THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The Role of the Royal Navy in the Support and Advancement of British Slavery, c.1782-1808: A Study of the Unsaid and Unseen

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By

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This dissertation is dedicated to Granny, Margaret Pooley (1934-2008), and Grandad, Derek Arkinstall (1930-2012), two people who never got to read it, but without whom it would never have been possible.

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Abbreviations

Adm.	*Admiralty Office*
BPP	British Parliamentary Papers
TNA	The National Archives

Introduction

On 25 March 1807, Royal Assent was granted to the Slave Trade Act, making the British part in the Atlantic slave trade illegal.[1] Any British ship found to be carrying enslaved Africans was to be confiscated and the owner fined (or imprisoned), as part of a burgeoning effort by the Royal Navy to suppress and stamp out the Atlantic trade. Whilst many works have been written on this momentous piece of legislation and its subsequent enforcement by ships of the Royal Navy during the nineteenth century,[2] this thesis seeks instead to investigate the years before the passing of the Slave Trade Act, a time when the Royal Navy was deeply rooted in Britain's part of the trade in enslaved Africans and the sugar-centric monoculture the trade fuelled. The Royal Navy was key to the institution of British Atlantic slavery in which African men, women and children were shipped, sold and traded within the Caribbean from European slave 'factories' on the West African coast. With Britain's status as the largest slave trading nation during the eighteenth-century, it is vital for historians to confront the uncomfortable reality that the increasing global dominance of the Royal Navy was integral to the British slave system, primarily in the West Indies and Africa as the defenders of British slave ships and slave-produced commodities, and the saboteurs of the slave systems of Britain's rivals; predominantly the French, Spanish and Dutch.

This work aims to support a rewrite of the historiography; acknowledging that before that crucial change in government policy

[1] *Slave Trade Act* 1807, 47 Geo III Sess. 1. c. 36.
[2] See for example: R. Burroughs and R. Huzzey(eds.), *The Suppression of the Atlantic Slave Trade: British Policies, Practices and Representations of Naval Coercion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).; B. Edwards, *Royal Navy Versus the Slave Trade* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Ltd., 2007).; P. Grindal, *Opposing the Slavers: The Royal Navy's Campaign Against the Atlantic Slave Trade* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2018).; S. Rees, *Sweet Waters and Bitter: The Ships that Stopped the Slave Trade* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009).; M. Wills, 'At War with the 'Detestable Traffic': The Royal Navy's Anti-Slavery Cause in the Atlantic Ocean'', in J. McAleer and C. Petley(eds.), *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c.1750-1820* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 123-146.

abolished the British slave trade and began a campaign to suppress it, the Royal Navy was a tool of the British state crucial in the defence of a trade which became increasingly vilified at the turn of the nineteenth century. This campaign began with a government who did not favour abolition, instead favouring extensive regulation to ameliorate the suffering of the enslaved being transported to the West Indies, epitomised by the 1788 *Act to regulate, for a limited Time, the shipping and carrying Slaves in British Vessels from the Coast of Africa*, commonly known as Dolben's Act, which primarily reduced the number of slaves which could be carried per ton of a slave ship.[3] With more legislation bringing about regulation of the trade, the abolition campaign pushed towards abolishing the slave trade, which was to take effect from 1 January 1808 (although the institution of slavery would not be abolished until 1834). Given the abundance of records from the years of war with France following the American Revolutionary War and the comparative documentary drought of the years of peacetime which flow through this research's chronological scope, this work seeks to investigate how far the Royal Navy was a tool of the British state and her subjects in the Caribbean, utilised for the protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery in the years from the loss of the American colonies until the passing of the Act of Abolition in the early nineteenth century. The chronological period has been chosen to examine the Royal Navy's duties through the peace that followed the end of the American War for Independence, through a period of almost constant war with Revolutionary France that followed in the 1790s, before terminating with the first day of legal enforcement of the Slave Trade Act on 1 January 1808. Most of all, this research aims to shed light on an area of British maritime history that has been severely neglected, perhaps through our reluctance to confront the more difficult parts of our past.

The dissertation focuses on the activities of the Navy as the protectors and facilitators of British slavery in the Caribbean and on the

[3] *An Act to regulate […] the shipping and carrying Slaves in British Vessels from the Coast of Africa* 1788, 28 Geo III c. 54.

West African coast, from the final years of the American Revolutionary War until the Slave Trade Act was legally enforced in January 1808. This period was chosen because of the increasing importance that was attached to Britain's Caribbean possessions after the close of the American War, as the loss of the thirteen colonies prompted Britain to increase its focus on the profitable sugar islands that Britain had gained in the wake of American victory, even before the end of the war.[4] Due to the nature of the Caribbean islands and Britain's maritime empire in the region being spread over the extremes of the Caribbean Sea, the navy was essential to the defence of British colonial trade. The transatlantic slave trade was no exception, not only for the protection of British islands' plantation economies and the disruption of those belonging to its imperial rivals, but also for the defence of the slave-produced goods such as sugar and rum that were convoyed back to Britain for the profit of merchants, politicians and other wealthy groups in the home country. This dissertation places the slave trade, British slavery and the Royal Navy's protection and facilitation of both into the wider context of commerce protection, which was a consistent concern and determinant of government focus during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as the economic foundations on which the burgeoning British empire was built, and would continue to grow.

The Royal Navy played an important role in Britain's economic success during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, protecting and maintaining British trade all over the empire and harassing that of its enemies during wartime, in addition to attacking enemy warships and protecting the British Isles. This dissertation stems from a noticeable imbalance between abundant scholarly work on the Navy's role after

[4] P. J. Marshall, 'Britain without America- A Second Empire?', in P. J. Marshall and A. Low (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 576-595.; S. Conway, 'Britain and the Revolutionary Crisis, 1763-1791', in P. J. Marshall and A. Low(eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 325-346.

abolition[5] as the heroic bringers of freedom, with the comparative historiographical drought on the role the Navy played as a defender of the British slave trade and British slavery itself before it was abolished. This work intends to rectify this overlooked part of the Royal Navy's and indeed Britain's maritime history. Although the literature which discusses this historical controversy is thin, the following review discusses both recent and more dated work which lays the groundwork for my research. This review focuses on the maritime aspect of the research that is being conducted, as the literature specific to slavery and the slave trade that discusses the Royal Navy's role (sparse as it is), is reviewed within the following discussion.

Most crucial to this work is understanding of the economic environment in which the protection and facilitation of British slavery was rooted, as one strand of commerce which was vital to Britain's future. The works most helpful for this consist of Ralph Davis' *The Rise of English Shipping in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1962) and Patrick Crowhurst's *The Defence of British Trade 1688-1815* (1977), both of which are high quality works which broadly discuss the role of the Royal Navy in the protection of British trade, whilst also examining the place of the Navy in the slave trade, albeit to extremely limited degrees.[6] Whilst primarily focused on general practice in British protection of its trade in general between the accession of William III and the fall of Napoleon after Waterloo, Crowhurst's work discusses challenges presented by the Atlantic slave trade and the complexities thereby generated.[7] It is a well-researched and excellently written book, which, like Davis' work, is unlikely to be surpassed on the subject of British trade and the protection of those commercial networks. Davis' book is much more wide-ranging, providing excellent context on British commercial networks and the workings of the

[5] See footnote 2.
[6] R. Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (St. John's: International Maritime Economic History Association, 2012); P. Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade 1689-1815* (Folkestone: WM Dawson & Sons Ltd., 1977).
[7] Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 67.

slave trade.[8] These works are extremely broad, providing integral context to inform the study which this work seeks to make. These works suffer through their age, as they are both quite dated in that records and sources have been released or brought to light in years since their publishing. This is particularly true for Crowhurst's conclusions, which will be discussed in a later chapter. Comparatively, Davis' work has stood the test of time, standing alongside classic discussions of British commerce and informing much of the work which came after it. Neither of these texts devote extensive time (indeed, Davis' work makes no connection) to the place of the Royal Navy in the protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery, reinforcing the need for the link to be made between the Navy and the commerce it was duty-bound to protect. Even more recent and specific work such as David Williams' article 'The Shipping of the Slave Trade in its Final Years, 1798-1807' (2000)[9] does not connect the duty of naval protection to these final years (although it provides first-rate context), highlighting the importance of this research further.

Similarly, there is a noticeable lack of discussion of the Navy's role in protecting British slavery in the core texts which inform much of the historiography of British naval history, such as Nicholas Rodger's *The Command of the Ocean* (2004).[10] A seminal work in understanding Britain's growing maritime ascendency during the 'long eighteenth century', Rodger's book examines Britain's naval history from interconnected viewpoints, which help place the period in a context far beyond the operational perspectives favoured by popular naval histories. However, there is barely any mention of the British slave trade, let alone any examination and analysis of the Royal Navy's place in support of British slavery or the hugely profitable trade in enslaved Africans. This should not be viewed as a dismissal of Rodger's work, which has proven invaluable to informing this research's contextual understanding of the administrative,

[8] Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, 31, 36, 142, 181, 259, 282.
[9] D. M. Williams, 'The Shipping of the British Slave Trade in its Final Years, 1798-1807', *International Journal of Maritime History*, 12, 2 (2000), 1-25.
[10] N. A. M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean* (London: Penguin Books, this printing 2006).

operational, social and technological context into which I aim to fit my research into Britain's place in the world during this period. Rodger's work only confirms the importance of this dissertation, as an alternative perspective from which to examine Britain's maritime ascendency. James Davey's *In Nelson's Wake* (2015), which follows the Navy during the Napoleonic Wars focused on the years immediately before, during and after the Battle of Trafalgar and the death of Horatio Nelson, is similarly brief in its discussion of Royal Navy support for the Atlantic slave trade.[11] Whilst briefly discussing the final days of Britain's legal slave trade and the protection of the final slave ships by Navy frigates, Davey instead focuses on the role the Navy had in suppressing the Atlantic slave trade.[12] Given the period Davey covers, it is a shame he does not explain more the about-face that led to abolition and the Royal Navy's place in slavery before its eradication. It is, however, extremely well written and researched, taking its place amongst the best works on the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic Wars. Michael Duffy's *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower* (1987) is a work of similar calibre which investigates British military interaction with slavery in the Caribbean, viewing the Caribbean as a central focus of British protection and development during the eighteenth century.[13] Its central conclusion is that the West Indies were vital to British survival, as the means to an end to economically support British war efforts in the ever-increasing totality of the wars of the 1790s and early 1800s, as vital pieces for eventual victory.[14] Duffy's work is an excellent and focused study of the West Indies as an ever-growing part of Britain's economic, military and imperial dominance during this period. However, the book suffers from a lack of depth concerning the Royal Navy's role within the institutions that Britain was so keen to protect in the Caribbean, with a greater focus on breadth to cover what is a temporally and spatially vast subject.

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[11] J. Davey, *in Nelson' Wake: The Navy and the Napoleonic Wars* (London: Yale University Press, 2017), 132-134.
[12] *Ibid*.
[13] M. Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War Against Revolutionary France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
[14] *Ibid.*, 393.

Nevertheless, this work has proven invaluable in informing the structure and focuses of this research. At its core, the Royal Navy's protection of British slavery is sorely under-researched, demonstrated by sparse coverage within core texts of British naval history.

The fact that naval protection and facilitation of slavery does not appear in academic naval histories has also had a profound effect on popular histories of the Navy, which often base their discussions on the academically written sources for their context and understanding. This demonstrates that the deficiency of discussion of the Navy's role in British slavery has clouded all levels of understanding of the less palatable parts of our history, largely through a lack of academic understanding of the Royal Navy as the guardians and facilitators of British slavery, which has subsequently prevented popular understanding of such avenues to a wider audience as would in theory be possible through popular histories designed for a non-specialist audience. Britain's maritime historiography is replete with popular historical investigations of the French Revolutionary (1792-1802) and Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), detailing the exploits of Admiral Horatio Nelson and his contemporaries. One example which examines the role of the Royal Navy in the wider context of protection of British trade is Roy and Leslie Adkins' *The War for All the Oceans* (2007).[15] This book is largely a standard popular history of the wars against France, but it discusses the Royal Navy's role beyond its operational exploits in naval actions across the globe and most notably its place as a protector of British trade.[16] It is, however, short on analysis and largely narrative, utilising its sources on face value and often without adequate referencing. There is no explicit connection made between these protection duties and the Atlantic slave trade, resulting in a certain level of inference being demanded from the reader regarding the Navy's connection to the trade in enslaved Africans. This source must therefore be used with caution, especially due to the low footnote count present in the book, bringing into question the

[15] R. Adkins & L. Adkins, *The War for all the Oceans: From Nelson at the Nile to Napoleon at Waterloo* (London: Viking Penguin, 2007).
[16] *Ibid*., 181.

validity of the claims made by the authors. In contrast, a skim through a similar work, Noel Mostert's *The Line Upon a Wind* (2007), garnered a single instance discussing transatlantic slavery, although no mention is made of the naval role besides brief sentences on abolition and naval suppression after 1807.[17] Similarly, this work is under-referenced and should be treated with extreme caution. These popular histories are no more useful than those from academic spheres. This work aims to make the connections which are partially considered by the authors of *War for All the Oceans* explicit and informed by full documentary evidence and referencing, bringing to the forefront the Royal Navy as a protector of trade and most notably, a protector of British slavery.

Most important to this research is work which considers the Navy's role in the Atlantic world. Essays contained in McAleer and Petley's *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World* (2016) explicitly connect the Royal Navy with British Atlantic slavery when read as a collection.[18] Petley makes a case similar to Duffy that the economic wealth of the island plantations pushed their protection above every other strategic consideration bar the protection of the British Isles themselves; simultaneously positing that cyclically the West Indies' commerce needed slavery, Britain needed the commerce of the West Indies and Britain needed the slave trade.[19] Williams runs with this, explaining that the Royal Navy had a continuous role during both peace and war protecting trade routes and suppressing slave revolts amongst other responsibilities.[20] Mary Wills' chapter discusses the Royal Navy's attempts to suppress the slave trade but does not detail the Navy's role before abolition and so will not

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[17] N. Mostert, *The Line Upon a Wind: An Intimate History of the Last and Greatest War Fought at Sea Under Sail* (London: Johnathan Cape, 2007), 283-4; 701, 702.
[18] C. Petley,'The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', in J. McAleer and C. Petley (eds.), *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c.1750-1820* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016), 97-121.; S. Williams, 'The Royal Navy and Caribbean Colonial Society during the Eighteenth Century', in J. McAleer and C. Petley(eds.), *The Royal Navy and the British Atlantic World, c.1750-1820* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 27-50.
[19] Petley, 'The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', 103, 104.
[20] Williams, 'The Royal Navy and Caribbean Colonial Society', 32, 31.

prove so instrumental to my research.[21] This collection of essays has helped provide more specific context within which to frame my research. It has also helped me to identify gaps in the historiography, as the essays in this volume remain largely open-ended as to the true extent of the Royal Navy's support and defence of the slave trade and its protection of British slavery as an institution. Joshua Newton's article 'Naval Power and the Province of Senegambia, 1758-1779' (2013), whilst outside the time parameters of this research, provides a similarly well researched and helpful groundwork for this work, examining the motives behind the deployment of naval resources to the African coast and makes vital connections between the Navy and British slavery.[22] The only limit is its time parameters, which whilst providing excellent context for this research, do not go far enough to evaluate the role of the Royal Navy during times of peace in the 1780s and the 'total war' of the 1790s and early 1800s.

Andrew J. O'Shaughnessey similarly discussed the relationship between the Navy and British slavery in the Caribbean in his book, *An Empire Divided* (2000).[23] It posits that the Royal Navy was the protector of the institution of British slavery through its defence of British Caribbean islands from foreign (namely French, Spanish and eventually American) invasion and attack.[24] The central thesis is that British protection of Caribbean islands was considered inadequate by colonial planters who relied on the navy for protection from foreign attack but were concerned at British naval overstretch in the face of American, French and Spanish opposition during the War.[25] It is an excellent work of academic history, contextualising the world after the American Revolutionary War and formulating the political conditions of the period this research covers connecting the role of the Royal Navy as a protective force in the Caribbean of British strategic interests alongside the consistent threats to

[21] Wills, 'At War with the 'Detestable Traffic', 123-146.
[22] J. D. Newton, 'Naval Power and the Province of Senegambia, 1758-1779'. *Journal for Maritime Research,* 15, 2, (2013), 129-147.
[23] A. J. O'Shaughnessey, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000)., 34, 49.
[24] *Ibid.*
[25] *Ibid*., 167-9

the economically vital institution of British slavery presented by colonial rivals in the Caribbean. Whilst its temporal parameters end with the beginning of the chronological period chosen for this dissertation, it serves as an excellent foundation on which to build this research, as well as valuable context to help the reader grasp the complexities of the American War in the Caribbean and the long term effects that would be felt far beyond the end of the War in 1783.

In summary, the literature which discusses the role of the Royal Navy as the guardians of British slavery is thin, but those works which do are of high quality. This research uses the literature discussed here as a foundation, on which is built a more focused and detailed discussion of the Royal Navy as a tool of the British state in the defence of British Atlantic slavery in the context of wider trade protection in the growing empire. Much has been written to celebrate the navy as the key to the suppression and the end of the Atlantic slave trade, something which must be balanced in the face of growing criticism of Britain's colonial past. This work seeks instead to confront the more uncomfortable subject of state-sponsored chattel slavery and the Navy's role within it. The hope is that by acknowledging the more uncomfortable parts of our past, we can better understand our history and avoid censoring our national story, no matter how much we might wish to ignore it.

With this in mind, this dissertation seeks to investigate the Royal Navy's place in the defence of British slavery (and the frustration of similar institutions of its imperial rivals such as primarily the French and Spanish) by examining the following areas. Firstly, it examines the formulation of government policy and strategy, as well as the dissemination of that direction and its practical execution. It then goes on to discuss the methods of the Navy in the protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery. This took the form of provision of defence and an advisory role in the development of British slave factories on the West African coast and the defence and development of recently established as well as existing

plantations in British colonial possessions in the Caribbean. The Navy also provided protection and facilitation for British slavery through the escort of ships involved in the triangular trade, protecting them in the journey across the Atlantic from West Africa with a cargo of slaves, and on the return journey with goods such as sugar, produced on the plantations and exchanged for those slaves, back to the metropole. The final method utilised by the Royal Navy in its work to protect and facilitate British slavery was through its attempts to frustrate their imperial rivals' possessions and trade, including the attempted destruction of the French settlement at Gorée, modern-day Senegal. Finally, this work discusses the connections, from the political to the personal, that were inherent in the Navy's protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery. Given that slavery was a strand of commerce vital to British imperial development, the merchant communities of Britain were crucial to the formulation of direction for the government regarding the protection of British slavery, with it becoming clear that in fact the Navy itself had connections, in a professional capacity, to the mercantile interests of the slave trade. At its heart however, the Royal Navy was the tool of the state in the execution of its will to protect and facilitate the development of British slavery, and was fundamentally driven by duty and the drive to complete orders set before its officers- even in the face of frequent (though highly debilitating) circumstances such as outbreaks of contagious disease.

The following research questions have been formulated and are answered in the chapters which follow. Firstly, how was policy and strategy toward the slave trade and slavery determined by the British government, and how successful was the Navy at executing it? Secondly, what were the methods utilised by the Royal Navy in the support of British Atlantic slavery? This question seeks to analyse the Navy's varied methods of supporting the institution of British slavery, such as the escort of convoys both outward to Africa and the Caribbean as well as the return trip carrying slave-produced goods such as sugar. This also encompasses the Royal Navy's support and protection of forts on the West African coast, escorting the vital stores for their maintenance and keeping lookout for 'pirates' in

the waters nearby. Finally, what were the origins of pressures on the protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery, and what drove the officers of the Royal Navy most in their execution of government policy?

It is hoped that this work will serve future discussion of the uncomfortable parts of the British national story, to allow us to better understand how that story developed. I hope that this is the last time that the protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery by the Royal Navy will be a study of the unsaid and unseen, instead to take its place in our history as a step to the world we inhabit today.

Chapter 1: Sources of Policy and the Royal Navy's Support of British Atlantic slavery.

This chapter examines each step of the process by which policy and strategy (as far as they existed during the eighteenth century) was determined, disseminated and executed, placed in the context of the protection and facilitation of British slavery and the slave trade, whilst simultaneously placing the institution of slavery into the wider imperial and commercial context in which it developed. Protection of the British slave-trade and the institution it helped perpetuate was a facet of wider trade protection, which in turn was a facet of British 'grand strategy' devised by politicians and translated into action by the Admiralty and the officers of the Royal Navy operating on its behalf. A great deal of government foreign policy was devoted to its commercial networks; vital assets which were key to the prosperity of Britain's growing empire, and therefore required extensive protection. The slave trade, and the institution to which the commodified slaves were supplied, was just one strand of this commerce which required extensive devotion of resources.

Officers of the Royal Navy acting in the capacity of protecting British trade were expected to translate the will of the government, communicated to them in broad terms through order letters, into practical action. Detailed written reports were returned at the earliest opportunity to inform the Admiralty, and in turn the King and Cabinet, of their efforts in execution of such orders for the protection of trade. Indeed, the reports of officers on station, through their returns to the Admiralty, could even inform future governmental priority, although this was by no means common.[26] However, such examples demonstrate that officers were keen

[26] For example: TNA, ADM 1/1623, Letters from Captains, Surnames C: 1797, nos. 151-339, J. Cornwallis to Adm., 10th February 1797, Letter No. 243; ADM 2/1099, Admiralty Out-letters: Convoys, January 1796-April 1798, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 1/1518, Letters from Captains, Surnames B: 1798, nos. 1-250, H. L. Ball to E Nepean, 18th January-10th April 1798.

to complete the objectives assigned to them, and were often successful in what they set out to achieve. At its heart, the Royal Navy was an institution with a strict sense of duty amongst its officers and men, and despite the difficulties that those duties were complicated by, a will to succeed as close to instruction as possible for the protection of British commercial interests was universal. Indeed, even in the case of extremely contagious diseases on board, naval officers and their crews remained apparently unwavering in their will to complete their duty in convoying trade beyond the reaches of enemy vessels cruising in the Caribbean and out into the wider Atlantic Ocean, before finally retreating to begin recovery from an outbreak.[27] Of course, this was also a product of a fear of failure, as the system of assignment in the Royal Navy meant that an officer was only as good as their last commission, in which failure could damage their chances of future employment. The institution of British slavery was heavily protected by the Royal Navy, based almost entirely on the fulfilment of order and duty, and regardless of the officers' personal opinions and moral outlook on the institution of British slavery. It is difficult to determine from the primary sources what naval officers' personal opinions truly were toward the slave trade, although Charles Foy suggests that by the beginning of the period under study, some naval officers began to push for equal rights for black mariners, which in Foy's analysis was evidence of a growing sympathy amongst Britons and the growth of 'compassionate humanitarianism'.[28] Given the above discussion of duty and fear of failure as driving factors for naval protection of slavery, alongside the apparent minority of officers with sympathies towards blacks regardless of their status as freemen or as slaves, it seems that personal opinions and questions of morality were inconsequential to a naval officer's outlook.

One thing is clear from the definition of policy and its dissemination to those charged with its execution: there is extremely rare mention of

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[27] ADM 1/1621, Letters from Captains, Surnames C: 1796, G. Countess to E. Nepean, 10th October 1796, Letter No. 184.

[28] C. Foy, 'The Royal Navy's employment of black mariners and maritime workers, 1754-1783', *The International Journal of Maritime History*, 28, 1 (2016), 10.

slavery and the slave trade specifically as an object of naval protection. It is only through contextual and geographical hints that it becomes clear what the subject of the Royal Navy's protection is, and in a particularly rare case, explicit mention of 'settlers, their slaves and property' as the focus of the officer's defensive measures.[29] It becomes apparent that being considered just one strand in the wider protection of British trade has the effect of reducing the correspondence to the barest essentials to allow the naval officer to complete their duty. In this respect, it is clear that the officer acting on the government's behalf for any strand of British trade need know only of their duty to protect trade in all forms and all locales in the British maritime world. The West Coast of Africa and the Caribbean were just two centres of British commercial networks. Detail was far from a necessity in the correspondence between the Admiralty and the officers on which it relied to execute governmental strategy and policy, as it was common knowledge for officers of the Royal Navy that it was the slave trade that they were guarding between Africa and the Caribbean, and so greater detail would only mean more time reading orders and less opportunity to start putting those orders into practice. Whilst it would be helpful for the modern historian if all was plain to see within the source material, it just was not required by contemporaries of the period in their protection of British commerce and by extension, British slavery. This is similar to David Hancock's examination of the slave trade from Bance Island in the Sierra Leone River, in which the similarities with the Admiralty and the Royal Navy's protection and facilitation of slavery are striking. Hancock reflects that

> [t]he records documenting the work of the factory [at Bance Island between around 1745-1785] are sadly cool and businesslike. The modern reader, who wants to know about the inhumanity of its owners and agents, is frustrated at every step by silence.[30]

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[29] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to T. Dundas, 19th September 1796.

[30] D. Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London merchants and the integration of the British Atlantic community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 203.

In the final analysis, the government felt that the duties of trade protection were such a known, that it was largely unnecessary to point out the specifics to men driven by duty on stations which had a largely well-known place in British commercial and imperial ambitions.

1.1 Upper Echelons of Government and the Birth of 'Policy' and 'Strategy'.

The Admiralty Board was far from a 'supreme executive body' directing the navy in its day to day running, instead being defined as 'one of several clearly defined government departments responsible for the management of naval affairs'.[31] In fact, even in times of potentially traumatic events such as changes of government and the subsequent appointment of new members of the Admiralty Board such as First Lord with ideological and political sympathies in line with a new prime minister, there were no marked changes in policy, no alterations in the office's functions and no revolutions in the running of the office in the quest for greater efficiency.[32]

The Admiralty was the first point of contact for Royal Navy officers around the during the eighteenth century, and the source through which officers cruising on station received their orders and instructions, both heavy focuses of this chapter.[33] However, first it must be explained just where policy and strategy were determined, and how that was then passed on to the officers of the Royal Navy acting on that policy across the world's oceans. The Admiralty did not define British naval strategy or conduct naval operations itself; with both of these functions being deliberated upon by the King and Cabinet (in which sat the First Lord of the Admiralty),

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[31] C. Wilkinson, *The British Navy and the State in the Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 19.
[32] *Ibid.*, 19-20.
[33] ADM 2/1097, Admiralty Out-letters: Convoys, January 1793-April 1795; ADM 2/1098, Admiralty Out-letters: Convoys, January 1795-June 1796; ADM 2/1099; ADM 2/1101, Admiralty Out-letters: Convoys, January 1806-June 1808; ADM 2/1384, Admiralty Out-letters: Convoys, Secret letters: letters relating to convoys, 1801-1806.

before issuing instructions through the Secretary of State for the Southern Department (who was the equivalent of the modern-day Foreign Secretary) through to the Admiralty Board via the First Lord.[34] However, George III (reigned 1760-1820) likely deferred much of his power to his son, Prince George, during his notorious bouts of illness which were sporadic during his reign. Indeed, Daniel Baugh goes even further to suggest that the Admiralty was only 'advisory', being heavily reliant on upper echelons of government to determine strategy.[35] This policy and strategy was then communicated to the Admiralty as a larger body, who behaved like middle-men between government and officers of the Royal Navy- men whose job it would then be to translate the grand vision of the politicians into action, insofar as the situation on the ground (or the water) would allow.

At its heart, British government policy toward trade and its defence was defined by King George III and members of his Cabinet, helping establish the philosophical, economic and strategic concerns which defined British policy toward the institution of slavery, and the commercial network of which it was a vital part. The government regarded the Caribbean as a vital part of British trade, being integral to the continued economic stability of Britain's war effort and the growing empire. Whilst the British Isles were always the priority for protection and thus received most resources, this did not mean that when there was no great threat to the home islands greater resources were not committed to protecting the Empire, and the Caribbean colonies were the most valuable possessions within that system.[36] Although it is not discussed openly, the value attached to the West Indies by extension demonstrates the reliance on British occupation of settlements on the African coast, as a crucial supply of enslaved labour to maintain the all-important plantation economy of the Caribbean. The government at this time did not favour abolition of the slave trade, which

[34] Wilkinson, *British Navy and the State*, 21; D. A. Baugh, *British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 31, 64.
[35] Baugh, *British Naval Administration*, 64-65.
[36] Petley, 'The Royal Navy, the British Atlantic Empire and the Abolition of the Slave Trade', 103, 104.

had grown in size and scale during the eighteenth century, making Britain one of the largest traders in slaves in the world. However, following the formation of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade in May 1787, founded by Thomas Clarkson (1760-1846) and Granville Sharp (1735-1813), abolitionist sentiment was on the rise. The government responded by implementing legislation which sought to regulate the slave trade, most famously through the Slave Trade Act 1788, also known as Dolben's Act, named after the Member of Parliament who led the charge on the act, Sir William Dolben (1727-1814), which carefully outlined the legal number of slaves a ship could carry in relation to its tonnage (five slaves for every three tons).[37] What followed was a period of growing regulation, as opinion gradually turned toward greater calls for abolition, until at last, an abrupt about-face in the first decade of the nineteenth century brought with it the Slave Trade Acts of 1806[38] and 1807,[39] the former abolishing the slave trade with foreign nations, and the latter abolishing the trade entirely, which took effect from 1 January 1808.

The British government was strategically concerned about the survival of the British Caribbean. Debates and discussion in the Houses of Parliament, as well as correspondence between King George III himself and his government help express the position and importance of the Caribbean and the West African coast within the British empire, particularly after the end of the American Revolutionary War.[40] The upper echelons of British government defined policy and strategy towards its Atlantic empire, from which it becomes apparent Britain was heavily reliant on the islands of the Caribbean and the sugar they produced. This was particularly important for the economic support they gave to the continued war effort in the defence of British imperial possessions and their profits across the world. By extension, the survival of the Caribbean relied on the labour force of

[37] 28 Geo III c. 54.
[38] *The Foreign Slave Trade Abolition Act 1806,* 46 Geo III c. 119.
[39] 47 Geo III Sess. 1 c. 36.
[40] Marshall, 'Britain without America', 576-595; Conway, 'Britain and the Revolutionary Crisis', 325-346.

enslaved Africans brought in to produce the sugar which was sold to maintain Britain's imperial and military aspirations, a conclusion shared with Michael Duffy.[41] In this way, the institution of British slavery had a symbiotic relationship with the empire, as the state channelled resources into the protection and facilitation of slavery, which helped grow the plantation economy of the West Indies, which in turn fed into the British economy, allowing greater defence and continued efforts to disrupt parallel trade operated by enemy nations.

The broad outlines of British policy towards the African coast are clear enough: the protection of British trade interests and where possible, the interdiction of those of its rivals. However, caution must be exercised when using the word 'policy', as it tends to imply fully developed decisions of the sort that would be expected of twenty-first-century government, something rarely possessed by those of the eighteenth century. It is easy to garner opinion and strategic priority from the attitude of policymakers towards the Caribbean, commonly viewed as vital to British survival. This was due to three factors: the Caribbean climate was suitable for growing such commodities; the small size of the islands meant that all plantations on each island were close to the coast and therefore had easy access to shipping; and the sailing ship was the 'cheapest, quickest bulk carrier of the period' which were funnelled to the Caribbean from Europe and Africa (and back to Europe) by natural wind patterns of the Atlantic Ocean.[42] A reliance on enslaved labour to produce the lucrative commodity of sugar in the West Indies makes it clear, even if it remains implicit, that the African coast was similarly vital to Britain's growing empire and economic superiority. This is more explicit in the orders from the Admiralty to officers of the Royal Navy as discussed above as well as in greater detail later in this dissertation.

[41] M. Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower: The British Expeditions to the West Indies and the War Against Revolutionary France* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 13.
[42] Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower*, 7; J. Walvin, *Black Ivory: A History of British Slavery* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 314.

During the American Revolutionary War, the King of Great Britain George III demonstrated the importance of the Caribbean island possessions to British imperial aspirations and the future of Britain itself. Writing to John Montagu, 4th Earl of Sandwich (13 November 1718 – 30 April 1792; First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782) on 13 September 1779, the King said that

> [o]ur islands [in the Caribbean] must be defended, even at the risk of an invasion of this island. If we lose our sugar islands, it will be impossible to raise money to continue the war.[43]

Whilst this is a particularly striking quote, this was likely either a minority view expressed by the King or perhaps simple exaggeration, which was more than likely diluted by members of his Cabinet in the formulation of commerce protection. However, King George recognised the growing economic potential of the British West Indies, defining clearly and succinctly the perspective of the highest level regarding the priorities for imperial defence. Similarly, the importance of the Caribbean must have been just as apparent to the French, given the threat posed by a fleet of the French Navy only three years later with the attempted invasion of Jamaica, foiled by Admiral George Rodney at the Battle of the Saintes in April 1782. Not long after, Rodney was rewarded by the islanders, and a statue of him was built in Spanish Town, Jamaica's second largest city at the time in 1792.[44] Growing demand for sugar fuelled the British war economy and pulled in a nearly continuous stream of revenue to Britain, allowing her to fight on with income provided from sources beyond the immediate reaches and disruptions of France and the newly formed United States of America. Even before the colonies were lost entirely, the West Indies were becoming a defensive priority for the British government.

[43] King George III, 'From the King[,] Windsor Castle, 13 September 1779', in G. R. Barnes & J. H. Owen (eds.), *The Private Papers of John, Earl of Sandwich, First Lord of the Admiralty 1771-1782*, Vol III (London: 1936), 163.
[44] Williams, 'The Royal Navy and Caribbean Colonial Society', 27-29.

Whilst this refers to the reliance on the sugar islands of the British Caribbean to maintain the economic resources required for the continuation of the War in North America, this statement had lost no significance once the colonies were lost and British attention turned to the West Indies in the wars with France at the close of the eighteenth century, something which a number of historians similarly suggest.[45] Indeed, sugar became one of the most important economic priorities of the British empire at the end of the eighteenth century, with Ralph Davis calculating that sugar imports from the Caribbean almost doubled between 1794 and 1816 (see Table 1).[46]

Table 1: Sugar Imports and Re-exports in Hundredweights (cwt), 1794-1816, Reproduced from Davis, The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade*.*

Year Range	Sugar Imports (000 cwt)	Sugar Exports (000 cwt)
1794-6	2264	811
1804-6	3334	995
1814-16	3921	1848

The thoughts of the King were echoed several years later in a letter written in August 1796 to Lord Spencer, the First Lord of the Admiralty (1794-1801) by Henry Dundas (Secretary of State for War 1794-1801). In the letter, Dundas voiced his personal (and no doubt also political) opinion that the defence of Jamaica was instrumental to Britain's economic survival, saying that 'I would rather hear that 15,000 men were landed in

[45] Conway, 'Britain and the Revolutionary Crisis', 341; S. Drescher, 'Emperors of the World: British Abolitionism and Imperialism', in D. R. Peterson (ed.), *Abolitionism and Imperialism in Britain, Africa and the Atlantic* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010), 132; M. Duffy, 'World-Wide War and British Expansion, 1793-1815', in P. J. Marshall & A. Low (eds.), *The History of the British Empire: Volume II: The Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 190; Crowhurt, *Defence of British Trade*, 170.

[46] R. Davis, *The Industrial Revolution and British Overseas Trade* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), 31.

Ireland or even in Great Britain, than hear that the same number were landed in Jamaica with a fleet superior to ours.'[47] Dundas was concerned that the protection of Britain's island colonies should be prioritised and the strategic importance of the Caribbean for British economic and imperial superiority was unmatched, even by the metropole on which the islands depended. Unlike the British Isles themselves, defence of the Caribbean islands was extremely difficult, with the islands being spread across a vast area of ocean, having low populations of settlers and being neighboured by islands controlled by European rivals (see Figure 1). To quantify this problem, however, it is worth noting that Britain possessed naval yards in the Caribbean, located at English Harbour, Antigua and Port Royal, Jamaica, which France was unable to match for much of the mid to late eighteenth century Anglo-French conflicts.[48] This made reaction to rival threats to Caribbean possessions comparatively easy, although by the wars of the 1790s, this advantage had been largely nullified by the creation of at least one French naval yard, located on Martinique.

By comparison, the British Isles themselves could rely on extensive manpower, and extensive plans for home defence were already in place in the early years of the French Revolutionary Wars. Dundas appears confident in the home nations' ability to repel invasion attempts, instead reserving his concern for the dispersed and unstable Caribbean islands (and their slave-production economies), on which Britain relied for its continued economic power in the drawn-out wars that were to come. This philosophy is reflected in the policy the Government took to the defence of the Caribbean in its orders to naval officers tasked with protecting British trade in the Atlantic world. British naval officers were commonly ordered to reinforce the Caribbean squadrons based at Jamaica and Antigua, in a functional bolstering of British Caribbean defence aided by the direction of British trade from the West African coast to the West Indies.

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[47] H. Dundas, 'The importance of Jamaica, 1796', in J. Hattendorf, R. J. B. Knight, A. W. H. Pearsall, N. A. M. Rodger & G. Till (eds.), *British Naval Documents 1204-1960* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1993), 341-2.
[48] M. Duffy, 'Introduction', in M. Duffy (ed.), *Parameters of British Naval Power 1650-1850* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992), 4.

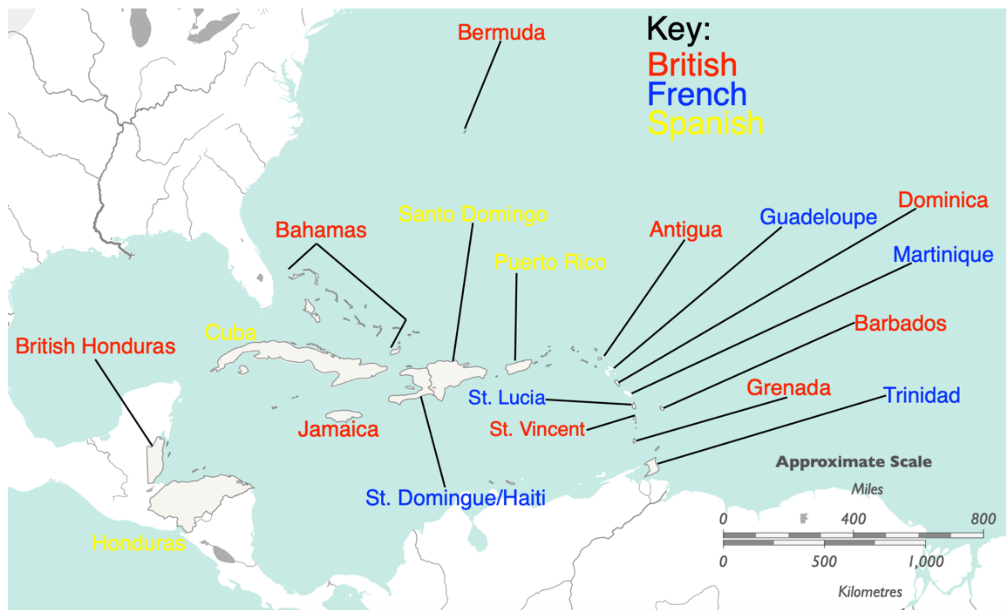

Figure 1: Map of the Caribbean, c.1783-1808 (Generated in Ortelius 2).

1.2 Admiralty Orders and the Dissemination of Government Policy.

The Admiralty Board consisted of seven Commissioners, the great majority of whom owed their position to their political allegiances, and were often sitting Members of Parliament.[49] With decisions primarily made by government in the form of King and Cabinet, the Admiralty Board's business was primarily the execution of government policy, which would be conducted both in official meetings which were routine and only required around three members of the Board (including, unsurprisingly, the First Lord), and informal meetings over coffee, dinner and as part of wider social affairs.[50] The only member of the Admiralty Board who did not change with new government was the Secretary, who would maintain their position as a permanent member of staff, serving as an important retention of institutional memory for the Admiralty. The Secretary who appears as the author and recipient of most of the correspondence for the majority of the period under study was Evan Nepean (1752-1822), who was

[49] Wilkinson, *British Navy and the State*, 12.
[50] *Ibid*., 16.

a former naval officer himself before going into politics at the end of the American Revolutionary War, becoming Secretary of the Admiralty in 1795, holding the position until 1804 when he was replaced by William Marsden.[51]

The Admiralty Board distributed government policy through orders to the Royal Navy officers it assigned to the protection and advancement of British slavery on these stations. These letters were structured as largely formulaic letters designed as open-ended dictations of orders which allowed the individual navy officer to adapt the orders to the situation at hand, helping bypass the problems of communication that were such an obstacle during the eighteenth century. Similarly important to consider and pivotal in the shaping of governmental policy was the climate on the African coast and in the Caribbean; both areas of the world which left men prone to contracting disease and therefore pushed an agenda of minimised time spent in these regions- considerations reflected in a number of order letters and the reports that were returned in execution of government direction.[52] The period of the French Revolutionary War (1793-1802) and the subsequent Napoleonic War (1803-1815) is well documented with order letters to and returned correspondence from the West African coast and the British Caribbean, which shed a great deal of light on the Royal Navy's relationship to the West Coast of Africa and the British Caribbean.[53]

Officers directed to station themselves on the African coast after escorting convoyed British trade there for the protection of the British

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[51] E. Sparrow, 'Nepean, Sir Evan, first baronet (1752-1822)', *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2009). Available Online: https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19894?rskey=jkfKkN [Accessed 17/8/19].
[52] ADM 2/1097, Adm. To E. Dod, 5th February 1794; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 1/1621, G. Countess to E. Nepean, 10th October 1796, Letter No. 184.
[53] ADM 1/1515, Letters from Captains, Surnames B: 1797, nos. 1-200; ADM 1/1518; ADM 1/1621; ADM 1/1623; ADM 1/1625, Letters from Captains, Surnames C: 1798, nos. 221-401; ADM 1/1627, Letters from Captains, Surnames C: 1799, nos. 241-461; ADM 1/1718, Letters from Captains, Surnames D: 1796; ADM 1/2131, Letters from Captains, Surnames M: 1796, nos. 1-200; ADM 1/2132, Letters from Captains, Surnames M: 1796, nos. 201-350; ADM 1/2133, Letters from Captains, Surnames M: 1797, nos. 1-200; ADM 1/2516, 4; ADM 2/1097-1099; ADM 2/1101; ADM 2/1384.

slave trade and the institution it supplied were key to the translation of these order letters into action. There is a distinct focus on the protection of commercial and economic centres which were key to the institution of British slavery as a whole, whether the officer was assigned to protect British trade interests on the West African coast, plantations in the Caribbean, or as was apparently common from Admiralty orders and the naval officers' correspondence detailing their execution of those instructions, the protection of both and disruption of Britain's imperial rivals.

The Admiralty sent orders to naval officers acting on behalf of Britain all around the world. By examining these orders to officers tasked with the protection of British slavery around the African coast and the Caribbean, it becomes apparent that these orders were formulaic and open-ended in nature, designed to give the officer on station the greatest freedom possible within the boundaries of Admiralty objectives.[54] This was likely due to inherently slow communications at this time, which forced the Admiralty to address the very basic strategic priorities demanded by the government, whilst allowing for circumstantial change in the time it would take for such orders to be enacted. Naturally, contemporaries did not think of these communications as slow – a world in which information could flash from one side of the globe to another in seconds was beyond their imagination – but with hindsight we can see how the limitations of contemporary communications shaped how the Admiralty framed its orders and how it expected them to be carried out. It is common for orders addressed to Royal Navy Officers charged with the protection of the institution of British slavery to largely echo those dispatched to officers on similar duty, across a long time span.[55] It also seems that by making orders open-ended, the Admiralty could increase the achievability of the goals it set its officers; which becomes apparent in the return correspondence

[54] ADM 2/1097-9; 1101; 1384.
[55] *Ibid*.

from officers to the Admiralty, discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

It is common that letters sent to naval officers simply call for the 'protection of the Trade of His Majesty's Subjects' in the case of both the coast of Africa and the Caribbean as well as the 'annoyance' and 'distress' of the enemy, with more specific calls to 'cruise for the protection of those [Caribbean] Islands' or the settlements in Africa respectively.[56] Trade on the West African coast was limited during this period, almost exclusively in an exchange of enslaved humans traded for British manufactures and commodities from across the empire. Similarly, the growing demand in the final decades of the eighteenth century for sugar and other slave-produced products created further demand by Britain's Caribbean planters for enslaved labour. Constant fear of enemy invasion and slave revolts alongside the general disruption of trade meant that the Royal Navy was pivotal to the survival of British slavery. However, these letters remain implicit on the subject of protection, making it difficult to pinpoint the beneficiaries of naval defensive measures.

Indeed, one occasionally discovers particularly enlightening examples which, whilst dangerous if mishandled as generalisations for the whole period under study, prove particularly revealing of the Royal Navy's place protecting and facilitating British slavery. The most prominent of these examples is an order letter sent to Commander Thomas Dundas in September 1796. Dundas was ordered to sail for British Honduras, 'for the protection of His Majesty's Subjects[,] their Slaves & Property'.[57] This is the only instance found during this research that the protection of British settlers' slaves (as an extension of their property), was ordered from a naval officer. It seems that this was likely included due to the position of Honduras as a less stable British colony in an isolated position in a sector of the Caribbean which was largely under the control of the Spanish empire. As a younger region of colonial expansion for the British empire, it seems

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[56] *Ibid*.
[57] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to T. Dundas, 19th September 1796.

likely that the officer tasked with the duties of protection would have little idea what was awaiting him in Honduras, pushing the Admiralty to fully outline the parameters of protection set out by the government which were expected from their officers such as Commander Dundas. The abundance of plantations in other parts of Caribbean like Jamaica and Barbados amongst Britain's West Indian possessions presented more obvious expectations for the naval officer to follow, making the orders to protect British slavery much more implicit in the Admiralty's correspondence with its officers.

The other example which is particularly enlightening is the order letter sent to Captain Henry Lidgbird Ball in October 1797, instructing him

> in the first place to repair to the French settlement of Gorée, and to use your best endeavours in co-operation with the Armed Ships abovementioned, not only to take or destroy the piratical squadron under the Command of Mons[ieur] Re[naud], or any other of the Enemy's ships which may be there, but also to dislodge the Enemy entirely from that Settlement.[58]

The perceived threat from rival nations' (in this case French) ships of war and privateers is clear in this instruction, as the priority determined by the government for Ball to achieve on the African coast was to remove the threat presented by 'Monsieur Renaud' and his 'piratical squadron'. What becomes clear is the intense imperial rivalry which determined the course of events on the African coast and the survival of British slavery up to the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. The Admiralty saw the settlement of Gorée, which had changed hands a number of times since first being colonised by the French in the seventeenth century, as an immediate threat to Britain's interests in Africa, thereby ordering the complete removal of that threat as a priority for Captain Ball, destroying the threat of French privateers through the destruction of the base of operations and resupply itself.

[58] ADM 2/1099, Adm. To H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797.

Captain Ball's objectives are particularly revelatory in terms of defining British commerce protection strategy in 1797-8 in particular. Orders to hunt down and destroy 'Monsieur Renaud' and his squadron were prioritised above all else, as the source of greatest concern for British trade on the African coast. Indeed, the objective of destroying Gorée and the privateers suspected of being there was the only order given for Ball to complete. Unlike many of his contemporaries during the period, who were similarly ordered to Africa, Ball was not instructed to escort trade across the Atlantic to the Caribbean,[59] but was instead

> to return as expeditiously as possible with the Ship & Sloop under your command to Spithead, where you are to remain until you receive further Orders, transmitting to our Secretary an Account of your arrival & proceedings.[60]

There is no explanation given for this, and it seems out of character for the Admiralty to not instruct the captain of a naval vessel on such station to escort trade to the Caribbean. It seems that the duty of locating and destroying Renaud, his squadron and the French position at Gorée took such precedence that the Admiralty foresaw that the quest for Renaud would consume all of Captain Ball's focus and resources; as later discussed, this would ring true as Ball was solely focused on the destruction of Renaud and the French base at Gorée.[61]

The letter dispatched to Captain Ball is also a significant example of the reasoning for the open-ended nature of government orders disseminated via the Admiralty. The Admiralty makes the admission in their order letter that

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[59] ADM 2/1098, Adm.to W. Mitchell, 10th October 1795; ADM 2/1098, Adm. To W. Parker, 14th December 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To J. Cornwallis, 26th February 1798; ADM 2/1101, Adm. To C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806; ADM 2/1101, Adm. To J. Stiles, 24th September 1806.

[60] ADM 2/1099, Adm. To H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797.

[61] ADM 1/1618, H. L. Ball to E. Nepean, 18th January- 10th April 1798.

from the nature of the abovementioned service, Events may possibly happen which are not immediately provided for in these Instructions; You are, in such case, at liberty to use your own discretion; taking care however, that the Object shall in all respects fully justify your Conduct, and that you remain no longer on the Coast, than may be absolutely necessary to accomplish the Purposes for which you are sent.[62]

Clearly, the Admiralty recognised the fluidity that situations on station could undergo, as the allowance of discretion on the part of the officer on station to make a necessary judgement on how best to proceed for the completion of the orders issued to them.

1.3 Convoy and the Logistics of Trade Protection.

The convoy lists contained in the Admiralty papers of the National Archives are enlightening not only for their record of convoy sizes and composition, but they also help determine patterns in how Royal Navy resources were committed to the task of supporting British slavery during the period from 1793 to the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Through analysis of convoys conducted from the principal southern ports of Britain (predominantly Spithead at Portsmouth and Cork in southern Ireland) to the coast of Africa, there is an easily discernible trend in which vessels are committed to the task of support for the convoys. Unfortunately, there are extremely limited examples of convoys recorded between the west coast of Africa and the West Indies as a continued effort to convoy slave ships the full length of their voyage. The sole example found during the conducting of research for this project was the convoy escorted by HMS *Maidstone* (32 guns) in 1797, which is recorded for the second leg of the voyage between the West African coast and Barbados.[63] Other recorded

[62] ADM 2/1099, Adm. To H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797.
[63] ADM 7/783, Admiralty Miscellanea. General, 1797-1798, 'A List of Ships &c under Convoy of the *Maidstone* frigate', May 1797.

convoys only detail the escort by naval vessels as far as the West African coast, with some even bound on alternative routes, to which the handful of slavers that can be identified for sure having been attached as long as the escorted route is common for all ships of the convoy.[64] This highlights the presence of significant gaps within the convoy lists, as the information provided by the lists themselves about both the ships being escorted and their Royal Navy escort is sparse, as well as the strand of trade in which the merchant ships are involved being undisclosed. This is not such a challenge when the destination of a convoy is recorded as 'Africa', but can prove difficult when a small number of ships as part of an exceptionally large convoy are recorded with the destination of 'Africa' amongst an assortment of recorded destinations.[65] Since no ship in the convoy lists is definitively defined in any regard in the lists besides its name, commander, port of origin and destination, it requires cross-referencing between the convoy lists themselves and the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database to determine which ships of the larger convoys were slavers.[66] What becomes clear is that despite clear concern for the protection of British trade (including the slave trade), the administrative requirements were not in place at the time to fully allow this. The thin information provided by the lists, as well as the disconnected nature of the lists themselves as more vessels were added to convoys on pages later in the volumes of Admiralty paperwork, demonstrate that the demands of the convoy system and the administrative limits of the time were incompatible.

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[64] See: ADM 7/782, Admiralty Miscellanea. General, 1793-1797; ADM 7/783; ADM 7/784, Admiralty Miscellanea. General, 1797-1800; ADM 7/786, Admiralty Miscellanea. General, 1800-1801; ADM 7/787, Admiralty Miscellanea. General, 1801-1802; ADM 7/789, Admiralty Miscellanea. General, 1804-1805.

[65] For example: ADM 7/782, 'A List of Vessels who took sailing Instructions from Captain Cornwallis of the *Sheerness* Frigate at Cork in December 1796 for the West Indies'; ADM 7/783, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of H. M. S. *Pompee* Capt Vashon in July 1797'; ADM 7/784, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HMS Severn Capt Whitby from Portsmouth for the West Indies in April 1800'; ADM 7/786, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HM Ship *Syren* Capt Gosselin bound to the West Indies at Cove of Cork the 16th of December 1800'; ADM 7/786, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HM Ships *Topaze* and *Heureusa*, bound to the West Indies in February 1801'; ADM 7/789, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HMS *Unicorn*, Capt Hardyman at Spithead the 23rd of December 1804'.

[66] *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade – Database* (2018). Available online: https://www.slavevoyages.org/voyage/database [Accessed 18/5/2019].

Through the combination of the convoy lists and lists of all Royal Navy ships recorded,[67] patterns can be discerned which illustrate the Admiralty's consistent level of resource commitment for the convoying of trade. It becomes apparent that the support of British trade to all ports of call was remarkably similar, as the common size of naval ships committed to the protection of convoys which contained slave vessels (although not necessarily recorded as solely destined for Africa) was a fifth rate ship (of frigate size) with between 32 and 44 guns.[68] Primarily, ships of the line (of around 60 guns or above) were considered unsuitable for the protection of British convoys, a duty instead carried out by the faster (although more lightly armed) frigates which were built in their hundreds during the wars with France which could react and respond to changing situations at sea faster than their larger counterparts, as well as pursue small, nimble privateers more easily. Ships of the line were also extremely expensive to build and operate, although a 64-gun ship was much cheaper to build and maintain than a ship of, for example, 100 guns. However, when they were destined for a similar station as trade being escorted in convoy, ships of the line were used for that duty out of practicality, as was the case with the escort of a convoy to India (to which two slavers were attached) under the protection of HMS *Blenheim*, a ship of the line armed with approximately 80 guns.[69]

Indeed, fourth rate ships of between 50 and 60 guns tended to be slow and unwieldy, making them less than ideal for the job as convoy escorts, which involved quick manoeuvres and giving chase of privateers and enemy vessels. Also, Rif Winfield points out that the lowest gun ports

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[67] J. J. College & B. Warlow, *Ships of the Royal Navy: The Complete Record of all Fighting Ships of the Royal Navy* (London: Greenhill Books, 2003).

[68] For example: ADM 7/782, 'A List of Vessels from Portsmouth to Africa under convoy of the *Iris* Frigate, March 1795'; ADM 7/784, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HMS *Severn* Capt Whitby from Portsmouth for the West Indies in April 1800'; ADM 7/786, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HM Ship *Syren* Capt Gosselin bound to the West Indies at Cove of Cork the 16th of December 1800'; ADM 7/789, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HMS *Unicorn*, Capt Hardyman at Spithead the 23rd of December 1804'; College & Warlow, *Ships of the Royal Navy*.

[69] ADM 7/789, 'A List of Ships and Vessels Under Convoy of HMS *Blenheim*[,] Rear Admiral Tho[ma]s Troubridge Austin Bissell Esq. Captain at Spithead 23rd of April 1805 bound to India'; College & Warlow, *Ships of the Royal Navy*, 53.

on 50-gun ships were often very close to the waterline, reducing the firepower they could bring to bear in action at risk of taking on water.[70] They would, however, be called upon and complete such a job in the event of vessel shortages, which were a common problem of the era. During the period 1790-1815, there was an average of 132 ships of the line, compared with an average of 199 vessels of below 60 guns (classified as fourth rates and below).[71] Michael Duffy has pointed out that the majority of British warships were of fourth rate and below, which indicates the importance attached to trade protection in British strategy.[72] Commerce protection was one of such vessels' main duties, once again demonstrating the state's concern for the well-being of British trade and its benefits to the growing British empire. What also becomes apparent is the similarity in the size of escort provision in relation to the size of the convoy to be escorted, regardless of size and destination. In all but one case amongst the convoy lists, the Admiralty provided only one Royal Navy vessel, with the exception being a convoy of 135 merchant vessels (of which two have been identified as slavers), which was escorted by the fifth-rate HMS *Topaze* (38) and the sixth-rate HMS *Heureux* (22).[73]

Besides the provision of basic information concerning the total size of convoys, the escort provided and the officer commanding the escort ships, the Admiralty's convoy lists provide no detail about prospective cargos, the size of the escort, or complete details of vessels' fates. They do offer sparse detail of individual vessel fates, although these are often vague and phrased simply as 'parted without leave' or 'parted with permission' in the remarks of each list. They do, however, provide one crucial insight into government policy: the universal need to convoy trade and protect it between leaving the British Isles and reaching its destination, wherever that may be. This calls into question Patrick Crowhurst's assertion that

[70] R. Winfield, *The 50-Gun Ship* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1997), 69-70.
[71] J. Glete, *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860* (Stockholm: Stockholms Universitat, 1993), 396.
[72] Duffy, 'Introduction', 3.
[73] ADM 7/786, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HM Ships *Topaze* and *Heureusa*, bound to the West Indies in February 1801'; College & Warlow, *Ships of the Royal Navy*, 328, 157.

ships engaged in the slave trade were unescorted by the Royal Navy for reasons already discussed such as 'perishability' of cargo and an extensive coast on which the trade was conducted.[74]

Indeed, the convoy lists are an incomplete record by their very nature, as they are a record formed in the moment as a logistical device to discern immediate requirements for the proper escort and protection of British trade all over the world and across the growing British empire. The lack of logged lists for slavers travelling between the African coast and the islands of the British Caribbean can be explained through the realisation that such lists were determined 'on the spot' by the naval officer assigned to West Africa for the protection of trade. Time constraints forced the officer to proceed without informing the Admiralty of their movements until they arrived in the Caribbean itself, whereby it was likely too difficult to recall the complete convoy list between Africa and the Caribbean. There is evidence to directly support this, which similarly contradicts Crowhurt's conclusion of an unescorted slave trade, which will be discussed in greater detail in the discussion of officers' return correspondence with the Admiralty in the following section of this chapter, as officers clearly were responsible (and successful) in escorting trade between the African coast and the islands of the Caribbean.[75]

1.4 Royal Navy Officers' Execution of Government Direction.

Correspondence from naval officers was sent to the Admiralty via the secretary, who for the majority of the period under study was Evan Nepean (1795-1804). These letters take the form of formal notes and similarly legalistic language to the letters sent from the Admiralty to the officers on station. Much like the letters sent to officers cruising on the African coast for the protection of British slavery, the officers' return

[74] Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade*, 67.
[75] ADM 1/1621, G. Countess to E. Nepean, 22nd April 1796, Letter No.182; ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 15th July 1797.

correspondence to the Admiralty transparently recounts the orders they have been assigned, expressing in great detail the expectations levelled upon that officer, as well as how they intend to execute (if they have not already done so) those orders in practice.[76] This was probably the officer's way on station to demonstrate his understanding of the orders given to him, and show the Admiralty his obedience and willingness to complete his task. The letters are often highly detailed, demonstrating that the correspondence returned to the Admiralty is largely the only official correspondence that they were likely to receive, with Captain Henry Lidgbird Ball recounting over a month of action on the African coast, in the pursuit and destruction of the French 'privateers' and their base at the island of Gorée, a prominent and consistent threat to British interests (including slavery affiliated settlements) on the West African coast.[77] Whilst there was the admission of an open-ended nature to Admiralty orders, it seems that officers were keen to follow such instructions to the letter as far as the situation on the spot would allow.

The example of Henry Lidgbird Ball is particularly enlightening, as his priority upon arrival on the African coast, and indeed for the entire voyage, appeared to be to 'dislodge' the French from Gorée and destroy the squadron of ships under the command of 'Monsieur Renaud'- a privateer apparently operating on the coast using Gorée (a French settlement in the Senegal) as a naval base.[78] Ball was accompanied by two armed merchant vessels, fitted out by merchants of Liverpool for the provision of bolstered defence for trade on the African coast.[79] He made the problem of Renaud and the settlement at Gorée his primary objective, and was keen to fulfil the objectives outlined by the Admiralty. He clearly

[76] See for example: ADM 1/1515; ADM 1/1518; ADM 1/1621; ADM 1/1623; ADM 1/1625; ADM 1/1627; ADM 1/1718; ADM 1/2131-2133; ADM 1/2516.
[77] ADM 1/1515; ADM 1/1518.
[78] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 1/1518, H. L. Ball to E Nepean, 18th January-10th April 1798.
[79] *Ibid.*

devoted all his energy and resources to this venture, as was instructed by the Admiralty themselves.[80]

There is little speculation that commerce raiding was a persistent threat to British trade in the region of the coast, and one the Admiralty were no doubt anxious to rectify through sustained effort. Indeed, examination of Royal Navy officers' correspondence from their place on station highlights a semi-formal function of such correspondence, as the return of intelligence from a standard cruise for the protection of British trade on the African coast had a direct effect on future governmental policy regarding the flow of British trade to and from the African coast. Ball's orders appear to have been defined based on the intelligence and concerns passed back to the Admiralty from the letters of Captain James Cornwallis on behalf of the governor of Sierra Leone on Cornwallis' similar cruise a year earlier, relaying that

> The Governor of Sierra Leone requested I would permit the *Calypso* to take the benefit of my convoy off the Coast, I complied with his request, as he informed me, that he was apprehensive the Enemy's privateers from Gorée would endeavour to intercept her, should they be apprised of her sailing.[81]

It is evident that the threat of privateering was consistent with the flow of trade to and from the African coast, as where there was shipping to prey on, predatory private men of war (no doubt alongside state naval vessels) would always seek to profit from defenceless trade. Protection no doubt took on an extra level of priority considering the lack of a permanent squadron on the African coast, which would also explain why Captain Ball was so focused on the 'destruction' of Renaud's squadron and the 'dislodg[ing]' of the French settlement at Gorée.[82] Considering the relative proximity of Gorée to British settlements like Sierra Leone (see Figure 2), it

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[80] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797.
[81] ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to Adm., 10th February 1797, Letter No. 243.
[82] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 1/1518, H. L. Ball to E Nepean, 18th January-10th April 1798.

is easy to see why the Governor of Sierra Leone would register his concern with the main source of protection for British trade interests and the institution of British slavery on the coast, the Royal Navy.

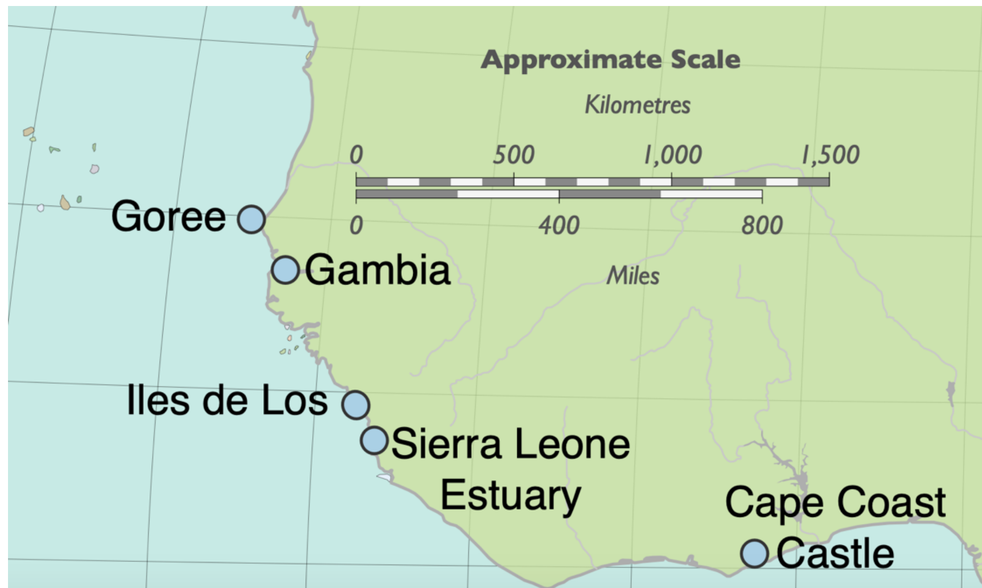

Figure 2: Map showing proximities of rival nations' settlements (Generated in Ortelius 2)

It seems likely that the threat from marauders operating out of Gorée developed and grew with time between the concern brought to the attention of Captain Cornwallis and offensively acted upon by Captain Ball just over a year later. Captain Cornwallis appears to regard the threat of privateers from Gorée as a secondary objective, instead being tasked first and foremost with the continued protection of his convoy, and the addition of the *Calypso* to his protection, before returning to the objective given to him to cruise for the protection of the trade on the coast of Angola and the 'annoyance of the enemy'.[83] Due to a lack of information, and the reception of orders which were still in the process of being fulfilled, it seems likely that Captain Cornwallis was reluctant to act on thin and unverified intelligence, instead holding on to the duty he had been ordered

[83] ADM 2/1099, Adm. To J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 26th June 1797, Letter No. 244; ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 15th July 1797, Letter No. 245.

to fulfil. By the time Captain Ball had arrived on the coast with orders to begin his (in modern parlance) 'search and destroy' mission at Gorée, a greater amount of information had been gathered, even with the identity of the individual in command apparently known to government, allowing Ball to devote his resources entirely to the locating and disrupting of Renaud's privateer squadron.[84]

It becomes clear that the officers tasked with the protection of British slavery had a role in the definition of the institution's protection, even if that is only through the provision of intelligence and reacting to the situation on hand. Cornwallis' submission of intelligence on behalf of the Governor of Sierra Leone to the Admiralty clearly had a hand in defining the objectives set out for Captain Ball, although no doubt the information which specifically identified Renaud as the target of Ball's privateer-hunting objective was gathered between Cornwallis' correspondence and Ball's assignment, once again suggesting the developing concern about the threat presented to British trade on the African coast and by extension, British slavery from rival nations' ships.

As briefly mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, it is evident that the convoy lists drawn up for visualisation and recording of the numbers, destinations and, sometimes, fates of convoys being escorted all over the world were incomplete and inaccurate. The demands of being the 'man on the spot' and the time constraints presented by the slave trade meant that the officer on station in Africa to inform could not inform the Admiralty of the total convoy to be taken across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, as evidenced by the examples of Captain George Countess (to whom no reference is made in the Convoy Lists or Admiralty order letters) and Captain James Cornwallis. Countess recounts waiting to assemble a convoy of an unspecified size destined for the Caribbean at Princes Island from the 17 April 1796, intending to leave for the West Indies on the 25

[84] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 1/1518, H. L. Ball to E Nepean, 18th January-10th April 1798.

April.[85] Unfortunately, it was not possible to find the letter which could confirm whether this time window was achieved, with the next available letter to have survived in the Admiralty In-Letters at the National Archives to be dated 10 October 1796, which detailed only Countess' and his crews' battle and subsequent recovery from an outbreak of yellow fever whilst convoying returning trade from the Caribbean to Britain as far as the Gulf of Florida.[86] Cornwallis spent much longer assembling shipping to convoy to the West Indies, recounting that he awaited the trade to be convoyed to the West Indies for thirty days, before setting off for the Caribbean with approximately forty merchant vessels (of which many were likely slavers) destined for the British West Indies; being only able to communicate such a sequence of events upon arrival in Barbados and subsequently Jamaica, the two principal destination for the merchant vessels under convoy.[87] With at least a month's delay between leaving the coast of Africa (9 May 1797) and arrival at port in Barbados (26 June 1797), it is easy to see why the convoy lists are incomplete; which is undoubtedly not only true for the slave trade, but all trade conducted under convoy by the Royal Navy.

Once again, it is clear that the challenges of communication affected the accurate recording of convoys. This demonstrates the even greater importance of the correspondence made by officers on station in Africa and the Caribbean, as they give the clearest view of the final stage in an examination of British government's policy toward protection and facilitation of British slavery leading up to abolition of the slave trade in 1807: how the government's policy and strategy was translated into action, alongside how achievable that policy and strategy was.

[85] ADM 1/1621, G. Countess to E. Nepean, 22nd April 1796, Letter No.182.
[86] ADM 1/1621, G. Countess to E. Nepean, 10th October 1796, Letter No. 184.
[87] ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 26th June 1797; ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 15th July 1797.

Chapter 2: The Royal Navy's Methods in the Support of British Atlantic Slavery.

The Royal Navy's methods in supporting British Atlantic slavery were many and varied, and can be considered as an extension of the broader role the Royal Navy held in this period as the protectors of British trade and economic interests. This chapter will be structured from the most important method of protection to the least, although each method is far from independent of others, instead part of a chain of interconnected priorities pressed onto the Royal Navy's duties. The most prominent method through which the Royal Navy protected and supported British Atlantic slavery was the protection of British slave factories on the West African Coast and plantations in the Caribbean, with the former being the key priority for the British state in relation to the protection of British Atlantic slavery as the source of Britain's supply of forced labour to the Caribbean. This is followed by the protection and escort of convoys from Britain to the West African coast and often onward to the Caribbean, as ships assembled and were escorted by a Royal Navy vessel (of often similar size) from ports around the British Isles down to prominent centres of slave trading on the West African coast, before they would be assembled once more and further escorted to the Caribbean islands. This is the most frequently ordered objective for the Royal Navy officers tasked with British Atlantic slavery protection during this period, demonstrating the prominence the Navy played in the protection of the trade to Africa and the Caribbean. However, as previously suggested, such convoys rely on having a destination to be escorted to alongside the supply of labour on which the British slave trade relied, based primarily at Cape Coast Castle and Gorée.

2.1 Protection of British Slave 'Factories' in West Africa and Plantations in the Caribbean.

Britain was one of the largest traders in the slave trade during the eighteenth century. Shortages of labour in the Caribbean colonies under British rule and growing demand for slave-produced sugar and other tropically sourced commodities pushed the demand for labour from Africa. Sugar production in particular had a high mortality rate, requiring a constant stream of replacement from Africa. This meant that the British merchant communities (most notably the Society of Merchants Trading to Africa) which traded with African warlords for slaves to be shipped to the Americas required bases to operate from, allowing them to buy slaves from Africans in exchange for British-produced goods under a barter trade system.[88] Primarily used as trading bases through which to barter with African warlords and secure a steady supply of slaves, slave factories on the West African coast also usually consisted of storehouses and pens for slaves to reside in until they were sold to slavers calling at the factory in search of cargo destined for the Caribbean.[89] Slave traders might also buy directly from Africans themselves, using the British coastal settlements in Africa to instead replenish supplies and men on their way to the Americas with their cargo of slaves, as well as taking refuge from the threat of privateers and rival nations' naval vessels common in wartime. These settlements stretched across the African coast, covering thousands of miles and separated by terrain otherwise largely unknown to British settlers. Consider the example of Bance Island in the Sierra Leone River, which whilst only a small base of trade, had consistent traffic of the slave trade right up to the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807. The trading post belonging to David Hancock's group of merchant 'associates' under study for his book *Citizens of the World*, Bance Island was less than 14 acres (less than 0.02 square miles) in area but included all the typical features of a

[88] Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 201; Davis, *Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, 282.
[89] D. Eltis & D. Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 304.

European trading factory.[90] The coast was an area of intense colonial rivalry, with the French in particular proving a consistent threat to British settlement at nearby Gorée, although by the close of the period of study the threat had been removed from Gorée as it had been taken by British efforts sometime around 1806.[91] As the centre of supply for the slave trades of many European countries, the African coast was a theatre of often forgotten conflict, within which the Royal Navy was constantly embroiled.

The protection of British slave factories on the West African coast was key to the Royal Navy's role protecting and advancing British Atlantic slavery in the lead up to abolition in 1807. The slave factories such as those at Cape Coast Castle and Gorée were key in the continued supply of enslaved labour for the British plantations in the Caribbean. Without the protection afforded to the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa (an organised company of wealthy merchants with a shared interest in the slave trade) and their slave factories and trading posts along the African coast, British plantations would have struggled to raise the numbers of labourers required to keep up with demand. The protection of settlements (ie. slave factories and plantations) was a frequent objective for Royal Navy officers supporting British Atlantic slavery, often a priority in the correspondence between the Admiralty and the Royal Navy officer being dispatched to the West African Coast. Order letters dispatched to the officers tasked with the protection of British slavery are suitably open-ended and formulaic, designed as a cover-all document to outline the basic wishes of the Admiralty concerning protection whilst allowing scope for the individual officer's implementation of those orders in line with the situation that lay before them.[92] For example, the earliest example of such orders preserved in the order books of the Admiralty for the period under

[90] Hancock, *Citizens of the World*; Eltis & Richardson, *Atlas of the Transatlantic Slave Trade*, 99.
[91] ADM 2/1101, Adm. To C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806.
[92] ADM 2/1097; ADM 2/1098; ADM 2/1099 for examples.

study is suitably flexible, ordering Commander Edward Brown upon successfully escorting supplies to Cape Coast Castle to

> cruize in the Sloop you command on such part of the Coast, as, upon Consultation with the Governor of Cape Coast Castle shall be judged best for the Protection of the Trade of His Majesty's Subjects, for so long a time as the Provisions & Water of the said sloop will admit.[93]

Brown was directed to the coast of Africa with supplies for the maintenance of British settlement at Cape Coast Castle (and by extension the slave trade which operated there), which once successful took on the broader order to protect British trade and the settlement that it stemmed from. This letter demonstrates that the Admiralty recognised the challenges of communication at the time, leaving the further dissemination of orders to the Governor of Cape Coast Castle as a 'man on the spot' better suited to determine the best placement of British naval assets in the protection of slavery on the West African coast.

This raises the question of how officers were selected for this duty. Perhaps it was reserved for officers who were well-connected and well-rated, as the African coast seemed to be a region of lucrative prize-taking potential, with the offer of wealth and fame for those stationed there. Similarly, there could be a connection between the allocation of such station and the repeated service on the coast of individuals such as Captain James Cornwallis, who served on the coast at least twice, and Lieutenant John Mathews, who served as an agent on the coast before returning on orders of trade protection.[94] Both of these men had evidently been 'seasoned' for duty on the African coast, a notorious hotbed for disease which had a huge mortality rate. It therefore makes sense that they would

[93] ADM 2/1097, Adm. to E. Brown, 22nd November 1793.

[94] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 26th February 1798; ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 26th June 1797; ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 15th July 1797, Letter No. 245; BPP, 1789, 69, *Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations*, 12, 34; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To J. Mathews, 27th December 1796.

be assigned once more to such duty, with no doubt a greater understanding of what was expected of them than officers without comparable experience. Long detachments like the voyage and station on the African coast were unlikely to be entrusted to officers who needed to be kept under the observations of the Commander-in-Chief, once more calling for experience and understanding of the dangers and trials of the region, as well as ability to work independently if so required.

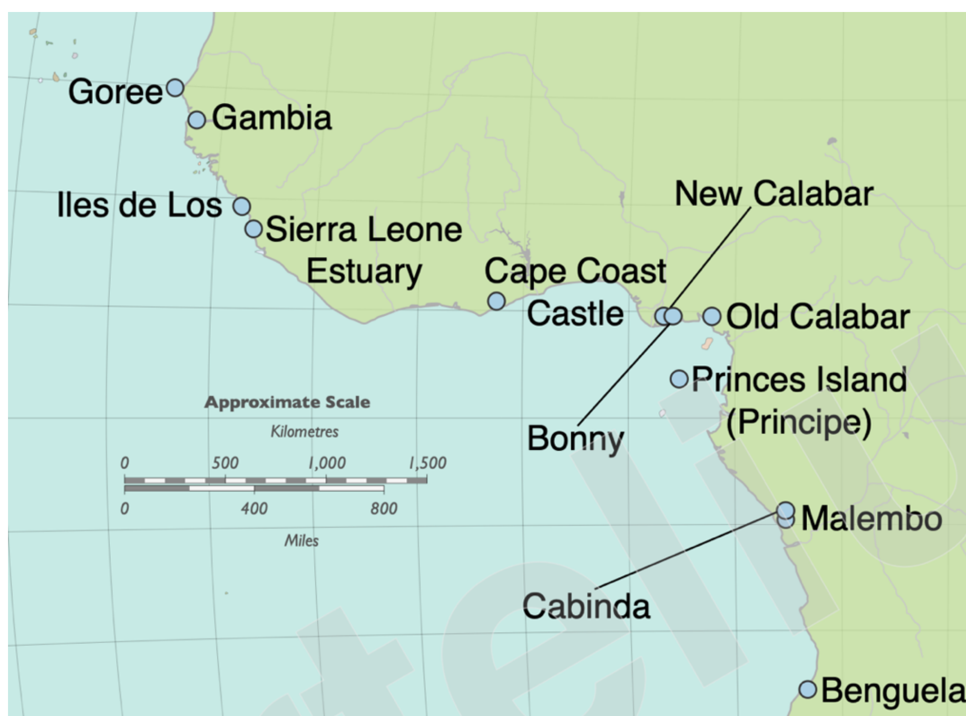

Figure 3: Map of West Africa, Showing Key Settlements and Areas of Supply of the Slave Trade, 1783-1808 (Generated in Ortelius 2).

Little had changed in the flexibilities built into these orders by the close of the period under study, with Captain John Stiles being similarly ordered to

> make the best of your way to the Island of Gorée; & having seen in safety such of the said trade as may be bound to that Island, […] go on with as little delay as possible to Sierra Leone, and thence with any Trade that may remain with you, to Cape Coast Castle, and in case you should obtain information that may be depended upon,

> that the Enemy's Privateers of Ships of War are cruising upon the Coast of Africa, you are to use your best endeavours to take or destroy them: But if none of the Enemy's ships or Privateers should be upon the Coast, you are, in that case, to remain for the space of one month upon your station off Cape Coast Castle for the protection of the Trade of H. M. Subjects & the annoyance of the Enemy.[95]

Stiles had received his own open-ended order from the Admiralty, which demonstrates that the communication challenges during this period were largely unchanged even in the early nineteenth century, a situation which was not to change until the arrival of the steamship and the electric telegraph. Stiles was given the general instructions as far as the escort of trade to the African coast and the subsequent protection of British trade interests there whilst hunting down enemy vessels that may be preying on the trade operating there. Given the difficulties presented by eighteenth-century communication, orders addressed to Royal Navy officers necessitated being open-ended in nature, illustrated here by the unknown of the size, strength, and even mere existence of an enemy presence on the African coast which posed a threat to British trade and the institution of slavery. Therefore, the orders sent to Brown, Stiles and other officers of the Royal Navy needed to be flexible enough to allow the individual officer to react to the situation as laid out before them whilst simultaneously outlining the Admiralty's minimum expectations of their officers acting overseas.

An illuminating, though isolated example which illustrates the navy's role in the protection of plantations and British slave settlements comes in the orders provided by the Admiralty to a Royal Navy officer tasked with the protection of British plantations in Honduras.[96] Whilst it is common for other Admiralty orders to be scant on detail regarding the

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[95] ADM 2/1101, Adm. to J. Stiles, 24th September 1806.
[96] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to T. Dundas, 19th September 1796.

protection of British slavery, this letter is especially enlightening. Commander Thomas Dundas was ordered to sail to Honduras 'for the protection of His Majesty's Subjects[,] their Slaves & Property'.[97] The British presence and existence of plantations in the southern Caribbean at Honduras was not as established as British presence on the sugar islands such as Jamaica, Barbados and other islands of the Leeward Islands for example. Unlike these other examples, Honduras was clearly less stable an area for sugar plantations than other areas of the Caribbean, especially given the close proximity to Mexico and other potentially hostile Spanish colonies and military bases. This is reflected in the contingency plan that Dundas was to follow in the event of 'hostile attack by the Spaniards upon the British Settlers', with his being ordered to 'land the Arms & ammunition which you have been directed to receive onboard for that purpose' and 'if needful, [he was to] remov[e] [the settlers], their Slaves and Property to Jamaica, or such other convenient Port belonging to His Majesty as the exigency of the case may require.'[98] It is interesting that Jamaica is identified as the first port of call in the event of evacuation, although this is no doubt due to the permanent squadron of the Royal Navy which was based there, as well as the long-established plantation culture on the island into which the evacuated British settlers and their slaves could be integrated. Orders to Dundas illustrate the comparative instability of Britain's place in Honduras compared with the established planter culture in Jamaica and other parts of the British Caribbean, as well as the centres of supply of enslaved labour on the West African coast.

The comparison of Caribbean plantation protection and protection of production centres on the African coast helps to illustrate British governmental priority regarding the protection and advancement of British slavery in the Atlantic world. The slave factories and their defensive structures on the West African coast were obviously the centre of British slave 'production', which explain why resources were annually committed

[97] *Ibid*.
[98] *Ibid.*

to the 'maintenance[,] Protection and Defence of their Forts & Settlements', and why ships of the Royal Navy were frequently ordered to escort storeships and victualling vessels to the African coast in support of the African Company's settlements.[99] In the cycle of trade on which British slavery relied, it makes sense that the West African production centres would take priority of resources over plantations in the Caribbean (and particularly those in isolated and hostile areas such as those in Honduras). Without the centres of slave production and sources of supply, the plantations of the British Caribbean islands would struggle to maintain their populations of enslaved workers when mortality amongst the enslaved was extremely high. In testimony to Parliament regarding the state of the slave trade in 1789, Lieutenant John Mathews implied that European interest in continued supply of African people as a source of labour was an alternative to the previous practice of 'put[ting] to Death the Prisoners made in War' apparently used by African warlords to dispose of an excess of prisoners.[100] This suggests a level of justification by Mathews for the continued part of the British merchant community in the slave trade; alongside the continued support of that trade by the Royal Navy. Mathews appears to imply that humanitarianism was key to the support of the trade, as a method of 'improving' African lives and removing them from the threat of being held prisoner or executed by their fellow Africans.

It is common to see the Admiralty orders request surveys of key British slave factories to be undertaken by the officers on the African coast, as a supplementary order secondary to the protection of factories themselves and the trade which flowed to, from and between them.[101] One of the reports made detailing the condition of Cape Coast Castle, composed by Captain George Countess (whose orders from the Admiralty

[99] For example: ADM 2/1097, Adm. to E. Brown, 22nd November 1793; ADM 2/1097 Adm. to E. Dod, 5th February 1794; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to J. Stiles, 24th September 1806.
[100] BPP, 1789, 69, *Report of the Lords of the Committee of Council appointed for the Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations*, 35-6.
[101] ADM 2/1097, Adm. to E. Dod,5th February 1794; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797.

were not possible to locate in the pursuit of this research) is particularly enlightening concerning the size and typical defensibility of such a factory as Cape Coast Castle. In March 1796, Cape Coast Castle was armed with a total of 99 guns of between two and 42 lbs, with three howitzers of either 13 or seven and a half inches.[102] However, at the time of making his survey, Countess reported that 31 of these guns were 'dismounted', although little reason is given for this besides small remark made that several gun carriages were in disrepair and need of replacement.[103] It is perhaps telling that even three years into a major war, Cape Coast Castle was in a poor state of repair defensively, likely due to inadequate and inattentive maintenance and climate conditions' effects on the wood of the carriages. Considering the apparent impairment in the ability of this settlement, and perhaps others along the coast, to protect themselves, the Navy's role as surveyors of factories and infrastructure further demonstrates their importance to the protection of British slavery. This demonstrates another function executed by the Royal Navy's officers stationed on the West African coast, as not only the protector of the settlements themselves and the trade being conducted in their vicinities, but also as a kind of quality surveyor who was pivotal to keeping central government informed of required supplies to an otherwise difficult to reach part of growing British imperial interests.

British Atlantic slavery relied heavily on the Royal Navy's protection of the source of enslaved labour to maintain the plantations and production centres in the Caribbean. This illustrates that the Royal Navy was key to the defence of British slavery through the protection of British slave factories in West Africa and plantations in the Caribbean. As the integral part of the British supply of slaves to the Americas, it comes as no surprise that the West African coast should receive such resources to

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[102] ADM 1/1621, 'State and Condition of Cape Coast Castle as taken by George Countess Esquire, of HMS *Daedalus*, this 21st day of March 1796'.
[103] *Ibid.*

better enable its fortification and allay concerns for the economic interests of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa.

2.2 Escort and Protection of Convoys Out to the Caribbean via Africa.

Although it proved hard to enforce, convoy was vital during times of war in the eighteenth century to protect British merchant vessels around the world from ships of rival European nations' navies as well as privateers of such nations, as well as pirates in a small number of regions around the world. The escorting of convoys by vessels of the Royal Navy, including those containing slavers, was just one facet of a wider concern about trade protection enacted by British government during this period. Well-armed naval vessels acted as a deterrent to opportunistic ships of rival nations hoping to prey on merchant ships with commonly lower armament and/or quality of training for combat.

The act of convoying ships under naval protection was not compulsory during the eighteenth century until the passing of the 1798 Convoy Act.[104] After this time, convoy became a strictly enforced method of trade protection, with the exception of the British arm of the Atlantic slave trade. It is clear from correspondence as discussed above that the sailing of merchant ships under convoy to the coast of Africa was voluntary, with the decision to sail under escort of the Royal Navy being entirely the choice of ships' masters who were willing to do so. The difficulties of organising and maintaining convoy are documented as far back as 1741 when London merchants petitioned the government for greater protection of their outward-bound trade on routes all over the world following losses

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[104] The Act itself has proven especially hard to find, but the Bill it was passed as is as follows: BPP, 1797-8, 116, *A Bill [As Amended By The Committee] For The Better Protection of the Trade of this Kingdom; and for granting New and Additional Duties of Customs on Goods Imported and Exported, and on the Tonnage of all Ships entering Outwards or Inwards to or from Foreign Parts*.

sustained during the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748). The Admiralty's report made in response to the concerns of these merchants point out that

> nothing is more frequent than that the complaints of the commanders of convoys of the obstinacy or folly of several masters of merchant ships, who refuse to obey their signals or directions for the better keeping company together; but disregarding all order of government, desert their convoys from impatience of getting sooner into port; by which means, and some time by separation in fogs or bad weather, may have fallen into the enemy's hands.[105]

This is an example of the long-established friction between naval officers and merchant captains, which serves as an explanation for why convoy could be such a challenging activity for all involved. This behaviour was common up until the 1790s, with extensive mention of merchant ships being marked as 'parted without leave' on lists of merchant ships sailing in convoy for the protection of many strands of British trade, although it seems very infrequently so in the escort of slavers to Africa and onwards to the Caribbean.[106] This would suggest the necessity for new legislation, such as that of the compulsory Convoy Act 1798, to further protect British trade and minimise losses to enemy capture, although as becomes clear, not for the compulsory convoying of British slave ships.

The convoy lists for the period 1793 to 1808 record far fewer voyages to the African coast than other trade routes of this period, with only 19 convoys found during the research for this dissertation with the destination for at least one vessel in the convoy being listed as 'Africa', compared with 23 convoys assigned to escort trade from the Caribbean back to Britain within ADM 7/782 (covering the years 1793-7) alone.[107] There is no definite reason given for this infrequency, although it is likely that this was linked with the assertion made by Crowhurst, who suggests

[105] 'Convoys: merchants' petition, 1741', in Hattendorf et al., *British Naval Documents*, 366-370.
[106] ADM 7/782-9.
[107] ADM 7/782-9.

that the large area of the West African coast over which the trade was conducted, alongside the 'perishability' of the cargo of slaves once loaded and therefore the need to sail quickly, without remaining static for a larger convoy,[108] meant that slavers were extremely difficult to convoy during the eighteenth century, predominantly left for the coast of Africa as individuals, and travelled onwards to the Caribbean in the same manner once loaded with cargo.[109] Also, the notorious unhealthiness of the slave coast could have effected idle time in West Africa, as demonstrated by the old saying: 'Beware and take care [o]f the Bight of Benin; [f]or one that comes out, [t]here are forty go in'.[110] However, this does not confirm Crowhurst's conclusion, as there are still many records for convoys out to the African coast and onwards to the Caribbean. Crowhurst's conclusion is unfounded, and in fact the Royal Navy was vital to the defence of British slavery through its convoying of slave vessels to the African coast and often onwards to the Caribbean. However, it was by no means a universal practice, and reflects much more the assertion made by Ralph Davis, that the trade between Britain, West Africa and the West Indies was one of a number of 'regular arrangements' in which 'individual ships made complicated voyages at times to avoid having empty holds'.[111] This certainly coincides with the distinct lack of systematic documentation of convoys destined for the West African coast, as individual ships would likely complete voyages as and when they wished, within the boundaries of seasonal considerations, regardless of the provision of an organised naval convoy. Convoys detailed in the lists often record merchant ships of various strands of British trade which broke rank with the convoy they were assigned to be protected under, being recorded as having 'parted company without leave'.[112]

[108] Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade 1689-1815*, 67.
[109] *Ibid.*
[110] As quoted in M. Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Merchant Seamen, Pirates and the Anglo-American Maritime World, 1700-*1750 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 47.
[111] Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, 181.
[112] ADM 7/782-9.

The most prominent duty entrusted to the Royal Navy within the protection and advancement of British Atlantic slavery was the escorting of convoys to Africa, and often onwards to the Caribbean. In examination of Admiralty order letters to Royal Navy officers serving on the West African coast,[113] it becomes clear that the protection of goods out to Africa (often commodities such as alcohol, agricultural commodities like sugar and tobacco, armaments, metal tools, linens; cotton and woollen goods, workable metals and precious miscellaneous items like beads, coral and crystal which were traded by barter for slaves)[114] was paramount for the defence of British Atlantic slavery. Captains are commonly ordered to convoy gathered ships at ports such as Portsmouth to the African coast *en masse* and who agreed to be accompanied by a naval escort.[115] These orders remain formulaic, being open-ended and generalised. Particularly striking is the common order (with slight phrasing variations from letter to letter), to assemble 'any Trade bound to the Coast of Africa which may be ready, and whose Masters may be willing to accompany you',[116] as a form of informal convoy discipline. Whilst given as a direct order which is common throughout the period, it is interesting that the protection of trade was entirely voluntary on the part of the ships that were to be escorted. Whilst technically governmentally mandated, escorts were not compulsory for ships sailing to the African coast, despite the ever-present threat from French naval and privateering vessels in the Atlantic. Certainly, investigation of convoy lists detailing naval vessels' assembled convoys demonstrates that only small numbers of slave ships travelling to the African coast took advantage of naval convoy to make the journey, with very few convoys apparently dedicated to escorting trade to Africa which

[113] ADM 2/1097-9; 1101.
[114] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 314; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 189-90, 201; Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, 36, 259.
[115] ADM 2/1097-9; ADM 2/1101.
[116] For example: ADM 2/1097, Adm. to W. Hargood, 7th November 1794; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 26th February 1798; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806.

often numbered less than twenty merchant vessels identified as slavers.[117] These voyages are sparsely recorded within the convoy lists, and are overshadowed by the more common records of individual slavers being attached to larger convoys, predominantly bound for the Caribbean or trade routes east of the Cape of Good Hope. Some of these convoys could be exceptionally large, for example the convoy under the escort of HMS *Severn* (44) bound to the West Indies in April 1800, of which only six vessels of a total 124 can be identified as slavers with certainty.[118] Whilst trade protection was an operational priority for the Royal Navy during this period, it seems clear that it was far from a compulsory order to be exerted over British trading vessels of all types, not only slavers. An even more extreme example of the *ad hoc* nature of naval escort of British slaving vessels is HMS *Syren's* (32) convoy of December 1800, once more bound to the West Indies, of which only one vessel of a total of 155 can be identified as a slaver.[119] James Walvin suggests that at the close of the eighteenth century, 40 percent of all exports went to Africa or the Americas, linked with slavery and the slave trade.[120] With this in mind, it's a wonder why more information about a larger number of convoys specifically destined for Africa do not exist, as the export trade was of paramount importance to the survival and continued prosperity of British slavery. As is to be expected, the examples of HMS *Severn* and HMS *Syren* do not appear in the order letters under examination for this dissertation, as they were convoys destined primarily for the Caribbean, to which an infinitesimal number of slave ships was attached destined for Africa. This dissertation does not have space to also discuss the purposes and logistics of convoys from Great Britain and Ireland directly to the Caribbean. In short, these convoys were used to transport agricultural equipment such as pipestaves,

[117] For example: TNA, ADM 7/782, 'List of ships under escort of HMS *Iris* to Africa, March 1795; ADM 7/783, 'Ships under escort of HMS *Maidstone* to Africa, May 1797'; ADM 7/786, 'Ships under escort of HMS *Fly*, January 1801'; ADM 7/789, 'Ships under escort of HMS *Success*, November 1804'.
[118] ADM 7/784, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of HMS *Severn* Capt. Whitby from Portsmouth for the West Indies, April 1800'.
[119] ADM 7/786, 'A List of Ships and Vessels under Convoy of H M Ship *Syren* Capt Gosselin bound to the West Indies at Cove of Cork, December 1800'.
[120] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 314.

and supplies including beef, pork, butter and cheese made in Britain and Ireland to help maintain the plantation infrastructure on which slavery depended for survival; exchanged predominantly for sugar in barrels and hogsheads for the metropole.[121] These examples of attached Africa-destined vessels to preestablished convoys demonstrate the logistical difficulties of convoy and trade protection. Unable to provide specific, dedicated convoy for the vessels destined to Africa, the ships were to be protected in a similar way to trade being escorted solely to Africa anyway, as the officer escorting was ordered to see 'the Trade as far as your way [and] theirs may lie together' or as near to their destination for their safety.[122] The demands of trade protection and the widespread nature of British commercial connections were a challenge everywhere, making it common that protection could only be afforded to the points where trade's course and direction of travel were common. Regarding convoys destined for commercial centres other than the coast of Africa, the slavers destined for Africa which had been attached for convenience were usually left to continue onwards from the Cape Verde islands, where the Atlantic Ocean's wind and current patterns changed.[123] Whilst commerce protection was a matter of paramount importance for British government and the officers of the Royal Navy acting on its behalf, it was in practice only possible to achieve with great stretches of resources.

The examples of convoys discussed above demonstrate the inherent difficulties of Admiralty administration and organisation in the allocation of convoys on the Royal Navy's attempts to protect and advance British trade. However, the lists also demonstrate possible Admiralty solutions to these issues, with examples such as that discussed

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[121] Davis, *The Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, 181, 259.
[122] ADM 2/1097, Adm. To E. Dod, 5th February 1794; ADM 2/1097, Adm. To W. Hargood, 7th November 1794; ADM 2/1098, Adm. To S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795; ADM 2/1098, Adm. To R. Rolles, 26th November 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To J. Mathews, 27th December 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 2/1099, Adm. To R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797.
[123] Examples of these logistical considerations can be found in a number of order letters contained in ADM 2/1097-99; ADM 2/1101; ADM 2/1384.

immediately above illustrative of the Admiralty's apparent belief in a policy of 'safety in numbers' as the first line of defence in the protection of British trade. This is especially apparent in the almost universal provision of a single naval escort, often no larger than a frigate with 44 guns (see Appendix 1, Table 3), with sheer numbers reducing the risk of individual merchant ships being captured. However, in practice, a 44-gun frigate was the largest type of frigate in service at the time and would have proven a formidable escort which was fast, manoeuvrable, and capable of dealing with any vessel up to a ship of the line. Not to mention that British gunnery was excellent during this period, with well-drilled teams of gunners with powerful guns. The philosophy of 'safety in numbers' is reflected on by Alan Pearsall, who suggests that ocean convoy as a whole had the advantage of having 'absorbed into one mass a great many ships, under protection, and virtually cleared the sea.'[124] Pearsall's work largely focuses on the period up to the end of the American War, but it becomes clear that the practice of convoy utilised at the end of the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century was a refined system forged from extensive experience. Unfortunately, the convoy lists contain significant gaps due to volumes having been lost in transit as the National Archives has expanded, as well as no discernible written records of convoys before 1793. There would have been no convoy lists for 1783-93 because in peacetime there were no convoys. Meanwhile, what happened to records of convoys for the American Revolutionary War itself is much harder to discern, and were likely lost or possibly destroyed at some time since the close of the war itself.

Orders contained in the Admiralty letters to naval officers demonstrate that our understanding of Atlantic convoys and their relationship with the slave trade needs updating. Patrick Crowhurst posits that variation in journey times and boarding times of the enslaved, as well as the wide area over which slaving ports were spread in West Africa, made

[124] A. Pearsall, 'The Royal Navy and the Protection of Trade in the Eighteenth Century', in *Guerre et Paix 1660-1815* (Rochefort: Service historique de la Marine, 1987), 137.

it impossible to organise convoys specifically for the escort of slavers to the Caribbean via West Africa.[125] However, certain examples call this conclusion into question (although they are far from a general occurrence) from Admiralty order letters and the convoy lists held at the National Archives which detail naval orders to await the slavers completing their convoys on the West African coast, before escorting them onwards to their destinations in the Caribbean.[126] An order letter sent to Captain Boys of HMS *Regulus* instructed him to await the trade travelling from the African coast to the Caribbean at 'St Thomas's or Princes Island (which ever of those Islands he may have fixed upon)' before escorting the ships onward to their destinations in the Caribbean.[127] St Thomas and Princes Island are both small islands, the former in the Caribbean and the latter off the West African coast, and provided a convenient rendezvous for the naval officers to escort trade (including slavers) to their destinations deeper in the Caribbean. This demonstrates the British government's concern for trade interests entering the Caribbean, whilst also revealing logistical concerns generated by the protection of trade in a time of war. The Admiralty recognised the futility of attempting to await the completed loading of slave cargoes on the African coast, putting their sailors at greater risk of disease, desertion and so on. Given the size of the Atlantic Ocean, the Middle Passage was likely recognised by the Admiralty as one of the lower risk legs of the journey from Britain to the Caribbean for British slave vessels. Whilst no doubt there was still a risk of uprisings by the enslaved onboard slavers crossing the Atlantic, the risk of being caught by enemy privateers was low, largely due to the aforementioned geographical consideration as well as the difficulties presented by cargoes of slaves upon capture. This also explains the limited recording of such voyage arrangements in the convoy lists, with the only recorded example of a fully escorted voyage being the example of the convoy escorted by HMS

[125] Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, 67.
[126] ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806; ADM 7/783, 'A List of Ships &c under Convoy of the *Maidstone* frigate, May 1797'.
[127] ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to J. Stiles, 24th September 1806.

Maidstone (32).[128] However, Captain James Cornwallis recorded himself as having escorted trade in convoy from the coast of Angola to Barbados and Jamaica between May and July 1797, with no details of such a convoy existing in the convoy lists held by the Admiralty.[129] These comprise the limited examples found during the conducting of this research which records a Royal Navy escorted convoy being assigned for escort between Africa and the Caribbean. This begs the question, that given that no example can be found of a naval response being instigated by the threat of revolt by the enslaved during the Middle Passage, what the Royal Navy would have done in the event of a serious rising on board a slaver they had under convoy. The Navy appears to have been used as a sort of deterrent, as Cornwallis was perhaps escorting trade including slavers which were perceived to have particularly volatile cargo, necessitating the need, despite the limited threat presented by enemy vessels during passage across the Atlantic, for naval protection.

Whilst it is by no means a universal objective of Royal Navy officers cruising along the West African coast to escort trade across to the West Indies, it becomes apparent that it was an objective and duty of the Royal Navy as far back as 1797.[130] Whilst there is no explicit mention of the cargo of the ships which the ordered Royal Navy officers are tasked with escorting, it is a fair assumption that before the abolition of the British slave trade in 1807, there was little variation in what was traded along the African coast besides enslaved Africans and precious metals in exchange for British tools, commodities from the East Indies, as well as rum and tobacco.[131]

[128] ADM 7/783, 'A List of Ships &c under Convoy of the *Maidstone* frigate, May 1797'.
[129] ADM 1/1623, J. Cornwallis to E. Nepean, 15th July 1797, Letter No. 245.
[130] ADM 2/1099; ADM 2/1101.
[131] BPP, *Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations*, 36.

2.3 The 'Annoyance' and 'Distress' of Rival Nations' Ships and Commerce, and the Unofficial Effects of Convoy.

Several Admiralty order letters to Royal Navy officers provide evidence of another function of the convoy system to the West Indies. Upon arrival of the escorted ships at their respective destinations, the officer was directed to report to the commanding officer of either the Leeward Island Station or (more commonly), the Jamaica Station.[132] It seems apparent that, whether intentionally or not, the Admiralty could use the convoy system to protect British slavery through the escort of slavers and other goods from West Africa across to the Caribbean, as well as reinforce the vital naval stations based in the West Indies, which were pivotal to the survival and advancement of British slave plantations and therefore the British economy. Given that the period under study was a time of almost constant worldwide conflict, the naval requirements in the Caribbean were paramount to the survival of the British economy and continued success in the war against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France. It was strategically convenient to protect slavers and their cargoes across the Atlantic, if for no other reason than to reinforce the key stations of the British empire in the Caribbean. More generally, ships of the line escorted trade across the Atlantic both because they were heading across the trading routes themselves anyway to reinforce British naval bases across the world, but also as a deterrent against enemy privateers and other marauders. After all, privateers would only attack isolated and lesser armed ships than themselves, with a heavily armed and well-drilled British man of war being an undesirable adversary in this regard.

The provision of convoys was apparently such standard business that the intentions of the merchants who ordered it are often omitted, for example demonstrated by the request of 'Several Merchants of London'

[132] ADM 2/1098, Adm. to W. Mitchell, 10th October 1795; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to R. Rolles, 26th November 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797; Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 26th February 1798; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806.

on 13 October 1794 for 'Some ships are preparing to take benefit of Convoy to Africa', which was subsequently provided with the escort of HMS *Iris* (32) appointed on 7 November to sail on the seventeenth.[133] Although the motive remains dubious, it seems apparent that the merchants were keen to attach their vessels to pre-appointed convoys to reach the African coast, with which little trade was conducted in this period besides that in slaves.

Privateering was a large problem for the British state during the eighteenth century, as a principal way in which her European rivals (predominantly France and the Dutch) would make war and disrupt Britain's maritime economy. Whilst the British state encouraged (and heavily regulated) privateering itself (although privateers were private ventures, not state-sponsored beyond issuing letters of marque), it was not such an important facet of British naval policy (given the size and strength of the Royal Navy) as it was to France or some other major powers in this period.[134] This was no exception in British Atlantic slavery, with the threat of opportunistic private men of war preying on British merchant shipping on both sides of the Atlantic. The British state was deeply concerned about this threat, evidenced by the prevalence in orders sent to the officers of the Royal Navy tasked with the protection of British trade on both sides of the Atlantic from enemy 'pirates' (apparently used interchangeably with 'privateers' in this context) whilst protecting either the African coastal settlements[135] or the British Caribbean plantation islands.[136] In

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[133] ADM 7/60, Admiralty Miscellanea. Convoys. Register of Application for Convoys, 1794-1795.
[134] Crowhurst, *Defence of British* Trade, 15; D. J. Starkey, 'The economic and military significance of British Privateering, 1702-83', *The Journal of Transport History*, 9, 1 (1988), 50; D. J. Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990), 26.
[135] ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795; ADM 2/ 1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 13th May 1795; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to W. Mitchell, 10th October 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Mathews, 27th December 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 26th February 1798; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to J. Stiles, 24th September 1806.
[136] ADM 2/1097, Adm. to J. Ford, 6th February 1794; ADM 2/1097, Adm. to J. Laforey Bartholemew, 6th April 1795; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795.

correspondence from the Admiralty to naval officers instructed to escort ships to the coast of Africa, a common secondary objective upon arrival with a convoy was the 'annoyance of the enemy', through the cruising and hunting for rival nations' (most commonly French) naval forces as well as privateers as part of the protection of British trade both to and from Africa.[137] These orders at first glance seem offensive in nature, but given the circumstances under which the naval officer would have found themselves on the African coast, they suggest that the 'annoyance' of the enemy was almost entirely defensive. The Royal Navy was on the back foot in this regard, engaged in a consistent battle to defend the established production centres which were so key to the continued profits of British slavery.

A particularly revealing example of Britain's concern about the threat of enemy warships and privateers to its production centres in Africa and its foothold on the continent is expressed in an order letter sent to Captain Henry Lidgbird Ball in October 1797. Captain Ball was ordered by the Admiralty to

> [upo]n your arrival off the Coast of Africa, you are in the first place to repair to the French settlement of Gorée, and to use your best endeavours in co-operation with the Armed Ships abovementioned, not only to take or destroy the piratical squadron under the Command of Mons[ieur] Ren[aud], or any other of the Enemy's ships which may be there, but also to dislodge the Enemy entirely from that Settlement.[138]

Whilst many of the other order letters sent to Royal Navy officers on similar assignments are more defensive, primarily focused on the protection of British trade interests, the instructions for Captain Ball

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[137] ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 13th May 1795; Adm. to W. Mitchell, 10th October 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; Adm. to J. Matthews, 27th December 1796; Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797; Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 26th February 1798; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806; Adm. to J. Stiles, 24th September 1806.

[138] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797.

appear heavily aggressive by comparison. As previously discussed, Gorée was a key French settlement on the African coast and a base of operations for French naval and private men of war to resupply and repair in the area.[139] The fact that the Admiralty made this a primary objective for Captain Ball upon his arrival on the coast illustrates British concern for the British slave production centres it had there, and the insecurity of British trade interests in Africa. Understandably, the Admiralty could not ignore the threat presented by the French at Gorée, especially given the influence played by the British merchant community (and their interests) in Admiralty strategy and naval policy on the African coast.[140]

In a number of letters dispatched with orders to naval officers tasked with escorting and protecting British slave ships and subsequently production centres on the African coast, there is concern of particularly large and organised attacks by enemy vessels on British slavery assets on the African coast, with the most prominent being the above sent to Captain Henry Lidgbird Ball.[141] The Admiralty expressed concerns at the continued presence of 'the piratical squadron under the Command of Mons[ieur] Renaud' near what was at the time the French settlement of Gorée, pushing Captain Ball to attempt to seek out and destroy Reneaud's squadron, as well as 'any other of the Enemy's ships which may be there'. British control of the West African coast was far from secure at this time, and this letter demonstrates the importance of British naval power to maintain Britain's foothold on the coast and the continued profitability of the settlements there. This letter also outlines orders to take a more offensive approach, as Ball was ordered to 'dislodge the Enemy entirely from that Settlement' at Gorée.[142] This is one of the more offensively minded orders outlined in these letters, demonstrating the role of the Royal Navy not only as the guardians of British slavery, but the poachers

[139] J. D. Newton, 'Naval Power and the Province of Senegambia, 1758-1779'. *Journal for Maritime Research,* 15, 2, (2013), 129-147.
[140] ADM 7/60; ADM 7/67, Admiralty Miscellanea. Convoys. Register of correspondence concerning disposition and convoys, 1795-1796; Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade 1689-1815*, 43.
[141] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797.
[142] *Ibid.*

and saboteurs of the slave trade interests of its rivals such as France. Joshua Newton describes Gorée as an ever-present threat to Britain on the African coast during the eighteenth century, making its disruption a pivotal objective for the navy on the African coast in the defence of slavery.[143]

'Annoyance' of the enemy is an objective assigned to the Royal Navy on both sides of the Atlantic, with the Royal Navy's disruption of rival nations' commerce whilst simultaneously protecting that belonging to Britain marked as a primary objective for Commanders in Chief stationed in the Caribbean. Commonly addressed to senior flag officers stationed on either the Jamaica Station or the Leeward Island Station, a number of order letters from the Admiralty instruct the Commander of the Royal Navy ships to 'give Protection to the Islands belonging to His Majesty within the Limits of your station', as well as British commerce travelling both to and from (as well as within) the Caribbean, alongside an order to 'distress and annoy the Enemy'.[144] Whilst largely left to enact the vision of the Admiralty on their initiative, the letters referred to here demonstrate that the Admiralty was still quite clear on what it saw as a strategic priority for Royal Navy protection to maintain Britain's economic reliance on the Caribbean. British settlement in the Caribbean was immensely profitable during this period, and the slave-produced goods and the island plantations they came from, a source of constant attention from marauders of rival nations, required extensive protection by the Navy.

The protection of the British Caribbean islands and the trade that came from them was clearly important, as was the disruption of parallel rivals' assets in the region, demonstrated by the common order dispatched to junior naval officers completing the voyage from the West African coast to the Caribbean to 'put yourself under the command of […] the Commanding Officer for the time being of His Majesty's Ships [and]

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[143] Newton, 'Naval Power and the Province of Senegambia, 1758-1779', 129-147.
[144] ADM 2/1097, Adm. to J. Ford, 6th February 1794; ADM 2/1097, Adm. to J. Laforey Bartholemew, 6th April 1795.

Vessels' already based in the Caribbean.[145] Functionally, the act of escorting British trade (in this case safely assumed to be slave vessels) from the coast of Africa to the West Indies created a process of organic reinforcement, whereby the Royal Navy vessels which had been charged with escorting British trade from Africa saw their charges safely to their destination before reporting for further orders from the Commander in Chief which was closest to the escorting officers' protected vessels' destination in the Caribbean. As can be seen clearly from Table 2, the Jamaica and Leeward Island Stations were some of the highest in demand of ships and manpower.[146] Even in comparison to other vital trade routes on which British commerce was heavily reliant, such as the East Indies (a trade which produced many commodities intrinsic to the outward bound African leg of the slave trade), the two stations which made up the Caribbean drew consistently larger numbers of vessels and men. This reflects the concerns of King George III and Henry Dundas discussed earlier in this dissertation, as the Channel Fleet in particular was apparently redistributed to other stations around the world, from which the Caribbean stations no doubt benefitted. Indeed, the King's assertion that '[o]ur islands must be defended, even at the risk of an invasion of this island' rings true particularly strongly here, as the consistent reinforcement of the Jamaica and Leeward Island stations compared even with the Channel Fleet, responsible for home defence, clearly demonstrates the importance of Britain's West Indian island colonies and the slave-produced commodities manufactured there for the future of the British empire.[147] Similarly, Dundas even advocates the reinforcement of the Jamaica and

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[145] ADM 2/1097, Adm. to E. Brown, 22nd November 1793; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to W. Mitchell, 10th October 1795; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to R. Rolles, 26th November 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 24th November 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Cornwallis, 26th February 1798; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to J. Stiles, 24th September 1806.
[146] ADM 8/68, List Book (showing the disposition of Ships, names of Officers, &c.), 1792; ADM 8/72, List Book (showing the disposition of Ships, names of Officers, &c.), 1796; ADM 8/80, List Book (showing the disposition of Ships, names of Officers, &c.), July-Dec 1800; ADM 8/88, List Book (showing the disposition of Ships, names of Officers, &c.), July-Dec 1804; ADM 8/96, List Book, July-Dec 1808.
[147] ADM 8/68; ADM 8/72; ADM 8/80; ADM 8/88; ADM 8/96; George III, 'From the King[,] Windsor Castle, 13 September 1779', 163.

Leeward Island Stations at the expense of the Channel Fleet, in the hope of subsequent reinforcement from the Mediterranean Fleet, a policy which appears to have been enacted judging by the postings of naval vessels and manpower in the years following his letter to Lord Spencer.[148] Once again, what seems at first glance to be an offensive strategy to 'distress' and 'annoy' rival nations was in fact part of a wider, highly defensive measure whereby the navy was engaged in a consistent process of reinforcement for the greater protection of British trade which was arriving in, circulating between, and leaving the Caribbean and the island plantations around which it all revolved.

Table 2: Ships and men stationed in key parts of Britain's global trade network (data taken from the third quarter of each selected year from records found in TNA, ADM 8/68; 72; 80; 88 and 96, List Books).[149]

Station	1792-Ships	1792-Men	1796-Ships	1796-Men	1800-Ships	1800-Men	1804-Ships	1804-Men	1808-Ships	1808-Men
Jamaica	14	1817	33	9551	48	11459	47	9229	39	6248
Leeward Islands	3	577	48	12431	23	4558	27	4610	64	9528
East Indies	6	1162	0	0	18	5918	22	6637	33	8370
Channel Fleet	6	1072	0	0	0	0	52	27001	58	17860

2.4 The Protection of Convoys Returning from the Caribbean.

As discussed earlier, the protection of slavery fitted into trade protection as a whole, at all junctures of the empire's commerce. Whilst the navy held global maritime power during the period under study, there was still a universal need to maintain contact with coastal settlements for

[148] Dundas, 'The importance of Jamaica, 1796', 341.
[149] ADM 8/68; ADM 8/72; ADM 8/80; ADM 8/88; ADM 8/96.

resupply and the reception of news and orders. Given the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean, the Royal Navy was limited in the areas in which it would be effective in its role in the protection of British trade. This was particularly prominent in the protection of the returning trade from the Caribbean, with ships carrying sugar and other slave-produced goods. The protection of the slave trade and its produce should be viewed in the context of trade protection as a whole during this period. The slave trade, which in this context encompasses the shipment of goods in what is traditionally regarded as a 'triangular trade', was part of the wider British Atlantic economy, as the produce of Britain itself was traded for slaves on the African coast, before being shipped to the British Caribbean to work on plantations in exchange for slave-produced commodities like sugar. The sugar and other goods such as tobacco were then shipped back to the centre, funding future voyages and further development of British slavery, as well as increased naval defensive capability.[150]

Predominantly, the protection of convoys returning from the Caribbean was conducted by a naval vessel stationed on either the Jamaica or Leeward Island stations. Trading vessels which were planning to return to Britain with the fruits of slave labour to be sold in Britain and Europe were assembled at an agreed meeting place (frequently Jamaica) from across the Caribbean, demonstrating the difficulty in committing naval resources to the task and a need for consistency.[151] Merchant vessels would then be escorted by the naval vessel charged with their protection through the West Indies (hence the need for the immediate, organised protection by the Royal Navy) from marauding enemy vessels such as privateers and enemy naval vessels. Having been escorted across the Atlantic, which was comparatively quiet and low risk in terms of enemy threat, the convoy would be taken under even greater protection by an awaiting naval vessel in the Western Approaches to the English Channel, which were a hotspot for enemy privateers and naval vessels. The almost

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[150] T. Burnard, 'The Atlantic Slave Trade', in G. Heuman & T. Burnard (eds.), *The Routledge History of Slavery* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), 81.
[151] See: ADM 7/782-9.

constant level of protection at every stage of the voyage from the West Indies with the sugar fleet demonstrates the British government's recognition of sugar as a strategically (let alone economically) vital commodity to Britain and her empire. As David Hancock says, '[n]either the periphery [i.e. the empire] nor the centre [Britain itself] prospered by itself', as the empire required the supply of capital and goods from the centre, and demand from the centre for the products and profits of the empire created a cyclical trade which grew across the period.[152]

Ships of rival European nations on either side of the Atlantic similarly recognised the economically lucrative trade as an obvious focus for raids to increase personal wealth at the detriment of Britain and her merchant community, as well as the ability to sustain the war effort of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, one reason for such consistent protection at most stages of the journey (bar the middle passage) across the Atlantic is the constantly rising value of sugar, especially considering this branch of the institution of British slavery to be the best to target by ships of rival nations. Sugar was easy to store, required few conditions to ensure its resale, and could be stored in a large quantity, although it was valuable in any quantity whatsoever. One must also remember that the growing fashionability and demand for sugar alongside other slave-produced commodities[153] only pushed its value higher during the period under study, making it an economically sound commodity which was sure to secure the marauder who captured a British merchant ship loaded with sugar a large profit anywhere in Europe. By comparison, enemy privateers and naval warships were reluctant to attack and capture slave ships because of the difficulties presented by the cargo- namely that ships of enslaved Africans required maintenance which the average enemy privateer or captain of a man of war was reluctant to undertake.

[152] Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, 21.
[153] Walvin, *Black Ivory*, 313-4.

Given the logistical considerations attached to privateering, it was far from a sure-fire way to make a profit and relied heavily on opportunity. With the sugar trade being both profitable and busy, convoys of merchant ships returned from the West Indies at all times of year with huge cargos of valuable sugar. This made the trade a target for privateers, predominantly from France's coastal ports which looked west into the Bay of Biscay, the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean itself. This forced the British state to further its protection of commerce, in this case the products of British slavery, by implementing convoy duty by Royal Navy ships upon the entrance into the Channel. In such case, the officer was ordered to cruise

> for the Protection of the Trade of His Majesty's Subjects and of His Allies, and the annoyance of the Enemy and particularly for the protection of the homeward bound Trade from Jamaica, which may be daily expected[.] And upon falling in with the said Convoy, you are to see them, or cause them to be seen, as far up the English, Bristol, & St. George's Channels (according to their respective Destinations) as you shall judge necessary for their security.[154]

Whilst this order explicitly names the returning trade of the greatest significance to be that returning from Jamaica, the orders remain open-ended and generalised, as part of a wider aim for the support and protection of British trade. It becomes apparent that the unpredictability and opportunism of the enemy (both naval and private) made the Admiralty's instructions even harder to define clearly, leaving the actual task of protection to the officer's best judgement.

Some examples of convoy protection place a greater focus on the protection of the larger sources of supply rather than the immediate pockets of product in transit across the Atlantic. In the case of George Countess, Captain of HMS *Daedalus* in 1796, the convoying of returning slave-produced goods from the Caribbean to the home country was limited as far as the Gulf of Florida, a key choke-point in the Caribbean for the

[154] ADM 2/1097, Admiralty to J. B. Warren, 14th July 1794.

interception of British trade by rival marauders preying on the commerce in the area.[155] This example also highlights the challenges presented by the Caribbean, as the ravages of yellow fever cut short the *Daedalus'* tour patrolling the West Indies for the protection of trade. Yellow fever, a highly contagious disease common both in the West Indies and on the African coast, had already killed 24 of Countess' men and officers, with another 48 on the sick list by the time they parted from the convoyed trade beyond the Gulf of Florida to return to Cape Nicola Mole, a port of the island of Hispaniola.[156] The *Daedalus* was ordered north, to the naval station at Halifax, Nova Scotia, to slow the effects of the disease in the cooler climate and resupply on vital provisions which were key to the convalescence of those suffering with the disease.[157] This is a particularly useful example, as it demonstrates the Royal Navy's attachment to its duty in the protection of convoying trade made up of slave-produced goods such as sugar, even in the face of extreme adversity such as that presented by the threat of a contagious and life-threatening disease such as yellow fever. It seems highly likely that the *Daedalus* was already suffering with the disease as she commenced her mission convoying the trade destined for Britain out into the Atlantic, which demonstrates the will of the crew of the *Daedalus* to complete their objective before beginning the process of convalescence.

The examples discussed in this chapter illustrate that the duty of convoy protection was limited to each 'edge' of the Atlantic concerning the protection of returning trade from the Caribbean, likely due to the already discussed extremely limited risk on the open ocean from rival nations' ships looking for prizes. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the provision of convoy protection and escort on entry into the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel stemmed from a greater concern for the risk of trade being intercepted, allowing the Royal Navy to focus its efforts in the protection of trade and better utilise the limited resources available to it. This is similar for the escort of the trade out beyond the reaches of the West Indies and

[155] ADM 1/1621, G. Countess to Adm., 10th October 1796, Letter No. 184.
[156] *Ibid.*
[157] *Ibid.*

the Americas into the Atlantic Ocean, with the need to stay on station being pivotal to the wider protection of British trade interests in the Caribbean.

Chapter 3: Royal Navy Officers' Personal Interests, and Non-Governmental Interests.

This chapter discusses the factors played by the personal interests and motivations of naval officers themselves in their efforts to defend British slavery, alongside the interests of groups who held significant sway over governmental policy such as the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa who had an extensive interest in the maintenance of British slavery, as well as the continued trade in the supply of enslaved labour over which they held extensive control; as well as smaller, although no less significant merchant groups with similarly vested interests in the success of British slavery in all its forms. This community was vital in the determination of British government policy, with British commerce (of which the slave trade and the plantation colonies were extremely important) portrayed as a strategic necessity for the government to help maintain the war effort of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In their quest to protect their profits and the trade routes on which they depended, the merchant communities of Britain held extensive pressure over government policy regarded trade and commercial opportunity, something which the slave trade and British slavery were viewed as exclusively in the period under study.

It is similarly worth considering the place of officers' personal interest in the Atlantic slave trade as motivation for the protection of British slave trade. Limited examples exist of officers of the Royal Navy known to have acted as agents on the behalf of others, as well as taking up their own business in various strands of British trade, including the institution of slavery. The boundaries between public service and private venture were more porous and flexible in the eighteenth century than would be permissible today. It is worth considering the limits of this however, as Nicholas Rodger suggests that naval officers were largely involved in the movement of specie (gold bullion) to continue smooth-

running trade; indeed, orders from the Admiralty (in enforcement of the Articles of War) to officers serving on the African coast expressly forbade men and officers of the Royal Navy to engage in the slave trade (or indeed any branch of private commerce) for economic interests.[158] Commonly, officers were driven by duty, alongside fear of failure and diminished career opportunity in the event of incomplete orders. For most officers, the morality of the growing abolitionist movement played little part in their fulfilment of government direction, with many driven on through duty and ambition, even, for example, in cases of extreme difficulty like outbreaks of disease.[159]

3.1 Merchant Connections.

As the eighteenth century progressed, the Caribbean became ever more important to the continued growth of Britain's burgeoning industrialised economy. Various societies such as the London Society of Merchants and the West Indian Planter Association also had significant influence with central government and were keen to seek the protections afforded by the state (in the form of the Royal Navy), to defend their continued profits and the institution that helped grow their personal wealth. In a report compiled in the House of Commons, for which naval officers gave evidence and testimony to the state of the slave trade, Lieutenant John Mathews was described as 'concerned in the Trade to Africa, at Sierra Leone', acting in residence as 'Agent for a Merchant in the City of London' from 1785 until approximately 1787.[160] Whilst this may be a limited example, it demonstrates the merchant community's aim to remain informed of the continued existence and success of the slave trade under the watchful eye of men duty-bound to protect their interests. It seems that the merchant community was keen to have an individual on the

[158] N. A. M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), 258, 318; ADM 2/1097, Adm. to E. Dod, 5th February 1794.
[159] ADM 1/1621, G. Countess to E. Nepean, 10th October 1796, Letter 184.
[160] BPP, *Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations*, 12, 34.

ground who was able to regularly report on the trade in Africa, and given the frequency with which naval vessels were dispatched to the African coastal settlements under British control, perhaps the appointment of a naval officer like John Mathews demonstrates an efficient way to establish an informant with orders to protect British trade interests under the command of government in Britain whilst answering directly to the merchants themselves. Mathews' appointment is particularly interesting given that to be appointed as agent for London merchants, he did not have to resign from the Royal Navy or vice versa.

The Admiralty acted as a middleman for requests for protection of British trade, including that both directly and indirectly involved in the Atlantic slave trade.[161] For example, Admiralty records for the period (predominantly 1793 and after) express the clear place of the Royal Navy in catering to the wishes of such merchant societies, as evidenced by the daily records of correspondence to the Admiralty and subsequent orders issued to Royal Navy ships.[162] This demonstrates the place of the economic interests of the wider British empire in the strategic considerations of the turbulent final years of the eighteenth century, a conclusion similarly shared by Crowhurst, with merchant groups being unwilling to allow the Admiralty to ignore their interests.[163] Indeed, the example of Henry Lidgbird Ball demonstrates that merchant groups from Britain were far from impotent in the protection of their interests. Given the duty of escorting trade in convoy down to the African coast, with the following objectives of protecting trade and hunting the French privateer captain 'Monsieur Renaud' who was threatening British trade near Sierra Leone, the merchants based in Liverpool whose trade Ball was to be responsible for provided 'armed ships' of their own which they fitted out themselves and put under his direction for the greater protection of theirs and Britain's

[161] See for example: ADM 7/60 and ADM 7/67; ADM 2/1097, Adm. to E. Brown, 22nd November 1793; ADM 2/1097, Adm. to E. Dod, 5th February 1794; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to J. Mathews, 27th December 1796; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20thOctober 1797; ADM 2/1101, Adm. to C. W. Boys, 26th July 1806.

[162] ADM 7/67; ADM 2/1097-1099; ADM 2/1101.

[163] Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade*, 43.

wider commercial interests.[164] This demonstrates that beyond simply lobbying the government for the increased and sustained protection of their interests both generally and more specifically in the African trade, the merchants also took the protection of their commercial assets and interests seriously enough that they would provide practical assurances in that defence. Indeed, David J. Starkey posits that the use of such armed ships as privateers was a form of private venture which made use of ships that would otherwise have remained idle, although Starkey's examples are drawn from the period up to the end of the American Revolutionary War.[165] This does not mean that the merchant community of Liverpool were not keen to utilise assets for greater profits through the commissioning of such ships as privateers, but in this instance, it seems more likely that such vessels were largely defensive measures for the practical defence of the merchants' property and continued profits.

What becomes clear from the examination of Admiralty orders sent to Royal Navy officers who had been charged with protecting British colonial settlements are the connections between government policy and mercantile interests. This was true all over the world and not only in the West Indies, powerful though the West Indies lobby was, and keeping mercantile interests happy was a problem for Commanders in Chief on many stations, and for the Admiralty itself. In several examples of correspondence between the Admiralty and Royal Navy officers who were ordered to set sail for the West African coast, most prominent is the link between the wishes and interests of merchant companies and the protection of British interests on the coast. It is common, for example, for officers of the Royal Navy to be ordered out to the West African coast for the purposes of 'Defence of [the Company of Merchants trading to Africa's] Forts [and] Settlements' at a number of locations along the West African coast.[166] Mercantile interest was key to the distribution of Royal Navy

[164] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797; ADM 1/1515, H.L. Ball to E. Nepean; ADM 1/1518, H. L. Ball to E. Nepean, 18th January 1798.
[165] Starkey, 'Significance of British Privateering', 54.
[166] ADM 2/1097, Adm. to W. Hargood, 7th November 1794; ADM 2/1098, Adm. to S. Mackenzie, 10th April 1795; ADM 2/1099, Adm. to R. Buckoll, 6th November 1797.

vessels in the defence of British slavery, as the Company of Merchants trading to Africa were the principal suppliers of slaves on the West African coast, and therefore an economically vital part of the British empire which required protection. One letter boldly stands out addressed to Captain Edmund Dod in February 1794, who was tasked with 'repairing […] to Cape Apolonia where the African Company are erecting a Fort in consequence of an Act of Parliament' and was ordered to 'giv[e] such assistance and protection to the People employed in that Work as circumstances may require'.[167] Not only is the mercantile connection laid bare in this order, but also the legal and political connections that this private company could exert within British government, and specifically the Royal Navy. It is interesting, but by no means surprising, as to why the Company of Merchants would be calling for assistance in the protection of their 'settlements' (i.e. slave factories) at this time, given that Britain had gone to war with Revolutionary France almost a year before and so Britain's sources of economic wealth would be at risk globally. However, these orders often remain broad in nature due to the difficulties of communication and volatility of the region.

3.2 Officers' Interests and the Obligation of Duty.

As was pointed in discussion of sources of policy and what they meant in the determining British policy toward slavery in the years up to abolition, policy was not so much defined by the Admiralty, as it was disseminated to Royal Navy officers tasked with British slavery's protection and facilitation. As also suggested above, the orders distributed by the Admiralty to officers of the Royal Navy tasked with the support and facilitation of British slavery had their incontrovertible instructions which could not be avoided. This is especially clear in the case of Captain Edmund Dod, who was warned that

[167] ADM 2/1097 Adm. to E. Dod, 5th February 1794.

> if we get any information of any Goods, Slaves or Merchandize whatsoever being received on board the Ship you command in the way of Trade, [w]e shall esteem the same to be your own act [and] shall expect you to be accountable for it, inasmuch as such a Prejudice cannot possibl[y] be carried on without your knowledge and consent.[168]

Whilst it is not clear what Captain Dod's punishment would be in the event of breaking such instructions, it is clear that the Admiralty took the subject of its officers' integrity and impartiality in its protection of British trade very seriously. This also raises greater questions about the part played by Lieutenant John Mathews, as discussed above, as the agent for merchants in London whilst Mathews was stationed on the African coast. Given the established laws which allowed men (predominantly masters and mates) working aboard slavers to carry slaves on their own account freight free, which become ever-more valuable as the slave trade expanded,[169] it raises the question of temptation and blurring of the lines between commerce and duty for people like Lieutenant Mathews. Was Mathews' employment as an agent on behalf of these London merchants not in breach of the Articles of War; the Act of Parliament banning naval officers from engaging in private trade,[170] and the Admiralty and British government's concern for the maintenance of its officers' integrity and impartiality? Perhaps future research may examine these connections in greater detail.

What seems more common as a driving factor behind officers of the Royal Navy in the completion of their orders to Africa and often beyond, encompassing the entire network of British slavery in the Atlantic in many cases, was their adherence to duty that had been laid before them upon being posted to protect British trade (and by extension, slavery). Like any other posting, the orders for officers to protect slavers, slave factories, plantations, and the products of slavery in their export to Britain were just

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[168] ADM 2/1097 Adm. to E. Dod, 5th February 1794.
[169] Davis, *Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, 142.
[170] ADM 2/1097 Adm. to E. Dod, 5th February 1794.

that, orders. The example of Captain George Countess (discussed briefly already in Chapter 2) is particularly revealing in this regard, as Countess and the crew of HMS *Daedalus* were struck with an outbreak of yellow fever on 22 July 1796, just before beginning the escort of a British trade convoy past the Gulf of Florida, which killed 24 members of the crew (including the Master, third Lieutenant, the Marine Officer, Surgeon and one Midshipman) and left another 48 on the sick list (including the other Lieutenants, the Gunner and Mates, another Midshipman and the Surgeons Mate) by the time the *Daedalus* parted company to return to Cape Nicola Mole (St. Domingue).[171] Countess and the crew of the *Daedalus* demonstrate the adherence to duty that was instilled in officers and men of the Royal Navy, as the completion of objectives set by His Majesty's government (and their representatives in regions far away from home) was the focus of officers and men on station, even in the face of a crippling disease outbreak like yellow fever.

It would no doubt be incorrect to assume that there was no selfish motivation for officers to adhere unquestioningly to what was becoming an increasingly morally questionable strand of British commerce. Given that officers of the Royal Navy were, much like their men, often paid in arrears (sometimes years behind), prize money and fame were attractive prospects and a lucrative (if inconsistent) form of increasing personal wealth [172]. Indeed, whilst he most definitely threw himself with zeal into the execution of the government's orders on his cruise in search of French privateers and the protection of British trade based on his duty as an officer to represent Britain and protect its interests, Captain Henry Lidgbird Ball without doubt was similarly driven by the prospect of capturing prizes of his own during his cruise on the African coast during 1797-8. In his returns to the Admiralty listing the vessels taken by the *Daedalus* (once again on the Coast, with a different captain) and the sloop HMS *Hornet* (under Commander John Nash), Ball gives details of each vessel, including how it

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[171] ADM 1/1621, G. Countess to E. Nepean, 10th October 1796, Letter 184.
[172] Rodger, *The Wooden World*, 130-133.

was rigged, the number of men and guns, where it was travelling from and to, and most importantly, cargo.[173] The great majority of captures are from Gorée, the 'privateer base' itself, although many of these are also ships taken by the privateers themselves and subsequently retaken by Captain Ball and Commander Nash. By comparison, largely scant detail of how each capture has been 'disposed of' (see Appendix 2, Figure 4) is included, except in the case of the cargo itself, which in a couple of instances includes slaves (in one case 10 onboard and the other, 337), who were simply sent on to be sold anyway, although naturally on behalf of the British rather than the French.[174] However, it would be unfair to accuse Ball and Nash of simply lining their own pockets, as the vague details given in the returns of capture (see Appendix 2) make it difficult to decipher if the two officers and their crews really did make any sort of profit from their seizures on the African coast.

However, as suggested earlier, Ball was without a doubt keen to fulfil the instructions given to him by the Admiralty. As is common with officers' correspondence with the Admiralty, Ball echoed the orders given to him in the previous year, before outlining what his approach and the outcome of his putting those orders into action, namely:

> You will please inform My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty that the Squadron late under the Command of Mon. Renaud which I left England in quest of, with His Maj. Ship under my command and Hornet Sloop are (by using information I could obtain) totally destroyed.[175]

Ball was successful in his pursuit of 'Monsieur Renaud', the apparently notorious privateer captain, although less successful in his quest to 'dislodge' the French from Gorée itself.[176] Ball seems to have had a single focus with regards to his orders for the African coast, having committed all

[173] ADM 1/1518, H. L. Ball to E. Nepean, 'A List of Vessels captured by His Majesty's Ship *Daedalus* and His Majesty's Sloop *Hornet* under the Command of Henry Lidgbird Ball Esq'.
[174] *Ibid.*
[175] ADM 1/1518, H. L. Ball to E. Nepean, 10th April 1798.
[176] ADM 2/1099, Adm. to H. L. Ball, 20th October 1797.

at his disposal in pursuit of the removal of the privateer threat to British interests on the nearby coastal regions. This shows that Ball was committed to the fulfilment of government strategy, as well as the protection of British imperial and commercial interests. It is a common theme which runs through naval officers' correspondence with the Admiralty's secretary Evan Nepean, that the professional requirements of the job alongside the completion of government-approved objectives took precedent beyond all else, reducing reports and correspondence to the 'business-like' format we expect of any example of report made by a member of the armed forces in the fulfilment of duty.[177] Naturally, there is no room (or appropriate time) for the officer reporting to muse on the nature of those orders, suggesting that the morality and philosophies of the growing abolition movement had little impact on the Royal Navy and its officers' opinions on their roles in the protection and facilitation of British slavery before 1807.

[177] See for example: ADM 1/1515; ADM 1/1518; ADM 1/1621; ADM 1/1623; ADM 1/1625; ADM 1/1627; ADM 1/1718; ADM 1/2131-2133; ADM 1/2516.

Conclusion

This work takes its place alongside a small body of literature which discusses the role of the Royal Navy in the protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery. Like these works, this dissertation concludes that the Royal Navy was deeply involved in slavery and the slave trade, but, contrary to their conclusions, it has sought to quantify the navy's role beyond general statements such as 'the Navy protected slavery'. By determining how government policy, both more generally, and specifically toward the slave trade, was formed, it becomes clear what the main considerations behind the duty of commerce protection for officers of the Royal Navy were, as the executors of government will. The Navy's protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery was part of a wider aim to guard and expand British imperial ambition, which was heavily reliant on the mercantile successes of British trade networks around the world. The slave trade and the institution it supplied was by no means exceptional, being a vital part of British commerce, particularly given the growing demand for sugar all across Europe, but particularly amongst the upper classes of British society. Indeed, the demand for slave-produced goods goes some way toward an explanation for why the trade in slaves and the institution of slavery itself was abolished with such a delay from the first abolitionist groups' formation in 1787. The government was largely anti-abolitionist, as were many individuals who made up the upper echelons of British society, including many very influential and rich merchants. At best, the trade was heavily regulated before pressure mounted enough to bring about the trade's eradication, although it would take almost three decades for the total abolition of British slavery to be enacted. A common view of the historiography demonstrated here was that the British empire was heavily reliant on the Caribbean islands, all of which were predominantly plantation economies based on the survival of slavery. Without them, the empire could not have grown; the British Isles could not be defended, and the Royal Navy could not be maintained to protect it all. British slavery

relied on the Royal Navy for its survival in the face of intense colonial rivalry, both on the African coast and in the Caribbean, in strategy discerned by government and executed by officers of the Navy on the spot.

Also highlighted and discussed here are the methods of protection and facilitation of the institution of British slavery, namely the defence of slave 'factories' on the West African coast; the protection of British plantation island colonies in the Caribbean; the protection of convoys both across the Atlantic via Africa and the returning trade containing sugar and other produced goods; and finally the harassment and destruction of rival European ships and settlements on both sides of the Atlantic. It is clear that the protection and facilitation of British Atlantic slavery was almost entirely defensive in nature, as the Royal Navy sought to guard against enemy infringement on Britain's vital commercial networks which maintained the supply of labour to the Caribbean, as well as the continuous supply of a luxury commodity (although by the end of the eighteenth century, more of a necessity), which heightened the need for protection of its supply centres almost continuously: sugar. Through the examination of Admiralty order letters, convoy lists and officers' correspondence with the Admiralty, what becomes evident is the banality of bureaucratic administration which organised the defence and facilitation of what was already becoming an increasingly morally deplorable institution in the eyes of society, although in a gradual and drawn-out process of reform, regulation and eventual abolition. The slave trade and the institution it supplied were simply another strand of British commerce, all of which required defensive measures to prevent the loss of profit and the continued maintenance of the war effort which was so all-encompassing in British foreign policy at the close of the eighteenth and into the early nineteenth centuries. Particularly illuminating are the letters sent in response to government orders issued via the Admiralty, in which officers of the Royal Navy inform the Admiralty of their successes (more often than not) in the execution of their orders. What becomes clear is the apparent adherence to duty and instruction which the officers assigned to

its protection applied to their orders to protect British slavery, whether it be in the destruction of privateering squadrons on the West African coast, or the escorting of slave-produced cargoes in convoy beyond the reach of enemy marauders in the wake of extremely contagious disease with high mortality. This demonstrates two things: the remarkable will to complete an objective no matter the odds; and the objective sense of duty in the face of a changing tide of opinion towards the institution they were sworn to protect. Regardless of what we must think as a modern perspective, the men of the Royal Navy were driven by the will of their government (and no doubt fear of failure and future unemployment if unsuccessful), irrespective of the growing question of morality attached to the institution of British slavery.

Defining motive of those involved in the protection and facilitation of British slavery is important here, as the sense of duty that was intrinsic to the Royal Navy's role was far from the only explanation. At its heart, the government was sovereign, although there was extensive pressure from groups outside the immediate political establishment to protect British slavery and its commercial links with the British empire. Predominantly, this pressure naturally came from groups of merchants with large investments in the slave trade and the plantation economies of the West Indies. Money, and the continued profitability of the British economy, bolstered by the slave trade and the plantation economies of the Caribbean, shaped government direction and strategy, with the interests of merchants being heavily incorporated into the orders issued to the officers of the Royal Navy tasked with their execution. Indeed, the blurred lines between personal and professional interests that were prevalent during the eighteenth century reared their heads, as limited examples of naval involvement in the trade on the African coast beyond the professional reveal the ambiguity of the Royal Navy's role. Lieutenant John Mathews is an isolated example of an officer working on the coast as an agent on behalf of a merchant (or group of merchants) based in London for a

number of years after the American Revolutionary War.[178] Given that naval officers were completely barred from conducting trade on a personal account, it raises the question of an *ad hoc* code of practice which was to be applied to British officers' conduct concerning commercial interest. It becomes apparent that the stature of officers such as Lieutenant Mathews would set them up well for employment as an agent, although it seems that the world in the eighteenth century took a more lenient view on potential conflicts of interest than would be possible today.

An abundance of government documents shows that, as in so many other aspects of politics and commerce during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it is economic interests which define the course of political events. At the heart of the Royal Navy's protection and facilitation of British slavery were the interests and lobbying of merchant groups with ears in Parliament. Sugar was the single most important commodity of the eighteenth century, and the survival of slavery was pivotal to the production of this growing trade. Sugar and its production became a strategic priority for the navy at the lobbying of merchants in Britain, the Caribbean and on the coast of Africa, all calling for increasing defensive measures for their interests in sugar and by extension, slavery. Given the nature of Britain's maritime empire, spread across the globe on oceans spanning thousands of miles, the navy was the perfect defence for the protection of British slavery; ever increasing as British dominance of the seas was realised at the turn of the nineteenth century. Strategically, British slavery was paramount to the continued prosperity of the British empire, as the vast wealth accrued from sugar production in the Caribbean funded expansion and continued war, but was heavily reliant on the supply of enslaved labour to solve the problems of high mortality in sugar production. This supply of labour relied on permanent links with slave 'factories' on the African coast, localised to British settlements on the coast which supplied the labour from captives bought from African warlords. The defence of British slavery was therefore strategically vital, creating a

[178] BPP, *Consideration of all Matters relating to Trade and Foreign Plantations*, 12, 34.

continuous, cyclical chain of commerce which was heavily dependent on naval protection for survival.

The protection and facilitation of the institution of British slavery by the Royal Navy (with its place for many as the paragons of freedom in the suppression of the slave trade in the nineteenth century) is an uncomfortable subject which historians have neglected. As a result, assumptions and assertions have been made about it, such as marked and decisive opposition from all walks of life towards the survival of slavery and the slave trade in the period leading up to abolition. The Royal Navy was driven by duty, which defined its position and perspective towards what was becoming an increasingly questioned strand of British economic prosperity. It is through acceptance and education of this subject and its nature as hard-to-swallow that we can become better informed about our national past, regardless of how uncomfortable it might make us. It is hoped that this dissertation will serve as a springboard for future research which examines and discusses British slavery, to help future generations of historians better understand the British empire and its cruelties, in recognition of our ancestors' mistakes alongside many things for which the nation should be proud. If this research was to be considered in conjunction with the evolution of abolition, it could inform a more complete view of the British abolition of the slave trade and the institution it supplied.

This research can inform future investigation into the nature of the economic and mercantile interest on the West African coast, as well as allowing future scholars a starting point from which to create a more detailed understanding of naval officers' roles as agents and representatives for merchants in the regions which were so intrinsically linked with British Atlantic slavery. It is hoped that this work can be read in tandem with the literature which examines the Royal Navy's role in the abolition and suppression of the Atlantic slave trade, helping us see clearer the changing world that was taking shape in the waning years of the eighteenth century and the first decades of the nineteenth. From this, it

will be easier for future generations to gain a clearer understanding of the evolution of human interest, motivations, and philosophies which formed, and in turn, a clearer picture of the world as it exists today can take shape.

Appendices

Appendix 1- Data from ADM 7, African Convoys.

Table 3: Royal Navy Convoys to Africa, with Merchant Ship Fates, 1795-1805

Source	Date	No. of slavers identified/Total convoy size	Details of Assigned Escort	Escorting RN Officer	Slavers' fates
ADM 7/782	Mar 1795	9/9	HMS *Iris*, 5th Rate (32 guns)	Capt. William Hargood	1 straggler parting without leave. 1 captured post disembarkation, Kingston.
" "	Dec 1796	6/39	HMS *Sheerness*, 5th (44)	Capt. James Cornwallis	2 parted without leave. 2 captured post disembarkation (1 Kingston, 1 unknown).
ADM 7/783	May 1797	5/5	HMS *Maidstone*, 5th (32)	Capt. John Matthews	1 unknown. Others completed voyage (3 Barbados, 1 Demerara).
" "	July 1797	1/28	HMS *Pompee*, 3rd (80)	Capt. Vashon	Slaves sold (Grenada), subsequent fate unknown.
" "	Nov 1797	6/7	HMS *Serpent*, sloop (16)	Cmdr. Richard Buckoll	3 unknown. 2 completed voyage (Kingston). 1 captured post disembarking slaves (unknown).
" "	Mar 1798	1/???	HMS *Sheerness*	Capt. James Cornwallis	Captured post disembarkation of slaves, Demerara.
ADM 7/784	Oct 1799	9/13	HMS *Seine*, 5th (38?)	Capt. Milne	1 captured post disembarkation, Demerara. 4 completed (3 Demerara, 1 Barbados). 2 sold slaves (subsequent

					fate unknown). 2 unknown.
" "	Feb 1800	6/17	HMS *Melpomene*, 5th (38)	Capt. Sir Charles Hamilton	2 completed voyage. 1 slaves sold (subsequent fate unknown). 1 captured post disembarkation, Kingston. 2 unknown.
" "	April 1800	6/124	HMS *Severn*, 5th (44)	Capt. Whitby	3 completed voyage (2 Demerara, 1 Berbice). 1 slaves sold (subsequent fate unknown). 2 unknown.
ADM 7/786	Dec 1800	1/156	HMS *Syren*, 5th (32)	Capt. Gosselyn	Completed voyage, Demerara.
" "	Jan 1801	7/18	HMS *Fly*, sloop (14/16?)	Capt. Duval	3 completed voyage (2 Demerara, 1 Kingston). 1 abandoned/condemned (unseaworthiness) post disembarkation. 1 sold slaves (subsequent fate unknown). 2 unknown.
" "	Feb 1801	2/135	HMS *Topaze*, 5th (38); HMS *Heureux*, 6th (22)	Unknown	Unknown.
" "	April 1801	1/8	HMS *Arethusa*, 5th (38)	Capt. Wolley	Completed voyage, Demerara.
" "	June 1801	3/65	HMS *Garland*, 6th (22)	Unknown	Completed voyages (1 St. Vincent, 1 Demerara).

“ “	Aug 1801	2/27	HMS *Santa Margarita*, 5th (38)	Capt. Sir George(?) Parker	1 abandoned/condemned (unseaworthiness) post disembarkation. 1 unknown.
ADM 7/789	Nov 1804	6/8	HMS *Success*, 5th (32)	Capt. George(?) Scott	4 completed voyages (2 Demerara, 1 Kingston, 1 St. Lucia). 2 unknown.
“ “	Dec 1804	1/79	HMS *Unicorn*, 5th (36? 32?)	Capt. Lucius Hardyman	Completed voyage, Demerara.
“ “	Mar 1805	1/12	HMS *Hindoostan*, 4th (50)	Capt. Alexander/Percy(?) Fraser	Captured post disembarkation of slaves, Basse-Terre.
“ “	April 1805	2/23	HMS *Blenheim*, 3nd (80)	R. Adm. Sir Thomas Troubridge	1 completed voyage, Demerara. 1 unknown.
“ “	“ “	2/55	HMS *Serpent*, sloop (16)	Capt. Thomas Moutray(?)/William Waller(?)	1 completed voyage, Charleston. 1 captured post disembarkation of slaves, Montevideo.

Note: no convoys to the African coast were recorded in ADM 7/785 and ADM 7/787, with ADM 7/788 and ADM 7/790 marked ‘Missing at Transfer’ in TNA. Fates have been determined through cross-references with Transatlantic Slave Trade Database.

Appendix 2- An Example of Capture Returns from the African Coast.

Figure 4: A List of Vessels captured by His Majesty's Ship Daedalus and His Majesty's Sloop Hornet under the Command of Henry Lidgbird Ball Esq. (Recreated)

Vessels Names	How Rigged	No. Men	No. Guns	Tons	Where from	Where Bound
Rebecca, American	Snow				Charleston, America	Island of Gorée
President, American Bottom[?] with an English Cargo	Ship				Taken by the Enemy off the Islands De Loss, and re-captured off the mouth of the River Gambia	Do
Quaker, late belonging to Liverpool, Retaken	Ship	36	10	260	Trading on the Coast	Do
Ocean, Retaken late belonging to the Sierra Leone Company	Sloop				From Gorée having been trading on the Coast	Do
La Prosperite, French	Schooner				From Gorée	Do
Bell	Armed Ship		20		At Gorée, Destroyed	

Name of Vessels	Lading
Rebecca	Part of her cargo Pitch & Tar. Dry goods, Tobacco, Coffee, Molasses, & Gun Powder. The Naval Stores taken out and Gun Powder and landed at the Port, and the Vessel liberated.
President	Lading with Salt.. Vessel & Cargo returned to the owner here, on salvage being paid
Quaker	Lading with Merchandise, and Three hundred & Thirty seven Slaves- sent to Messrs Dennistons Macklocklin

	and Thompson, the Island of St Christophers, for the Ship & Cargo to be disposed of, […] Money […] remitted to Rich[ar]d Nash Esq, […] Plymouth.
Ocean	*Cloth, Iron, Beads, and 10 Slaves. The 10 slaves sent in the Quaker to the West Indies. The Vessel & Cargo disposed of here.*
La Prosperite	*Lading with Guinea Corn- disposed of here.*
Bell	*N/A*

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