achieve accepted by Government despite times when he and Fordyce despaired of ever seeing them adopted. Of the Commission of Revision's thirteen reports, eleven were adopted, while the two secret reports, firstly on the timber supply and secondly on a proposed new eastern dockyard, were shelved due to expense for the most part in the case of the timber situation in the royal forests, and redirection of priorities in the case of the eastern dockyard. The eleven adopted reports predominantly recommended revisions to traditional practices to improve efficiency, and reduce waste and corruption that had been found by St. Vincent's Commission of Enquiry. The eighth report though, on the dockyards, represented 'a total change of system' that the Navy Board replied would have to wait until peace to be fully implemented.<sup>714</sup> This attitude towards adopting wholesale changes should not be wondered at in the context of the period, nor when looking in particular at the Navy Board, as can be seen in Barham's travails when attempting to

<sup>709</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, p. 37.

<sup>710</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 65-66; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 130-136.

<sup>711</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Revision, pp. 65-85.

<sup>712</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 135-36.

<sup>713</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, pp. 43-44.

<sup>714</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 205.

reform the ways in which that Board thought and acted during his Comptrollership. Thanks to the work of John Payne at the Navy Board until 1811 though, these reforms were put into practice sooner than expected and with greater than expected results.<sup>715</sup> The reports therefore provided the basis for the administrative system of the Royal Navy at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, and ensured that it would remain as Barham directed for decades to come. It would therefore seem to be entirely accurate that Morriss describes him as 'the most influential naval administrator of the late eighteenth and early nineteenthcenturies.<sup>716</sup> From a post-captain in 1775 casting aspersions about the mental capacity of his commanding officer,<sup>717</sup> Barham's influence had grown to the extent that he had managed to mould to his exacting standards the systems, structures, organisation, and efficiency of every major part of the naval shore administration. Only the Ordnance Board had escaped his influence, and then only due to that Board's unique position outside of both the military services, and yet intricately connected with them. In short, there was not a single aspect of naval administration that had not been considered, altered, implemented, influenced, abolished, or revised by 1811 that Barham had not in some way been associated with.

## **Barham's Reforms to the Active Service**

Looking at Barham's work regarding the active service whilst in office as First Lord, in order to better facilitate safe passage for the trade at a time when the French and Spanish were unusually active on the seas, and with larger concentrations of ships in home waters than previously in the Napoleonic War, once Admiral Villeneuve arrived back in Europe from the West Indies, Barham wrote to the various bodies that required protection and convoy for their vessels, asking for advance notifications of their plans and requirements, which would allow preparations to be made well in advance, so that any window of opportunity could be taken advantage of. The responses were to be sent to him directly 'for their Lordships' consideration;'<sup>718</sup> clearly Barham, as usual, had resolved to take the

<sup>715</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 206-09.

<sup>716</sup> Roger Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham 1726-1813, An Administrator Reassessed' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding, (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000) pp. 301-23, pp. 322-23.

<sup>717</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, Fourth Earl of Sandwich, 1718-1792* (London: HaperCollins*Publishers*, 1993), pp. 159-60.

<sup>718</sup> I. Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty' in *Mariner's Mirror LXIV* (Greenwich: Staples Printers St. Albans at The Priory Press, 1978), pp. 217-33: p. 229.

main part of the business upon himself. This is also indicative of Barham's far wider appreciation of communications between various maritime aspects which were so intrinsic to his professional administrative career. Rather than relying on port admirals, commissioners, and officers to communicate the intentions, schedules, and requirements of the merchants, Barham realised that the Admiralty would be a far better body to supervise the allocation of convoy escorts and the times of sailing for those convoys, particularly if they could be made to coincide with the movements of ships and officers from one theatre or station to another. While in peacetime, and previously during the eighteenth-century, when convoys were not always essential, a department such as the Admiralty need not have concerned itself with the merchant marine from a military operational standpoint. The fact that convoys now required regular escort to protect them from the depredations of Britain's enemies, and the increasing value of those convoys as Britain's wealth and that of her everexpanding empire grew, meant that the Admiralty now had to concern itself with trade and how it was organised and protected. These ideas first appear in one of the memoranda that Barham sent to Melville in 1804, and included details on the kind of officer required to efficiently and effectively control convoys and escorts, the best types of ships to be assigned escort duty, the best stations to be used for convoys to gather, and also contained ideas for the best ways in which to handle the officers assigned escort duty, in order to keep their morale high, and ensure that duty was done to its utmost.<sup>719</sup>

On the subject of cruisers and increased efficiency of communications at sea, Barham took Nelson's viewpoint that the cruiser networks needed fresh means of communication and organisation in order to better protect the trade and bring information more speedily to those commanders that would benefit the most from it. In the aftermath of Villeneuve's escape from the Mediterranean and subsequent return to Europe, information had been the key in allowing fleet dispositions to be made to prevent the damage an unlocated fleet could potentially do to Britain's convoy system. It was decided that Sir Home Popham's code of signalling should be used by the cruisers operating under the new system, due to its success to date on Nelson's chase of Villeneuve to the West Indies.<sup>720</sup> A single line of cruisers was established, with the cruisers of the Irish station extending from Cape Clear to Cape Finisterre with orders to protect British trade, annoy that of the enemy, and keep up communications with commanders of other stations. If they sighted an enemy they were not to break contact until they were assured of its destination and then they were to make

<sup>719</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III, pp. 37-39, Memorandum dated ? May 1804 in Barham's hand.

<sup>720</sup> Corbett, Campaign of Trafalgar pp. 297-301.

all speed to bring that information to the commanding officer whom the information would most benefit. Three frigates from Ireland, one from the Channel Fleet, and the frigates that Cornwallis (the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel fleet) usually had cruising to the westward made up this first chain. While this structure did not differ materially from what had been the usual practice regarding the distribution of frigates in the Channel Fleet under Cornwallis, the orders would not have been specifically meant for him. Rather, as with the codification of the Admiralty clerks and Secretariat, Barham sought to set down in official written policy what the best method of cruiser communications was to be, in order that succeeding First Lords and Commanders-in-Chief had clear orders and precedents to refer to, and ensured that malpractice was not allowed to creep in to the service afloat.

Nelson also concurred with Barham's thoughts that there should be a second line of cruisers implemented along the Iberian Peninsula from Cape Finisterre to Cape St. Vincent in order to protect trade and give information on enemy fleet movements in much the same fashion as the Irish squadron.<sup>721</sup> This squadron would consist of four frigates to be put under the control of Captain Cobb, who had worked with Popham, and understood the signalling code well. The telegraph system of signalling, with which Nelson sent his famous signal 'England expects that every man will do his duty' at Trafalgar, was a significant step forward in the scientific process of intelligence gathering and signalling at sea, and its distribution to the frigates operating in the newly established cruiser squadrons also greatly enhanced commerce protection and defence against the enemy's cruising squadrons. Barham and Nelson, both with the object of trade protection first and foremost in their minds, came to this decision seemingly at the same time, with their ideas perfectly melding the active service and the shore establishment.

Along with the issues of the command of fleets at sea, Barham had long been interested in the ways in which the doings of commanding officers and captains were recorded, as can be seen when he took the unusual step of requesting to see Nelson's log-book from his time in the Mediterranean upon the latter's return from his cruise after Villeneuve to the West Indies.<sup>722</sup> Although Barham found nothing untoward in Nelson's conduct and formed a much greater appreciation of Nelson and his 'extraordinary talents', it shows that he was unusual in wishing for the captains and admirals to be subject to far closer scrutiny by the Admiralty than had previously been common, especially as Nelson's letter to William Marsden, the Admiralty Secretary, remarked that he had never kept a journal before, apart

<sup>721</sup> Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar p. 300 letter dated Albemarle, 29th August 1805 - Nelson to Barham

<sup>722</sup> Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar pp. 280-82; p. 312.

from the period he was in pursuit of Villeneuve, not ever having been called upon to provide one, or believing it to be customary.<sup>723</sup> This harks back to Barham's comment made as First Sea Lord that 'officers of all ranks must be brought to know that submission in service must be observed and attended to.'<sup>724</sup> To that end, Barham created a new form of log-book, with the civil or calendar day being used, beginning at midnight, contrary to previous iterations, which had begun at daybreak. As can be seen in a letter to Keith, it was expected that all captains would send this log-book, instead of a journal, to both the Navy Board and Admiralty for inspection, as per the General Printed Instructions.<sup>725</sup> Barham also had an immediate use for this form of journal and log-book; to keep track of the movements of captains of frigates, especially those assigned to trade protection and convoy duty. If a captain left his assigned station in order to cruise for prizes, much harm could come to the merchant vessels entering his assigned station if his ship was no longer present. By frequently and thoroughly examining log-books and journals, however, the Admiralty could be sure of the movements of the ships under their command and censure disobedient captains accordingly.<sup>726</sup>

As First Lord, Barham had to deal with the thorny question of patronage and promotions; an aspect of the job far more entwined with politics, either national or within the officers' ranks than the good of the service. Many previous First Lords had made enemies due to impartiality, notably Sandwich, but Barham was true to his mindset that merit must be promoted over influence and seniority. This mindset can be seen clearly in his memoranda to Melville in 1804 when he stated that 'a good set of officers, therefore, is the first thing to be attended to as vacancies occur, and nothing should stand in the way of procuring them' and 'men of knowledge in the business must be employed in every department of the service, and neither rank in life, nor birth, nor country should stand in the way, when integrity and ability are to be found.'<sup>727</sup> In this he was also following the example laid down by St. Vincent, who stated in 1801,

<sup>723</sup> Corbett, The Campaign of Trafalgar pp. 312-13, footnote, letter unprinted dated Merton, August 1805.

<sup>724</sup> J.S. Corbett, (ed.), Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801, Volume I Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XLVI (1913), pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December – Middleton to Spencer with two Enclosures: Enclosure I.

<sup>725</sup> Lloyd, *The Keith Papers Vol. III*, pp. 181-82, letter dated Admiralty Office, October 11, 1805 – Secretary of the Admiralty to Keith.

<sup>726</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III, pp. 37-39, Memorandum dated ? May 1804 in Barham's hand.

<sup>727</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice dated May 1804

It is my fixed determination to fill all vacant offices with the most efficient men I can find, and to pay no regard to the recommendations of any person whatever, where the qualification of the candidate will not bear me out in the appointment.<sup>728</sup>

While the press did not expect that St. Vincent could keep up such a line of business for long, citing the lack of prior examples,<sup>729</sup> it was also held up as very meritorious and honourable, as it was when Barham continued to pursue it. The system as it stood was a sound one, and had operated for over a century with very little change, but there were good practitioners and bad practitioners of the system of patronage. The system seemed to work best though, when the First Lord was a professional man who understood the service, and was known to prefer merit and professionalism over political favour and seniority.<sup>730</sup> By 1811 this attitude of promoting through merit had clearly taken root at the Admiralty, possibly owing to the influence of J.D Thompson, but owing much also to Charles Yorke's enlightened attitudes as First Lord. An account detailing shipwrights' characters, abilities and ages was drawn up for the Navy Board<sup>731</sup> that draws many parallels to the account drawn up by Barham as Comptroller during the 1780s 'of the several officers, their supposed respective ages, their names and employs..., their respective abilities in their respective stations, how far they are such as fear God and hate covetousness, their moral character, actions, dispositions [and] whether married or single.'<sup>732</sup>

Barham did continue his way of dealing with patronage throughout his tenure though, to the extent that the Commanders-in-Chief of the various squadrons started to feel aggrieved and singled out when their recommendations and requests for promotions were not granted by the Admiralty. Cornwallis began to complain to the First Lord at the end of October 1805, citing his position as Commander-in-Chief of the nominal highest command as reason why his promotions should take precedence and claimed that he did not see how an officer could continue in the command if he did not hold the countenance of the First Lord.<sup>733</sup> Barham though was not to be overawed, and blamed the actions of his

<sup>728</sup> Bonner-Smith, St. Vincent Vol. I, p. 302. Letter dated 26 March 1801 – St. Vincent to Thomas Parlby Esq.

<sup>729</sup> Bonner-Smith, St. Vincent Vol. I, p. 313. The Times article dated 6th March 1801.

<sup>730</sup> Daniel A. Baugh, 'The Eighteenth Century Navy as a National Institution, 1690-1815' pp. 120-160, in J.R. Hill, and Bryan Ranft, (eds.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) p. 154.

<sup>731</sup> Morriss The Royal Dockyards, p. 145.

<sup>732</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 145.

<sup>733</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 281-2 – letter dated Ville de Paris, at sea, 31<sup>st</sup> October 1805, Cornwallis to Barham.

predecessors in his reply to the admiral and, while he assured Cornwallis that he still held him in the highest regard, he claimed that,

With regard to patronage, the service has become too extensive to make it any longer an object; and I declare to you that since my coming to this board, I have made but one master-and-commander; and when I read over the claims before me,- from the King's ministers, members of parliament, peers, eminent [*illegible*], I do not see when I am to make another. Under the circumstances it is impossible that any person in my situation should give satisfaction. If I steer clear of injustice I shall think myself fortunate.<sup>734</sup>

In a recent article by Gareth Atkins, Barham's political influence has been further addressed, exploring Barham's use of his positions to influence patronage in favour of fellow Evangelicals within the British Government.735 In this article, Atkins asserts that Barham may have had far more influence on patronage than previously thought, and that Barham's appointment as First Lord may have been intended to influence the votes of Wilberforce and his friends.<sup>736</sup> Also brought up is the fact that Barham and his nephew, James Gambier 'had cultivated an extensive network of naval protégés.'737 While this may well have been the case, as has been previously discussed, issues such as this were not defining factors in Pitt's decision to promote Barham to the office of First Lord, as there were several candidates available that could have brought votes to Pitt's administration and dealt out patronage to persons desiring promotion or favours. Barham was selected by Pitt, and was eventually approved of by Government and the Navy, to oversee and direct the strategy and policy of the Navy during a critical period. Patronage was merely something attached to the office in question: it was not a reason to place somebody in so critical a position. Atkins also downplays Barham's perceived hard-line Evangelicalism when he speaks of Barham and his wife Margaret moving 'in circles of prosperous sociability that had a decidedly unsectarian feel' by 1781, ignoring the Clapham sect, and the work done by the abolitionists working out of Barham Court.738 Throughout the study, Atkins makes the argument that Barham both supported and practised the idea that religion and a person's religiosity should be taken into account when selecting men for governmental positions,739 an attitude shown previously in Barham's lists of dockyard officers made when

<sup>Laughton,</sup> *Barham Vol. III* pp. 283-84 – letter dated Admiralty, 7<sup>th</sup> November 1805, Barham to Cornwallis.
Gareth Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage in the Late Georgian Navy, c.1780 - .c1820' in *Historical Research Volume 88, 2015* (Online Edition, published online 15 April 2015) pp. 272-290.

<sup>736</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' p. 273.

<sup>737</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' p. 285.

<sup>738</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' p. 277.

<sup>739</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' p. 280.

Comptroller. This though may not necessarily be as censorious or corrupt as Atkins seems to imply. Patronage was simply a by-product of high office in Barham's time in administration, and for any man not to use it was unheard of, and would have produced no benefit to anyone, especially the office-holder. The study, being from the twenty-firstcentury, seeks to portray the use of patronage within government and the naval service as corruption, as indeed it must seem so to modern eyes, but the historical context of the period is again lacking. What should be made more of throughout the study, is the fact that Barham, and those whom he influenced, were moved to promote and nurture talented and hard-working individuals, who were made more likely to oppose vice because of their religious views. This is almost concurred with by Atkins, as he quotes Thomas Gisbourne's An Enquiry into the Duties of Men in the Higher and Middle Classes of Society (1794), which he surmises owes a great deal of influence to Barham, especially with regard to promotions and influence within the military spheres. The message seems to be, once again, that illegitimate influence and corruption of patronage would be attended with disaster, but that attention should be paid to a person's religion, as it was seen that a more pious man would work harder to eliminate corruption. The examples given by Atkins of persons that Barham promoted are firstly Ambrose Serle, acknowledged to have received significant administrative experience before being appointed to be Secretary of the Navy Board in 1789, and then to the Transport Board in 1794.<sup>740</sup> Secondly, James Gambier, who was a distinguished active service admiral, as well as a capable administrator, as had already been seen by the time he was promoted to the Admiralty under Melville. His

religion is also less of a factor in his ties to Barham than was his family connection.<sup>741</sup> Philip Patton and Hugh Christian are also brought up, but more in terms of family connection and Scottish kinships than religion.<sup>742</sup> The article serves well to indicate Barham's desire for a strong religious element throughout public service, as he wished for it throughout the Navy, believing that only with religion could there be public principal, attention to duty, and desire to eliminate corruption and push for professionalism. While Atkins singles out the appointment of Samuel Gambier to the Navy Board, making a point that Gambier had no naval experience,<sup>743</sup> he does not provide the context that only one permanent member of the Board during Barham's tenure as Comptroller had naval experience, and that was Barham himself. The others were all 'pen and ink gentlemen', for

<sup>. . . .</sup> 

<sup>740</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' pp. 281-82.

<sup>741</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' pp. 280-81.

<sup>742</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' p. 282.

<sup>743</sup> Atkins, 'Religion, Politics and Patronage' p. 282.

whom no naval experience was often no hindrance to their work. Significantly, there is no mention from Atkins on whether or not these matters of patronage, politics, and promotions by Barham helped or hindered the service. In an age where political networks were a necessity to a man such as Barham, his use of the wheels of power can be seen to have been very judicious for the period, and far more minded towards efficiency of administration than others were minded to do.

## **Barham's Departure from Office**

Those familiar with the service were sorry to see Barham leave office. Many realised that, while the old peer could be obstinate and refused to bow to demands for patronage from both within and without the service, his knowledge of operations and administration had seen the Royal Navy brought to its highest epoch yet, and a position of dominance over her European rivals the world over at sea. Many admirals also recognised that few politicians held Barham's penchant for application to business and professionalism and few Admirals could possess Barham's intimate professional knowledge of the naval shore establishment. As Keith put it,

I am sorry you are about to quit the Admiralty (although I dare say you are not), for the times require knowledge and a constant application. Nothing can persuade me that any man not a seaman is fit for the office in war. I have observed it all my naval life – not a short one now.<sup>744</sup>

Melville was also fulsome in his praise for his cousin, and the man whom he recognised as being behind the majority of his policies from his short tenure in office. Writing to Barham's secretary, Melville asked that his congratulations be passed on through more informal means than an official letter and again iterated the view that

Nobody more sincerely rejoices in the just merit he will have with the public by his great exertions in the naval administration of its affairs, by which he furnished the means to Lord Nelson of performing the great service he has conferred upon his country.<sup>745</sup>

Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* p. 184 – letter dated 1st February 1806, Keith to Barham.

<sup>745</sup> Laughton, *Barham Vol. III* p. 334 – letter dated Dalchonzie, 12<sup>th</sup> November 1805, Lord Melville to J.D. Thompson.

It is unclear though, just how much Barham could have wished to stay in the job any longer. The question of the length of his tenure as First Lord, never meant to be a long one, was brought to an abrupt end by the death of Pitt. From what little documentation now remains of Barham's departure from office, it would not seem that he wished to remain any longer, and was quietly content to retire for the final time to his beloved estate in Kent, now a member of Britain's peerage, and having held the highest post in British naval administration. He had managed to fulfil the schemes he and Melville had begun and had finally obtained the means of pushing through the last of his reforms which, through the Commission of Revision, he was able to finalise even when out of office.

As it happened, Barham was to be the last of the great professional First Lords. He was not though to be the last that also valued greatly the experience, expertise and knowledge of how the service worked that the professional Lord Commissioners could bring to the Admiralty. That he tasked the civil lords with catering to the business of the office which fell outside the grasp of the professional lords in his assignment of duties within the Admiralty, says much about how he imagined the office was best run. He was not alone in his appraisals of the benefits of professional men in office, but it did not necessarily follow that the best First Lord was a professional man at all times. As St. Vincent so succinctly put it on his arrival in office, 'I have known many a good admiral make a wretched First Lord of the Admiralty.<sup>746</sup> Politicians followed this viewpoint from this time onwards and a high-ranking Admiral would never again hold the position of First Lord. The only anomaly comes from a period of a few months in 1852 when the Duke of Northumberland took the office, but by that time the Duke was a nominal admiral only, a grandee whose naval career was long distant and of limited scope.747 Barham also, during this short period, enhanced the reputation not only of the Admiralty, but that of the naval minister. With a victory such as Trafalgar, the rise of the prestige of the position of First Lord of the Admiralty was complete, and meant that it ranked just below, or perhaps alongside that of the Secretaries of State. During the nineteenth-century the office would generally be held by politicians of the second rank merely due to the fact that either the Secretaries of State or the Exchequer led more smoothly to the Premiership, and the ability of the Admiralty to hold on to the residence of the Admiralty House, despite the best efforts of the Treasury to take it, shows the prestige that the office held.<sup>748</sup>

<sup>746</sup> Bonner-Smith, St. Vincent Vol. I, p. 333. Letter dated 21 February 1801 – St. Vincent to Lord Keith.

<sup>747</sup> Sainty, Admiralty Officials, pp. 26-7.

<sup>748</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, pp. 26-27.

Barham had one of the shortest periods of office as First Lord of the Admiralty, and certainly the shortest period for one who achieved such a lasting legacy, or presided over a naval battle such as Trafalgar. Without the time one might think was requisite for any lasting changes to be properly effected, he reorganised the workings and structure of the Board of Admiralty, followed up and began anew several improvements to the shore establishment of the Navy, such as the introduction of piece-work, the building of naval facilities on Haulbowline Island, the amalgamation of two prominent naval Boards into one more efficient whole, and the enforcement of greater discipline and the reduction of political influence within the officer class. His reorganisation throughout this time and the few years to follow would lay the groundwork for how the dockyards and naval departments would operate for the next twenty-seven years, and ensured that Britain could afford to keep, augment, and maintain the largest sailing fleet ever seen.

Barham's unique insights and experience in how every department of the naval shore establishment operated meant that he was able to expertly wield the large, ungainly, and complex machinery of the Royal Navy in its entirety and use it to peak efficiency. To use Clive Wilkinson's example, he understood completely the political parameters, physical boundaries, limits on resources, and slow-moving infrastructure of the Navy on shore, and was able to use his professional and political connections, combined with his knowledge of the vested interests within the service to help him make changes. The fact that Barham had been promoting the sort of changes that he eventually made for decades, and had laid all the groundwork for them in the years leading up to his tenure as First Lord. This meant that he was able to implement them immediately, and could then continue to do so through the Commission of Revision, all in a short time period. He promoted harmony between departments, deference and obedience from admirals, cooperation from ministers and subordinates, and eventually victory over the enemy.



## **Conclusions**

The American and French Revolutionary, and Napoleonic Wars required enormous exertion and precision of distribution of force and resources on the part of the naval shore establishment in order to ensure that Britain emerged from the conflicts victorious. It would seem impossible that the same nation that entered the American War of Independence could have achieved naval victory in the period's wars had no changes been made to the overall structure and professionalism of government, and the naval shore establishment in particular. From a situation whereby office-holders thought of their posts as a form of private property, possessed of pecuniary payments and influence from outside of government,<sup>749</sup> to a culture of service to the Crown and Parliament for the good of the public,<sup>750</sup> and from a cumbersome, outdated series of administrative boards<sup>751</sup> to clearly defined responsibilities for individuals and small, expert committees,<sup>752</sup> the naval shore establishment entered 1815 greatly altered from how it entered 1775. A new generation of public servants, with only distant memories of the practices of the late-eighteenth-century, with new attitudes shaped by the rigours and exigencies of near-constant warfare and the load of business that it entailed, had to, and did, work in vastly different ways with greatly increased professionalism to enable the Navy to rise to the challenges laid before it by France and her allies. These new administrators developed the public service ethic, paving the way for the great reforms of the British civil service in the mid-nineteenth-century and, while many had been professional in their outlook at the beginning of the period, by the end, their official conduct, social standing, respectability, vigour of work, and terms of service more closely resembled a modern civil servant than an archetypal eighteenthcentury office holder.753

<sup>749</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989), pp. 86-87.

<sup>750</sup> Roger Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards During the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), pp. 156-57.

<sup>751</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 211.

<sup>752</sup> Fourth, Ninth, and Tenth Reports of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy (1806-09); J.M. Collinge, (ed.), Office Holders in Modern Britain VII – Navy Board Officials 1660-1832 (Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1978) pp. 12-15; J.K Laughton, (ed.), Letters and Papers of Charles, Lord Barham, Admiral of the Red Squadron, 1758-1813, Volume III Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XXXIX (1910), pp. 76-79 – Conduct of Business dated Admiralty, May 1805 (National Archives – Admiralty Minutes no. 256) dated Admiralty May 1805; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 150; p. 183.

<sup>753</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 156-57; pp. 221-222.
While the departments of state that have previously been selected by historians for assessing this rise of professionalism; the Treasury, the Secretaries of State, and the Exchequer, all show this process, it is no less present in the shore establishment of the Navy, and arguably more so when one considers the age of some of the Navy's departments.<sup>754</sup> It is also important to understand how the process of professionalisation developed in a military service that was under the greatest pressure it had ever experienced during the years in which these changes were made. Similarly, previous studies of the work that Barham did, or of the work that the shore establishment did in which Barham played a key role, have tended to focus on a single aspect of his career, be it an office, such as his time at the Admiralty<sup>755</sup> or as Comptroller,<sup>756</sup> a particular measure such as the coppering of the fleet,<sup>757</sup> or his religion and how it affected him and his work.<sup>758</sup> Because of this is becomes difficult to discern exactly how and, perhaps more importantly, why Barham effected the measures that he put into place most notably as First Lord of the Admiralty and chairman of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, and did not take a different view or leave things as they were. The ethos and changes that he brought to the various government departments and the ways in which they worked, while sometimes only of limited scope, all formed the basis of Barham's views on how the departments of the administration were best organised and how their work was best executed for optimum efficiency. Only by tracing these measures from their origins in 1778-79 to the final implementation of the Commission of Revision's reports in 1810-11 can a full picture emerge of the gradual processes of professionalisation and how and why the particular measures were brought to fruition.

This professionalism was sought through a number of measures, such as the selection, appointment, and promotion of dockyard officials<sup>759</sup> and Principal Officers and

<sup>754</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power, chapters 2 and 3, pp. 29-87.

<sup>755</sup> I. Lloyd-Phillips, 'Lord Barham at the Admiralty' in *Mariner's Mirror LXIV* (Greenwich: Staples Printers St. Albans at The Priory Press, 1978)

<sup>756</sup> John E. Talbott, *The Pen and Ink Sailor: Sir Charles Middleton and the King's Navy, 1778-1813* (London: Frank Cass, 1998). While ostensibly a biography regarding his work in office, Talbott focuses predominantly on Barham's time as Comptroller, and does not link his measures throughout his career sufficiently.

<sup>757</sup> Randolph Cock, "The Finest Invention in the World": The Royal Navy's Early Trials of Copper Sheathing, 1708-1770' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume LXXXVII* (2001), pp. 446-459; R.J.B. Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing into the Royal Navy' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume 59*, (St. Albans: The Priory Press, 1973), pp. 299-309.

<sup>758</sup> Richard Blake, *Evangelicals in the Royal Navy*, 1775-1815: Blue Lights and Psalm-Singers (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2008);

<sup>759</sup> First, Second, and Third Reports of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy (1806)

Commissioners on merit,<sup>760</sup> with greater knowledge of the Navy and shore establishment on the part of the Admiralty, alongside clear definitions on what each administrator and office should be doing as part of the administrative machine.<sup>761</sup> The abolition of fees, gratuities, perquisites, and emoluments within the shore establishment and the establishing of salaries adequate to the needs of the administrators over the course of the period meant that officials were much less likely to be influenced by factors outside the administration. As these men were now completely dependent for their income on their government salary, their loyalty would not be placed anywhere else, increasing their desire to work for the public good, and not to see their office as private property that they entered through a payment to a superior.<sup>762</sup> Such an attitude was to become essential at a time when the shore establishment required the utmost attention to detail, application of business, and commitment to the good of the country from its public servants. The constant alteration of the pay scales and salaries in the wake of the reforms of the 1780s onwards also showed how much the successive ministries valued their increasingly professional civil servants and how their status in society was growing, enhanced and supported by the cumulative successes the Navy enjoyed during this period.<sup>763</sup> The payment of dockyard workers was also improved by the increase in day-rates and the complete overhaul of work done by the piece (called 'task-work' at the time), with the addition of Master Measurers to the yards, which resulted eventually in workmen being paid weekly, rather than quarterly, reducing the debt that dockyard workers were invariably forced into.<sup>764</sup> All of this meant that management could be sure of what the workers should be earning, with the consequence of increased control and output, with the end result being that the merchant yards were no longer required for building new ships from 1812 onwards.

If one looks at the most basic measure of ascertaining professionalism, that of possession of specific knowledge, skills, expertise, and experience,<sup>765</sup> then the level of professionalism of the naval shore establishment can be seen to have been increased overall during this period, even if certain departments possessed little more than they did at the beginning,

<sup>760</sup> Fourth, Ninth, and Tenth Reports of the Commissioners of Naval Revision

<sup>761</sup> Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, p. 186. This also fits in with the Foucauldian theory of 'institutionalisation of expertise', see Mike Saks, 'Defining a Profession: The Role of Knowledge and Expertise' in *Professions and Professionalism Volume 2, No. 1* (2012) pp. 1-10, p. 3.

<sup>762</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 221.

<sup>763</sup> The enhanced social standing of these public servants in the eyes not just of government but the wider public ties in with Neo-Weberian principals regarding professionalism, see Brewer, *The Sinews of Power* p. 69; p. 79; and Saks, 'Defining a Profession', p. 4.

<sup>764</sup> Third Report of the Commissioners of Naval Revision, pp. 199-214; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 30.

<sup>765</sup> This is the taxonomic approach, which was the first method used to define what makes a profession. See Saks, 'Defining a Profession', p. 2.

such as the Navy Board. If certain departments progressed little, however, it was because they began the period as fully professional bodies by these standards, and had been professional for a long time before the 1770s. Bodies such as the Admiralty, however, greatly increased their professionalism with regard to specialist knowledge and expertise over the period, beginning in the 1790s, and continuing throughout the Napoleonic War. The reconstituted Transport Board increased the overall professionalism of combined operations at this time, gathering all aspects of the business under a single head, based on the work done by the Navy Board in the American War of Independence. Finally, the Sick and Hurt Board, through its amalgamation with the Transport Board in 1806, became a more efficient administrative element to the establishment, rather than merely a group of medical professionals who, while greatly contributing to the overall health of the Navy, also increased its debt, and were behind the overall curve in terms of administrative professionalism.<sup>766</sup> This work was bolstered by the work done by the Commission of Revision, which set out in comprehensive terms the duties to be undertaken by the various dockyard officials, Principal Officers and Commissioners, and agents, meaning that the Admiralty could see in written format exactly what duties each member of the shore establishment should be charged with, what their work should entail, and what results should be forthcoming. No longer would they be faced with an impenetrable barrier to control of the dockyards in the form of the Navy Board, which had previously been the sole body that, in theory, had an intimate knowledge of the work the dockyards should be doing (but not, in practice, what processes they actually followed). As a result, the Admiralty had grown in professionalism to such an extent by the 1830s that the Great Reform Act could comfortably abolish the Navy and Victualling Boards and attach their duties to the Admiralty, which finalised centrality of control and confirmed the Admiralty's position at the head, rather than the centre, of naval administration.<sup>767</sup>

With regard to establishments such as the dockyards, Navy Board, and Victualling Board during the period, while they possessed formidable knowledge at the beginning of the American War of Independence, their efficiency and effectiveness was not always what it could have been. As seen by Barham's exploits, much could be done under the system as it then existed, the coppering of the fleet standing out as a case in point, with the complete

<sup>766</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 122-24 – Memorandum dated 15<sup>th</sup> October 1805; pp. 124-30 – letter dated Admiralty, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1805, To The King; Ninth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Revision pp. 16-21.

<sup>767</sup> J.M. Haas, A Management Odyssey: The Royal Dockyards, 1714-1914 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 189-90.

overhauling and readying of the fleet during the 1780s being essential to Britain's eventual success in the following wars against France. Nevertheless, the performance of the Navy Board, in particular over the course of the 1790s and early 1800s, shows that under a Comptroller who was not as assiduous or committed to the business of the Board as Barham was (and few men of the time were), the Board's efficiency and effectiveness could, and did, drop.<sup>768</sup> This drop-off was made worse due to the need from 1796 onwards to accommodate, implement, and understand the new working arrangements, structures, and loss of earnings through fees and other informal payments that the reforms suggested by the Commission on Fees brought. The reforms had had a chance to bed in by the time the Commission of Revision came to amend salary scales and increments, as well as the number of Commissioners on the Board in 1807-08, the additional measures taken ensured that the Board became more efficient and, with the Standing Orders to the yards fully revised and digested under simple headings, much more capable of administering the dockyards.<sup>769</sup>

In all aspects of the naval administration, following the influence of Barham and the Commission of Revision, the setting down of the requisite backgrounds in business and personal character for the various positions to be filled throughout the shore establishment fulfils the final aspect of the taxonomic approach to professionalism, that of the trait-writers.<sup>770</sup> While the traits listed by Barham with regard to how men should be selected for the positions he dealt with were meant to promote the selection of individuals who would put the business of the state and public duty before their own ends, they did contribute to the evolution of the eighteenth-century office holder or political nominee into a nineteenth-century civil servant, working for the public and accountable to government for their performance. Barham's insistence on having the right man in the right job was coloured by his Evangelicalism, but in an era when private probity and public duty were not automatic characteristics of administrators, certainly at the beginning of his career, the personality traits of the men selected could be as important as their previous work when determining their suitability for administration and their capacity for professional conduct.

By this setting out of the prior requirements of an individual before they could be considered for appointment to a naval administrative post, the naval shore establishment was able to effect the Foucauldian tenet of institutionalisation of expertise, as they could

<sup>768</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, p. 51.

<sup>769</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Revision, pp. 18-22; pp. 36-38.

<sup>770</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession', pp. 2-4.

find the best men in the country, or at the very least, the existing naval establishment, to fill the various positions in the administration.<sup>771</sup> The Foucauldian viewpoint of the state being the result of the experience of governing can be seen clearly in the ways in which the naval shore establishment went about their business; gaining experience, and finally making clear and concise records of that experience with minute books and the Admiralty Record Office from 1809 onwards. Once gained, that knowledge could be used to pinpoint the requirements of the various offices and positions, to specify in great detail the work that should be done, and the particular type of men that should fill those offices and positions. All these things, of course, were measures that Barham promoted and pushed his contemporaries for repeatedly over the course of his career. While he may not always have been the one to have directly implemented such measures, such as in the case of the Admiralty Record Office, he was invariably the first to determine the need for such an institution, and one of the first men to accept the necessity of utilising professional expertise in all offices within the shore administration, not just a portion, for the benefit of governing the Navy.<sup>772</sup>

The shore establishment began the period socially closed to a great extent, and ended closed yet further, tightening the regulations on exactly who could realistically be considered for any particular professional position, brought about in the main through Barham's actions and the work of the Commission of Revision that he chaired.<sup>773</sup> With the duties and responsibilities of the dockyard officials, Principal Officers and Commissioners of the various Boards, and Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty laid down in writing, along with similar, if not as specific, instructions for the various secretariats, the right men could be found for the right job, and merit could be promoted over seniority to facilitate this. This last point was provided for by a final reworking of salary increments for long-service rather than just for higher position in office.<sup>774</sup> The men who were selected, however, would have to demonstrate adequate professional expertise and achievements in order to obtain the higher positions within the naval shore establishment, along with a specific educational and practical background, thus preventing undeserving prospective candidates from being appointed, as the requirements became more stringent. Pension and superannuation schemes also assisted in enabling older members of the administration to be

<sup>771</sup> Saks, 'Defining a Profession', p. 3.

C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 38; pp. 45-46.

<sup>773</sup> This social closure is important in Neo-Weberian methods of ascertaining professionalism, Saks, 'Defining a Profession', p. 4.

<sup>774</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power, p. 89; Collinge, Office Holders in Modern Britain VII pp. 12-15.

persuaded to leave their posts, rather than staying on long after they became too infirm to discharge their duties, with some elderly office-holders dying while in office. The drive for a greater sense of public duty and the removal of the attitude of offices as a form of property also encouraged retirements, but allowing a greater proportion of office-holders access to a pension did achieve immediate results.<sup>775</sup> Perhaps the most significant part of this closing of the ranks in the shore administration to the public and general government can be seen in the wholesale removal of politics from the active service from 1806 onwards, and the specification of the duties of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty.

With regard to the first point, many officers within the Navy, either on shore or afloat, actively engaged in politics, using family ties, and political connections and influence to enter the service, have themselves advanced for promotions, attain high commands or governorships, sinecures, and administrative posts, along with cultivating a following of junior officers throughout their careers that they could influence through patronage both naval and political. Connections and rivalries between naval officers, which sometimes extended to politicians on shore, could exert a deal of influence on the relationships between commanding officers even in the same squadron along with the ways in which the Navy operated, perhaps best demonstrated by the Keppel-Palliser affair of 1778, when Party politics threatened to dismantle the highest command of the Channel fleet at a critical time.<sup>776</sup> By disallowing naval officers whose ships were either under sailing orders or ready for sea from attending Parliament, Barham and the Admiralty ensured that political factions could not rend the commanding officers apart again and meant that officers' only loyalties lay in the service and to the Admiralty, rather than a patron in Parliament.<sup>777</sup> This also meant that the focus of sea officers was on their commands and the duties assigned to them by the Admiralty and, not insignificantly, reduced the quantity of requests, demands, and pressure from politicians to the naval administration for nominees to be advanced, promoted, and favoured. Merit could now be used far more often as political considerations were slowly removed from the officers' ranks. This also finally brought the higher ranks afloat into line with the rest of the naval offices ashore, as the de-politicisation of clerks and secretaries had been identified early in the eighteenth-century as a key aspect of efficient administration,<sup>778</sup> as it ensured that the men working for government were more

<sup>775</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, p. 142; p. 148

<sup>776</sup> Broomfield, J.H., 'The Keppel-Palliser Affair, 1778-1779' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume 47, no. 3, August 1961* (1961) pp. 195-207

<sup>777</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III p. 79 – Order, Barham's Autograph.

<sup>778</sup> Brewer, The Sinews of Power, pp. 73-74.

concerned with promoting the public good rather than themselves. With the removal of politics from within the service, this was assured throughout the Navy both on land and afloat.

On the second point, while certain Principal Officers and Commissioners were chosen from the list of sea officers, their positions were accepted to be of a purely administrative nature, and it was an unspoken rule that any officer appointed to a post at an administrative Board gave up their active service career and prospects of advancement in rank upon accepting the post. While exceptions such as Sir Hugh Palliser did exist, officers such as Barham and Sir Thomas Byam-Martin were more common. The Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty, however, did not give up their active service careers, or rights to promotion upon appointment, and a great many continued their service at sea upon taking a position on the Board of Admiralty, meaning that they were unable to assist with the day-to-day business of the Board. While the lesser burden of work at the Admiralty earlier in the eighteenth-century could permit of such an arrangement, more particularly as the professional knowledge of the shore establishment was to be found below the senior Board, as the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars continued to grow in scale and criticality, the Board's business became ever more important and voluminous as it became better acquainted with the administrative side of the Navy. As a result, officers appointed to the Board could ill afford to absent themselves for any reason, more so once Barham divided up the business of the Board between the Sea Lords, meaning that the colleagues of an absentee Lord would become overworked and the whole business would slip into arrears.<sup>779</sup> As a result, officers were far less likely to serve at sea once appointed to the Board, increasing their effectiveness, their professionalism as administrators, the importance of the administrative post of Lord Commissioner, and more clearly delineating the chain of command. Admiral Hugh Seymour, for example, served in the Channel Fleet during the 1790s when the squadron was under the command of Lord Bridport. Technically, as a junior flag officer, Seymour was subordinate to Bridport, and could be expected to follow his orders, yet as a member of the Board of Admiralty, Seymour could have issued orders to Bridport, or at least ensured that he complied to the letter of the Admiralty's instructions to him, reporting any infringements back to Spencer. By dissuading active service officers from continuing their careers at sea while they remained at the Board, the officers positioned at the Admiralty could be treated as administrators first

<sup>779</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 76-79 – Conduct of Business dated Admiralty, May 1805 (National Archives – Admiralty Minutes no. 256) dated Admiralty May 1805.

and foremost rather than as sea officers, who held their positions at the Admiralty as a form of patronage.

Throughout the process of increasing the professionalism of the shore establishment, Barham's touch can be discerned at almost every step. From encouraging, demanding, ordering, and harrying the Navy Board to increase its efficiency and effectiveness through the American War,<sup>780</sup> forcing through an untried measure of immense complication and doubtful security in the coppering of the fleet,<sup>781</sup> to fully setting down the constitution of every major organ of the administrative establishment as First Lord of the Admiralty and chairman of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, Barham moulded the administrative machine to his specifications. He improved what had gone before, implementing new positions, structures, working arrangements, and necessary backgrounds for each member of the shore establishment.

Barham was a firm believer that the efficiency of the various offices was of paramount importance, as can be seen in his initial measures when entering the Navy Board and Admiralty for the first time.<sup>782</sup> He knew that the members of these Boards could do much more than previously if certain simple expedients were put in place, such as increased, regulated, and standardised office hours, set times for certain tasks to be performed, and efficient and reliable record-keeping. While these changes were small, they often had a large impact on the existing structures, giving Barham further confirmation in his mind that the old system was sound, but required men to submit to close application of business in order to make the most of it now the scale of the business was greatly increased. In this he showed that he was a product of his time, a man who believed in the British way of doing things since the seventeenth-century and belied his conservatism regarding the administrative system, although he certainly believed more changes were necessary than his contemporaries did, as the fact that he was the first man to push for such simple

<sup>780</sup> Leslie Gardiner, *The British Admiralty (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons Ltd., 1968)*, p. 178; John B. Hattendorf, R.J.B. Knight, A.W.H. Pearsall, N.A.M. Rodger & Geoffrey Till, (eds.), *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 131 (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1993), pp. 460-62, A View on the Navy Board, 2 December 1782 – Robert Gregson, Chief Clerk to the Clerk of the Acts to Lord Shelburne.

<sup>781</sup> Randolph Cock, "The Finest Invention in the World": The Royal Navy's Early Trials of Copper Sheathing, 1708-1770' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume LXXXVII* (2001), pp. 446-459; R.J.B. Knight, 'The Introduction of Copper Sheathing into the Royal Navy' in *Mariner's Mirror Volume 59*, (St. Albans: The Priory Press, 1973), pp. 299-309, p. 301.

<sup>782</sup> Hattendorf, Knight, Pearsall, Rodger & Till (eds.) British Naval Documents pp. 338-41, Naval Resources at the Start of the War 1793, Draft Memorandum by Vice-Admiral Sir Charles Middleton, undated (October 1793); Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804; Julian S. Corbett, (ed.), Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801, Volume I Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume XLVI (1913), pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December 1794 – Middleton to Spencer with two enclosures: Enclosure I.

bureaucratic measures in administrative offices shows. Even such minor changes were important in the ways these ancient organs of government brought themselves into the nineteenth-century, as record-keeping would come to be an essential aspect of bureaucracy, as would constant application to business in the public service and regular, day-long office hours. The days of the eighteenth-century administrator were coming to an end by the time Barham first came to a public Board, and he ensured that they were ended more swiftly than they might otherwise have been, assisted by the necessity of meeting the challenges of three great wars.

By advocating that the Admiralty should take firm control over the officers under their charge, Barham assisted in establishing the Admiralty as the supreme authority within government and the service for the dispensation of naval orders and the general discipline of officers.<sup>783</sup> No longer could the autonomy of Commanders-in-Chief in home waters be permitted to continue, or for officers afloat to be directed by Secretaries of State as the Admiralty began to acquire professional knowledge regarding the ways in which the whole of the active and shore services worked together.<sup>784</sup> This move mirrored Barham's push for increased efficiency on shore, as he realised that the limitations of that shore establishment would necessarily impact on the abilities of the fleets at sea, and that fleets on certain stations would have to be maintained at all times, for a system of 'unlimited conquest' as he put it, was unobtainable at the time.<sup>785</sup> In this he was unique, for a seaman, such as St. Vincent, often looked down on the civil establishments, and the dockyards in particular, often ignorant of the work that they did and the problems they had to overcome.786 Likewise, a landsman politician could not have hoped to have been thoroughly conversant with the intricacies of dockyard procedures and the ways in which the subordinate Boards oversaw their various contractors, relationships with private industry, and the dockyards themselves. Barham provided the bridge between the two arms of the service.<sup>787</sup> With the knowledge first brought into the office by Barham in 1794 of how the fleet would be best

<sup>783</sup> Roger Morriss, (ed.), *The Channel Fleet and the Blockade of Brest*, 1793-1801 Publications of the Navy Records Society Volume 141 (Ashgate Publishing Limited: Aldershot, 2001), pp. 48-49 – letter undated (late November/December 1794), Middleton to Dundas; Corbett, *Spencer Vol. I* pp. 7-14, letter dated Admiralty, 19<sup>th</sup> December – Middleton to Spencer with two Enclosures: Enclosure I.

<sup>784</sup> Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty, pp. 23-26

<sup>785</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I pp. 50-54, letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 1795 – Middleton to Spencer marked private.

<sup>786</sup> P. K. Crimmin 'John Jervis, Earl of St. Vincent, 1735-1823' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding (eds.) Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 325-350, pp. 345-46; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 148-49.

<sup>787</sup> Roger Morriss, 'Charles Middleton, Lord Barham 1726-1813, An Administrator Reassessed' in Peter Le Favre and Richard Harding (eds.), *Precursors of Nelson: British Admirals of the Eighteenth Century* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000) pp. 301-23, p. 303.

distributed when the necessities of repair, replenishment of supplies, refreshment of crews, routine refitting work, and convoy service were taken into account, the Admiralty, by working more closely with the shore establishment under its control, could be a better judge of how the fleet should be used and what stations the ships should be employed upon than Commanders-in-Chief at sea.<sup>788</sup> The fragmentation previously found in the naval shore establishment, the jealously-guarded autonomy of the Commanders-in-Chief, and the dismissal of the Admiralty by the Navy Board had previously acted as barriers to this sort of close control, which was firmly established by the end of the Napoleonic War. It was exactly this sort of close control that allowed the Navy to work at peak efficiency during the last decade of the wars against the French, and permitted the complete blockade of Continental Europe, so critical in forcing nations out of alliance with France and breaking down the continent economically. The lines of cruisers that Barham established in concert with Nelson were some of the final adjustments necessary to create a complete blockade of the Atlantic coast of France, Spain, and Holland, and ensured that the trade, which the British war effort relied on more than anything, and which Barham had dedicated the greatest part of his naval strategy to, could be brought home safely.789

Barham also extended this attitude of close control by the Admiralty to the subordinate Boards during his time as First Sea Lord, as First Lord of the Admiralty, and as chairman of the Commission of Revision. While such close control would have been infuriating to Barham when he himself was Comptroller, the performance of the Navy, and Sick and Hurt Boards in particular from an administrative point of view during the 1790s, provided the evidence that unless such organisations were properly regulated their business could fall into arrears, despite the good that they might also do.<sup>790</sup> Barham realised that the shore service could not afford for distance to be kept between the departments, and each department or office had to understand and appreciate the work that the others did in order for greater harmony to prevail. Through the comprehensive instructions for each officer in the dockyards and Boards set down by the Commission of Revision this understanding and harmony could be achieved, and close control was an essential part of ensuring that matters did not slip back to what had gone before. With the position of the Admiralty established at the head of naval administration, and aware of the work that each of the subordinate Boards did, there could be no barriers to control or friction between the departments, and

<sup>788</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. II pp. 394-401 - Statements I-IV.

<sup>789</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *The Campaign of Trafalgar* (London: Longmans, 1910), pp. 297-301; p. 300 letter dated Albemarle, 29<sup>th</sup> August 1805 – Nelson to Barham.

<sup>790</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 122-24 – Memorandum dated 15th October 1805.

the newfound sense of public duty throughout the naval shore establishment concentrated the desire to work together for the good of the nation's first and foremost line of defence.

Even in the instance of the work of Sir Samuel Bentham, the other great naval reformer of the period, and his radical views on individual responsibility, Barham played a hand, and was the man who moved for the institution of 'an intermediate sea board,' taking Bentham's views on the benefits of a single Inspector-General after conversations with him in 1795, helping to persuade Spencer to place him in the office of Inspector-General of Naval Works in 1796.791 While Barham was more of an advocate of the small, expert committee over the course of his career, he was willing to try Bentham's new methods regarding individual responsibility, for he surely saw something of himself in the ideal of a sole administrator, ultimately responsible for the work done in a government department, and at liberty to claim the reward for good management and take the fall for shortcomings, a sore point hanging over him from the end of his Comptrollership.<sup>792</sup> It was also Barham who saw to it that Bentham's influence could no longer pervade the Admiralty and shore establishment as before,<sup>793</sup> once his disturbing influence on the naval establishment became clear, although transferring him to the Navy Board may well have had the unintended effect that the previously conservative, cautious, and risk-adverse Board embraced the idea that persons possessing superior professional knowledge in certain areas should be consulted and listened to, rather than continue to ignore the suggestions of outsiders and simply trust to their own judgement and dimly recalled precedents.794

Barham's extensive experience led him to be the defining voice in setting down how the Navy would enter the nineteenth-century, and progress up to and past the end of the Napoleonic War, with many of his measures surviving to the great centralising measures of the Whigs in 1832. Much of what Barham did could be regarded as profoundly conservative, in that, rather than proposing and implementing radical, new measures along the same lines as St. Vincent and Bentham, he adapted and refined the existing, seventeenth and eighteenth-century systems as Britain entered the nineteenth-century. However, the constant warfare, coupled with the discontent sown by St. Vincent and Bentham during the years prior to him becoming First Lord, forced conservatism and refinement rather than a radical overhauling of the entire system. In many cases throughout

<sup>791</sup> Corbett, Spencer Vol. I, pp. 45-47 Memo by Middleton, dated 25th June 1795.

<sup>792</sup> Laughton, Barham Vol. III pp. 24-39 – Memoranda of Advice, undated, presumably May 1804.

<sup>793</sup> Fourth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Revision, pp. 19-22; Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 213-15.

<sup>794</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 214-16.

his career what Barham did was radical for the time, such as the separation of politics and the active service when at the Board of Admiralty, the reorganisation of the Navy and Victualling Boards into expert committees from a single Board structure, the recommendation of the institution of the Royal School of Naval Architecture in the dockyards, and the coppering of the entire Navy during the height of a great war as Comptroller. Also to consider is that fact that Barham was very much a man of the eighteenth-century, and remained a firm proponent of refining and tweaking the existing system rather than adopting radical measures. In part this was the inherent conservatism of the eighteenth-century administrator, in part a response to the demands of the time, i.e. the need for greater efficiency of the existing system in order to win a war rather than the need for upheaval to facilitate future efficiency (although Barham always did whatever he could within the existing parameters on this count), and in part a conviction that the shore establishment was based on a firm constitution that only needed streamlining and the presence of men of vigour and dedication to business to be made to work properly.

If Barham stopped short of the full extent of what might have been done during the reforms suggested by the Commission of Revision, simply assessing the full title of the Commission should provide adequate explanation. To 'revise and digest the civil affairs of the Navy' did not mean to propose to implement new and untested measures into a deeply conservative and risk-averse organisation such as the Royal dockyards and the naval shore establishment. That had been St. Vincent's aim, but such reforms would have to wait until a Whig once more had the power to effect such changes from 1830 onwards in a period of sustained peace.<sup>795</sup> Indeed, Bentham's ideas on the benefits of individual responsibility would only come to be accepted from the 1820s onwards.<sup>796</sup> The midst of the greatest struggle that Britain had even been a part of was also an inopportune moment to uproot the administration, as St. Vincent had found even in the limited peacetime he was permitted. The state of the Navy could, and perhaps always would, be seriously hindered by such measures, and it required the particular talents of John Payne in 1811 to ensure that the more radical measures proposed by the Commission of Revision, contained within the eighth report regarding overhauling piece-work in the dockyards, were implemented during the conflict.<sup>797</sup> Without his input, it remains very doubtful that anything would have been done before the end of the war. To attempt more than was suggested would surely have

<sup>795</sup> Haas, A Management Odyssey, pp. 189-90.

<sup>796</sup> Morriss, The Royal Dockyards, pp. 209-10.

<sup>797</sup> Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards*, pp. 205-07.

resulted in the reports being dismissed by the Admiralty (which approved the Commission of Revision's decision not to deviate from the measures set down in the seventeenthcentury), meaning that nothing at all would have been accomplished now that Barham was no longer First Lord and without power to force through such recommendations personally.

Overall, in the context of a period of near constant warfare on an ever-increasing scale, the work done to professionalise the shore establishment of the Navy provided major steps forward from what had gone before, and paved the way for what was to come. There could be no great leap over the relatively short period of three decades from the stolid, inflexible and, at times, unworkable arrangements that the eighteenth-century both inherited and implemented during its earlier years, and was mostly still labouring under come 1775, to the efficiency, accountability, attention to the public duty, and individual responsibility that the nineteenth-century brought. The fact that a few radical thinkers had already had the ideas that would come to define the great Victorian civil servants does not mean that the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries (which still very much resembled what had gone before due to the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars being a barrier to largescale change), were ready for such measures to be undertaken.<sup>798</sup> Because of this, reformers such as William Pitt the Younger, Lord Shelburne, William Wilberforce, Lord Melville, Lord Barham, and the reforms they achieved, were all necessary to begin the process from the 1780s onwards. Perhaps more might have been done in the earlynineteenth-century, and the reforms suggested by the various Parliamentary Commissions might have been more radical, had the Napoleonic War not been ongoing, and had the minor measures attempted during the Peace of Amiens not produced such disruption in the dockyards, meaning that the Navy's condition and readiness to meet future challenges were severely retarded. Only from the 1820s onwards, when it had become clear that Britain had emerged from the Napoleonic War as the world's pre-eminent power, with the relative powers of the European nations shattered from twenty-five years of warfare and over a decade of economic starvation, could the British government look towards wholesale reformative measures that abolished departments, changed the ways in which administration worked, and implemented radical new ideas such as Bentham's individual responsibility.

Haas, A Management Odyssey, pp. 64-65; p. 187; Hamilton, The Making of the Modern Admiralty pp. 39-40.



## <u>Appendix A – The Active Service Career of Sir Charles Middleton</u> Barham

• 1726 – Middleton born, the twelfth and youngest child of Robert Middleton, Collector of Customs at Borrowstounness in Linlithgowshire, and his wife, Helen, daughter of Charles Dundas.

• April 1741 – Middleton enters the Royal Navy, having gained 'sea time' by being borne on the books of a merchantman previously through his father's connections, as Captain's servant to Samuel Mead, captain of the *Sandwich* and *Duke* successively, both of 90-guns. As Mead approached superannuation, Middleton transferred to the 20-gun frigate *Flamborough*, where he served for four years as servant, then midshipman, and later, as master's mate.

• 4 October 1745 – Middleton passes the examination for lieutenant.

• 5 October 1745 – Middleton posted as lieutenant to the *Chesterfield* of 40-guns, serving mostly in the Channel for nearly four years.

• 1748 – The *Chesterfield* is seized by mutineers whilst off the coast of Sierra Leona on the west coast of Africa. Middleton is on shore at the time of the mutiny and escapes censure. By chance the ship is retaken at sea and taken to the West Indies, where the officers, Middleton included, rejoin the ship.

• July 1749 – Middleton placed on half-pay

• January 1753 – Middleton begins ten years of near-continuous service, beginning with voyages from Portsmouth to Gibraltar.

• 8 June 1755 – Middleton is present aboard the *Anson* (60) as Admiral Boscawan engages three, and captures two French ships-of-the-line as they attempted to get in to Louisbourg, to begin the Seven Years' War. He would spend the remainder of the war in the Leeward Islands.

• 30 January 1757 – Middleton is involved with a seaman, John Dunbar over the stopping of the latter's rum ration. Middleton strikes Dunbar and threatens him with a pike. Dunbar is sentenced by court martial to sixty lashes for contempt and insolence.

• February 1757 – Middleton obtains command of the sloop Speaker (10)

• 1759 – Middleton achieves post rank and is given command of the frigate Arundel (24).

• 1 December 1760 – Middleton is involved in a confrontation between himself and the *Arundel's* carpenter Thomas Slater. Slater is tried by court martial and found guilty of treating Middleton with contempt.

• July 1761 – Middleton transfers to command the 28-gun *Emerald* in the Leeward Islands, escorting convoys and protecting trade. Over a nine month period the *Emerald* takes sixteen prizes; five privateers and eleven enemy merchantmen laden with sugar, coffee, timber, and wine. These efforts earn Middleton a gold-hilted sword from the merchant community of Barbados, along with significant prize money.

• October 1761 – The *Emerald* is paid off and Middleton returns to England.

• December 1761 – Middleton marries Margaret Gambier, whom he had met twenty years previously aboard the *Sandwich*, as Margaret had been Captain Mead's niece. Margaret had defied her father and refused marriage to another in order to wait for Middleton.

• March 1762 – Middleton obtains command of the 32-gun frigate *Adventure* and spends a year off the coast of Normandy.

• April 1763 – Middleton is offered the command of the 32-gun frigate *Pearl* but declines on account of fatigue and scurvy. Additionally the attractions of life on shore with his new wife draw Middleton to a life at Teston, farming the lands of Elizabeth Bouverie, the friend of his wife Margaret, with whom she now lives after falling out with her father in the matters regarding her marriage to Middleton. For the next twelve years, as peace reigns in Europe, Middleton lives the life of a country gentleman in Kent.

• 1775-78 – Middleton obtains command of a guard-ship at the Nore, the *Ardent* (64), conveniently close to Teston, later obtaining a larger one, the *Prince George* (90), and finally, in early 1778 he is appointed to a 50-gun ship, the *Jupiter*, still building. With this, his career in active service comes to an end, as he is made Comptroller of the Navy later that year.



## Appendix B: Middleton's Career Ashore

• December 1775 – Middleton appointed Commanding Officer (temp.) at Chatham Dockyard as senior captain present, commanding the *Ardent* (64).

• 6 February 1778 – France signs the Franco-American Treaty with the Thirteen Colonies, and shows their intent to fight to secure independence for the colonists.

• February-March 1778 – Lord Sandwich begins to sound out Captain Middleton through his brother-in-law, Rear-Admiral James Gambier, as to his willingness to accept the Comptrollership in the near future.

• 14 July 1778 – Captain Maurice Suckling, Comptroller of the Navy, dies after a year of ill health.

• 7 August 1778 – Middleton is appointed to the office of Comptroller of the Navy.

• November-December 1778 – Middleton learns from a Liverpool shipbuilder of the method of using thick, tarred paper as a means to prevent seawater from getting between the iron fastenings and copper sheathing of ships.

• February-July 1779 – The process of coppering the fleet begins.

• 3 February 1779 – Middleton writes to the Treasury to recommend that in future all contracts for transports should be made by the Navy Board alone, in order to prevent conflicts of interest injuring all parties.

• 9 September 1782 – Middleton writes to Lord Shelburne in the first of his attempts to obtain reform for the Navy Board. After Shelburne expresses interest, however, Middleton back-pedals, unwilling to ascribe his name to an unpopular measure within the office.

• 1784 – Middleton is appointed as M.P for Rochester. His time in Parliament is reserved only for naval matters over the course of the six years he spends in the House, and he will speak only seven times.

• 16 September 1784 – Middleton writes to William Pitt the Younger, the new head of Government, with ideas similar to those he gave to Lord Shelburne, recommending reform and the elimination of fees, gratuities and perquisites in the Navy Office.

• December 1786 – Middleton writes to Francis Baring, the chairman of the Commission of Inquiry on Fees, Gratuities, Perquisites and Emoluments in the Public Offices, with his recommendations on how the Commission should proceed with the reform of the Navy Board. While he wishes that his name is kept from the record when publishing the reports, the Commissioners gratefully receive Middleton's expert advice on how the office should

be reorganised.

• 1787 – Middleton is appointed to head a Commission under the Crown Land Revenues, etc. Act of 1786. This Commission would report three times between 1787 and 1793 on the state and condition of the woods, forests, and land revenues of the Crown, with recommendations for their better management, eventually leading to the Crown Land Revenues Act 1794.

• 24 September 1787 – Middleton promoted rear-admiral.

• October 1789 – The Privy Council refers all ten of the reports of the Commission on Fees to a special committee of the Privy Council.

• 15 March 1790 – Middleton resigns the office of Comptroller of the Navy.

• 1 February 1793 – Middleton promoted vice-admiral.

• 6 October 1793 – Middleton begins to send memoranda to Lord Chatham with recommendations regarding the use and state of the Navy.

• 1794 – The Transport Board is formed, heavily lobbied for by Middleton, and staffed by many men that he recommended to the positions.

• May 1794 – Middleton is appointed to the post of Third Sea Lord on Chatham's Board of Admiralty.

• March 1795 – Middleton appointed First Sea Lord on Lord Spencer's Board of Admiralty.

• 1 June 1795 – Middleton promoted admiral.

 25 June 1795 – Middleton proposes an 'Intermediate Sea Board' to enquire into technological innovations in the dockyards, and recommends Sir Samuel Bentham to the role. This leads eventually to General Bentham being made the Inspector-General of Naval Works in March 1796.

• 1 October 1795 – Middleton oversees the transfer of the care and custody of prisoners of war from the Sick and Hurt Board to the Transport Board.

• 26 October 1795 – Middleton resigns his seat at the Admiralty after severe disagreements with Lord Spencer over the handling of the combined West Indian expedition and the recall of Sir John Laforey.

• July 1803 – Middleton meets Pitt and speaks with him about the State of the Navy, which Middleton had prepared a memorandum on earlier in the year. This professional appreciation would assist Pitt in bringing down the Addington administration in April 1804.

• May 1804 – Middleton begins to send memoranda of advice to Lord Melville on the running of the Navy.

• 1 January 1805 – Middleton is appointed as chairman of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy.

• 9 April 1805 – Melville is impeached in the Commons for the actions of Alexander Trotter and is forced to resign as First Lord of the Admiralty.

 1 May 1805 – Middleton is created First Baron Barham of Barham Court and Teston in Kent.

• 2 May 1805 – Barham officially takes office as First Lord of the Admiralty.

• 20 May 1805 – Barham sets down the constitution of the Board of Admiralty that would endure until the 1830s. Also contained is an order that commanding officers of ships under sailing orders or ready for sea may not be given leave to attend either House of Parliament.

• July 1805 – The first report of the Commission of Revision, on the duties of yard officers and Principal Commissioners in the Royal Dockyards, is accepted by an Order in Council.

• 11 October 1805 – New log-books are sent to commanders of H.M. Ships under the direction of Barham for the better regulation of officers by the Admiralty.

• 4 November 1805 – Barham passes his proposals on joining the Sick and Hurt Board and the Transport Board to George III, who approves the matter.

• 10 February 1806 – Barham resigns the office of First Lord following the death of William Pitt the Younger and the fall of his ministry, and returns to Teston.

• March 1808 – The Commission of Revision's work is wound up.

• 1809 – Eleven of the thirteen reports of the Commission of Revision are accepted, with only the two secret reports on the timber supply and proposed new eastern dockyard shelved.



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