

The Newfoundland Convoy, 1711¹

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Cette étude détaillée du convoi annuel de flotille anglaise de pêche vers la Terre-Neuve en 1711, pendant la phase finale de la guerre de la succession espagnole, se place du point de vue des navires de guerre de l'escorte, dont la force était exceptionnellement puissante en raison de la croissance des attaques françaises, en mer par les navires de course et à terre par des groupes de pilliers. Le convoi était un succès complet, en dépit du désastre qui est arrivé à la grande expédition anglaise contre le Québec cette même année. L'article arrive à la conclusion que le succès était le résultat autant de la puissance des vaisseaux de guerre, que de l'appui apporté au convoi de Terre-Neuve et soutenu par la marine royale depuis les années 1690, ce qui avait donné aux officiers et aux équipages une connaissance approfondie du secteur. Les officiers ont également apprécié une large autorité en effectuant leurs opérations en raison de l'absence d'un gouvernement civil et autres autorités concurrentielles en Terre-Neuve

The success of the 1711 Newfoundland convoy is in contrast to the well-known misfortunes during the same months of the Walker expedition against Quebec in the closing stages of the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-13). Even as the climactic effort to eliminate the grave threat posed by Quebec to New England and Britain's interests in Newfoundland failed when Walker's troop transports were driven ashore in the St. Lawrence, the convoy sustained the Newfoundland fishery and the settlements ashore at a minimal cost in lives and vessels lost. The almost seamless manner in which the convoy moved several large groups of vessels from many ports in England to various destinations in Newfoundland and back, by way of Portugal to reach markets in southern Europe, was the product of long experience and the refinement of British strategy. Since the Nine Years' War, 1688-1697, the French had employed *guerre de course* against

¹ This paper is based on Chapter 5 of the author's MA dissertation, "The Royal Navy and Northeastern North America, 1689-1713" (St. Mary's University 2000). The author thanks Olaf Janzen for assistance in its preparation.

British shipping and raids by small land units and their aboriginal allies against British settlements. Well-organized convoys, protected by strong escorts of naval warships, were the answer, and one Britain consistently applied despite the very large demands these measures made on the fighting fleet and the reduction in the productivity and profitability of the fishery that resulted from the rigid sailing and marketing schedules.² Despite initial resistance by the Admiralty to an apparent dispersal of naval forces, the size of the escort for the Newfoundland convoy roughly doubled from an average of three warships in 1689 to six by the latter part of the War of the Spanish Succession, and the warships assigned were more powerful than those previously employed.³

There was good reason for this substantial effort. Newfoundland was the scene of constant raiding. D'Iberville's devastating attack in 1696 was only the first (albeit arguably the most spectacular) in a series of overland raids, sometimes by substantial military expeditions but more typically by small plundering parties. John Norris' stand-offs at St John's on two occasions in 1697, first against the squadron of the Baron de Pointis and then another under the Marquis de Nesmond, together with the activities of French privateers based at Plaisance, demonstrated how vulnerable Newfoundland could be to attack from the sea.⁴ At the end of December 1708 a French force of only 160 men from Plaisance captured St. John's and deported the garrison.⁵ A daring raid by French seamen in 1710, using stealth and bluff, captured the sixth-rate *Valuer* while at rest in Carbonear.⁶

When England entered the Nine Years' War in 1689, the English had been fishing off Newfoundland for more than 150 years.⁷ The fishery played an important role in the English economy by then and it provided the dominant context for Newfoundland history both with respect to its relationship with the rest of the North Atlantic world and with respect to its development as a fishing society.⁸ For instance, many historians view

² Patrick Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade, 1689-1815* (Folkestone, 1977), 110.

³ See Great Britain, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Kew, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), Admiralty (hereafter Adm) 8 series, vol. 3, 1 August 1692 and Adm 8/11, 1 August 1711; Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade*, 51; Ian K. Steele, *The Politics of Colonial Policy: The Board of Trade in Colonial Administration* (Oxford, 1968), 1-2.

⁴ James Pritchard, *In Search of Empire: The French in the Americas, 1670-1730* (Cambridge, 2004), 332, 352-3.

⁵ John G. Reid, "1686-1720: Imperial Intrusions," in *The Atlantic Region to Confederation*, Phillip Buckner and John G. Reid, eds. (Toronto, 1994), 90.

⁶ David J. Hepper, *British Warship Losses in the Age of Sail, 1650-1859* (Rotherfield, 1994), 29.

⁷ Gillian T. Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland, 1577-1660* (Toronto, 1969), 3.

⁸ Keith Matthews, *Lectures on the History of Newfoundland* (St. John's, 1988), 7-11. On the historiography of early-modern Newfoundland see "Reader's Guide to Newfoundland History to 1869" http://ww2swgc.mun.ca/nfld_history/index.htm, which is comprehensive. Excellent overviews are: Matthews, "Historical Fence-building, A Critique of the Historiography of Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Quarterly* LXXVIII, No. 1 (Spring 1978), 21-20, reprinted in *Newfoundland Studies* XVII, No. 2 (2001), 144-165 and Peter Pope, "Comparisons: Atlantic Canada," in *A Companion to Colonial America*, ed. Daniel Vickers

Newfoundland's place in North Atlantic trade as distinct, even unique. It is often described more as an extension of Europe than of North America, in part because travel there was shorter both in time and distance than to most other places in North America, but also because the labour force engaged in the fishing industry there was a seasonal one, based and resident in Europe.⁹ Moreover, merchants and fishing ships were free of many of the regulatory restraints of the Navigation Acts, which stipulated that colonial commodities destined for foreign markets must normally be directed through England first. Instead, Newfoundland fish was transported directly to European markets in Iberia and the Mediterranean, thereby reducing the risk of spoilage.¹⁰

Settlement in Newfoundland has also been perceived as unique. Mercantile and political forces discouraged the establishment of Newfoundland as a colony proper, the better to preserve the fishery's economic advantages as well as its perceived role as a "nursery for seamen." By the late seventeenth century it was recognized that settlement in Newfoundland could not be prevented, that in fact it was even necessary to an extent for maintaining the fishery on the island and as a demonstration of presence to other European powers. Yet neither settlement growth nor colonial status was encouraged.¹¹

Although Newfoundland convoys were decided in the same fashion as any other, the status of Newfoundland gave them distinct operational parameters. Ships stationed there lacked ready access to bases, colonial governments or jurisprudence, or naval fleets. They therefore required orders more specific than might otherwise have been the case. As with all convoys, the ships going to Newfoundland were obliged to provide services to any ships going their way. But protection of the fishing trade was of paramount importance. Specific to Newfoundland were instructions not only to ensure the safety of the fishing fleet but also to defend the inhabitants and facilities on shore against depredations at the hands of the French.

The Newfoundland fishery required ships to carry fishermen, gear and provisions to Newfoundland, salt ships to head for Portugal and Spain before making for Newfoundland, and sack ships from England to sail to Newfoundland a few months after the fishing fleet in order to load and transport the season's production of cured fish. Towards the end of the season, two separate convoys were needed to escort all ships back to Europe – one to accompany the fishing vessels directly back to England, the other to escort the sack ships to Spain and Portugal where they sold their fish and acquired cargoes, and to remain with the sack fleet until it was ready to set sail for England.

This paper will reconstruct the Newfoundland fishing convoy for the 1711 fishing season from the perspective of the warships rather than that of the fishermen, merchants and planters. Specifically, analysis will concentrate on activities in Newfoundland and the return leg of the convoy. The object of the paper is to highlight how the warships, by providing military security to the fishing fleets and settlements on

(Oxford, 2003), 489-507.

⁹ Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1675-1740* (New York, 1986), 82.

¹⁰ Sari Hornstein, *The Restoration Navy and English Foreign Trade 1674-1688* (Aldershot, 1991), 27.

¹¹ Reid, "Imperial Intrusions," 85.

shore, projected British authority in an area that was close to Europe and the North American mainland, but not fully a part of either.

Strikingly, in view of the importance of the navy for defence in a contested region of economic and strategic importance both to Britain and the large colonies in North America, the naval effort has been little studied despite extensive use of naval records for other purposes. Historians of Newfoundland routinely employ the considerable demographic evidence gathered by officers of the navy while guarding the yearly fishing convoy, as requested by the Board of Trade. This evidence has been employed to reconstruct all manner of political, social and economic life in early-modern Newfoundland.¹² The importance of naval government to the later legal history of Newfoundland has resulted in study of the navy's administrative role ashore as captains evolved into the official imperial link with Newfoundland in lieu of a colonial government.¹³ The navy also commonly appears in anecdotal fashion in the historiography. For instance, in order to explore the size of the fishery, Patrick Crowhurst drew on the correspondence of Captain Stafford Fairborne (later knight and admiral) during his 1700 convoy to Newfoundland while commanding the fourth-rate *Tilbury*.¹⁴ C. Grant Head employed a naval captain's log from 1693 to demonstrate the hurried activity within a Newfoundland fishing harbour.¹⁵ Yet rarely have the particulars of a naval convoy been analyzed for their own importance, despite the centrality of convoy to the military security of the region and the role played by the navy as a substitute government. Ian K. Steele's essential study, *The English Atlantic*, for example, devotes half a chapter to Newfoundland between 1675 and 1740, yet has little to say about the warships that accompanied the trade. Steele's primary interest was transatlantic communication and the transfer of information. Though he acknowledges the important role of the warships as arbiters of power and their representation of central authority, he

¹² Some recent examples employing the yearly convoy reports include C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland: A Geographer's Perspective* (Toronto, 1976); W. Gordon Hancock, *So Longe as there Comes Noe Women: Origins of English Settlement in Newfoundland* (St John's, 1989); John Mannion, "Victualling a Fishery: Newfoundland Diet and the Origins of the Irish Provisions Trade, 1675-1700," *International Journal of Maritime History*, XII, No. 1 (June 2000), 1-57; Peter Pope, *Fish into Wine: The Newfoundland Plantation in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2004).

¹³ Jerry Bannister, *The Rule of the Admirals: Law, Custom, and Naval Government in Newfoundland, 1699-1832* (Toronto, 2003); See also the several essays in each of two special issues of *Newfoundland Studies* on the theme "The New Early Modern Newfoundland," XVII, No. 2 (Fall 2001), "the Eighteenth Century," and XIX, No. 1 (Spring 2003), "To 1700"; Christopher English, "The Development of the Newfoundland Legal System to 1815," *Acadiensis* XX, No. 1 (Autumn 1990), 89-119; John Crowley, "Empire Versus Truck: The Official Interpretation of Debt and Labour in the Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland Fishery," *Canadian Historical Review* LXX, No. 3 (September 1989), 311-336.

¹⁴ Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade*, 112, note 8. The reference cited is TNA PRO Adm 1/1776, Fairborne to Admiralty, 13 September 1700.

¹⁵ Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, 8-9, note 26. The log used is that of the *Reserve*, Thomas Crawley, which can be found in TNA PRO Adm 51/3953, Part 9.

does not distinguish them from the merchant vessels with which they sailed.¹⁶

The 1711 convoy consisted of the third-rate *Warspight* (Josias Crowe), the fourth-rate *Warwick* (Henry Partington), a larger fifth-rate, *Portsmouth* (Thomas Man), two fifth-rates, *Milford* (John Goodall) and *Arundell* (Andrew Douglas), and a sixth-rate, *Seaford* (Thomas Davers). The total number of men on board was approximately 1280.¹⁷ The fishery that year, based on Captain Crowe's final report, totalled sixty-five fishing ships, fifty-five sack ships, and ten ships from mainland North America, totalling 3137 persons. The resident population of Newfoundland that year consisted of 1925 men, 190 women, and 278 children.¹⁸

The process of escorting the trade to Newfoundland would proceed in four distinct components. *Portsmouth*, Captain Man, was to escort the first collection of fishing ships ready for convoy.¹⁹ *Warwick*, Captain Partington, was to escort the salt ships from England to Portugal and then to Newfoundland.²⁰ *Milford* (Captain Goodall) and *Arundell* (Captain Douglas) were to escort the second batch of fishing ships.²¹ Finally, as the end of the fishing season neared, *Warspight* (Captain Crowe) and *Seaford* (Captain Davers) were to escort the sack ships to Newfoundland. The return voyage would commence in two distinct elements once the season's catch was loaded; *Milford*, *Arundell* and *Seaford* would convoy all ships going directly back to England, while *Warspight*, *Warwick* and *Portsmouth* would escort the trade to Portugal and then back to England.²²

All ships with the exception of *Arundell* and *Seaford* were given extensive orders. Captain Douglas of *Arundell* was merely ordered to obey the senior officer at the scene.²³ Captain Davers of *Seaford* received similar orders except that his small ship was required to take on board Jacob Rice, chaplain to the garrison in St. John's, together with his four servants. Davers was instructed not to provide them with any provisions unless payment was given. *Seaford* was also to receive two gentlemen from Moscow.²⁴ Their presence may have been related to the Russian practice of sending officers in training on board foreign ships.²⁵

Although all of the captains knew of their pending voyage to Newfoundland,

¹⁶ Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 78-85.

¹⁷ The total number is nominal; it is based on the Lists Books found in TNA PRO Adm 8/11, 1710-11, *passim*.

¹⁸ TNA PRO CO 194/5, 25, Crowe to Board of Trade, 31 Oct. 1711. The term "total population" can be misleading since it embraced permanent inhabitants, temporary residents, and seasonal labourers. See John Mannion (ed.), *The Peopling of Newfoundland: Essays in Historical Geography* (St. John's, 1977), 5.

¹⁹ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 43-46, Instructions to Captain Man, 3 February 1711.

²⁰ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 160-63, Instructions to Captain Partington, 5 March 1711.

²¹ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 230-32, Instructions to Captain Goodall, 21 March 1711.

²² TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 516-21, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711.

²³ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, Orders to Captain Douglas, 21 March 1711

²⁴ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 606, 612, Orders to Captain Davers, 30 June 1711.

²⁵ Richard Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare 1650-1830* (London and Annapolis, 1999), 140.

Captain Man of *Portsmouth* was the first to receive his sailing orders. On 3 February 1711 he was instructed to make his ship ready and get under way as soon as he was able. *Portsmouth* was then to proceed to Milford Haven and collect the fishing ships from there as well as Bideford and Barnstable; Man was to send notice of his arrival ahead of him. *Portsmouth* was also to convoy vessels from any other Channel port desiring an escort.²⁶ Man's orders are typical of the instructions that had been given to ships going to Newfoundland during the Nine Years' War, with some notable exceptions. They are, for instance, virtually identical to the orders given in 1693 to Captain Thomas Crawley of the fourth-rate *Reserve*.²⁷ Both sets of orders included directions on the safe transfer and protection of trade and defence of harbours in Newfoundland. The ships were not to transport any seaman or other persons unless part of the ship's company or ordered to do so. Warships were not to bring on board any fish "either by way of merchandise, freight or otherwise except what shall be for your own use or spending." Finally, both Crawley and Man were ordered during the voyage to "put the ship's company under your command to short allowance of victuals of six to four men's allowance, or otherwise as the necessity of the service shall require." The seamen would have their pay adjusted accordingly.

One important difference between the orders issued to Crawley and Man reflected a slight change in the nature of convoy duty in Newfoundland between 1689 and 1713. Crawley had been granted permission to seek out and destroy any enemy ships and facilities he came across so long as such action did not endanger the fishing fleet or harbours. Orders for the 1711 convoy reflected the impact of the recent raids, particularly the bold operation that had captured *Valeur* just the year before. Man's orders did not include permission to attack the enemy. Yet it should also be noted that Man was not convoy commodore, whereas Crawley had been The convoy commodore in 1711, Captain Crowe in *Warspight*, did receive permission to attack the enemy when he arrived, but only within specific parameters. He was given the standard order to protect the fishery and:

...if you shall have intelligence that the enemy have any ships of war in the Ports of Newfoundland, you are not only to consider with the Masters of the ships what measures may be best taken to secure yourself & them but with the Captains of the ships you command how you may best attack the enemy & ships (if you shall be strong enough to proceed accordingly).²⁸

The language was slightly more cautious than was the case in the similar instructions issued in 1693 to Crawley. He had been ordered to:

...govern your self accordingly in the defence & safeguard of their Maj. subjects & their ships under your care, proceeding according to your

²⁶ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 43-46, Instructions to Captain Man, 3 February 1711.

²⁷ TNA PRO Adm 2/11, 476-480, Instructions to Captain Crawley, 29 May 1693.

²⁸ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 517-18, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711.

direction in opposing or making any attempts against the French whether at sea, or in any of the Harbours of Newfoundland, either by taking burning or destroying any of the ships or forts as it shall lie in your power, so as nevertheless you do not improperly expose their Maj. ships of war nor any of the vessels of their Maj. Subjects under your convoy.²⁹

Captain Crowe, although last to leave for Newfoundland, was already well-informed of the details surrounding his assignment. The choice of *Warspight* for this duty could be considered unusual, for this was one of the few instances during this period when a ship larger than a fourth-rate was sent to North America other than to the Caribbean or as part of a specific expedition. While the sources consulted thus far do not suggest why so large a warship was sent to Newfoundland, some reasons can be surmised.

Strengthening of the 1711 convoy might have been intended to prevent a repetition of the *Valeur* incident. A second consideration may have been the Walker expedition against Quebec that same year. Despite the secrecy surrounding the operation and its distinctive circumstances, Crowe and all other captains travelling to North America were provided with sealed orders to assist Walker in any way possible.³⁰ Still, it is important to note that the Navy Board qualified these instructions so that the ships were prevented from neglecting their original assignments.³¹ Similar orders were dispatched to station ships on the mainland.³² That a third-rate was dispatched to provide greater coverage on the homeward leg of the convoy may have been the result of yet another consideration. Crowe's instructions included concerns that some Portuguese port cities might switch their allegiance to Spain. Were this to occur, the convoys were to use caution and divert the sack ships to friendly entrepôts.³³ While this may have been a plausible explanation for *Warspight's* dispatch, it seems unlikely to have been the principal reason, since the coast of Portugal was already an area where the navy maintained a strong presence .

An additional argument for the assignment of a ship as powerful as *Warspight* to Newfoundland that year relates to the political nature of the convoy's responsibilities. The commodore of the ships that escorted the fishing fleet to Newfoundland typically received two sets of instructions, one from the Admiralty for overseeing the warships

²⁹ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 477-78, Instructions to Captain Crawley, 29 May 1693.

³⁰ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 554, Orders to Captain Crowe, 12 June 1711. The orders were sent by packet but it was required to return to the Downs. Subsequently the orders were sent express to Plymouth and Portsmouth on 15 and 16 May respectively. The package was sealed and written upon it was: "Not to be opened till you come to Newfoundland." In the end, the orders to assist Sir Hovenden Walker were for naught; his fleet fell victim to weather and navigational confusion as it approached the St. Lawrence River. See Gerald S. Graham (ed.), *The Walker Expedition to Quebec, 1711* (Toronto, 1953).

³¹ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 553, Orders to Admiral Walker, 16 June 1711.

³² TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 555, Orders to Captain Smith, 12 June 1711. Duplicate orders were sent abroad on board the sixth-rate *Squirrel*, acting as packet.

³³ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 519, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711.

under his command and another from the Board of Trade. The latter comprised direction for the commodore to report on the state of the fisheries and inhabitants of Newfoundland and to punish any violations of the law. The extensive reports that resulted normally ended up in the records of the Board of Trade where they remained easily accessible and could be used to provide imperial bureaucrats with information on the nature of life and work in early modern Newfoundland.³⁴ However, in 1711 the Crown demonstrated a greater concern than usual over the continued violation of fishing regulations. Based on information collected previously by the Board of Trade, Secretary of State Lord Dartmouth drew attention to persistent violation of the laws governing conduct at Newfoundland and suggested that the commodore of the pending convoy therefore be granted a commission to command on land as well as in the harbours. The commodore would “be fully empowered thereby to redress and punish all such abuses or offences as shall be committed at Newfoundland contrary to the said act.”³⁵ Sending a more senior officer in a larger ship would add weight to this land commission.

While this would not significantly alter the role played by captains in Newfoundland, Josias Crowe recognized that it would lend his command an authority that might enhance his chances for promotion and half-pay benefits. Although war often provided serving naval officers with opportunities for promotion, the War of the Spanish Succession had also necessitated an increase in the number of serving naval officers that could just as easily hinder advancement during the post-war period. Officers without connections were at the mercy of a system that expected highly skilled officers and men to perform duties that history (and indeed the officers and men themselves) deemed mundane. Crowe had advanced to the rank of captain many years before, in 1691.³⁶ In the twenty years since, he had served overseas more than once.³⁷ Notwithstanding the confidence of the Admiralty that such commands reflected, Crowe believed that overseas service took officers out of contention for promotion because they were then unable to place personal applications. In Crowe’s mind, his service to America and elsewhere held him back.³⁸

So great was his concern that, shortly before receiving his orders for Newfoundland, Crowe had written to the Admiralty during a stay in London, reminding their Lordships of his twenty-two years’ service as an officer and of a promise made

³⁴ Reid, “Imperial Intrusions,” 93. Now kept in the Colonial Office 194 series of in-bound correspondence relating to Newfoundland, these records provide scholars with the same basic foundation of information concerning life and labour in early modern Newfoundland.

³⁵ TNA PRO Adm 1/4094, Dartmouth to Admiralty, 19 December 1710.

³⁶ TNA PRO Adm 7/549, List of Ships and Captains, 1651-1737; David Syrett and R.L. Dinardo, eds., *The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy, 1660-1815* (Aldershot, 1994), 107.

³⁷ In 1695 he commanded the fourth-rate *Norwich*, which served as one of Virginia and Maryland convoy, while in 1700, as captain of the *Arundell*, he was sent on station to New England; TNA PRO Adm 8/3, 1 January 1695 and TNA PRO Adm 7/550a, Station of Ships, 1696-1714, January 1700.

³⁸ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 11 April 1712.

several years before for preferment at the hands of the Queen and the Lord High Admiral following introductions initiated by Admiral Sir George Rooke. Crowe had been promised consideration should any flag posting become available. Crowe maintained that the Earl of Pembroke (Lord High Admiral following the death of Prince George), reaffirmed the promise following a petition to the Queen more than two years later. Crowe had learned that several flag positions had been filled while he was on other duties and that at the time of writing there was a position open for Rear Admiral of the White.³⁹ When orders were issued in February 1711 for *Warspight* to commence outfitting for Newfoundland, he undoubtedly realized that he was not going to be given the promotion.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, he remained determined to make the best of the situation.

Although he did not receive his sailing instructions until 1 June 1711, Crowe already knew by then that he would command a total of six ships. He therefore appealed to the Admiralty to grant him “a distinct commission as Commander in Chief of the Squadron.” Drawing attention to his “advanced age” and his “misfortune of being postponed in the navy,” Crowe also reminded the Lords Commissioners that precedents existed for such a distinction. He then closed the letter with the “hope they won’t deny me that favour for my encouragement, after all my misfortune.”⁴¹ Crowe must have been satisfied with the outcome; not only was he granted the title Commander in Chief of the Forts and Garrisons of Newfoundland, but, as a result of the heightened Crown interest in the convoy, he was given a royal warrant for this office.⁴²

The term “Commander in Chief” was one that was freely used by the senior officer in Newfoundland regardless of royal warrant. There was no formal civil government in Newfoundland prior to 1729 and the rudimentary system of naval supervision of the fishery was the closest thing to official, organised administration. It was the custom of the fishery that the master of the first fishing vessel to arrive in any harbour declared himself to be the “admiral” of that harbour, with certain traditional and specified privileges as well as a responsibility to arbitrate disputes. The master of the second vessel became the “vice admiral” and that of the third was the “rear admiral.” Yet these practices and customs were widely regarded as corrupt and dysfunctional by the late seventeenth century. The fishing admirals themselves were considered to be as delinquent as those they oversaw.⁴³ Since the law allowed appeals to be heard by the

³⁹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Memorial of Captain Crowe, 9 March 1711.

⁴⁰ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 89, Orders to Captain Crowe, 14 February 1711.

⁴¹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 4 April 1711.

⁴² TNA PRO CO 324/32, Instructions for Captain Josias Crowe, 17 April 1711. Granting the commission in this instance would have been made easier because the Admiralty had intended to do something similar anyway.

⁴³ Thomas Kempthorne, who commanded the Newfoundland station a few years later, informed the Lords of Trade that “tho^h it is reasonable for them to believe that the Authority, that by Act of Parliam^t is given to the Admirals of Harbours, is Sufficcient to secure them peace, and quietness, and to prevent any disturbance that may happen to the detriment of the Fishery, yet the experience of any one that has but once known this trade, will affirm, that was it not for the Yearly expectation of a Ship of War coming among them, the Power of their Admirals would be of little regard, so that one may modestly affirm, they only comence regulation,

commanding officers of the Royal Navy warships serving in Newfoundland, the task of resolving conflicts and dictating policy devolved increasingly upon them, even as they provided the fishery with protection against deprivations. The Admiralty ordered its convoy captains to act in conjunction with the various fishing admirals to ensure smooth operations.⁴⁴

Crowe was not alone in referring to himself as Commander in Chief of this convoy. Captain John Goodall of the *Milford* employed a similar term while at St. John's prior to the arrival of *Warspight*.⁴⁵ Such usage may have been a symbolic assertion of authority by Goodall over his harbour. It may also have been a necessary device to which Goodall resorted when he found himself the chief correspondent with the French governor at Plaisance, Phillip de Pastour de Costebelle. Although other more senior officers were in Newfoundland at the time, they were away at other harbours. Goodall, too, had been seeking promotion and perhaps thought such demonstrations of responsibility would assist his efforts. When he learned that another captain, Hughs of the fourth-rate *Winchester*, was soon to receive a third-rate, Goodall requested that he be given the vacant ship. He cited that there were "above forty younger Captains then myself & that many of them have obtained commands of fourth-rates."⁴⁶ Goodall's appointment to Newfoundland, like Crowe's, did not discourage him from reminding the Admiralty of promises made of a larger command.⁴⁷

These personal concerns must be kept in mind when turning attention to the Newfoundland convoy as it began to carry out its instructions early in 1711. The *Portsmouth*, Captain Man, had already made its way to Milford Haven by March 17 after sailing down the channel. From there, Man sent dispatches to the necessary ports to inform of his presence at Milford.⁴⁸ A month later, on 15 April, *Portsmouth* sailed with a coastal convoy of seventy ships before separating as darkness fell with twenty-three ships for Newfoundland. *Portsmouth* sighted and spoke with *Arundell*, Captain Goodall and *Milford*, Captain Douglas and sixteen sail of merchantmen on 3 June.⁴⁹ The convoy reached Ferryland on 7 June where they found a small Bideford ship and a privateer.

Goodall had been instructed to take all ships then at Spithead under convoy and

upon the arrival of any of his Majesty's Ships, and lay it down the moment they are gone." TNA PRO CO 194/5, 384-84v, Kempthorne to Secretary to the Board of Trade Burchett, 6 October 1715; see also Matthews, *Lectures*, 97, Jerry Bannister, "The Fishing Admirals in Eighteenth-Century Newfoundland," *Newfoundland Studies* XVII, No. 2 (Fall 2001), 166-219 .

⁴⁴ See TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 517, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711.

⁴⁵ See TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Captains Syms and Osbourne, 22 July 1711. When issuing orders to privateers, Goodall identified himself as "Commander of Her Maj. Ship *Milford* & Commander in Chief of Her Maj. Fort & Plantations in and Adjacent to St. John's."

⁴⁶ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 1 March 1711.

⁴⁷ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 24 April 1711

⁴⁸ TNA PRO Adm 1/2094, Man to Admiralty, 17 March 1711.

⁴⁹ TNA PRO Adm 51/672, pt.11, Log of *Portsmouth*, 15 April-7 June 1711.

send word ahead to the western ports of Poole, Weymouth, Exmouth, Dartmouth, Topsham, Plymouth, and Falmouth that *Milford* and *Arundell* would soon stop in and collect any ships desiring convoy.⁵⁰ Though *Milford* was briefly diverted to convoy transport ships to Ostend, the ship was back at Portsmouth by 8 April and, together with *Arundell*, spent much of that month collecting trade from the various ports along the Channel.⁵¹ For better protection, the Newfoundland ships fell in with the Straits (Mediterranean) and West India convoys; the collected fleet remained together until 1 May when it cleared the Lizard and the fleets proceeded to their individual destinations.

Milford and *Arundell* had in their company twenty-six merchant ships; eighteen were still in convoy when the little fleet arrived in Newfoundland waters on 1 June. According to Goodall's orders, the ships were now to be escorted to the harbours of St. John's, Ferryland, Conception Bay, Trinity Bay or any other so desired. *Arundell* was to proceed to Trinity Harbour while Goodall remained at St. John's to see to the defence of the fishing fleet there. Accordingly, *Milford* anchored in Bay Bulls on 7 June and entered St. John's harbour three days later, while *Arundell* proceeded with ships destined for Carbonear and Bonavista before arriving in Trinity Harbour.⁵²

Meanwhile, the salt ships commenced their voyage to Newfoundland under escort of *Warwick*, Captain Henry Partington, who had received his orders on 5 March 1711.⁵³ *Warwick* was first to take the salt ships, together with any other merchant vessels desiring convoy, to Lisbon; there, the ships would load their precious cargo, so essential for curing fish. Partington had already taken command of the *Warwick* on 9 January and spent until 25 March preparing to go to sea. His was a new ship and the process of making ready was similar to a refit. A crew had to be entered into the books, then stores, masts, rigging, ballast, guns, powder, provisions, and water.⁵⁴ Not until 15 April did *Warwick* sail from Spithead with twelve merchant ships in convoy, picking up six more in Dartmouth.⁵⁵ Finally, on 27 April, in company with six merchant ships, *Warwick* set

50 TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 230-31, Instructions to Captain Goodall, 21 March 1711; TNA PRO Adm 2/43, 234, Orders to Captain Douglas, 21 March 1711.

51 TNA PRO Adm 51/606, pt. 1, Log of *Milford*, 1-8 April 1711.

52 TNA PRO Adm 51/606, pt. 1, Log of *Milford*, 16 April-11 June 1711; TNA PRO Adm 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 7-10 September 1711.

53 Partington had gone convoy to Newfoundland once before in 1705, in the fourth-rate *Angelsea*, serving much of that year as senior officer; TNA PRO Adm 7/550a, Lists of Ships and Stations, January 1705.

54 TNA PRO Adm 51/1072, pt.8, Log of *Warwick*, 9 January-25 March 1711; David Lyon, *The Sailing Navy List: All the Ships of the Royal Navy – Built, Purchased and Captured – 1688-1860* (London, 1994), 35. According to Lyon, *Warwick* was launched 9 November 1711. This should probably be 1710.

55 The process of collecting the trade was not without incident. On 20 April, while anchored at Plymouth, fifteen men deserted by taking one of *Warwick*'s boats and smashing it in upon escape; TNA PRO Adm 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 20 March 1711. It was not unusual for men to desert upon discovering they were bound overseas. Moreover, the incentive to run was greater on board an untested ship with unfamiliar ship mates and officers; N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London, 1986), 196.

course for Lisbon, arriving there on 23 May.⁵⁶ Early in the morning of 28 May, *Warwick* departed from Portugal, now with sixteen ships, and sighted Cape St. Francis in Newfoundland, in company still with ten merchant ships, on 5 July 1711.⁵⁷

Upon *Milford's* arrival at St. John's, Captain Goodall was given a packet of letters by the civilian caretaker (called governor) of the fort, John Collins. The letters, recently captured from the French, comprised the most recent correspondence from Costebelle, governor of the French colony of Plaisance, on Newfoundland's south coast. Among his concerns, Costebelle was anxious to discover the course that the year's convoy would take in hopes of easing pressure on the beleaguered French garrison. Costebelle was well informed by spies and deserters as to the deficiencies of the British garrison in Newfoundland and the approximate number of ships forming the guard. He was reasonably sure that the British would undertake no offensive against Plaisance despite knowledge of the Canada invasion. In fact, he had learned through two Irish deserters that, despite British success at blockading Plaisance, the inhabitants of British Newfoundland felt more threatened by Plaisance than *vice versa*. Unfortunately, Plaisance could only rely on a force of about four privateers and no navy ships whatsoever to counter British cruising.⁵⁸

Although he was not the senior officer in Newfoundland, Goodall felt obliged to establish a correspondence with Costebelle since, for the moment at least, he was the senior officer at St. John's, which functioned as English Newfoundland's military centre, naval rendezvous, and chief centre of communications. Costabelle's initial letters addressed a number of matters, including the needless plundering of fishermen, bad debts incurred from ransoms issued at the capture of St. John's in 1708, the alleged murder of an English inhabitant, and the ill treatment of a French crew by a privateer captain. Yet it was privateering activities generally, and the repatriation of prisoners in particular, that were the principal topics of discussion between the French governor and the British captain.

The French governor insisted that excessive plundering by privateers ran counter to the public good. He offered his word that if French fishermen were left to their business then the British along the Renew's and Bay Bulls shore would be left in peace as well. If, on the other hand, the British insisted on continued privateering, then he warned that the French would answer in kind. Tied closely to the issue of privateering was that of

Partington had previously been court martialled in 1708 for muster irregularities and abuse of a crewman. He was found guilty of the former and acquitted of the latter. He would be court martialled again in 1716 for victualling irregularities and overzealous disciplining of crewmen, for which he was found guilty and fined. This makes him a possible candidate for a captain to be avoided for lengthy voyages, TNA PRO Adm 1/5266, Court Martial of Henry Partington, 12 November, 1708 and TNA PRO Adm 1/5271, Court Martial of Partington, 29 Nov. 1716.

⁵⁶ *Warwick* sailed briefly in company with a Dutch convoy (April 28 to May 5).

⁵⁷ TNA PRO Adm 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 27 April- 5- July 1711.

⁵⁸ Graham (ed.), *Walker Expedition*, 244-45, 248; on the French situation see Pritchard, *In Search of Empire*, 394-400.

the prisoners generated by such actions. Not only were prisoners held by the French a drain on the French colony's scarce provisions, but it was also clear (though he did not say so in as many words) that French fishermen captured by the British were as much a burden on the meagre resources of Plaisance as were prisoners of war, since they were invariably repatriated stripped of their belongings. Costebelle blamed a lack of shallops for the slow repatriation of prisoners, but he did indicate that he had already released about fifteen prisoners who sought transport to Boston rather than to England or British Newfoundland.⁵⁹

Goodall attempted as best he could to secure information about Costebelle's concerns, though his tone remained firm, but diplomatic. Consultation with the fishing captains at St. John's confirmed that repatriating French prisoners to Plaisance as quickly as possible was in the common good.⁶⁰ He assured Costebelle that the exchange of prisoners would proceed as before, and as a gesture of assurance, he sent his response in a shallop manned by French prisoners. The sending of prisoners from Newfoundland to Boston, however, ran counter to the expressed wishes of the British government. And insofar as privateering was concerned, Goodall could only inform Costebelle that:

What ships in my government that may or do cruise on your coast I shall endeavour to prevent their acting such hostilities for the future as I expect the like on your side but what hostilities may be committed on the sea by ships not under my command I cannot prevent nor be answerable for them.⁶¹

Goodall's solution to the immediate problem of prisoners was to direct all captains of privateers to keep any prisoners on board ship. This transferred the cost of feeding them over to the privateers and prevented any spies from gaining information. Two privateer captains, after taking a prize, politely petitioned Goodall that they could not afford to keep prisoners for long. This facilitated a strategy of quick repatriation and ransoming, of prisoners and prizes respectively, directly to Plaisance or France.⁶² Such arrangements suited Costebelle. Despite the diplomatic intricacies of the correspondence with Goodall, the French governor felt comfortable enough with the honour of his enemies to plead for the safe return to Plaisance of his mother, a family friend, Madame Sourdenalle (*sic*), and his six-year-old daughter in the event of their capture.⁶³ When their ship was indeed captured by a privateer en route to Nantes, Goodall signed a bill of safe passage and left the prize ship with enough provisions to see it to Europe.⁶⁴

As Captain Man and, later, Captain Partington each reported in at St. John's, Goodall passed along his correspondence with Costebelle, including the captured

⁵⁹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Costebelle to Collins, 8 June 1711.

⁶⁰ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Merchant Captains to Goodall, 1 July 1711.

⁶¹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Costebelle, 24 June 1711.

⁶² TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Syms and Osbourne to Goodall, 24 July 1711.

⁶³ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Costebelle to Goodall, 24 July, 1711.

⁶⁴ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Certificate of Passage issued by Goodall to Captain Pillet of the *St. Nicholla*, 2 August 1711.

despatches intended for the French minister of marine, the Comte de Pontchartrain, to his superiors. They remained suspicious of Costebelle's information, and though they could find no evidence of any French warships in the area as the summer wore on, and though it soon became known that the French were short of supplies, nevertheless, the British naval officers in Newfoundland were never entirely certain as to events and situations at Plaisance. They were anxious that the French not discover their strength and they were careful not to let down their guard.⁶⁵

Costebelle was correct in his conclusion that the British had formulated no plans for an offensive. The priority given by British warships to defence discouraged offensive activities. When *Warwick* arrived in Trinity Bay and met *Arundell*, Captain Partington sent boats from each ship commanded by lieutenants to scout the areas around Bay of Bulls and New Perlican for signs of the enemy.⁶⁶ In Ferryland, Captain Man felt it necessary to send his marines ashore to act as a guard⁶⁷ Yet such precautions did not cause the British to curtail attacks on French commerce in the region, for the warships benefited as much from prize-taking as did letter-of-marque ships. Although the need to be in or near the harbour of designation discouraged an overly aggressive pursuit of prizes, the desire for prize money never diminished.

Consider the example of Captain Goodall. On the one hand, there is no reason to believe that he was not sincere when he promised to work to prevent undue suffering amongst fishermen and prisoners. Yet quite clearly, he had no intention of curbing privateering. Quite the opposite; when he had first learned both that he would not be promoted and that he would be sent to Newfoundland, he had immediately requested permission to go cruising once there. Apparently he viewed the prospect of supplementary income as acceptable compensation for being passed over.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the amount of work that awaited him in St. John's precluded immediate cruising, though it was equally apparent that a nervous mood prevailed there – local merchants and fishing captains were convinced that the French threat to their property was a serious one. Even though no fewer than seven privateers were cruising in and out of St. John's, no proper garrison had been assigned there, and no defensive measures had been taken. The merchants, fishing captains and local boat keepers insisted that they could spare neither time nor people to keep a proper watch and maintain the fort. A group comprising eleven merchants and sixteen captains including the Vice Admiral therefore petitioned Goodall on 13 June to send an officer and some men into the fort, which he did.⁶⁹ Goodall then initiated a series of precautions to improve the state of defence at St. John's. Overland communication with Plaisance was prohibited, while

65 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Man, 10 August 1711.

66 TNA PRO Adm 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 13-30 July 1711.

67 TNA PRO Adm 51/672, pt. 11, Log of *Portsmouth*, 17 June 1711.

68 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 24 April 1711.

69 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Petition of Merchants and Fishing Captains to Goodall, 13 June 1711; TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty 17 June 1711.

any wandering hunters or messengers not arriving by sea were to be treated as spies.⁷⁰ On 23 July Goodall issued orders giving permission to the seven privateers operating out of St. John's to wear naval colours during their patrols.⁷¹ The following day, Goodall instructed the merchant captains to send one man in five from each ship into the fort at St. John's (Fort William) in the event of an emergency to be determined by a series of signals from the *Milford*.⁷²

A similar state of anxiety confronted Andrew Douglas at Trinity. He had proceeded there after completing his task of seeing all merchant ships safely to their various destinations. Upon reaching Trinity, he began to make preparations to cruise for the protection of the fishery as ordered by the Admiralty. Instead, the merchants and fishermen, convinced that a French attack was imminent, petitioned Douglas to remain in harbour as they would otherwise be "undone." Douglas agreed.⁷³ This seems a surprising response for a hard sailor with an opportunistic bent.⁷⁴ To forego cruising and potential prize money, and to demonstrate concern for the defence of Trinity instead, conflicts with the common perception that naval captains were usually at odds with their merchant counterparts.⁷⁵ The answer to this paradox appears to rest with the lack of intelligence and the difficulty of local communication and support networks which confronted naval commanders in early eighteenth-century Newfoundland. Unable to determine the strength of the enemy, faced with threats of privateers and small-scale raiding, and thinly spread out along the coast of the Avalon Peninsula, naval officers could not guarantee each other quick support if attacked. Although a formidable squadron collectively on paper, the convoy was forced to stretch resources to guard both harbours and the fishery. The point of departure from St. John's on the homeward bound leg of the convoy was the only

⁷⁰ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Costebelle, 24 June 1711.

⁷¹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Captains Summers, Dawson, Syms, Osbourne, Coomes, Wye, and Ellton, 23 July, 1711.

⁷² TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to All Commanders of Merchant ships, 24 July, 1711.

⁷³ TNA PRO Adm 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 7-10 September 1711.

⁷⁴ This side of his personality surfaced repeatedly during Douglas' chequered career. He had commanded four smaller rates throughout the Nine Years' War until finally rendered unemployed by peace. Persistent letter-writing to the Admiralty secured command of the *Norwich* in February 1701, and in July 1702 he was sent convoy to Jamaica where he was senior officer until returning with a homeward bound convoy in July 1704. Upon return to England, Douglas began petitioning for promotion, but was court martialled instead in December 1704 for illegal trading, selling of stores, extorting from the men when hiring them out to merchant ships, and general harsh treatment of the ship's crew. He was found guilty and cashiered, yet eventually reinstated after the case was reopened based on new evidence. In January 1710 he was appointed to command the *Arundell* but soon, in December 1712, he was again court martialled, this time for abusive language and the undeserving confinement of officers. He was fined three month's wages, though his lieutenant was fined six month's wages for provoking him. Douglas served until October 1715 before going on half-pay. He died ten years later. See entry for Andrew Douglas in Stephen, Leslie, and Sidney Lee (eds.) *Dictionary of National Biography* (London, 1901), V, 1164-65.

⁷⁵ A.W.H. Pearsall, "The Royal Navy and Trade Protection, 1688-1714," *Renaissance and Modern Studies* XXX (1986), 115, 120.

instance when all six warships were in concert.

Communication beyond Newfoundland was less of a concern within the broader context. Newfoundland was relatively close not only to Europe but also to the mainland of North America. Merchant sloops and brigs from Boston routinely sailed to Newfoundland. They traded supplies for fish with the local boat keepers and then sold the higher grade fish to the sack ships and transported the inferior bank fish to the Caribbean. This trade was essential for the survival of any settlement in Newfoundland and was acknowledged as such by Captain Crowe.⁷⁶ Newfoundland was also a resting place for all manner of ships travelling in the Atlantic, especially those blown off course or suffering damage. The busy environment was conducive to the transfer of news, accurate or not, and those spending the summer were probably more up to date than in other corners of the North Atlantic.⁷⁷

The reverse was also true; Newfoundland was close enough to North America to render assistance there when needed. Thus, when a French prize arrived at St. John's late in July 1711 with news that Port Royal in Nova Scotia had been retaken by a force of French and aboriginals, the Newfoundland convoy was able to offer immediate assistance. Goodall sent word to the other ships and a captains consultation was held on board *Warwick* in Caplin Bay on 8 August. It was decided that *Warwick* and *Milford* would leave immediately for New England to offer assistance while *Portsmouth* would remain at Ferryland and *Arundell* would travel back to Trinity Bay.⁷⁸ One of Costebelle's officers, a Monsieur St. Michell, who had recently carried messages to St. John's, including Costebelle's plea for his family, was still being housed on board the *Milford*. The captains had been suspicious that his arrival had been for the gathering of intelligence. Partington thought it prudent to transfer him to the *Portsmouth* and not release him until *Milford* and *Warwick* had returned.⁷⁹

Having hired a pilot in Caplin Bay, *Milford* and *Warwick* set out on 10 August, sighting Cape Breton on 15 August.⁸⁰ Off the Gut of Canso they spoke to the *Kingston*, Captain Winder, part of Admiral Walker's squadron, on 16 August, and Partington took the opportunity to deliver the correspondence captured from Costebelle to Admiral Walker via *Kingston*.⁸¹ They spoke to another warship, *Chester*, on 20 August – it had travelled up the coast in support of the Walker expedition and was returning to its station at Boston. By 28 August *Milford* and *Warwick* reached Cape Cod and anchored in

⁷⁶ TNA PRO CO 194/5, 22, Crowe to Board of Trade, 31 October 1711; James E. Candow, "Salt Fish and Slavery in the British Caribbean," in *The North Atlantic Fisheries: Supply, Marketing and Consumption, 1560-1990*, David J. Starkey and James E. Candow, eds. (Studia Atlantica 8)(Hull, 2006), 165-94, esp. 170-74 .

⁷⁷ Matthews, *Lectures*, 42-43; Steele, *The English Atlantic*, 84-85.

⁷⁸ TNA PRO Adm 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 7-10 September 1711.

⁷⁹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Man, 10 August 1711.

⁸⁰ TNA PRO Adm 1/2281, Receipt of bill from John Green to Partington, 12 September 1711; TNA PRO Adm 51/1072 pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 10-16 August 1711.

⁸¹ Partington to Walker, 16 August 1711, in Graham (ed.), *Walker Expedition*, 238.

Nantasket Road the following day.⁸²

There it was quickly discovered that the intelligence was false and that Port Royal was safe. The two ships therefore used the opportunity to avail themselves of services offered by the colonial metropolis of Boston. *Warwick* had its masts replaced and took on bread, beer and water.⁸³ Partington also purchased a variety of items for sick crew members. The list, worth describing in full, included: 290 pounds brown sugar, 116 pounds each of white sugar and currants, eighty-six pounds each of rice and barely, sixty pounds raisins, and seven pounds tamarind. Also included were fifteen ounces each of nutmeg, mace and cinnamon, fourteen sheets, eighteen saucepans, and four boxes.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, *Milford* was careened, a labour-intensive procedure that involved stripping the whole ship then hauling it on its side so that its hull could be scraped and cleaned below the waterline. The entire process took ten days. *Milford's* crew spent two more days scraping the masts and sides of the ship, coating them with rosin and tallow.⁸⁵ The ease with which the two warships secured goods and services stands in stark contrast to the turmoil experienced about the same time by the much larger Walker expedition.⁸⁶ Those ships had faced shortages, irate colonials, and soaring prices only weeks before. Evidently Boston could easily accommodate small ships, but the sudden appearance of a fleet strained the resources of both port and the surrounding countryside.⁸⁷

On 15 September *Milford* and *Warwick* set sail for the return voyage to Newfoundland. The journey was not without incident. On 27 September Goodall received his wish and captured a French banker. *Milford* lost touch with both *Warwick* and its prize in rough weather but managed to reach St. John's by 3 October. *Warwick* arrived two days later and *Milford's* prize arrived on 7 October. In harbour were *Arundell*, which had just arrived, having escorted fishing ships there that had finished up their season, together with *Warspight* and *Seaford*. *Warspight* had been in St. John's since its arrival on 23 August, and Commodore Crowe had immediately made himself busy as he carried out his orders. Thus, the day after his arrival, he had sent a lieutenant and forty-two men into the fort as a guard, filling the vacancy created when *Milford* had recalled its men in order to sail to Boston. On 25 August a general court was established and agreements were made to repair the church, fix an allowance for the new minister and close several taverns about St. John's.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, Captain Davers arranged to have *Seaford*, which had arrived in St. John's in a leaky state, careened to seal the hull. Once completed, *Seaford* proceeded to Carbonear to act as guard; a lieutenant and ten armed men belonging to *Arundell* were sent Bonavista to provide some security there.⁸⁹ As

⁸² TNA PRO Adm 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 15-29 August 1711.

⁸³ TNA PRO Adm 51/1072, pt. 8, Log of *Warwick*, 30 August-14 September 1711.

⁸⁴ These sundry items and provisions cost £53..19sh..10d; TNA PRO Adm 1/2281, Receipt of bill from Henry Franklyn to HMS *Warwick*, 12 September 1711.

⁸⁵ TNA PRO Adm 51/606, pt.1, Log of *Milford*, 31 August-14 September 1711.

⁸⁶ See Graham (ed.), *Walker Expedition*.

⁸⁷ Harding, *Seapower and Naval Warfare*, p. 205.

⁸⁸ TNA PRO Adm 51/4387, pt. 6, Log of *Warspight*, 23-25 August 1711.

⁸⁹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 13 September 1711.

nothing had been heard from *Warwick* or *Milford*, tensions persisted until a sloop from Boston arrived with news of their whereabouts. By 26 August, Crowe also learned via another Boston sloop that Port Royal had not been recaptured. The so-called attack had been a skirmish and, the sloop reported, three companies of reinforcements were on the way from Boston.⁹⁰ The crisis had passed.

The second sloop from Boston also passed on information that *Milford* and *Warwick* had been ordered, along with *Chester* and *Weymouth*, to return to Boston to refit and victual. *Chester*, *Warwick* and *Milford* were then to cruise the eastern coast of North America. Two other ships, *Devonshire* and *Humber*, had been ordered by Walker to travel to Plaisance and cruise there before returning to England. These circumstances do not correspond with the logs of the *Milford* and *Warwick*, which give no indication that they had been ordered to do anything by officers in Walker's squadron. Uncertain as to whether the two ships sent to Boston would be rejoining him before the end of the season, Crowe could only inform the Admiralty that he would leave for Portugal as originally ordered with whatever ships were available.⁹¹

Quite apart from the ships comprising the Newfoundland convoy, a number of Royal Navy ships made their appearance in Newfoundland during the 1711 season, though their instructions precluded giving Crowe any assistance. *Tryton's Prize* (Richard Girlington), then stationed at Virginia, had been ordered to Newfoundland with a message for the *Sapphire* or to the governor of the fort if the ship had not arrived. Girlington did manage to capture a French fishing ship and escorted it into St. John's before returning to Virginia.⁹² Previously, on 9 September, the *Adventure*, carrying troops for the Walker expedition, sought shelter in St. John's with a sprung mast, while the *Burlington* arrived from Barbados with an engineer who was making the rounds of various fortifications within the English Atlantic.⁹³

We can assume that Crowe would have welcomed the opportunity to add such ships to his command, for late in September he learned that the Walker expedition had failed in its mission and was returning to England. Fear and apprehension spread quickly among the inhabitants of Newfoundland, who were already concerned at the way bad weather had contributed to a poor season and had caused delays both in processing fish and in the departure of the convoy.⁹⁴ Yet these setbacks proved advantageous in other ways; Crowe used the extra time in attempting to make St. John's safer and more hospitable for those who would have to overwinter there. He proposed housing all residents of St. John's, Quidi Vidi, Torbay and Petty Harbour within the fort during the winter. The first step in this process was to hold a general court on 22 September, in order to turn many of the inhabitants out of the tenements, storehouses and stages belonging to the fishing ships. Then, persons possessing more houses inside the fort than they

90 TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 28 August, 1711.

91 TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 17 September 1711.

92 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Girlington to Admiralty, 10 October 1711.

93 TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 13 September 1711.

94 TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 28 September 1711.

inhabited were prohibited from selling or letting them out for hire. The surplus housing was to be given to those “destitute of habitations.”⁹⁵ Subsequent general courts on 1 and 6 October were held for inhabitants of the aforesaid harbours to sign obligations for their housing.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, work began on strengthening the defences at St. John’s. Parties from the men-of-war were sent to cut palisades and Fort William was stocked with powder and other ordnance. Guards and patrols composed of naval personnel were deployed along the back of St. John’s harbour so as “to prevent the mischiefs frequently committed by the spies of the enemy.”⁹⁷

The wily Captain Douglas took this opportunity to rid himself of a nuisance that had plagued him at least since leaving England. Six of *Arundell*’s guns proved useless as their ports could only be opened during a calm sea. Twice Douglas had written the Admiralty to replace them with smaller ordnance as he had spare ports on his upper deck and great cabin. On the bottom of the second letter on receipt was scribbled “To be told the Board do not think fit to give any instructions therein.”⁹⁸ By whatever means, Douglas negotiated to transfer his surplus weaponry to Fort William for the better defence of the harbour. Thus, he simultaneously performed a public service and solved a problem concerning the security of his ship. When Douglas was back in home waters he informed the Admiralty of the action, performed at Captain Crowe’s orders.⁹⁹

A dilemma of a very different sort confronted Captain Goodall shortly after *Milford*’s return to St. John’s on 3 October. Two midshipmen, John Griffin and Thomas Jourden, received permission from the master (Goodall being away from the ship) to go ashore and visit some friends. Griffin and Jourden got into an argument, walked off by themselves and engaged in a duel by sword. Griffin was killed and Jourden was severely wounded. Jourden turned himself in to the officer in charge of the fort who transferred the unfortunate midshipman to *Warspight*. Crowe returned Jourden to the *Milford* to be held in custody until his fate could be decided.¹⁰⁰

The whole incident perplexed Goodall, who had not know of any quarrel between the two and had not received any complaints. Jourden remained a prisoner during the return voyage. Upon entering Portsmouth harbour, Goodall was instructed to bring the midshipman before the mayor of Portsmouth. As there were no witnesses to the event the Admiralty hoped the mayor would secure Jourden’s release. Despite two audiences, the mayor stated nothing could be done until he received instructions from the Admiralty.¹⁰¹ Eventually, Jourden was released and was back on board *Milford* for its next assignment.¹⁰²

95 TNA PRO Adm 51/4387, pt.6, Log of *Warspight*, 22 September 1711.

96 TNA PRO Adm 51/4387, pt. 6, Log of *Warspight*, 1, 6, October 1711.

97 TNA PRO Adm 51/4387, pt 6, Log of *Warspight*, 9, 16, and 26 October 1711.

98 TNA PRO Adm 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 11 March and 16 March 1711.

99 TNA PRO Adm 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 8 December 1711; TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 5 September 1712.

100 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Crowe to Goodall, 3 October 1711.

101 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 7 January 1712, and 14 January 1712.

102 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Dore, 1 June 1712. Jourden’s name appears on a list of

The six warships with seventy-three sail of merchant vessels finally departed St. John's on 8 November 1711. They immediately encountered storms and heavy seas. When *Milford*, *Arundell* and *Seaford* separated from the others they were in possession of thirty-four merchant sail. When *Milford* and *Arundell* finally made Falmouth on 25 November (*Seaford* was not far behind) there were only fourteen fishing ships in company. *Milford* was so leaky in its upper sections that Goodall requested an immediate refit at Portsmouth after he saw the remainder of his charges to safety.¹⁰³ *Arundell* was also in a bad way, leaking both above and below the water line.¹⁰⁴ At least the convoy was safely back in England after only seventeen days at sea. The sack ship convoy was less fortunate.

Almost immediately after leaving St. John's, *Warwick's* crew was fighting to save the ship from heavy seas. Early in the morning of 9 November the foremast and foretop gallant mast collapsed. An anchor was cut loose and a gun thrown overboard by the weather. Ninety minutes later the main topmast, main topgallant mast with all their yards, sails and rigging were lost. At this point they became separated from the fleet. With most of the masts and rigging gone, preparations were made to rig a jury mast, but not before having to stave in and throw the ship's longboat overboard.¹⁰⁵ *Warwick* eventually limped into Lisbon on 8 December 1711. *Warspight* had also lost contact with *Portsmouth* and fourteen sack ships. *Portsmouth* itself was damaged during the voyage and lost four of the accompanying merchant ships along the way. Two were captured, one foundered and another changed course for Ireland.¹⁰⁶

Once in Portugal, the damaged Newfoundland convoy could avail itself of victualling and outfitting facilities as well as of a Royal Navy service vessel – the *Success* hagboat – in Lisbon harbour. Nevertheless, only one damaged ship could be repaired at a time and so the mastless *Warwick* was the first to receive attention, while *Portsmouth* was able to arrange for some resupply. In addition to the *Success*, a navy hulk rode in Lisbon. In order to better facilitate repairs, Crowe ordered the hagboat's commander, Captain Ramsey, to place a mast on the hulk so it could be used as a second service vessel.¹⁰⁷ Ramsey refused, arguing that the operation was too dangerous and his ship too valuable. More to the point, Ramsey had received no written orders from the Admiralty to obey Crowe, and told the convoy commodore that the ships under his command were suitable for the job.¹⁰⁸

In addition to having to cope with two disabled warships, the Newfoundland convoy discovered that adverse weather prevented the fishing ships from traversing the bar at Oporto, a major trading port in Portugal. At the same time there was a need to

men in a detail commanded by *Milford's* lieutenant, James Dore.

103 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 25 November 1711.

104 TNA PRO Adm 1/1693, Douglas to Admiralty, 1 December 1711.

105 TNA PRO 51/1072, pt.8, Log of *Warwick*, 9-16 November 1711.

106 TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Crowe to Admiralty, 23 December 1711.

107 TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 31 December 1711.

108 TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Ramsey to Crowe, 1 January, 1712.

patrol the coast against as privateers, who cruised regularly. In early February 1712, upon completion of repairs, *Warwick* and *Portsmouth* therefore made for Oporto to cover the emerging merchant trade, apparently more numerous than usual.¹⁰⁹ Fortunately, Crowe was able to secure the services of two more escorts with the arrival of the *Solebay* and *Anglesea* at Lisbon.¹¹⁰ He was less fortunate with the weather, which still refused to cooperate, obliging Crowe to delay the projected time of departure. According to Crowe's original instructions, *Warwick* and *Portsmouth* were to have seen the sack ships safely into the various Portuguese trading ports and stay no more than a month before returning to England.¹¹¹ Instead, it was 8 May before the homeward bound ships joined Crowe in Lisbon.¹¹²

On 6 May the court at Lisbon received the ominous news that a French fleet, replete with bomb vessels, fireships and transports, had sailed out of Cadiz and was making for Lisbon. Crowe, along with the senior officer of a Dutch convoy then in port, attended the government with the British and Dutch envoys. When solicited for advice, the naval officers stated they had not heard of any French fleet and surmised that if it indeed had sailed, it was unlikely to attack Lisbon. Nevertheless, they suggested placing the defences of Lisbon in a state of readiness. The Portuguese government requested that the warships in harbour do the same. As a precaution, Crowe sent *Solebay*, Captain Owen, out in search of signs of the French fleet.¹¹³ When Owen reported that he could find no sign of the fleet, the Portuguese court concluded that the French force was intending to sail to Brazil to attack the fleet there, and petitioned for the greater part of the British and Dutch ships to break away and reinforce the Portuguese. Crowe refused. Instead, the alarm caused the British and Dutch convoys to sail home together for their mutual protection.¹¹⁴ The joint convoy of 190 merchant ships left Lisbon on 20 May, sighting the Lizard on 18 June 1712.

Conclusion

The return leg of the 1711 Newfoundland convoy demonstrated that the arrival in European waters, despite the availability of support from the Royal Navy's main forces and bases, did not make the task of convoying any easier. In Portugal the convoy faced adverse weather, the demands of local politics, intransigent naval personnel, the expectations of England's allies, and the very real threat of large French squadrons. While not to downplay the challenges of duty on overseas stations, there is evidence, such as the ease with which *Warwick* and *Milford* refit and victualled in Boston so soon after the Walker expedition encountered its problems, to suggest that service in the western reaches of the North Atlantic was not necessarily a difficult undertaking for a small group of warships. More generally, the officers commanding the ships on convoy to

¹⁰⁹ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 4 March 1712.

¹¹⁰ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 19 April 1712.

¹¹¹ TNA PRO Adm 2/43, Instructions to Captain Crowe, 1 June 1711, 520-21.

¹¹² TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 8 May 1712.

¹¹³ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 8 May 1712.

¹¹⁴ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 14 May 1712.

Newfoundland did not have to negotiate authority with local governments. They were usually the only authority available. Thus the all-important defence of the fishery was left in the hands of relatively junior captains, who took it upon themselves to make the decisions needed to carry out their instructions. That the Admiralty was satisfied with this arrangement is, in one sense, borne out by their preoccupation with the settling of outstanding accounts rather than the decisions the captains made while overseas. Captains Crowe, Goodall, and Partington were all required to send reports of the expenses incurred while in Newfoundland.¹¹⁵

To no small extent the convoys sailed clear of the debates and conflicts in England among the Board of Trade, fishing merchants, the Admiralty and other branches of government, and it was usually local considerations that dictated responses by naval captains. They had the dual responsibility of maintaining the integrity of ship and crew and carrying out their orders to protect the fishery. It was therefore sometimes necessary for the public good to go against official policy in deference to the needs and demands of local residents and local trade. Thus, while Goodall was not the senior officer, he did see it as his duty to establish a dialogue with Costebelle to devise a local solution to the problem of prisoners. If someone such as Andrew Douglas could be convinced to forego the supplementary income offered by cruising for prizes, then the situation was evidently considerably more complex and exigent than revealed in the yearly report of the commodore. While Commodore Crowe correctly stated that New England trade was vital for the survival of the planters, it was also a potential source of stores and provisions for warships. The first four men-of-war to reach Newfoundland in 1711 did not concern themselves with righting the wrongs outlined by the Board of Trade. Their orders stipulated the defence of Newfoundland, not its policing.

Although the 1711 convoy was formed and dispatched like any other, the circumstances surrounding that convoy were unique. Admiral Walker's expedition increased the amount of naval traffic in northeastern North America and added a dimension not normally experienced in that theatre. Yet the Newfoundland convoy appeared to be entirely separate and distant from Walker's operations. This contrasts with the station ships at New England, New York and Virginia which were required to assist the expedition against Quebec. In part this was due to the different nature of convoy as compared to station duty but may also have reflected the secret nature of the Walker expedition. Certainly the convoy captains showed a good understanding of the wider strategic situation when they decided to divide their force and offer assistance to Boston following the rumours of Port Royal's recapture, but these decisions appear to have been made outside of any consideration for Walker's squadron.

It is revealing that the disaster that befell Walker had so little impact on the operations conducted so competently, almost routinely, by the warships of the Newfoundland convoy. The confidence and flexibility demonstrated by the convoy

¹¹⁵ TNA PRO Adm 1/1595, Crowe to Admiralty, 5 September 1712; Adm 1/2281, Partington to Admiralty, 5 May 1712; TNA PRO Adm 1/1825, Goodall to Admiralty, 7 January 1712. The Surveyors of the Navy actually refused to release Crowe's pay until he accounted for all expenses, including the guns he authorized Douglas to leave at Newfoundland.

captains grew from experience gained in nearly two decades of sustained commitment to protection of the fisheries, and the fact that the Admiralty had responded effectively to the upsurge in French raids in recent years by significantly strengthening the convoy force in both size and numbers of warships. By 1711 Newfoundland was not an exotic or foreign place to the men of the convoy, whether they had already been there or not. Unlike ships in the Caribbean who wasted under the sun and unfortunate captains who ran afoul of ambitious local governments both there and on mainland North America, captains and crews going to Newfoundland were close enough to New England to benefit from official and unofficial support networks, but far enough removed to avoid entanglement in competing interests. In Newfoundland itself, the captains enjoyed an authority on land as well as at sea that was unique.



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