

Chapter 17

Army, Navy and Air Force Records.

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THE BRITISH ARMY

(with the Australians, Canadians and New Zealanders)

There have been many Jephcotts who have served in the British Army, as well as those of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, especially during the two World Wars. There is a wealth of information available to the family historian, much of it located at the PRO, Kew.

Our research in this area is virtually nil. This is because the author has no strong links with his AA family and the armed forces, except for his father who served in Burma during the last war (a proud owner of the Burma Star) and other uncles, aunts and cousins who were called to serve in the two World Wars. This section is therefore mainly limited to the information that we have extracted from various published indexes.

There have, however, been strong links with the Jephcotts (Jeffcoat and Jeffcott mainly) and the British Army, and the individuals are both mentioned in the following pages and particularly in the family trees for AC and BU.

Army Lists

The following extracts have been taken from various Army Lists that have been published over the years and are available on the shelves of public libraries.

Harts Army List 1877, 1878

P.375 Medical Department

James Henry Jeffcoat

Assistant Surgeon	5th August 58
Surgeon-Major	1st April 73
Regiment, or Station	Bengal

The Official Army List - 30th September 1881

P.883 Medical

James Henry Jeffcoat

Date of Birth	9th May 37
Assistant Surgeon	5th August 58
Surgeon	1st March 73
Surgeon-Major	1st April 73
(Surgeon-Major ranks with Lieutenant-Colonel)	

Harts Army List - 1904

P.1154 Distinguished Service Order

Captain A C Jeffcoat, Inniskilling fusiliers

P.430 Indian Army	
Last Regiment -	Bedfordshire
Years service -	17

Frederick Hugh Hiddingh Jeffcoat, 83 Light Infantry

2nd Lieut -	16th November 87
Lieut -	4th January 90
Captain -	16th November 98

P. 172 Active List
Henry J Powell Jeffcoat
in Index Only.

P.1078 Half or Retired pay - Medical Department

Brigade Surgeons

James Henry Jeffcoat (96) MRCS LSA

Assistant Surgeon	5th August 58
Surgeon	1st March 73
Surgeon Major	1st April 73
Brigade Surgeon	3rd September 84
Dep. Surg. General	30th May 85
Retired on Half Pay	30th May 85

(96) - Deputy Surgeon General, J H Jeffcoat served in the Afghan War of 1878-1880 with the Koorum Field Force, and was present at the capture of the Peiwar Kotal (medal with clasp).

The Official Army List - 1912

P.2055 Dept L. Officers retired on half pay or Retd. pay Brigade surgeons (with honorary rank of Dep. Surg. Gen)
James Henry Jeffcoat.

Date of first commission - 5th August 1858
Date of retirement - 30th May 1885

P.1385 Warrant Officers - Regimental

Superintending Clerks

Edward Broof Jeffcott

Date of Birth 16th April 74
Rank Service 11 yrs 197 days
Date of Appt. 1st March 07

P.2597 War Services of Officers of the Army etc.

A C Jeffcoat}
J H Jeffcoat} Further info.

P.636 Gradation list of officers of the British Army

Algernon Cautley Jeffcoat (Captain) DSO

Date of Birth - 14th August 77
1st Appointment - 2nd Lieut R.Innis Fus. 8th September 97
Lieutenant - R Innis Fus 8th June 1898
Captain - R Innis Fus 14 Dec 01
Staff Service & - Employed with Egyptian Army
13th May 04 to 15th July 06

P.1960 Officers retired on full pay & retired pay
Indian Army, Majors

Frederick Hugh Hiddings

Date of Substantive Major - 16th November 05
Date of Retirement - 16th November 10

Roll of the Fallen Indexes

The following extracts have been taken from various 'Roll of the Fallen' indexes that have been published.

JEFCUT

National Roll of the Great War 1914/1918, section VII. William James Jefcut volunteered November 1915, just before his 18th birthday.

(unsure whether this item refers to being killed in action or simply a statement of his joining up.)

JEFFCUTT

Killed in action at Neuve Chapelle on March 12th 1915, Samuel Jeffcutt of the 1st Wilts Regiment, son of Joseph and Threnza Jeffcutt, 45 Stafford Street, Swindon, aged 23 years.

JEPHCOTT (AK)

In humble submission in the will of God, this tablet is in loving memory of Private Arthur Boobyer Jephcott, 18th Btn. Australian Imperial Forces, Eldest son of E.A. and A.A. Jephcott of this town, who was wounded in Gallipoli and fell at Pozieres, France, on August 4th 1916, aged 26.

(tablet inside Alcester Church, Warks.)

City of Coventry - Roll of The Fallen 1914-1918

1916 - Jephcott John, PTE, 2/7th Bn, Royal Warwickshire Regt
b 24.04.1898 at 7 Bradford Street, Coventry.

1914 - Jephcott Oliver, PTE, 1st Bn, Royal Warwickshire Regt
b 6.1.1890 in Grove Street, Coventry. Buried at M,teren

(None for 1939 - 1945)

Miscellaneous Army References

Arthur William Jeffcott

We received a letter from a Mr D L Thomas who is a collector of Campaign Medals. One that he had acquired and did not particularly wish to keep was a British War Medal and Victory (1914 to 1918) to 5426 A.Cpl. A W Jeffcoat, Machine Gun Corps.

A check of the BMD register revealed that Arthur William Jeffcott was born in Kettering in 1893. We made a telephone call to a Jeffcott that we found living in Kettering and was informed that the medals belonged to his late cousin, who was incidentally, at one time, 'Batman to Tedder'.

Mr Thomas was offering them for sale at the time and we did advertise the fact in one of TJS newsletters. Whether he still has them is not known.

THE ROYAL NAVY

There have been many Jephcotts who have served aboard Royal and Merchant Navy vessels, especially during the two World Wars. There is a wealth of information available to the family historian, mainly located at the PRO, Kew.

Regrettably, very little research appears to have been done into our family's links with the Navy. We have a few scattered references to 19th and 20th century naval service and this is clearly an avenue for further research that would no doubt yield a great deal of information. Who knows what fascinating facts are sitting amongst these records, just waiting to be uncovered?

Our very limited research in this field stems from our first visit to Kew in 1990. On searching the indexes in a very unorganised manner, we stumbled across a totally unexpected reference to a John Jephcott or Jeffcote, who received his Lieutenant's certificate in the year 1690.

This was in the day of the dreaded Press Gang, when men were dragged off from the streets and pressed into service aboard one of His Majesty's ships. Of course, ship's officers were mostly recruited from the upper classes and it is unlikely that John Jephcott would have started his career as a pressed man.

Regrettably, copies of lieutenant's certificates have only survived since 1691. We do not know anything of John's family connections and can only guess that he would have fitted in with the Ansty Jephcotts (family BR, or more likely BJ).

Ansty is a long way from the sea and for this reason, it is surprising to find a sailor in the family. We do not know of any other members of the family who became sailors in the 17th century.

Details of John Jephcott's career are shown at the end of this chapter.

Assorted Naval Records

Other brief references to 19th century and earlier, Jephcott sailors, together with the source of the information are shown below.

Frederick Jeffcutt, a mariner of Leicester, was tried on 23rd September 1843 for an unknown offence and was transported to Tasmania aboard the ship 'Asiatic'. He was born around 1828 and died in Tasmania on 1st November 1854. What is known of his family tree is shown in section 6.

Name	Family	Comment	Date	Source
Thomas Jephcott	?	of St Leonards, Shoreditch, Mariner	1714	Will 43
William Jephcott	BR	William Jephcott, Lieutenant of Marines	1807	Admon
John Jeffcott	BJ	Surgeon RN	1859	Will
Joseph Herbert Jephcott	AX	Seaman on Ship Combermere	1899	Letter 153

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE

There have been many Jephcotts who have served in the Royal Air Force, especially during the second world war. There is a wealth of information available to the family historian, mainly located at the PRO, Kew.

Again, we have done no personal research into this area of the family history, mainly because of there being none of the author's direct family connected with the RAF. Of course, the RAF was only formed during the 20th century and much of the family history is still within living memory. This is clearly an avenue of research that requires attention.

The following extract was taken from a published index.

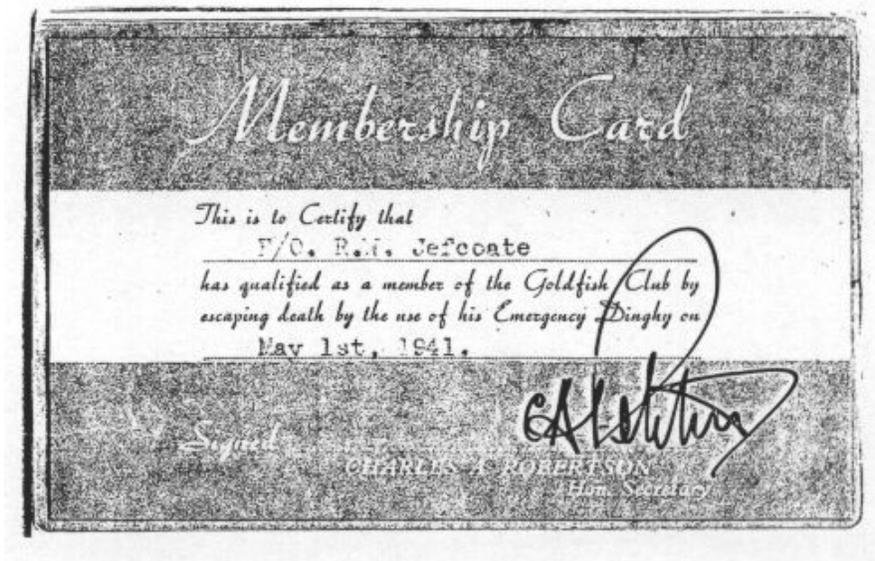
Air Force List April - June 1920

RAF Commands (Overseas)

Middle East Area - Cairo

Captain Edward B Jeffcott (Family BU) (Attached for duty with RAF from RE)

This item was sent to me by the late Bob Jefcoate (Family BW) of Esher, Surrey. It records his somewhat unorthodox return from a mission.



Regrettably, the above is the sum total of my knowledge of the Jephcott's links with the RAF.

Captain John Jeffcott

John Jeffcott is the earliest sailor that we have found in our research - and what a man he turned out to be! He went to sea in the latter part of the 17th century, gaining his Lieutenant's certificate on 26th June 1690 and finding himself a part of one of the most important and colourful periods in the history of the Royal Navy.

In researching his career, we discovered a fascinating source of historical records and bibliography, which has now left us with a deep interest in 17th and 18th century naval history.

In the year 1690, First Lieutenant John Jeffcott was commissioned to serve aboard the Neptune. She was a 2nd rate ship of the line, built at Deptford Dock Yard in 1683 and carried an armament of 90 guns.

The Nore is a sandbank in the Thames estuary, just outside the entry to the River Medway, where the naval dockyard at Chatham is. If a ship had put in to Chatham for refitting work in the dry dock or alongside, she would then go to the Nore to take on provisions or for further work to be done on her. The Royal Navy first used the River Medway in 1547, when a storehouse was recorded as being rented. By the reign of Elizabeth I, a small dockyard had been established at Chatham. The first warship built there was the Sunne, launched in 1586. In 1613 the dockyard was moved to its present site and that which John would have known. By 1618, storehouses and a ropewalk had been built and shortly afterwards, a dry dock and houses for senior officials were built.

Ship design was in the hands of a few gifted master shipwrights, each of whom trained his successor. Ships were built on the basis of past experience and their size and shape varied between builders. The early eighteenth century was dominated by war with France. Chatham's proximity to the North Sea and our allies the Dutch, put it in a prime position for operations against France, although later interest in the Mediterranean Sea and the West Indies eventually left Chatham to concentrate on shipbuilding and repair, with Portsmouth and Plymouth taking over as fleet bases.

The commissioner's house at Chatham dockyard was built in 1704, a building which still stands little changed over the years since John would have known it from his frequent visits to the port.

John's first commission had therefore been as a second lieutenant (not a first as was his commission) aboard a second rate ship of the line. This term 'ship of the line' came about from the manner in which 'men of war' moved in a line in a battle situation. This was necessary to reduce the possibility of an enemy ship firing into the rear of the ship, thus potentially doing a great deal of damage within the ship and on its gun deck. The fact that he was made a second rather than a third lieutenant indicates a probable degree of competence gained from previous naval experience, and the fact that the first lieutenant probably had greater experience than John. Evidence of John's previous non-commissioned experience is borne out by the 1684 reference at the beginning of this account.

His next commission was aboard the Burford, a 3rd rate ship of the line carrying 70 guns and of 1053 tons. Again, this reference was misleading as he was actually made second lieutenant of the ship in 1691, followed by promotion to first lieutenant in 1695.

The records show that the Burford took part in the battle of Barfleur in 1692. It was in 1690 that the French admiral, the Comte de Tourville, had achieved French superiority over the English by his victory off Beachy Head. The incident two years later at Barfleur, followed by the dramatic sequel at Le Hogue a few days later, regained the Channel superiority for the English and decisively settled the Anglo-French naval struggle during what became known as 'the War of English Succession'.

The exiled James II was attempting to regain his throne from a base in Cherbourg, by invading England. Tourville was waiting for reinforcements but, when they failed to arrive, he set off from Brest with 44 ships of the line, bound for the Channel. Unknown to him, Admiral Sir Edward Russell had mustered a huge Anglo-Dutch fleet (the Dutch were then our allies) of almost a hundred ships of the line, at Portsmouth. The two fleets sighted each other off Cap Barfleur, the two battle lines engaged and fierce fighting ensued. Fortunately for the French, a thick fog set in and they were able to slip away. Both fleets anchored at nightfall, neither having lost a ship.

The following morning, the French continued westwards, towards the Channel Islands and Russell began the chase after them. The fleets anchored again for the night, and the following day the chase continued. The French ship, the Soleil Royale, went aground off Cherbourg and she, together with other French ships, were

trapped by the English Red Squadron (of which the Burford was part) and destroyed by fire. Some 22 French ships were chased by the English Blue Squadron of 32 ships, commanded by Admiral Sir John Ashby. They chased them through the race of Alderney and into the port at St Malo where the French found safety from their pursuers, whilst the remainder of their fleet attempted escape towards the Bay of La Hogue. It was there that the battle was fought to the bitter end with an English victory.

The battle of La Hogue was the continuation of the battle of Barfleur. On the 23rd May 1692, Sir Cloudisley Shovel, Rear Admiral commanding the Red Squadron, was ordered to destroy the French ships which were left at anchor off La Hogue. However, he had been severely cut by a large splinter wound in his thigh, so his place was taken by Vice Admiral Sir George Rooke, commanding the Blue Squadron.

Fifteen French ships of the line had been caught by the flood tide and lay at anchor in the bays of La Hogue and Cherbourg. Three had already been destroyed by the Red Squadron and the remaining twelve sailed deeper into the bay, among the scores of transports assembling for an attempted invasion of England by the exiled king. The English and Dutch ships of the line, together with their fire-ships and boats, pursued the French ships and transports, wreaking havoc with fire and shot. The twelve French ships were destroyed and it is said, watched by James II himself, and crowds ashore. The allied boats and fire-ships operated in such shallow water and so close to the shore that French cavalry was sent out to attack them, leaving a remarkable account of French troopers being pulled off their horses by sailors armed with boathooks. It was a stunning victory for the Anglo-Dutch fleet, proving decisive in the direction and outcome of the war.

The Burford was built at Woolwich by Thomas Shisk in 1679. 140ft long, 40ft 10«in beam, 17'3" depth, 18'0" draught of water, 1174 tons, 300 men at peace, 380 at war abroad, 460 at home, 62 guns at peace, 62 guns abroad at war, 70 at home, 3rd rate. In June 1692 she was one of the line of battle ships, under the command of the Vice Admiral of the Red Squadron.

Then came John's next commission. The Lyme was built in Portsmouth in 1654, was 145ft long with a beam of 35 ft. She was 764 tons and carried between 52 and 62 guns. She was renamed the Montague in 1660, widened to 36 ft in 1675 and was rebuilt in 1698.

Then came John's next commission in August 1696. The Plymouth was built in Wapping in 1653, was 140ft long with a beam of 35 ft. She was 742 tons and carried between 54 and 60 guns. She was rebuilt in 1705. Another record says that she foundered in 1705, which was perhaps the reason for her rebuild. She was similar in size to the Montague.

It was whilst serving aboard the Plymouth in October 1696, that John was the subject of a courts martial. This must have been a very traumatic time for him and could well have ended his promising career. I have reproduced the evidence given at the courts martial, as it was written, with allowances being necessary for my possible misreading of the poor handwriting of the documents involved.

The courts martial was convened in the presence of Admiral Sir Cloudesly Shovell and Admiral Nevell, in addition to several naval captains, with the charge broadly being that Lieutenant John Jeffcott was responsible for flogging a man to death. The records of the case were well preserved and these have been transcribed below.

Report of Courts Martial (Adm 1 5257)

Att a court martiall held on board his majts. shipp Queen at Spitthead 30th day of October 1696.

Present

The honorable P E Cloudsly Sherele knt. Admle. and commandr in chief of his majts. shippes in ye Mediterranean. President the honorable in Nevell Esq rear Adm of the Redd Kg.

Capt: Wivoll	Capt: Littlejohn
Jennings	Worthington
Jennings	Pollatt
Bibb	Whittaker
Crawley	Ward
Wgatt	Legg-Long
Gardner	Mighells
Fogs	Arris
Slidley	Edwards
Lycott	Dyer

All duly sworne pursuant to a late Act of Parliament (entitled an Act) concerning the commissioners of ye admiralty.

John Jeffcott first Lieutent of his majst. shipp Plymouth was accused for whipping to death, in ye absence of his captain, one William Walters a seaman on board the Burford in ye streights, as also for beating and abusing one Dan Ward a seaman late belonging to ye Montague.

The examination of David Bulfield taken on board his Maj ship the Plymouth at Spithead the 20th day of October 1696.

Daniel Bulfield sayth that he was informed by severall of the Burfords men when he belonged to that ship, that William Walters was punished by Capt. Beamonds [Beaumont] order for stealing a Dollar from one Mackay, that this Dept. was his messermate and that he lay in irons about five or six days after he had been whippt, and that during that time this dep. and the sayd Walter dranke frequently four or five bottles of wine together in a day, and so far as this dept. could perceive he was in perfect health and never heard the sayd Walter make mention of Lieutent Jeffcotts Warrant[?], but complained that he had received six lashes more than he was ordered and this dept. was with him all the time of his sicknesse which happened about ten dayes after his punishment as aforesayd, and the morning he dyed the sayd William Walters did declare to this dept. and one James Philips another of his messemates that he verily beleived that William Webb was really the cause of his death, by whipping him too severely and giving more lashes than was ordered.

Geo Larkin

David B Buffield

William Oswell Corporall of his Maj ship the Plymouth declareth upon oath that he heard William Walters say that one Webb whoe is now boatswaine of a Bombe Vessell, whoe executed the punishment upon him gave him six lashes more than was ordered him which went nearer to his head than all the rest, and the sayd Webb alsoe declared in this depts. hearing that he was glad he had gott him the sayd Walters under his lash, for he would be revenged of him, because the sayd Walters had called him Cuckold.

Geo Larkin

William Oswell

Joseph Philips Gunners mate of his majts ship the Plymouth upon oath sayth that he belonged to ye Burford and was present when William Walters was whipt for stealing a Dollar and it was discoursed then abouth the ship that he was to have fifteen lashes but one Webb (whoe then executed the punishment) gave him about twenty lashes as near as this dept could guess, that he saw the sayd Walters some days after upon the forecastle and

he was then in drinke, but did not seeme to be indisposed as to his death, neither did he complaine of any dammage recieved by his Whipping

Geo Larkin

Joseph Phillips

Bernard Shorthouse upon oath sayth that he belonged to the Burford when she was layd in the straites and when they were betwixt Callary and Thoulon (as well as he can remember) William Walters was ordered to be whipt for theft, as he then was informed and it was discoursed about the ship that he was to have fifteen lashes but he was positive yt Webb when then executed punishment gave him one and twenty.

Geo Larkin

Bernard Shorthouse

Harman Marshall belonging to ye Plymouth upon oath declareth yt he belonged to the Burford when William Walters was whipt for stealing a piece of eight out of one Mackays pocket and that he heard Lt. Jeffcott order him fifteen lashes but one William Webb who executed the punishment gave hime one and twenty and this dept counted ye lashes that this dept dranke with him severall times afterwards and that he often declared yt he verily belived Webb had done him a very grave deale of injury and had been his death, but never mentioned anything relating to Lt. Jeffcott but seemed to this dept to be in perfect health.

Geo Larkin

Harman Marshall

Peter[?] Tuckerman sayth yt be belonged to ye Burford and abt four or five dayes before William Walters dyed, Webb whoe had whipt him for stealing a dollar came to ye sayd Walters and would have dranke with him, but Walters refused saying you have given me my death and alsoe sayd that Webb had given him five lashes more than he was ordered, but never heard him mention anything, touching Lt. Jeffcott tho he was often times with him before his death.

Geo Larkin

Peter Tuckerman

On board his Majesty's Ship the Plymouth at Spithead the 20th day of October Anno Domini 1696.

Charles Pebler? belonging to his Maj's Ship the Plymouth being examined upon oath declareth that he never saw Luitenant Jeffcott beate, strike or abuse in anywise one Daniel Ward late belongong to the Montague, neither did the sayd Ward ever to this deponents remembrance complaine of any thing relating thereunto to this deponent.

Sign

Geo Larkin Dep Jud Ad

Charles Pebler

Barnet Evans belonging to his Maj ship the Plymouth upon oath sayth yt he never saw or heard of Luitenant Jeffcott Beating or abusing one Daniel warde late belonging to the Montague, neither did the sayd Ward ever complaine of any such thing to this deponent as well as he can remember.

Sign

Geo Larkin Dep Jud Ad

Barnet Evans

The court having examined severall witnesses upon oath it appeared that the sayd William Walters was punished by ord of his comandr. for theft that he recd. but one and twenty lashes with the Catt of Nine Tailles which is but an ordinary punishment for such a crime, that the sayd Lt. Jeffcott never beat or abused the sayd Daniell Ward and its resolved that the sayd Lt. Jeffcott is not guilty of ye charge layd agst him and the court both accordingly acquitt him ye sayd Lt. Jeffcott.

[All Signed.]

My analysis of the court martial is that the charges brought against John, must have had a basis of truth to have been brought in the first place, but were found to have been without substance. Why were they brought against him, by whom - and why did not the court feel that its time had been wasted? Discipline aboard ship in those days was harsh and the lieutenant (or lieutenants) of the ship was (or were) responsible for keeping order and seeing that the correct punishment was carried out as dictated by naval laws or traditions. I noted that his captain, Basil Beaumont, aboard the Plymouth and the Montague did not appear to have been present at the trial. Surely he would have had evidence to offer! Also, I found no record of John's evidence in his defence!

What this episode did reveal was an intrigue which would otherwise have been lost to us, that of an alleged unfaithful wife and the husband taking his revenge on being taunted with it. It also gave an interesting insight into life aboard ship at that time and how people of the time spoke.

In May 1699, came John's next commission. The Warwick was built in Deptford in 1696, was 130 ft long with a beam of 35 ft. She was 687 tons, carried 48 guns and was a 4th rate ship of the line, being rebuilt in 1710.

Whilst this ship was smaller than John's previous ones, it was much more modern, being only three years old when he joined her. This may have been a backward step in his career as a possible admonishment for the court martial. However, it could have been quite the reverse, in that he was now in command of this vessel. Lieutenants were often given command of a ship and were entitled 'captain', this being a loose term rather than an actual rank.

In March 1701 came John's next commission. The Kent was built in Blackwall in 1699, was 152 ft long with a beam of 40 ft. She was 1064 tons and carried 70 guns. She was a 3rd rate ship of the line and was rebuilt in 1724.

Now here was a definite elevation in John's career! This ship was one of the fleet's most modern fighting ships. The 3rd rate ships did most of the fighting in a battle situation, they being more numerous and more manoeuvrable than the larger 1st and 2nd rates, whilst also possessing a powerful complement of ordnance. A typical 3rd rate ship of that time would have carried 26 x 32 pounders, 26 x 12 pounders, 14 x 6 pounders and 4 x 3 pounder guns.

John would have been well thought of by his superiors, to warrant such a rise in responsibility. His court martial in 1696, did not seem to have affected his prospects and this change must have pleased him greatly. He was serving aboard the Kent on the occasion of a remarkable engagement with the French and Spanish, with whom England were then at war. The disposition lists simply showed him to have been with Sir George Rooke 'on ye expedition.' It was during what became known as 'the War of Spanish Succession', that this first naval action came, in August 1702, when Admiral Sir George Rooke led a combined fleet of thirty British and twenty Dutch ships and the second Duke Ormonde (James Butler) commanding 10,000 Marines and Foot, in an attack on the port of Cadiz in Spain. The British, seeing a serious menace in the growing power of France, joined in a league against her. The Duke of Marlborough (John Churchill) led the allied English and Dutch armies with great success against the French in Europe, and achieved victory after victory. At sea, the Navy was charged with the duty of securing a new naval base in the Mediterranean to support their army's campaigns in Europe. The port of Cadiz was selected as being the most suitable for their purpose. Troops were landed, with little help from the Navy, but the Spanish defenders, fighting for their new Bourbon king, Philip V, drove off the invaders, who subsequently set sail for home.

Luckily, on the way back to England, they put in to Lisbon for water, and some officers went ashore (Jeffcott may have been one of them). Among them was a chaplain, who happened to meet the French consul and astutely engaged him in conversation. The consul boasted that an invincible French fleet was escorting a Spanish treasure fleet into Vigo Bay (on the north west coast of Spain.) The chaplain wasted no time in passing on the news and before long, a plan of attack on Vigo was agreed. The capture of Spanish treasure was a project much

more to the liking of the British sailors and it was tackled with spirit and with markedly more aggressiveness than that at Cadiz. At Vigo, they found a boom across the harbour with a guardship and a fort at either end. On the 12th October 1702, the army landed and took one of the forts. The Torbay which was the leading ship of the English line, charged into the boom and broke it. At that moment the wind dropped and the following ships drifted into the wreckage of the boom, leaving the Torbay to anchor between the guardships and engage them both at once. When the wind got up again, the next two ships, which were Dutch, got through the boom and boarded one of the guard ships. In retaliation, the French sent out a fire ship, which drifted on to the Torbay and set her rigging alight. After a while the fireship exploded and it was concluded that she was hastily prepared as her cargo of snuff was still intact. There is no record of what affect it had on the combatants, but the snuff fell so thickly on to the Torbay, that it extinguished most of her fires. The fight lasted for about half an hour. The French admiral, seeing the enemy fleet pouring in to the bay through the broken boom, ordered his captains to burn their ships. Most complied but others did not do so in time.

It is said that there cannot ever have been a quicker or more thorough naval victory. In the harbour had been 21 French warships and 17 Spanish galleons and every one of them was either burned or captured. Some of the Spanish treasure had already been taken ashore, but cargo to the value of 13 million pieces of eight was taken, and four or five French ships were safely taken to England.

The captain's logs for the Kent under the command of Captain John Jennings (ADM51-4230) gave a first hand account of the proceedings with his ship taking little part in the attack on Cadiz, other than to disembark the soldiers that they were carrying. The logs record in no great detail:

5 Sep 1702 - 'army quitt attack on Cadiz'
7 Oct 1702 - 'made discovery of French fleet and Spanish galleons which lay at Veigo'
10 Oct 1702 - 'spoke with the Dunwich who gave me an account of 18 saile of French men of warr and 22 sail of spanish galleons at Vigo of which I gave Sir Geo. Rook an account in ye morning'
12 Oct 1702 - an account of the boom being broken and of the engagement of guns
13 Oct 1702 - an account of the captured ships
14 Oct 1702 - sending of men to man the prizes and mention of repairing damage to the ship
16 Oct 1702 - new top mast fitted
12 Nov 1702 - back at Spithead

Amongst the Captain's Logs was a further journal written by Thomas Faunce who was one of the ship's lieutenants. He was much more descriptive of the action, and his handwriting far more legible. He described the Torbay's breaking of the boom and the enemy fire from all sides and how the attacking fleet's 'mortars played on the enemy defences.' Of the aftermath, he wrote:

'we lost but one man which was our boatswaine he was shott int the back with a small shott we rec'd a shott through the head of our fore mast an on in our main topmast and on in our main top sail yard and another in our cross jack yard by the slings on of our poop guns was mutilated[?] by another shott and great part of our rigging shattered'

Just what part John took in this action and what his share was, if any, of the captured booty, can only be guessed at; but in less than a month after this decisive battle, he was given his first real command. It is probable that John was put in command of one of the captured ships, being responsible for sailing it back from Vigo to England as a prize.

The fleet's failure at taking Cadiz was conveniently forgotten and the problem of finding a naval base was eventually answered later in 1704 with the taking of Gibraltar and which has remained in British hands ever since. John took no part in that action.

After the Battle of Vigo Bay came John's next commission, in 1702. The Basilisk was a bomb vessel, built in Wapping in 1695, was 72ft long with a beam of 23ft. She was 163 tons and carried 4 guns, being broken up in 1728.

The warrant book showed that Sir George Rooke gave Captain John Jeffcott his commission as 'Master and Commander' of the Basilisk bomb ship. The record did not use his rank of Lieutenant but referred to him as Captain. This is probably because he had been captain of one of the prize ships and that such was his conduct during and after the Battle of Vigo Bay, that it merited promotion.

The Basilisk was a considerably smaller and different type of vessel than that which John would have been used to. What would his new crew have made of their new captain and how would he have coped with such a different style of vessel with its altogether different method of waging war on the enemy?

Bomb vessels were given appropriate names like 'Infernal', 'Thunder', 'Sulphur' and the like. The dictionary gives Basilisk as 'a fabulous reptile, said to be hatched by a serpent from a cock's egg, its looks and breath were reputed to be fatal.' The ship would have carried mortars rather than cannon. Its shell (or bomb) was a hollow iron sphere, packed with gunpowder, and was designed to fall from a great height and not to explode until it had penetrated the target. The shells were 10 inch or 13 inch diameter and the vessels had to be specially constructed to withstand the shock of their discharge. Live shells of this type were not greatly liked in the navy as they were dangerous objects, requiring great skill in preparation, aiming, fusing and firing. This command would certainly have been a good test of Captain Jeffcott!

Then in 1704 came John's next commission. The Queenborough was built at Sheerness in 1694, was 96ft long with a beam of 25ft. She was 262 tons, carried 24 guns and was a 6th rate ship of the line.

This was a natural step up the ladder for John, having served for almost two years in command of a bomb ship, apparently without action or, more importantly, mishap. This commission must have seemed a little more like it, although much smaller than the 3rd rate line of battle ships that he had served aboard earlier in his career. The entry read:

Commission dated 15th November 1704 for
Captain John Jeffcott to be Master and
Commander of the Queenborough

The ship's disposition lists showed what service John was put to aboard the Queenborough. It was nothing like the exciting times that he had experienced aboard the larger ships of the line, but it was under his absolute command, with seemingly a promising career ahead of him. The ship was deployed almost exclusively on protective services, sailing between Chatham and Newcastle, escorting coal carrying vessels. The first entry is for December 1704.

1st Dec 1704 Queenborough 6th Rating 115 men and 24 guns
John Jeffcoat Lt.Jacob Hughes Newcastle Convoy

1st Jan 1705 Queenborough
John Jeffcoat Lt.Jacob Hughes Newcastle Convoy

1st Feb 1705 Queenborough
John Jeffcoat now ordered with the Nightingale

1st Mar 1705 Queenborough
John Jeffcoat Newcastle Convoy

1st May 1705 Queenborough
John Jeffcoat Nore, Newcastle Convoy

1st Jun 1705 Queenborough
John Jephcott Newcastle Convoy

1st Sep 1705 Queenborough
John Jephcott Lt.Samuel Franklyn Nore, Newcastle Convoy

1st Feb 1706 Queenborough
John Jephcott Nore

1st May 1706 Queenborough
John Jephcott Sheerness

1st Sep 1706 Queenborough
John Jephcott Newcastle Convoy with the
Bonadventure [4th Rate]

1st Nov 1706 Queenborough
John Jephcott 1st Mart. Bond Sheerness, Newcastle Convoy

1st Jan 1707 Queenborough
John Jephcott Convoy between the Nore and
Newcastle

1st May 1707 Queenborough
John Jephcott Convoy to the Colliers

1st Jun 1707 Queenborough
John Jephcott Newcastle Convoy

After June 1707, there was no further mention of John, the ship then had a new commander, Captain Chaloner Ogle. To try and find out, the 'Captain's Logs' were consulted. These were journals written by the commander or on his behalf, detailing the activities of the ship, its location, weather conditions, notable occurrences, accidents, etc.

The first one consulted was written by John himself and dated 22 November 1704 to 30 April 1706. His handwriting was clear and the information precise and to the point. He recorded the ships activities with mention of several navigational points such as the Nore, Harwich, Aldborough Church, Yarmouth, Cromer, Flamborough Head, Tinmouth, etc. He was escorting what he wrote down as 'collyars', sometimes as many as 180 of them, together with other men of war. The main threat seemed to have been from what he termed privateers, probably pirate ships out to attack undefended merchant ships or engaged in smuggling activities. He wrote about extremes of weather and how he trimmed his sails, what course he took and particular notes about depths of water that he anchored-in, usually a minimum of eight 'fathams' (48 feet). Various entries that were picked out, read:

8 March 1705

Fine easy gales and fair weather. In ye afternoon came of a new cable of this day being ye Queen's proclamation. Fired 21 gunns.

11 March 1705

Sailed with her majst ship Dunwich and Coneto[?] with about 46 sayle of colyars

10 April 1705

Hayled all ye transports with the Duke of Marlborough for Holand. Fired a gunn.

25 July 1705

Yesterday noon being of Hartlepool gave chase to a privater of 8 or 10 gunns it proved little wind he gained from me

18 Sep 1705

[another account of an encounter with a privateer who fired a gun at him but who he could not catch]

27 October 1705

Little wind and fair weather this morning we fired 17 gunns for ye surrendering of Barcelona

9 December 1705

[an account of his hearing many guns being fired in the direction of the Nore. He set full sail to bear down on the source and to help if necessary, only to find a ship in trouble and putting in to port. Difficult to assess exactly what was going on, his record being un-specific. He seemed to have been thinking at the time that an attack was in play.]

His next journal was dated from 1st May 1706 and ending 2 July 1707, with the note in a different handwriting saying that it was 'by Captain Jno Jeffcott - deceased'.

1 March 1707

At 9 in the morning made a Houy. We had information he was a privateere by boates from Albrough. At 12 at the noon weighed went out of Orfordness, lost sight of the Houy.

2 March 1707

Little wind and modt weather. At 6 anchored in 9 fatham. Albrough church distant 3 miles at 7 made the houy again. She came within a gunshot of us then she tackt and stood of from us. At « past 7 weigh'd and gave chase. We fired sevell gunns and vollyes of small arms. At 11 she struck and she had 2 guns and 32 men. We took him in tow and carried him on into Albrough Bay at 7 in the morning in 8 fatham water.

2 July 1707

Yarmouth Roads. Fresh Gales and hazy and squalley. This morning came on board 12 tunn of beer and all other spaires to compleat 6 weeks.

Their location was somewhere around Yarmouth as the preceding day's entries showed that they had left the Nore, then Sand Hope, then Flamborough Head and then Yarmouth Roads. The last few entries in John's journal seemed to be in a different handwriting. The final word 'weeks' was the last in the book and had been written over a corrected word. It was the only such corrected word found. Over the page, on the back page of the journal was written the words 'Captain Dead'.

This brief description of the end of Captain John Jeffcott poses so many questions that defy answers. What did he die of? Had he been ill for some time? Was he sealed in his bunk with a cannon ball for company and buried at sea or was he taken back to port to be buried? If so, where might he have been buried? How old was he when he died?

John's handwriting quality had fluctuated quite dramatically in his journal and it does appear as if perhaps his clerk, John Cudlipp, may have written it for him at various points. Was the state of his health such that he could not write? We shall probably never know. What seems evident is that John died carrying out his duties aboard ship, proudly and diligently serving his King and country, on or about the night of the 2nd July 1707.

His mate, Sam Gale, was discharged for preferment on the very same day. He had probably served with John over the years and his death must have been very upsetting for him. The new captain would probably have had his own mate to bring on board and Sam would have continued his career under a new captain.

The still used saying of 'like taking coals to Newcastle' must have referred to the collier traffic, with its more up to date equivalent of 'like selling sand to the arabs'.

In his journal, mention was made of Queensborough, a town near Sheerness, after which the vessel would undoubtedly have been named. The word was written bolder by John, implying a certain pride in it. A small touch but perhaps significant in telling a little about the man. The journals are written in a clear and informative manner, and at the same time give the impression of being written by a very competent person. He was not reluctant about recording that he gave chase after privateers but lost them. After all, his ship was a fighting ship and no match for the speed of smaller boats used by the privateer. The hoy that he captured, with its amazingly large crew of 32 men for such a small vessel, was a small victory for John, happening as it did in the last few months of his life.

The Pay Books (ADM33-258) were consulted for any other information and the section covering the Queenborough gave a difficult reference to decipher, as follows:

	6d per month Greenwich Hospital	Full Wages	Neat Wages	
365 D ^s at 6 ^s ea Acco ^{ts} past & C ^r	6.6	109.16.6	109.10.0	4 Dec ^r 1708 Cap ^t wid ^o Eliz ^a

This appears to show that John was owed 365 day's pay at six shillings per day, taking into account the six pence that he had to pay towards the funding of the Greenwich Hospital. The money was paid to his widow Elizabeth in December 1708, some 18 months after his death.

Every officer and man in the Royal Navy had to pay towards the funding of the proposed Greenwich Hospital to look after sick and wounded seamen, this being on a parallel to the Chelsea hospital for soldiers. In 1708, the hospital was opened and served the navy until 1873. It now houses the Greenwich Maritime Museum.

It is probable that John was aged around 45 years when he died. He was married to Elizabeth and probably had a son named Thomas. The IGI was consulted for possible marriage and baptismal evidence in London, Kent and Surrey, but with no likely entries found. There is no indication in John's records of a link with Warwickshire.

Where he came from is unknown and is now the subject of further research. There is a strong link with the Navy through family BJ and it is possible that John's ancestry was connected with this family.

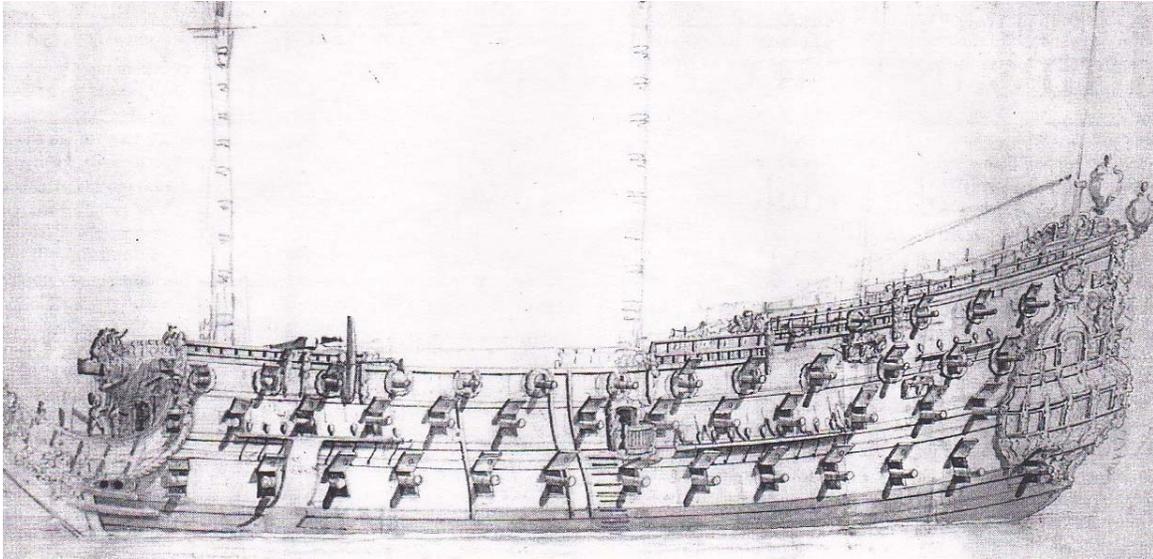
jaj

(For details of Captain Crawley, mentioned in the above article, letter 793 refers.)

ADDENDUM

By way of an addendum to the item above, here follows some additional information concerning the ships that John Jephcott served aboard and an explanation of some of the places and terms used. This information was kindly provided by David Jephcott of Sandwich, Kent. Please note that David provided me with drawings of the hulls of these vessels, which we have shown here.

MONTAGUE/MOUNTAGUE/MONTAGU.



THIRD RATES 64-60 GUNS AND FOURTH RATES 64-60 GUNS (TO DECKERS). (Note that these vessels were all eventually classed as Fourth Rate 60s)

60, 1698-1714. Built Woolwich Dockyard (Surveyor. Harding). Dimensions & Tons: 143'10", 119'11" x 37'8" x 15'4". 905 tons. Men: 365/240. Guns: Gun Deck (usually the lowest deck with guns) 22 x 24 (pounders). Upper Deck 24 x 9. Quarterdeck 10 x 6. Round House (poop) 4 x 3. (1703 establishment 24x24, 26x9, 10x6, 4x6).

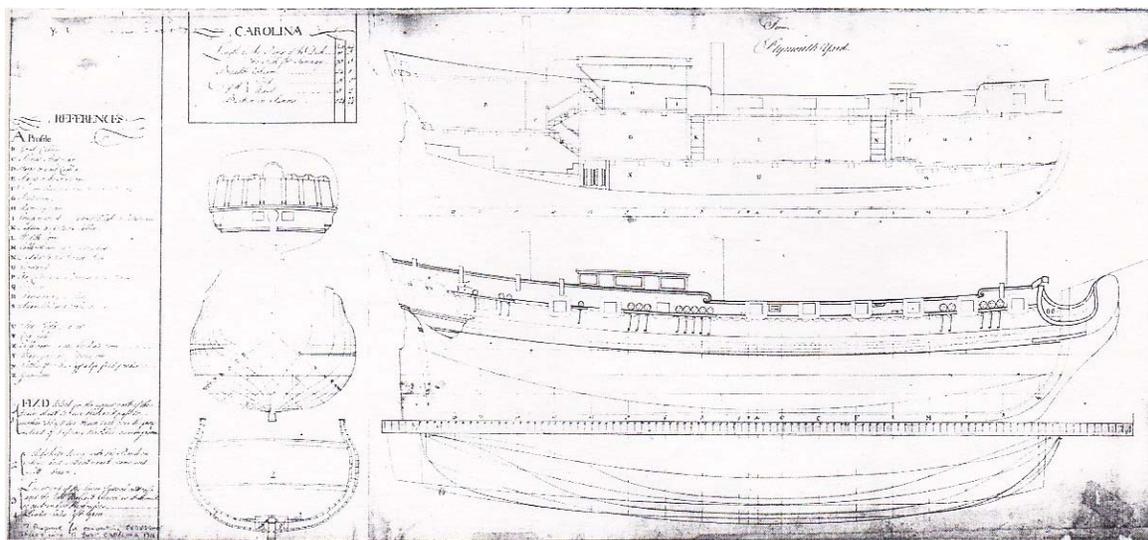
Rebuilt (This word has many meanings - but for this case we can say enough ship building was carried out in Woolwich Dockyard to enter the ship on the Establishment List as new?) 1698; Broken Up (ship taken to pieces) 1714.

THIRD RATES: The Third Rate covered ships of the line from 80 down to 60 (later 64) guns at the beginning of the 18th century. The three-decker (originally 'two and a half-decker') 80's of the 1690's, which were a type built in numbers until the mid-eighteenth century, were of this designation. So were the 80 gun two-deckers of the end of the eighteenth century on. The 70 gun and later 74 gun two-deckers which formed the basis of the line of battle throughout our period from 1750 to mid 1780's but then abandoned as being not powerful enough to sustain the role of ships of the line. The 60 gun ships which were earlier equivalent began the eighteenth century as Third Rates, but later slid back into Fourth Rate.

MONTAGUE 62/54 (originally 52), (ex Lyme 1654 built Portsmouth Dockyard [Tippett]. 1660 renamed). REBUILT 1675 at Chatham Dockyard (Phineas Pett); 1696/7? reclassified as Fourth Rate; 1698 REBUILD???

Note: These details are from Admiralty establishment lists of the day.

QUEENBOROUGH/QUINBROUGH



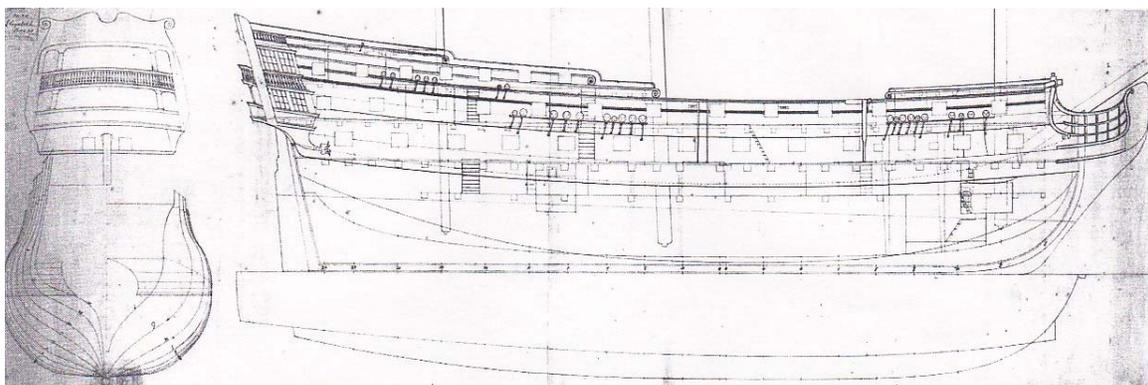
LARGE SIXTH RATES, 20-24 GUNS.

24/22, 1694-1719. Built Sheerness (Surveyor: Bagwell). Dimensions & Tons: 96'4", 80'4" x 24'9" x 10'10". 261 tons. Men: 115/85. Guns: 1703 establishment: Upper Deck 20 x 6 (pounders), Quarterdeck 4 x 4. 1717: 2 Sakers (5 1/4 pounder gun), 18 minions (4 pounder gun), 4 x 3. Launch date 1694; 1719 sold.

Ships of this size and design were often termed as "Yachts" or as in the case of the Carolina (Peregrine Galley in 1700) a Royal Yacht.

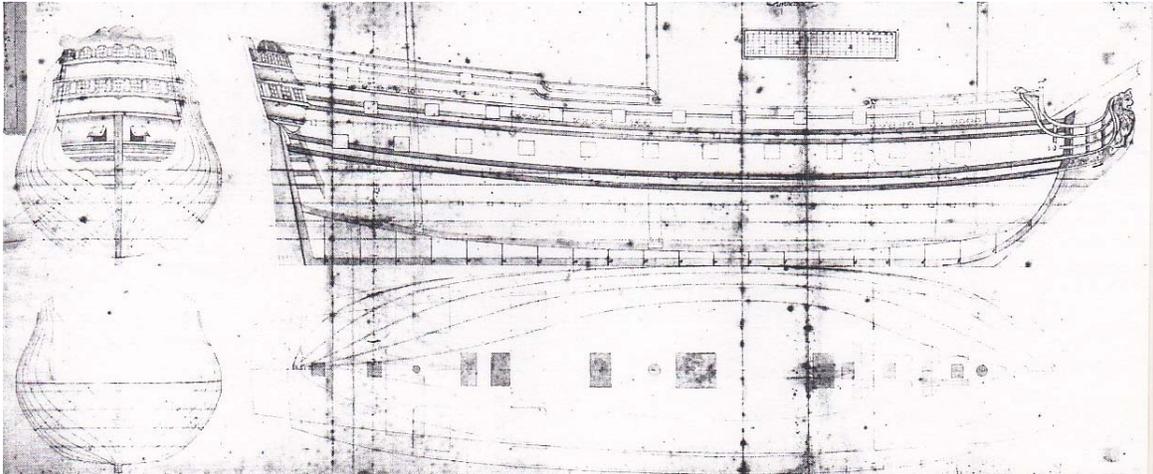
YACHT: The word came from the Dutch, who presented the first English example to the restored King Charles II in 1660, originally meaning a scouting craft. By the time the first British examples had appeared in the 1600's, they were used as dispatch vessels, for carrying important people, and for racing. Most British examples were used as Royal Yachts, though lesser ones were by Commissioners of the navy and Dockyards, the Viceroy of Ireland and the Governor of the Isle of Wight. The earlier examples were rigged with what was called 'yacht rig' (like cutter rig) on one mast, or were ketches. later, some of the larger yachts were ship rigged. The larger ones were classed as Fifth Rates, the smaller as Sixth Rates, as they were commanded by Captains.

PLYMOUTH



THIRD RATES (TWO DECKERS) 60/52 (originally 52/54) 1653 John Taylor, Wapping. Probably Rebuilt early in her career; 1696/7? reclassified as Fourth Rate; 1703 to be Rebuilt.

WARWICK



FOURTH RATES, 50 GUNS, etc (TWO DECKERS)

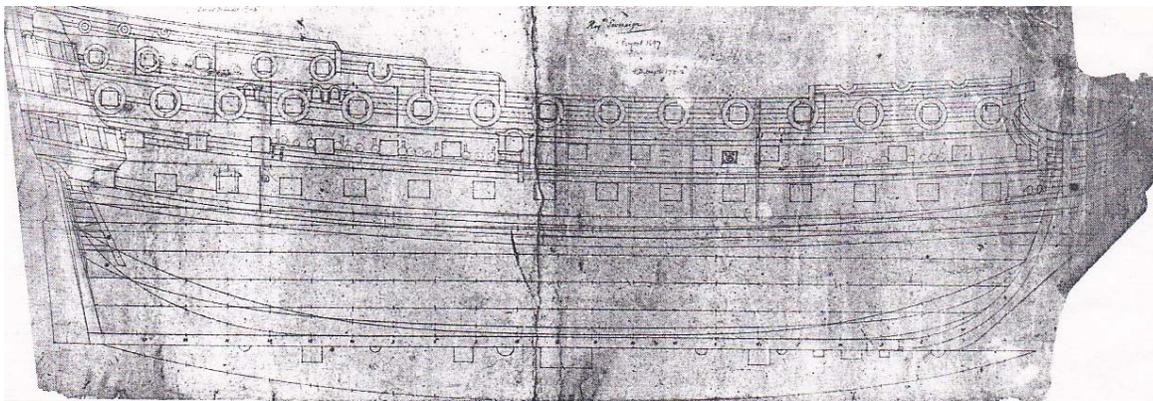
50/48/42. 1696-1709. Castle, Deptford.

Dimensions & Tons? 130'5", 109' x 34'5" x 13'9". 686 71/94 tons. Men: 230/160. Guns: (1703 establishment: 20 x 12 [pounders], 20 x 6, 6 x 6).

Launched - 1696; 1709 Broken Up (ship taken to pieces).

FOURTH RATE: In 1680's this had included ships of 40 guns (and the galley frigates or even less) but by the beginning of the eighteenth century included ships of between 58 and 50 guns. These had been considered fit for the line of battle, but by this time were coming to be considered too small and weak and were being used for more general tasks from trade protection to being ships of force on distant stations (as 'small two deckers'). These were two-decked ships. By the mid eighteenth century the 60 gun ships had been reassigned to this rate and were no longer felt to be fit for the line of battle. Shortly afterwards, the 60's fell out of use, but 50's were still building in the first decade of the nineteenth century, though in small numbers. The large frigates razed from 74s or built from new to cope with the big American frigates after the defeat of three British frigates in the opening rounds of the war of 1812 were classed in the Fourth Rate, and the last two-decker 50 building was altered on the stocks so became a 50 gun frigate.

QUEEN

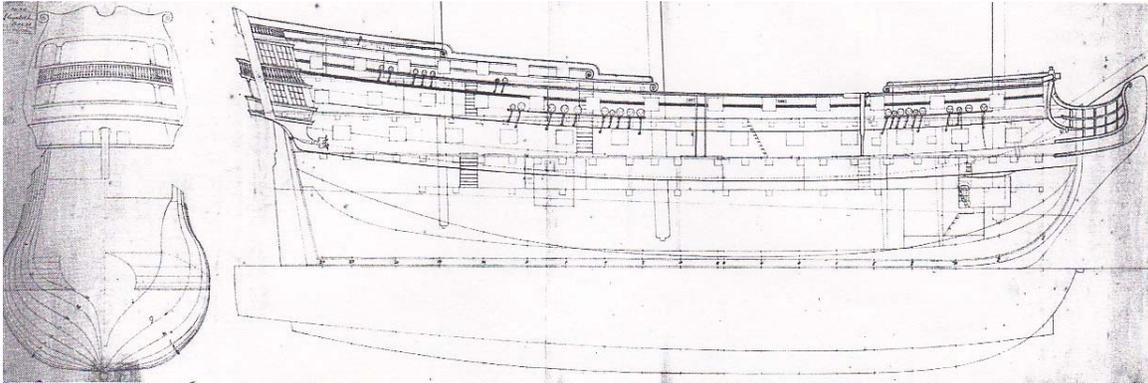


FIRST RATE, 100 GUNS (Three Decker).

QUEEN 100/90, 1693-1709. Woolwich Dockyard (Surveyor: Lawrence). Dimensions & Tons: 170'6", 137'8" x 47'7" x 18'. 1658 tons. Men: 780/580. Guns: Gun Deck 26 x 32 (pounders) Main Deck 28 x 18, Upper Deck 28 x 9, Quarterdeck 12 x 6, Forecastle 4 x 6, Round House (Poop) 2 x 6. Rebuild of the ROYAL CHARLES, Launched 1693. Broken Up 1709.

FIRST RATE. The largest ship of the line, always a three-decker and by the beginning of our period, except for a very few survivals of slightly less force, invariably carried 100 guns. This total was not exceeded until the last quarter of the eighteenth century when, following the French example, first 110 gun ships and then 120 were ordered.

BURFORD



THIRD RATES, 70 GUNS, etc (TWO DECKER).

70, 1698-1719. Snellgrove, Deptford.

Dimensions & Tons: 151', 126'2" x 40'8 3/4" x 16'4 1/4", 1113 tons. Men: 440/320. Guns: Gun Deck 26 x 24 (pounders), Upper deck 26 x 9, Quarterdeck 12 x 6, Forecastle 4 x 6, Round House (Poop) 4 x 3, (1703 establishment: 24x24, 26x12, 12x6, 4x6, 4x3). Rebuild (all things to all men?) Launched 12th September 1698; wrecked 14th February 1719 'near Pentimiglia on the coast of Italy'.

BASILISK

BOMB VESSEL, 1695 GROUP 4.

BASILISK 4? 1695-1729. Redding, Wapping.

Dimensions & Tons: 72'2", 57'4" x 23'2" x 10'2", 163 1/4 tons. Men: 30. Guns: 1 or 2 mortars? + 4? x ? pounders (minions [4 pounder gun] in 1714). Launched: 1695; Broken Up: 1729.

Bomb Vessel/'Bomb'. Specialised vessel built or converted to carry (usually) two heavy mortars (usually one 13" and one 11") to throw explosive shells at high trajectory in shore bombardments. Needed to be heavily built to take the recoil of these heavy weapons. Invented by the French to bombard Algiers in 1685 and first adopted by the Royal Navy in 1687. The earlier vessels were mostly ketch rigged, hence the usage 'bomb ketch', but at least one of the earlier vessels, and, from the end of the 1750's, all bombs built or purchased for the R. N., were ship rigged, so 'bomb ketch' for the type is incorrect and not used here. Smaller craft of the gunboat variety fitted with mortars (usually only one) were 'mortar vessels', whilst a number of 'mortar brigs' were converted from 10 gun brigs during the Napoleonic War. Bomb vessels spent much of their lives being employed as (and often fitted as) sloops. Their sturdy construction also fitted them for use in polar exploration and a number were converted for this purpose.

PLACES MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY

The DOWNS.

The Downs and the Small Downs are off Deal, of which Nelson wrote 'The coldest place on earth'. It is an anchorage protected by the land to the North West to the South West and by the Goodwin Sands from the North West to the East by South East (just). The danger zone being the South East. Any ship, (regardless of nationality) sailing north to south and awaiting suitable winds, west through north to east would, anchor in the downs when the wind was in the south or south east. The numbers of these ships could reach 100+ at any one time. There has to be a logic there somewhere? But it accounts for the largest number of wrecks (on Goodwin Sands) in an area 8 by 6 miles in the world. The Downs were also the anchorage for the Channel Fleet (Blockade Squadron), the Coast Guard and a base for the Royal Naval Customs Service.

The NORE, a sand bank off Sheerness (as above). The anchorage for the Home (North Sea) and Channel Fleets.

SHEERNESS, was a small dockyard for light repairs, stores and storage, also, and most importantly, an arsenal.

BLACKSTAKES, a small anchorage/moored hulk off Sheerness (in the Medway). Powder Hulk: Vessel for storing and issuing gunpowder, usually moored well away from the dockyard to which they were attached. Usually under the control of the Ordnance (which was a separate organisation to the Army or Navy, though later coming under the control of the former.

St HELENS, Lancashire. A small Naval Dockyard and anchorage. Liverpool/docks was at this time (1600-1700's) a very poisonous, disease ridden bog!

SPITHEAD, an anchorage off Portsmouth in the Solent, did the same duties as Sheerness.

GUNS. Guns and other articles of weight would be removed, stored and serviced from ships going in to dockyard for major repairs, dry docks etc. For Chatham, powder would have been taken off a ship at Blackstakes, the guns at Sheerness.

TUNS. A barrel, used for beer. Water went rancid quicker than beer, therefore beer was issued in home waters and wine further afield, not as a replacement for rum.

DEATH AT SEA. Dead bodies would not as a rule have been kept on board ship much longer than 72 hours unless you were someone special, in which case the body would have been pickled in brandy. See Nelson, 'Nelsons Blood' etc., Royal Marines for the use of!