The movement of British troops across the Atlantic to attack Cartagena during the War of Jenkins’s Ear was the first large British transatlantic troop movement in history. To carry these troops to Cartagena, the British government had to charter merchant ships to serve as transports. It was the responsibility of the navy board, an agency of the civil administration of the Royal Navy, to hire the required number of ships and to establish procedures and policies concerning freight rates, fitting, provisioning and administering the ships that served as transports during the expedition to Cartagena.

The War of Jenkins’s Ear was a turning point in the military history of Great Britain. Not only was this war the beginning of a series of great conflicts fought with France and Spain for trade and overseas empire, but also it was a war in which a significant proportion of British military power was projected, for the first time, across the Atlantic to conduct sustained operations in the western hemisphere. In the course of the conflict, which began as the War of Austrian Succession, large numbers of British soldiers not only fought on the battlefields of Europe but also saw service in the Caribbean during the ill-fated attempt to conquer, from the Spanish, Cartagena and Cuba.¹ The British army dispatched to attack Cartagena was, according to its commander, Major-General Lord Cathcart, ‘the greatest that was ever sent from any European country to the West Indies’.² In order to convey such a large number of soldiers across the Atlantic and to make the operations as effective as possible, the British had to utilize as transports a number of chartered merchant ships.

The navy board, a subordinate department of the Admiralty, was the agency of the British government responsible for providing the ship-

² Public Record Office [PRO], CO 5/41, fo. 168.
ping required to transport troops. In order to carry out this task as effectively and efficiently as possible, the commissioners of the navy, known collectively as the navy board, obtained by means of chartering, from the shipping frequenting the Thames, scores of merchant ships.

All the merchant ships hired to serve as transports, not only during the campaign against Cartagena, but also later in the War of Austrian Succession, were chartered by the commissioners of the navy at their offices at Crutched Friars in the City of London. Throughout the years 1739–48, the members of the navy board met five or six days a week to conduct business. Three commissioners were required for a quorum, and all orders, notes, contracts and the like had to be signed by at least three commissioners. Transports were chartered by the commissioners of the navy under the direction and supervision of the Lords of the Admiralty. The government in the case of major expeditions, such as the one to Cartagena, would decide on the requirement for transports, and then a secretary of state would issue an order to the Admiralty to provide the ships. The arrangements to obtain the transports required for the Cartagena expedition, specifically, began when the Duke of Newcastle, a secretary of state for the Southern Department, issued an order for the providing of transports to carry 8000 men on a transatlantic voyage. Upon receipt of this directive the Admiralty ordered the navy board to hire the shipping needed to carry 8000 troops across the Atlantic Ocean.

Upon the commissioners of the navy receiving an order from the Admiralty calling for the chartering of ships for the transportation of troops, a notice was issued requesting bids be put forward by those people desiring to let ships to serve as transports. This was a process that was repeated every time such an order emanated from the Admiralty. There is no mention in the minutes of the navy board concerning the placement, either during the War of Jenkins’s Ear or during the War of Austrian Succession, of advertisements in the London newspapers calling for bids for the chartering of such shipping. However, what is clear from the existing records is that the commissioners of the navy made known their desire to charter shipping either by word of mouth or through notices sent to places in the City of London frequented by merchants, shipowners and ship masters. When seeking

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5 For an account of the workings of the navy board, see D.A. Baugh, British Naval Administration in the Age of Walpole (Princeton, NJ, 1965), pp. 32–48.

4 In 1740 the commissioners of the navy were Richard Haddock, Jacob Ackworth, George Crowle, Thomas Pearse, George Purvis, John Fawler and John Phillipson.

5 Baugh, British Naval Administration, p. 38.

6 PRO, ADM 1/4108, fo. 102.

7 e.g. PRO, ADM 3/44, 1 Jan. 1739; ADM 3/45, 29 May 1741.

8 PRO, ADM 106/253–65.

9 In commercial negotiations with the commissioners of the navy the owners of a ship could be represented either by one of the ship’s owners, by the vessel’s master, or by an agent such as a ship broker. Because of the complexity of the patterns of merchant ship ownership in eighteenth-century Britain it is impossible to identify who actually owned the ships tendered to the commissioners to serve as transports. It
to charter shipping the commissioners ‘Set up Publications at the Royal Exchange & other proper places that the [Navy] Board would be ready to treat on Monday the 7th for the hire of ships to be employed as transports’. Here the word ‘Publications’ does not mean newspaper advertisements, but rather the placing of notices of the navy board’s intention to charter shipping at places frequented by merchants, shipowners and ship masters. On rare occasions the officers of Deptford dockyard might be sent among the shipping on the Thames in search of ships to charter as transports. At the time appointed to receive tenders for the chartering of shipping, those people who wanted to let vessels to the navy board assembled outside the room at Crutched Friars where the commissioners of the navy were meeting. The shipowners were then, as a group, ushered in and informed of the terms upon which the navy board desired to charter shipping to serve as transports. A number of ‘objections’ were stated by the shipowners to the navy board’s terms, which where then ‘answered’ by the commissioners. The shipowners, then again as a group, withdrew from the meeting. Later, those shipowners, who desired to let their vessels to the government returned individually to the room where the commissioners were meeting ‘to leave their Lowest demands’ and were at this time told to return to Crutched Friars ‘next Friday’. On 14 January 1740, as instructed, the shipowners again assembled at Crutched Friars and were called before the commissioners, only to be informed that the proceedings were again postponed because the ‘Frost still continued and that no survey could be taken of the ships that have been offered to us’. Before leaving Crutched Friars the shipowners were further told that when the commissioners were ‘enabled to proceed further on our treaty, Publication should be sent to the Exchange & the usual Coffee houses to give notice thereof’. After the shipowners had departed from Crutched Friars the commissioners of the navy, who apparently did not have a clear understanding as to the terms upon which to charter the transports decided to obtain guidance from the admiralty. That the navy board required directions over the question of transports is understandable. The whole business of transports and troop movements was new to the commissioners, for

was not until the early nineteenth century that the word ‘shipowner’ appears as an occupation in British commercial directories. Most merchant ships during the eighteenth century were owned by syndicates usually, but not always, consisting of merchants. A person would hold a share or part of the ownership in an individual merchant ship. These shares were usually divisors of four: eighths, sixteenths, thirty-seCONDS – a type of ownership which was not only British but also international. R. Davis, The Rise of the English Shipping Industry in the 17th and 18th Centuries, 2nd edn (Newton Abbot, 1972), pp. 81–110.

10 National Maritime Museum [NMM], ADM/B/111, Navy Board to Admiralty, 14 Jan. 1739.
11 e.g. PRO, ADM 106/2556, 27 Mar. 1741.
12 PRO, ADM 106/2554, 7 Jan. 1740.
the provision of ships for the conveyance of troops by sea had previously been the responsibility of a now defunct Board of Transport.\footnote{See NMM, ADM/B/125, Navy Board to Admiralty, 8 May 1744.} Further, the War of Spanish Succession had ended some 25 years before, and nobody in the British government, including the civil establishment of the Royal Navy, had any first-hand experience with wartime military and naval administration. What was not perceived at the admiralty, and especially at the navy board, was the necessity in wartime to be willing to spend money in order to attain an objective quickly. The Admiralty had indicated to the navy board its concern about the cost of hiring transports for the Cartagena expedition, and the issue of costs had already emerged.\footnote{PRO, ADM 106/2554, 14, 16 Jan. 1740.} The owners of the ships being tendered to the navy board were demanding that their vessels continue to earn freight until the ships had returned to the Thames. The commissioners were not amenable to such terms. Instead, and because it ‘has [thus] been generally practiced’, they desired to discharge the ships from the service in the West Indies and then pay 42 days’ freight, if the ships sailed in ballast and with convoy, as compensation for the time spent on the return voyage to England.\footnote{NMM, ADM/B/111, Navy Board to Admiralty, 14 Jan. 1739.} The Admiralty attempted to break this impasse, on 21 January, by informing the navy board that the transports for the Cartagena operation must be at Spithead on 1 March ready for service. Further, if the shipowners would reduce their demands for freight the admiralty in return would charter the vessels ‘for six months certain’.\footnote{PRO, ADM 106/2554, 21 Jan. 1740.} The commissioners considered the Admiralty’s new directives for two days and then informed the shipowners that they would again ‘treat’ on 28 January for shipping to serve as transports.\footnote{Op. cit., 23 Jan. 1740.}

On 28 January the shipowners again assembled outside the office where the commissioners were meeting. This time each person wishing to tender a ship to serve as a transport was individually called before the navy board to state the terms upon which they were willing to let their vessels to the government for ‘3 months or six months certain’. After all the tenders had been heard, the commissioners concluded that the shipowners were ‘Generally insisting upon higher demands than was expected’. This meeting also ended inconclusively, around 3 p.m., with the shipowners being asked to return that evening to Crutched Friars with new proposals for a further round of negotiations. However, when the talks were resumed that evening it was soon found that the shipowners were ‘still insisting on too high prices’, being unwilling to accept a basic rate of freight of 12 s. per ton per month, for six months certain plus ‘all the other conditions which were publish’d to them’. When it became clear that neither the shipowners nor
the commissioners were prepared to alter the terms upon which the ships should be chartered, the negotiations were broken off.  

Two days later the navy board again considered the problems they were encountering in their endeavours to charter ships to serve as transports for the imminent and planned attack on Cartagena. After some discussion, the commissioners could see no alternative but to submit the whole problem for a solution to the Admiralty. According to the commissioners, the shipowners would not let their ships unless they were paid, at the end of the expedition, eight weeks’ freight for the return voyage to England. Or in the case of those ships desiring to go to Virginia, the owners should ‘be allowed convoy’ and four weeks’ freight for the voyage to North America. And if a vessel was discharged from the service in the West Indies the owners should be paid 14 days’ freight to cover the expenses of a voyage to another Caribbean port. Finally, the shipowners were demanding that all the vessels which the navy board agreed to charter and which were fitted for service be paid, even if the expedition to Cartagena were cancelled, two months’ freight in advance. Upon learning of the shipowners’ demands, the Lords of the Admiralty requested that the commissioners of the navy board attend a meeting of the Board of Admiralty to explain in greater detail the problems they were encountering in chartering transports.

The meeting between the Lords of the Admiralty and the commissioners of the navy appears to have been off the record, for no minutes have survived, despite the fact that there are references to this meeting. However, at this meeting the problems of chartering transports do not appear to have been resolved, for on 12 February the navy board was still informing the Admiralty that it was not going to be possible to charter ships for the expedition unless the government agreed to the shipowners’ demands and conditions. The next day, 13 February, the admiralty agreed to pay the owners of ships chartered two months’ freight in advance, provided the vessels were found upon inspection to be fit for service and were entered into government pay before 1 March. Two days later, on 15 February, the commissioners of the navy decided to reopen negotiations with the shipowners for the hiring of shipping.

When the shipowners assembled at Crutched Friars on 18 February, a clerk read to them the terms upon which the commissioners were now willing to charter ships. Then each of the shipowners was individually called before the commissioners and informed that the freight rate

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21 NMM, ADM/B/111, Navy Board to Admiralty, 30 Jan. 1739.
22 PRO, ADM 106/2554, 1 Feb. 1740.
23 NMM, ADM/B/111, Navy Board to Admiralty, 12 Feb. 1739.
25 PRO, ADM 106/2554, 15 Feb. 1740.
would be 12 s. per ton per month. However, only ‘a very few’ of the shipowners would agree to this rate. Although they were told by the navy board that ‘they were desired to consider it’ and that the commissioners would ‘sit every day to receive what further proposals they should make to us’, the majority of the shipowners would not agree.\textsuperscript{26} Indeed, on 19 and 20 February nobody appeared at Crutched Friars to accept the offer. The next day, 21 February, those few shipowners who had initially agreed to 12 s. appeared at the navy office and withdrew their tenders. At this point, because ‘a great deal of time have been lost’, the commissioners decided that if the transports required for the Cartagena operation were to be chartered in a timely fashion there was no alternative to paying 13 s. per ton per month, as well as acceding to all the other conditions and demands put forward by the shipowners. Once these concessions were made, the commissioners were very quickly able to agree with a number of shipowners for the chartering of the ships needed to transport troops.\textsuperscript{27} In the negotiations with the shipowners that had proceeded since the beginning of the year over the chartering of transports, the commissioners, as well as the Lords of the Admiralty, were being forced to learn an important lesson: that financial concerns had to be balanced with, and even in some cases sacrificed to, strategic considerations.

The rates of freight paid to ships chartered to serve as transports were obviously of great importance to both the shipowners and the commissioners. The shipowners let their ships to the government to make money. However, it was the task of the commissioners to obtain the merchant shipping required in the London shipping market, at the lowest possible rates of freight. Although freight rates rose slowly, but steadily, throughout the war owing to inflation and the increasing demands for shipping, the policy of the navy board remained one of paying freight rates just high enough to obtain the ships necessary to support military operations. In other words, it remained convinced that it could balance, as far as possible, financial considerations with military objectives. For the attack on Cartagena in 1740 the commissioners were able to charter transports at 13 s. per ton per month. In 1741 the navy board paid 14 s. per ton per month for transports to carry troops to the West Indies.\textsuperscript{28} And in 1746, with freight rates having further increased, the commissioners paid 16 s. per ton per month for the transports used to carry troops from England to garrison Louisburg.\textsuperscript{29} It is difficult, if not impossible, to compare the rates of freight earned by ships under charter to the navy board with rates earned by vessels in civilian trades. The few statistics that do exist show that rates of freight, in trades such as those to the West Indies, were subject to

\textsuperscript{26} Op. cit., 18 Feb. 1740.
\textsuperscript{28} PRO, ADM 106/3596, pp. 1–5.
\textsuperscript{29} PRO, ADM 106/3600, pp. 36–40.
'violent fluctuations'. What is clear is that while freight rates increased during the War of Austrian Succession they were subject to extensive negotiations, as shipowners on the one hand sought to increase profits and the commissioners of the navy on the other struggled to provide the shipping necessary for the conduct of the war at the lowest possible cost to the British treasury. For it remained the policy of the navy board, when chartering shipping for military purposes, to balance the need to be frugal with the public’s money with the need to fulfil the strategic requirements of the war and the costs incurred therein.

The following policy was finally worked out. The ships chartered by the navy board to serve as transports during the War of Jenkins’s Ear, as well as during the War of Austrian Succession, were paid freight according to the number of months of service times their measured tonnage. The terms of the time charters used by the navy board to hire transports were in marked contrast to the space charters employed to hire ships to carry naval stores. The merchant ships chartered by the navy board for the conveyance of naval stores to overseas bases, such as Gibraltar and Jamaica, were usually hired for a single outward bound voyage, and their freight was paid according to the amount of cargo, usually expressed in tons, actually loaded on the vessel. Unlike vessels chartered to convey naval stores, whose services were only required for a single outward bound voyage, transports owing to military necessities, such as the conduct of amphibious operations, were chartered to serve for extended, and in most cases indefinite, periods of time.

When the financial terms for chartering the transports tendered to go on the Cartagena expedition had been agreed upon, the ships were then inspected, measured, and appraised by the officers of Deptford dockyard. There is no evidence in the existing records of the navy board describing just how the Deptford officers actually conducted their inspections during the War of Austrian Succession, to determine if a vessel was fit to be a transport. Although the classic method to inspect and determine the fitness of a wooden ship is to insert a sharp instrument into the planking and timbers of the hull at various points, the records do not show the specific methods employed by the Deptford dockyard officers to measure and appraise the value of a ship tendered to serve as a transport. The tonnage of a ship is nothing more than its volume expressed in terms of tons; and in the case of the transports to be sent to Cartagena, such tonnage was probably arrived at by the Deptford dockyard officers by means of an arbitrary mathematical formula. In any case, the standard and most common formula for determining the tonnage of a vessel employed by both shipowners

31 e.g. PRO, ADM 106/2559, 14 Oct. 1742.
32 See NMM, ADM/B/120, Navy Board to Admiralty, 8 June 1741.
33 PRO, ADM 106/2554, 21, 27 Feb. 1740.
and dockyard officials during the eighteenth century was length times width times half the width divided by 94.\textsuperscript{34} Appraisals of ships to be chartered as transports were most probably conducted by assigning an arbitrary value to the vessel’s hull as well as to each item of rigging and furniture. These were the methods employed during other eighteenth-century wars by the Deptford dockyard officers to inspect, measure and appraise ships chartered by the commissioners of the navy to be transports.\textsuperscript{35} Once the Deptford dockyard officers completed their inspections, measurements and appraisals of transports chartered for the Cartagena expedition, the results were sent to the navy board.\textsuperscript{36}

The inspection of ships tendered to serve as transports was crucial to the whole chartering process. The reports of inspections by the officers of Deptford dockyard of all ships tendered for hire gave the commissioners the information required to determine which of the vessels in question was structurally or, for some other reason, unfit for service. For example, on 26 June 1741, on the basis of a report of such an inspection, the ship Martha was judged unfit to serve as a transport by the commissioners.\textsuperscript{37} It was suggested, probably by the military, that an army officer assist in the process of inspecting and selecting ships for the Cartagena expedition. However, this proposal was rejected by the commissioners, who insisted that the inspection of all ships tendered be conducted solely by the Deptford dockyard officers.\textsuperscript{38} As a result, all shipping thus tendered for charter to the commissioners, not only in the War of Austrian Succession but also in other conflicts, would continue to be inspected exclusively by the officers of Deptford dockyard.\textsuperscript{39}

The measurement and appraisal of ships were of paramount importance to both the commissioners and the shipowners. For it was upon the outcome of these two procedures that the fates of large amounts of money depended, since appraisals of ships made by the dockyard officers served as the basis for the compensation of the shipowners if their vessels were perchance taken or destroyed by the enemy. For instance, under the terms of the charter party agreed upon by the navy and the owners of the Three Sisters, hired to carry troops to the West Indies in 1740, compensation was to be paid by the government, should the ship be taken or destroyed by the enemy, ‘according to the appraisement to be made thereof on Oath by such persons as the said Commissioners shall appoint, reasonable Wear and Tear first deducted’.\textsuperscript{40} While payment of compensation for ships lost through enemy action was of obvious importance to shipowners, since it pro-

\textsuperscript{36} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 7, 24 Mar. 1740.
\textsuperscript{37} PRO, ADM 106/2555, 26 June 1741.
\textsuperscript{38} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 23 Feb. 1740.
\textsuperscript{39} See Syrett, Shipping and the American War, pp. 108–10.
\textsuperscript{40} PRO, ADM 106/2595, fo. 13.
tected their investment from the ravages of war, the measurement of their vessels for tonnage was perhaps of more immediate concern, for it was upon this calculation that the rate of freight of a ship was determined. Ships serving as transports were paid freight according to their measured tonnage times the number of months of service. For example, the transport *St Elizabeth*, chartered to carry troops to the West Indies on 14 July 1740 and discharged from the service on 4 April 1743, earned freight for ‘32 calendar months & 22 days for 249 tons at 13s per ton per month’.\(^4\)

A ship’s tonnage was not only used as a basis to calculate freight; it was also employed as a means to determine how many soldiers to embark on each ship. For example, a number of troops being conveyed in 1741 between Newcastle and Ostend were allotted two tons of shipping for every three men.\(^4\) The troops going on the expedition to Cartagena, for instance, were allowed two tons of shipping for each soldier embarked on board transports.\(^4\) That is, a ship of 200 tons was assigned to carry 100 soldiers. On this basis, the whole force of 8000 men being sent to Cartagena was to be carried on 16,000 tons of transports.\(^4\) The rate of two tons of shipping for each man embarked was based on a series of arbitrary calculations as well as on previous practice. When planning the Cartagena expedition, the Admiralty asked that the commissioners of the navy inform them if troops had ever before been carried on transatlantic voyages at the rate of two tons of shipping per man.\(^4\) After doing some research, the navy board informed the Admiralty, several days later, that soldiers had been in the past transported to Jamaica and Georgia at the rate of one and a half tons of shipping per man.\(^4\) Further, a scheme of the disbanded transport board was found in the files which allowed only a half a ton of shipping per man.\(^4\) On the basis of this information, and even though one and a half tons of shipping per man appeared to have been standard in the past for transatlantic passages, the Admiralty decided, on instructions from George II, that the troops going to Cartagena should be embarked at the rate of two tons per man.\(^\) A factor in such a decision was the possibility that the troops might have to remain on board the ships after their arrival in the West Indies.\(^\) The conveyance of troops on transatlantic voyages at the rate of two tons of shipping

\(^{42}\) NMM, ADM/N/234, Admiralty to Navy Board, 15 Jan. 1742.
\(^{43}\) PRO, ADM 106/2544, 14 Jan. 1740.
\(^{44}\) *Op. cit.*, 4 Apr. 1740.
\(^{45}\) PRO, ADM 3/44, 1 Jan. 1739.
\(^{46}\) NMM ADM/B/111, Navy Board to Admiralty, 3 Jan. 1739.
\(^{47}\) PRO, SP, 44/225, Newcastle to Admiralty, 12 Jan., 9 Feb. 1739/40, I wish to thank Dr Richard Harding not only for information on this point, but also for a number of other suggestions which improved this paper.
\(^{48}\) PRO, ADM 3/44, 5 Jan. 1739.
per man would become standard operating procedure for the remain-
der of the century.\textsuperscript{49}

When a transport had completed the process of inspection, measure-
ment and appraisal, the vessel was then fitted to accommodate troops. In
the case of the transports chartered to go to Cartagena, the com-
missioners consulted the files and discovered that the transport board
had constructed cabins between the decks of the ships and issued each
soldier with a bed, blankets and the like. If there was not room enough
between decks on a ship for cabins, then hammocks were issued to the
troops.\textsuperscript{50} At the beginning of the war with Spain, arrangements
were entered into to obtain hammocks for transports.\textsuperscript{51} Contracts were
also made for constructing, again under the supervision of the
Deptford dockyard officers, cabins on board each of the ships char-
tered for the Cartagena expedition.\textsuperscript{52} Orders were moreover issued for
the provision of ‘a sufficient Quantity of Bedding’ to the transports.\textsuperscript{53}
The cost for the construction of cabins cost 4 d. for each soldier
and 6 d. for each officer. Each cabin was designed ‘to lodge 4 men and to
be 6 feet square’.\textsuperscript{54} The commissioners further directed that each sold-
ier be supplied with a bed, bolster, blanket and coverlet.\textsuperscript{55} On orders
from the Admiralty, each of the transports assigned to the Cartagena
expedition was to be equipped with awnings to protect the soldiers
from the sun, and to have gratings fitted to its hatches to ventilate the
vessel’s holds.\textsuperscript{56}

It was the responsibility of the commissioners of the victualling to
provide provisions for troops embarked on transports.\textsuperscript{57} Apparently
during the War of Spanish Succession, the transport board ‘Vic-
tualed at 6 to 4 mens Allowance’.\textsuperscript{58} This ratio was adopted for transatlantic
voyages during the War of Jenkins’s Ear, as well as during the War of
Austrian Succession, and the transports carrying troops to Cartagena
were provided with ‘Six months provisions for the number of men
expressed at 6 to 4 mens Allowance’.\textsuperscript{59} The diet of the troops on board
transports was almost totally lacking in vitamin C and consisted of
bread, butter, cheese and beer every day of the week, plus salt beef or
salt pork on three out of every seven days.\textsuperscript{60} On shorter voyages, such
as between England and the European continent, the rations issued
to troops on board transports were reduced.\textsuperscript{61} It was hoped to sup-

\textsuperscript{49} See Syrett, \textit{Shipping and the American War}, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{50} NMM, ADM/B/111, Navy Board to Admiralty, 3 Jan. 1739.
\textsuperscript{51} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 2 Jan. 1740.
\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Op. cit.}, 7 Mar., 11 Apr. 1740
\textsuperscript{53} PRO, ADM 1/4108, fo. 115.
\textsuperscript{54} PRO, ADM 106/3594, fo. 137.
\textsuperscript{55} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 14, 16, May 1740.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Op. cit.}, 12 Feb. 1740.
\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Op. cit.}, 21 Mar. 1740.
\textsuperscript{58} NMM, ADM/B/111, Navy Board to Admiralty, 3 Jan. 1739.
\textsuperscript{59} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 10 Mar. 1740.
\textsuperscript{60} See PRO, ADM 106/272, Victualling Board to Navy Board, 17 Oct. 1748.
\textsuperscript{61} e.g. NMM, ADM/B/117, Victualling Board to Navy Board, 5 Apr. 1742.

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plement the diet of the soldiers bound to Cartagena, once the force arrived in the West Indies, by issuing fresh provisions two days a week.\textsuperscript{62} Further, fishing tackle was provided for the transports.\textsuperscript{63} The masters of the transports were legally responsible for the soldiers’ provisions, and had to sign indents for them at the victualling office.\textsuperscript{64} The owners of the transports had to provide rations for the ship’s crew, and in the case of the crews of the transports proceeding to Cartagena they were required to provide provisions for six months.\textsuperscript{65} On the very day that the Deptford officers certified that a transport was fitted, provisioned, stored and in all other respects fit for the service, the vessel would begin to earn freight.\textsuperscript{66} Finally, just before a transport sailed from Deptford dockyard, the vessel’s master was given sailing orders, by the clerk of the cheque, drawn up by the commissioners of the navy.\textsuperscript{67}

Administrative control of the transports employed on the Cartagena expedition was exercised by the commissioners through an official known as an agent for transports. At the request of Major-General Lord Cathcart,\textsuperscript{68} the military commander of the expedition, James Wallace was appointed agent for transports on the Cartagena operation. Wallace received a salary of £300 a year, along with an additional £50 for the hire of a clerk. The same salary was paid to Peter Crisp, who served as agent for transports in the Mediterranean during 1715.\textsuperscript{69} The instructions issued by the commissioners to Wallace called for him to ensure that the masters of the transports carried out the terms of the ships’ charter parties. Wallace was further instructed that upon discovering ‘any Neglect in the masters to give us an Account thereof’.\textsuperscript{70} If a master was reported by Wallace for not fulfilling the terms of the vessel’s charter party, or had otherwise ‘neglected his duty’, the commissioners had the ‘liberty to make such abatement out of the freight as they shall judge reasonable’.\textsuperscript{71} It was also on the basis of reports made by Wallace showing the good conduct of the masters that the owners of transports were granted advance payments of freight before the vessel’s accounts had been audited.\textsuperscript{72} Wallace, while he was embarked on a transport from various places in the West Indies, continuously sent reports to the Navy Board on the conduct of the ships under his direction.\textsuperscript{73} In order to obtain the funds needed to pay for repairs and other necessary expenses incurred by the transports under

\textsuperscript{62} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 27 June 1740.
\textsuperscript{63} Op. cit., 3 July 1740.
\textsuperscript{64} Op. cit., 17 Apr. 1740.
\textsuperscript{66} PRO, ADM 106/2595, fo. 13.
\textsuperscript{67} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 10 May 1740.
\textsuperscript{68} PRO, ADM 1/4109, fo. 10.
\textsuperscript{69} PRO, ADM 106/2554, 27 June 1940.
\textsuperscript{70} Op. cit., 28, 30 Apr. 1740.
\textsuperscript{71} PRO, ADM 106/2595, fo. 13.
\textsuperscript{72} e.g. PRO, ADM 106/2555, 16 Mar. 1741.
\textsuperscript{73} e.g. PRO, ADM 106/2558, 15 Jan. 1742. Additional reports and letters from Wallace to the navy board can be found in PRO, ADM 106/274.
his direction, Wallace was granted the authority to issue bills of exchange paid by the navy board.\textsuperscript{74} During the War of Jenkins’s Ear, as well as during the War of Austrian Succession, the commissioners also employed a number of other officials, such as naval officers stationed in the out ports and overseas, to exercise effective administrative control over the transports and other chartered shipping.\textsuperscript{75} It was a complicated operation, partly carried out at sea and miles away from the centre of the British government.

The owners of transports, provided that there were no complaints lodged against the conduct of their vessel by any official, including an agent for transports, received payment of freight in instalments. Two months’ freight would be paid upon signing the charter party. A further two months’ freight would be paid after six months’ service. Thereafter, two months’ freight would be paid for every four months of service.\textsuperscript{76} The remainder of a transport’s freight would be paid when the vessel had actually returned to the Thames, all the king’s stores had been removed and accounted for, and the vessel’s accounts had been audited and passed. For instance, when the transport \textit{St Elizabeth} arrived at Deptford dockyard to be discharged from the service, all ‘the cabins & materials belonging to the Navy’ were removed from the ship, and the commissioners of the victualling were further requested to remove from the vessel any of the king’s provisions which might still be on board.\textsuperscript{77}

Once all government property had been removed from a transport, officials of the navy board would then audit the ship’s accounts. The accounting that went on could be meticulous. For instance, the transports \textit{Devonshire} and \textit{Marlborough} had 5s. and 7s. respectively abated from their freight because seven hammocks were ‘not accounted for’.\textsuperscript{78} Rigour in administrative detail was near-absolute. The failure to produce a single document could prevent the prompt payment of freight, as the owner of the transport \textit{Princess Ann} discovered when he was informed that it would not be possible to pay the vessel’s freight ‘before a certificate is obtained from the Victualling Office’.\textsuperscript{79} In the case of ships lost to enemy action the freight was not paid until the owners gave a bond, as was the case with the transport \textit{Monmouth}, to indemnify the Navy Board for any loss that might be sustained by an inability to pass the vessel’s accounts owing to the loss of the ship’s papers.\textsuperscript{80} It was only after problems such as these had been overcome that the commissioners would order a transport’s freight be paid in navy bills.

\textsuperscript{74} See PRO, ADM 106/2555, 1 Oct. 1741.
\textsuperscript{75} See PRO, ADM 106/2563, 9 Mar. 1744.
\textsuperscript{76} PRO, ADM 106/3600, p. 41.
\textsuperscript{77} PRO, ADM 106/2558, 19 Feb. 1742.
\textsuperscript{78} PRO, ADM 106/3600, pp. 37–9.
\textsuperscript{79} PRO, ADM 106/2555, 19 Nov. 1941.
\textsuperscript{80} PRO, ADM 106/2556, 7 June 1742.
The navy board always paid the freight of transports in navy bills and not in cash. Navy bills were negotiable instruments, redeemable in due course; moreover, they began to pay 5 per cent interest six months after issue.\footnote{PRO, ADM 106/2560, 16 Feb. 1740; ADM 106/2595, fo. 13.} More importantly, navy bills could be redeemed and converted into money if the treasurer of the navy was solvent. If this official did not have the money in hand, the bill-holders would have to wait longer for the funds to become available in order to redeem them. In such a case, an alternative to prompt redemption of the bills was still available: navy bills could be sold, at a discount, to a bill broker in the City of London who speculated in government paper. Shipowners did not like being paid in navy bills, maintaining that they were not receiving the full value of their freight. However, protests about the use of navy bills, while common, were to no avail, for these negotiable instruments remained in use and were vital to the wartime finances of the British government.\footnote{One of the best accounts of the workings of navy bills is J. E. D. Binney, \textit{British Public Finance and Administration, 1774–92} (Oxford, 1958), pp. 161–2.} And since redemption was more or less guaranteed, navy bills were also an effective measure for financing the war.

In the final analysis the commissioners of the navy were successful in chartering the merchant shipping required to serve as transports during the expedition to Cartagena. Between 21 February 1739 and 23 May 1741 the navy board chartered a total of 77 transports, at the rate of 13s. per ton per month, not only to carry troops to the West Indies but also to support amphibious operations, including the attacks on Cartagena and Cuba, in the Caribbean region.\footnote{PRO, ADM 106/2595, pp. 13–21.} At first the commissioners encountered difficulties in persuading shipowners to charter their vessels to serve as transports, owing to an unwillingness to pay competitive rates of freight. These difficulties were soon overcome by the decision to pay 13s. per ton per month; the navy board was then promptly able to charter the transports required to mount the expedition to Cartagena.

The hiring of shipping to serve in the West Indies during the War of Jenkins’s Ear was a classic example of the government’s strategic desire having to dovetail with the economic interests of British shipowners. In the eighteenth century, during wartime, both the government and the shipowners, would face a number of difficult problems. To conduct military operations in distant regions, such as the West Indies, the British government had to be able to transport troops across oceans. This could only be done by converting warships to carry troops or by chartering merchant shipping to serve as transports. Obviously, it was easier and far less costly to charter merchant shipping to serve as transports than to employ a number of warships of the Royal Navy for that purpose. The owners of merchant ships also faced a number of difficult problems in wartime. On the one hand,
a shipowner could sail his ship without convoy and make good profits, but ran a great risk of being captured. The ranks of eighteenth-century shipowners abound with men who lost their ships to the enemy by running the risk of sailing without convoy. Yet, on the other hand, to sail with convoy greatly forced up expenses. Here was the crux of the shipowners’ dilemma. To sail without convoy could result in great profits, but there was the risk of losing everything, including one’s ship, through enemy action. Nevertheless, to sail with convoy, while greatly reducing the chance of capture, also greatly reduced – even destroyed altogether – the ability to earn a good profit in the carrying trade. By chartering his ship to the commissioners of the navy the shipowner could earn money, without the risk of losing his investment through enemy action since the navy board paid the owner the full appraised value, minus wear and tear, of any transport lost owing to enemy action. It is clear that from the total economic package – freight and protection of investment – shipowners ultimately profited from chartering their ships to the government. If this was not so, why did shipowners continue to charter ships to the government during the War of Jenkins’s Ear as well as in other eighteenth-century conflicts?

For the British government, the true significance of the chartering of merchant shipping to support the expedition to Cartagena is not economic, but rather administrative and strategic. One authority has estimated that, in 1751, the English merchant marine consisted of some 421,000 tons of shipping. Clearly, the 77 ships, of approximately 200 tons each, employed by the navy board to support military operations in the West Indies represented only a small fraction of the available British merchant shipping tonnage. What is important about the chartering of merchant ships, however, and especially during the War of Jenkins’s Ear, was that it enabled the British, for the first time in the nation’s history, to conduct large-scale and sustained military operations outside Europe, in such distant regions as the West Indies. The administrative procedures employed by the commissioners of the navy in hiring troop transports for the attack on Cartagena were further refined, and were subsequently applied to charter huge amounts of shipping during the Seven Years and American Wars to support British military operations in the western hemisphere. In the American War, for example, the navy board during 1776 employed more than 400 chartered transports to support the operations of the crown’s forces in America. The ability to charter merchant shipping to carry armies across oceans was a critical factor, affording the British

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84 For an account of the British shipping industry during wartime, see Davis, *Rise of the English Shipping Industry*, pp. 315–37.
87 Syrett, *Shipping and the American War*, p. 249.
army, during the second half of the eighteenth century, the ability to operate in almost any region of the world which could be reached from the sea. The military and strategic implications of such an ability for British imperial history were to be far-reaching.