The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV

A monumental painting by

WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER

(Leiden, 1633 – Westminster, 1707)

One of the most outstanding paintings commissioned by
Admiral Edward Russell (1652-1727), 1st Earl of Orford,
for his Chippenham Park estate, in Cambridgeshire.

The painting has always remained in the same collection for over 325 years.

The painting was one of a total of seven, together constituting one commission. Together, the seven paintings constitute the largest and most ambitious commission ever undertaken by Van de Velde on behalf of a private patron.

SASKIA KATTENBURG

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FOREWORD

The painting '*The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV,* was commissioned directly from the famous maritime artist Willem van de Velde the Younger by Admiral Edward Russell, (1652-1727), 1st Earl of Orford.

As art dealers, we always look for masterworks, whether made by one of the great masters or a skilled but lesser-known artists. Over the centuries, that cultural heritage has been scattered across the globe, resulting in the search being a difficult process in practice. Preliminary work includes examining hundreds of auctions at home and abroad and, after careful selection of potentially interesting autions, the inevitable travel to the place the action is being held, say, Rome, Paris, Vienna, London or New York.

It is a time-consuming process that only yields success once in a blue moon. Upon arrival, the attribution might still turn out to be incorrect, or the painting may be more poorly preserved than initially thought. Nevertheless, fortune favors the bold or, in this case, those who persevere and that makes up for everything. For example, late last year we were able to add a magnificent maritime painting by Willem van de Velde the Younger to our collections.

It turned out to be a very special discovery and the painting was better preserved than we initially thought. Our search for the history of the masterpiece took us to the late 17th century and its owner at the time, Admiral Edward Russell, who had commissioned the painting directly from the artist.

The monumental painting, 164.2 x 306 cm was signed and dated *'Aº 1698 W.V. Veldᵉ f.'*. Russell, who was an Admiral in the Royal Navy at the time, commissioned the painting for display in his country home. There it remained for over 325 years along with three other marine paintings attesting to his naval exploits.

The painting of the Council of War on the *Britannia* is a joint acquisition. The fact the painting has never changed hands is one of the reasons it is exceptionally well preserved.

We would like to express our thanks to Dr Remmelt Daalder, former curator of the Scheepvaartmuseum in Amsterdam, restorer Jazzy de Groot, Ab Hoving, formerly chief curator of ship models in the Rijks-museum, Amsterdam, art historian John Brozius, Effie Moneypenny & Dorin Bocur, who made valuable contributions from their fields of expertise to unravel and map the history of this historically important painting. Artist and art historian Saskia Kattenburg also did very extensive research and wrote the text to accompany this special publication. Many thanks to her as well.

Rob Kattenburg & Sander Bijl

THE COUNCIL OF WAR ABOARD THE *BRITANNIA*

For an artist, regular customers with plenty of money are what keeps his business afloat. Over the course of his career, Willem van de Velde the Younger, like his eponymous father, Van de Velde the Elder, was able to find such clients. Admiral Edward Russell was one of them. The painting of the Council of War aboard the *Britannia* was part of one of the largest commissions that Willem van de Velde the Younger managed to secure.

He and his father developed a clever marketing strategy to establish good relations with influential figures in naval circles. This strategy is reminiscent of the advice given by Samuel van Hoogstraten in his *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (Introduction to the Academy of Painting, 1678).

On the subject of 'how an artist should act against the power of fortune', he wrote:
'It is true that an artist must seek good fortune first through his own merits, which is to say, through the merit and appeal of his own work. Nonetheless, he must see to it that through the efforts of diligent Maecenases he wins the favour of powerful princes or kings, or that he comes to the attention of prosperous merchants. For without the help of benevolent supporters and heralds who loudly sing his praises, it will be difficult for him to become well known.'[1]

Russell was not the first 'benevolent supporter' of Van de Velde. The Dutch Admiral Cornelis Tromp, for example, regularly commissioned ship portraits and paintings of naval battles over the years. After the Van de Veldes emigrated to England, the relationship with the English royal court was excellent. This led, for example, to a commission for a large series of paintings of English naval successes, which are still in the possession of the British royal family.

The paintings commissioned by Russell were also, until recently, privately owned by the descendants of the original owner. I was able to study the Van de Velde paintings at Ombersley Court in 2010, exhibited as a virtually complete series under the guidance of Richard and Patricia Sandys, descendants of a niece of Admiral Russell.

William van de Velde must have had an excellent personal relationship with Edward Russell. This is evidenced by the invitation the painter received in 1694 to join the admiral's fleet on an expedition to the Mediterranean as his personal guest. Russell commanded a fleet of some sixty-three ships to keep the French from attacking the Catalan coast.

It may have been on this voyage that the plan for the series of paintings was born, that Van de Velde would later supply. Russell's career was then at its height. His victory in the naval battle of La Hougue (23 May 1692) in particular, between the Anglo-Dutch war fleet and the French navy, had already bestowed on him an air of immortality. The *Britannia* was Russell's flagship during this naval battle; this is the ship depicted in this painting.

In addition to his activities at sea, Russell held a number of high positions in English politics. He was one of the seven signatories who invited William of Orange to claim the English throne in 1688. He also acted as William's secretary during the invasion of England.[2] Russell went on to become a member of the House of Commons and First Lord of the Admiralty, the political head of the Royal Navy.

By now he had become a wealthy man, largely because of all these high offices and the income that came with holding them. Although some contested whether his wealth had been acquired fairly, this did not affect him in practice. On the contrary, he was able to spend huge sums on Chippenham Mansion near Cambridge.

The painting of the Council of War aboard the *Britannia* was part of the Chippenham Mansion decoration programme. It included seven paintings by Van de Velde depicting highlights of Russell's career on large canvases. It is easy to imagine the Admiral, Earl of Orford from 1698, leading his guests through this series, telling them about his years as a warship captain, the naval battle of La Hougue, and pointing out the huge portraits of his imposing flagship *Britannia*, including the Council of War painting described in detail below.

This commission must have generated an enormous amount of work and income for the painter. His assistants, who may have included Van de Velde's son Cornelis, would certainly have contributed to the realisation of the paintings, but the master himself did the lion's share of the work. The way the light falls on the sails in the painting of the Council of War, as well as the fine detailing of the two ships in the foreground, clearly show the master's skilled hand. It is possible that some of the details in the background and the sea were studio work. But the composition is entirely in the style that Van de Velde himself developed for large ship portraits in horizontal format: the protagonists of the scene, the *Britannia* on the right and the yacht *Isabella* on the left, are prominently placed, with a relatively empty 'midfield' between them.

This arrangement is very reminiscent of one of Van de Velde's most famous paintings, 'King Charles II Visiting the Fleet in the Thames Estuary, 5 June 1672 (OS)'.[3] That painting also features a large warship on the right and several yachts on the left, with smaller vessels in between. It has roughly the same size as the Council of War, and is now a highlight of the National Maritime Museum's permanent collection in the Queen's House in Greenwich, where father and son Van de Velde once worked. The resemblance to the present painting seems no coincidence, the more so as Van de Velde only completed this large canvas in 1694, after it had lain unfinished in his studio for years. That was shortly before he completed the canvas for Russell. So, both works may have been in the studio at the same time.

The painting that once adorned Chippenham Mansion has a level comparable to Van de Velde's achievements from a prolific earlier period of his life. After a somewhat hidden existence in the collection of a descendant of Admiral Russell, it has now been expertly restored to its former glory.

Dr Remmelt Daalder

Fig.2
Willem van de Velde the Younger
The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV
Oil on canvas, 164.2 x 306 cm.
Signed and dated *'Aº 1698 W.V. Veldt f.'* (on driftwood, lower right)
Gallery Rob Kattenburg BV, Heiloo 2025

Fig. 3
Willem van de Velde the Younger
A Royal Visit to the Fleet in the Thames Estuary, 1672
Oil on canvas, 1651 x 3300 mm
Dated: 1672-1694/6; 1672-1696
National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, Caird Collection, inv. no. BHC0299

Fig. 4
Lodewijk van der Helst (Amsterdam 1642-1684)
Portrait of Willem van de Velde the Younger (1633-1707)
Oil on canvas, 103 x 91 cm
Unsigned, c. 1670
Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-2236

WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER (LEIDEN 1633 – WESTMINSTER 1707)

Together with his father of the same forename, Willem van de Velde the Younger was one of the finest marine artists in Europe. The following is a brief outline of his life, which is described in detail by Michael Robinson and others.

Willem van de Velde the Younger was born in Leiden in 1633. The family moved to Amsterdam soon afterwards, settling beside IJ Sound. His father had by then become famous as a skilled and meticulous ship's draughtsman (*scheepsteyckenaer*) and producer of so-called 'pen paintings', large drawings in Indian ink on vellum, canvas or panel with a white ground, 'prepared in such a way that [they] could be hung out in the wind and rain, and could be wiped clean with a sponge just like an oil painting'.

Van de Velde the Elder was the leading artist in this irregular though fascinating technique, which was in use for no more than 50 years. His wonderfully composed pen paintings also found buyers abroad, some as far away as Italy. Cardinal Leopoldo de' Medici was a particular admirer and patron. It was a very time-consuming technique, so the paintings were extremely expensive. Van de Velde the Elder charged 150 guilders for a small pen painting, whereas a landscape by an artist like Jan van Goyen, for example, might sell for around 50 guilders.

It was probably the elder Van de Velde who first showed his son how to portray a ship accurately, before apprenticing him to Simon de Vlieger, who taught him the art of painting. This was probably in the late 1640s. De Vlieger moved from Amsterdam to Weesp in 1648, and it is quite possible that younger Van de Velde followed him there, for in 1652 he married a young woman from that area. It was not to be, however, and the marriage was dissolved the following year, and De Vlieger acted as a witness at the divorce. The earliest dated painting by Willem van de Velde the Younger dates from 1651. It must have been clear from the outset that he had a remarkable talent. A letter to a foreign patron dated March 1652 indicates that he was already working independently at that time, and by the early age of 18 he was already well known as 'a very good painter ... of oil paintings of seascapes and battles.' Father and son were by now working together, although the latter was apparently able to set his own prices, as shown by the intermediary promising the patron to inquire about 'the lowest price for which De Velde's son is willing to make it'.

These and other details have come to light with the discovery of previously unknown archival material abroad, due to be published in good time.

The immense importance of the Van de Veldes lies not only in the development of marine painting; they have also played an important role as chroniclers of historical events. They were unequalled in their accurate portrayal of ships, rigging and the like, and made the most painstaking and accurate studies from life. The elder Van de Velde sailed with the fleet to record events at sea, and was given his own galliot from which he was able to see the battles unfolding before him.
On board he drew sketches which he later detailed at home or used them as the basis for a pen painting. His son also used the same sketches for his own paintings. The father was thus the first war correspondent to report from the scene of battle.

Willem van de Velde the Younger set the standard for a new development in marine painting, incorporating atmosphere and the effect of light in combination with a sunlit coloration. His subjects range from small pieces intended for private collections, simple and clear in their design, to (very) large historical and monumental pieces with more complex compositions. The larger paintings were mainly commissioned by individuals and institutions with ties to the navy. Admirals and other naval officers who wanted to adorn their homes with imagery of their exploits or of the ships they had commanded.

In the case of this particular painting, *The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russel on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV,* was commissioned by Admiral

Edward Russell, (1652-1727), 1st Earl of Orford. It must have been in the winter of 1672-1673 that the Van de Veldes arrived in England and settled there with their families at the invitation of the King Charles II of England. He and his brother James, Duke of York, were delighted to have gained the services of the two leading marine painters of the day.

Samuel Pepys's papers show their appointment by Charles II, detailing the decision 'to allow the salary of one hundred pounds per annum unto Willem van de Velde the Elder for taking and making draughts of sea-fights; and the like salary of one hundred pounds per annum unto Willem van de Velde the Younger for putting the said draughts into colours for our particular use'.

On top of this basic salary, the Duke of York promised them a sum of 50 pounds a year with an additional payment of 50 pounds for every painting delivered. Father and son were also given a large house in Greenwich and a studio was built for them in the Queen's House, which could be expanded if they were working on large projects, such as the designs for a tapestry series of the Battle of Solebay.

At first, they had their hands full dealing with the commissions from their royal patrons, and it was only when William III came to the throne in 1689 and their contract was allowed to lapse that they found time to work for other clients.

They then moved from Greenwich to Sackville Street, Westminster, a street off Piccadilly running down beside Burlington House, which has been the home of the Royal Academy of Arts since 1867. There they lived in great style.

Charles II clearly understood his protégés' value, for in 1673 he expressly forbade Willem van de Velde the Elder from sailing to view the Battle of Texel for fear that he might be killed. The father continued to work until his death in 1693, in which final year he still produced several pen paintings.

His son remained in England, although he did visit the Netherlands every now and then. During one such stay he painted a majestic view of ships on the IJ that now belongs to the Rijksmuseum collection, although it is on display in the Amsterdam Museum. For the last two years of his life, he lived on Millbank beside the Thames, which is also in Westminster.

He died in 1707 and, like his father, he was buried in St James's Church, Piccadilly. A memorial stone placed there in 1929 honours these two most eminent Dutch marine artists.

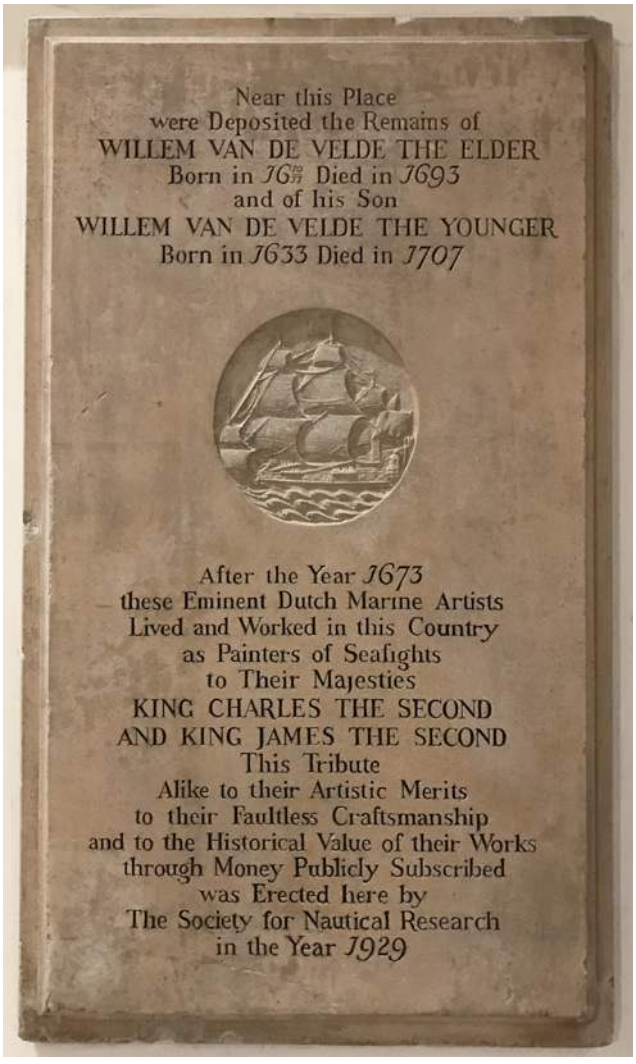

Fig. 5
The memorial stone in St. James Church, Piccadilly, London, UK

WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER (LEIDEN 1633 – WESTMINSTER 1707)

The Council of War of the English Fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the Naval Battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV

Oil on canvas, 164.2 x 306 cm.
Signed and dated '*A^o^ 1698 W.V. Velde f.*'
(on driftwood, lower right)

PROVENANCE
Commissioned by Admiral Edward Russell, 1st Earl of Orford (1652-1727) for Chippenham Mansion, Cambridgeshire, and by inheritance to his great-niece, Letitia Tipping (1699-1779), wife of Samuel Sandys, 1st Baron Sandys (1695-1770), and by descent to their son, Edwin Sandys, 2nd Baron Sandys (1726-1797), and by inheritance to his niece, Mary, Marchioness of Downshire and 1st Baroness Sandys (1764-1836), and by descent to her second son, Lieutenant-General Arthur Hill, 2nd Baron Sandys (1792-1860), and by inheritance to his younger brother, Arthur Marcus Sandys, 3rd Baron Sandys (1798-1863), and by descent in the family to, Richard Hill, 7th Baron Sandys (1931-2023), at Ombersley Court, Worcestershire.

EXHIBITED
– London, *Earl's Court, Naval, Shipping and Fisheries Exhibition*, 1905, no. 418 or 420, both described as 'Naval Battle'.

LITERATURE
– J. Grego, Inventory of Pictures: Portraits, Paintings, etc., Ombersley MS., 1905, where listed in the Great Dining Hall.
– ONM / 1 / 2 / 7, journal entry for a visit to Ombersley Court, 25 August 1950, Oliver Millar Archive, Paul Mellon Centre, London, p. 29.
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– Ombersley Court Inventory, annotated Ombersley MS., June 1963, where listed in the Dining Room.
– M.S. Robinson, Van de Velde: A Catalogue of the Paintings of the Elder and Younger Willem van de Velde, Greenwich, 1990, II, pp. 968-969, no. 636.
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– Country Life, 9 January 1953, p. 97, pl. 9

Fig.6 >

THE PAINTING

The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV, is one of the seven paintings commissioned by Admiral Edward Russell from Willem van de Velde the Younger for his Chippenham Park estate (Cambridgeshire), to commemorate his naval exploits. The painting is signed and dated *'Aº 1698 W.V. Veldᵉ f.'* on the driftwood, lower right.

A sky with stratocumulus cloud on the left and cumulus cloud rising on the right; the sun and a moderate breeze come from the left of the picture.

The large three-decker the *Britannia* is depicted at anchor on the right side of the painting, seen before port beam; she has her fore and main topsails loosed on the cap. The flagship of Admiral Russell has the Union flag at the main, indicating that the commander-in-chief is on board and the red ensign at the stern; there are pendants at the fore and the mizzen, and at the fore yardarm, the fore topsail and mizzen topsail yardarms. She employs pendants at the mastheads and yardarms, which most likely signifies that we are witnessing the important occasion of the Council of War at the *Britannia*. The pennants with the combined English and Dutch flag indicate that this is an alliance fleet.

Depicted in the left foreground is the ketch-rigged royal yacht *Isabella*, port quarter view, lying-to as manned sloops take people between her and the flagship on the right; there is a man aloft lowering the Union flag at the masthead. The yacht is lying-to on the port tack with mizzen, foresail at her masthead, but the square mainsail is half clewed up and the topsail half-mast high, both sails being aback. It was at Rye-Bay where the English fleet would muster.[4]

We may assume that Admiral Russell made use of the Royal Yacht *Isabella* (1683) to personally visit each ship of the fleet to give final instructions.[5]

There are three yachts under sail on the centre left. In the background, nine or ten ships are anchored or about to anchor, including one with a blue flag at the mizzen indicating the presence of the Rear-Admiral of the Blue.[6]

THE PROVENANCE OF THE PAINTING

The painting, *The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and la Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV,* forms part of a series of seven painting commissioned of the great Dutch marine painter Willem van de Velde the Younger by Admiral Edward Russell (1652-1727), 1st Earl of Orford, for his Chippenham Park estate, near Cambridge, between circa 1693 and 1698.

It is one of the most outstanding paintings commissioned by Russell and serves to commemorate, together with the other paintings, his naval exploits. They collectively serve as a symbol of his wealth, status and prowess in battle. It has always remained in the Chippenham Park Collection for over 325 years. Together, the seven paintings constitute one of the largest and most ambitious commissions ever undertaken by Van de Velde for a private patron.

In 1694, during the Nine Years' War, van de Velde then sixty years old, received his first opportunity to familiarise himself with life aboard a ship during a long voyage by joining a fleet of sixty-three ships. Russell, then first Lord of the Admiralty, was leading to engage the French in combat in the Mediterranean.

Following the artist's request to go to sea, Russell received the following orders on the 18th of May, which had been drawn up by the Admiralty Board two days previously: '*Orders to Admll Russell to cause Mr Wm Vande Veld junr to be borne aboard some of ye Ships in the Fleet in order to his makeing Draughts & Figures or Imitations of what shall pass & happen at Sea by Battle of Fight of ye Fleet, and that he have such an Allowance for the same as his Father had in Holland, upon some Proposalls from him now read. [Russell had to ensure that] Mr Vande Veld & a Serv[an]t… be born in victuals on board such ship as he desires*'.[7]

While Russell's squadron did not return to England until the summer of 1695, van de Velde must have arrived before then, as the National Museum (Greenwich) holds a painted view of the North-African harbour dated 1694, probably based on one of more drawings made during this voyage with Russell's fleet.

Russell retired from the navy after the Mediterranean expedition of 1694-1695, devoting himself to the decoration of the country estate.

Of the seven paintings Van de Velde produced for Chippenham Mansion, one of the upright paintings is in a private collection is dated 1697, while *The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV* bears the date of 1698.

They are mainly ship portraits, but there is also a scene of the French flagship *Soleil Royal* on fire at the Battle of La Hogue in 1692, when Russell commanded the combined Anglo-Dutch fleet. Van de Velde would have painted it on the basis of information given by Russell himself or by other eyewitnesses.[8] Russell lived at Chippenham Park in Cambridgeshire from 1689 until his death. He re-modelled the mansion house and greatly extended Chippenham Park, which still dominates the parish to the south of the village. Subsequent to Russell's death in 1727, the paintings passed to his grand-niece, Letitia Tipping, Lady Sandys, in whose family they have descended until the present day.

Until recently, the paintings made by Willem van de Velde the Younger to commemorate the exploits of Admiral Edward Russell decorated Ombersley Court, the estate of Lord and Lady Sandys.

Fig. 7
Ombersley Court (Worcestershire, UK)

Fig. 8
The paintings by Willem van de Velde the Younger at Ombersley Court, displayed on the walls of the ground-floor dining room. The painting *The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of* Barfleur and *La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV,* is partially visible on the right side.

TREATMENT OF WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER'S '*The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV'.*

Upon arrival in the conservation studio, the canvas and paint layers turned out to be structurally stable, but aesthetically the paint layer was highly disturbed by dirt, discoloured varnish and retouching. In order to restore the original colour balance and smooth rendering of the paint layers, the varnish layer and most recent retouching were removed.

After removal of the discoloured top varnish layer and most recent retouching, the paint layer was still covered in remnants of even older retouching, varnish and dirt. The paint layer had probably been coated with a (mixture containing) drying oil in the 18th or early 19th century to re-saturate the paint layers after a cleaning campaign. In the past, this coating of drying oil got partially removed, but the remnants were discoloured, forming dark-brown residues scattered over the surface of the paint layer, disturbing the readability of the fine details in especially the ships, sails and rigging. The solubility of the discoloured oil-remnants and the oil binding medium of the paint layers, were close to each other, making it complex to remove the oil-remnants without damaging the original paint layers.

To safely remove the oil remnants from the original oil paint, a custom designed gel was made, based on enzymes that would only react to the oil remnants while it had no effect on the underlying paint layers like the vulnerable, thinly painted rigging and other fine details.

The precise timing of the gel enabled safe removal of the oil remnants using a scalpel, millimetre by millimetre. This way, the fine detailing and colour rendering of Willem van de Velde II can be fully appreciated and recognised again.

After this fine-meshed and complex cleaning stage of the treatment, the painting was varnished and retouched. The painting is in an overall good condition. Now, the original intention of Willem van de Velde the Younger can be appreciated again, considering the age and historical status of the painting.

J. de Groot

Fig. 9 (partly cleaned)
The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV (fig. 6)

Fig. 10 (after cleaning, before restoration)
The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV
(fig. 6)

THE *BRITANNIA*, AN ENGLISH THREE-DECKER, AT ANCHOR IN A SEAWAY WITH THE ISABELLA, A ROYAL YACHT, ARRIVING IN THE FLEET

In 1698, Willem van de Velde the Younger painted a large seascape measuring 164.2 x 306 cm and was catalogued as *an English three-decker at anchor with a royal yacht arriving in the fleet*. The work is signed at lower right on a piece of wreckage and dated *'Aº 1698 W.V. Veldᵉ f.'*.

It is immediately clear to the good observer that the presence of a total of four yachts combined with the line ships in the background and the manned sloops rowing toward the three-decker are convening for a Council of War.

There was no certainty about the identification of the large three-decker until now. According to Robinson, who is considered an authority on father and son Van de Velde, the *Duke* was depicted, a second-class liner with 90 guns built in 1682. It is very likely that he did not see the painting in reality and may have described it from a black and white photograph, since he did not describe the painting correctly. Furthermore, he does not give measurements and notes that the painting seems to be signed and dated, while this can be clearly seen in the lower right corner of the painting. Robinson suspected that the scene was related to the passage of Maria Anna of Palatinate-Neuburg, the second wife of Spanish King Carlos II, to Spain.

Anna Maria came from the Palatinate with her retinue, and in mid-January 1690 Russell picked her up at Flushing in the Netherlands, with the Royal Yacht the *Fubbs*, which he says can be seen in the lower left corner of the painting, escorted by several frigates.

However, research by contemporary experts David Antscherl and Effie Moneypenny, who have very recently published a book on the *Fubbs*, has demonstrated the Royal Yacht in the front left of the painting cannot be the *Fubbs* (which has a different carving).[9] The portrayed ship is instead, the *Isabella.* [10]

Then, according to the documents, at The Downs they transferred to the *Duke* and journeyed to Spain. The Royal Fleet reached the Spanish coast on the 27th of March 1690, and on the 14th of May 1690, the couple officially married in Vallodolid. Robinson's main reason for assuming that this event was based on his identification of the ship as the *Duke*, which bore a lion as its figurehead.

He did not adopt the more obvious identification of the ship as Russell´s flagship the *Britannia* because, according to his available data, this ship had a figurehead of a rider on horseback.[11] Robinson, and others after him, relied on some studies and drawings, some of which were paintings, from Van de Velde's circle marked with the ship's name.

Apart from the fact that it is almost impossible to determine from early drawings and paintings whether the annotation of the ship's name is contemporary, or was only added later by the owner out of good faith, Robinson's assumption proves incorrect.

For example, an etching of the *Britannia* was made after a drawing by the painter and engraver Thomas Baston, who was able to see the ship himself, with a lion as the figurehead. The whereabouts of the original drawing are unknown, and it may have been lost, but the etching engraved in its image appeared in 1721 in '*Twenty-two prints of several of the capital ships of his Majesties Royal Navy with variety of other sea pieces'.*

Barton certainly submitted his sketches to the office of the Lord High Admiral for approval before proceeding to convert the sketches to engravings. This etching is a view of the *HMS Britannia* seen from the port side, showing three rows of cannons and an added fourth row at the quarterdeck. The ship appears to be giving a salute. It is engulfed in smoke from the fired cannons that obscures the central and mizzen mast. Most of the crewmembers stand at the deck and wave their hats while others are on top of the bowsprit, and mast yards working the rigging. Various small boats row alongside the ship. A city skyline can be seen in the distance behind the vessels.

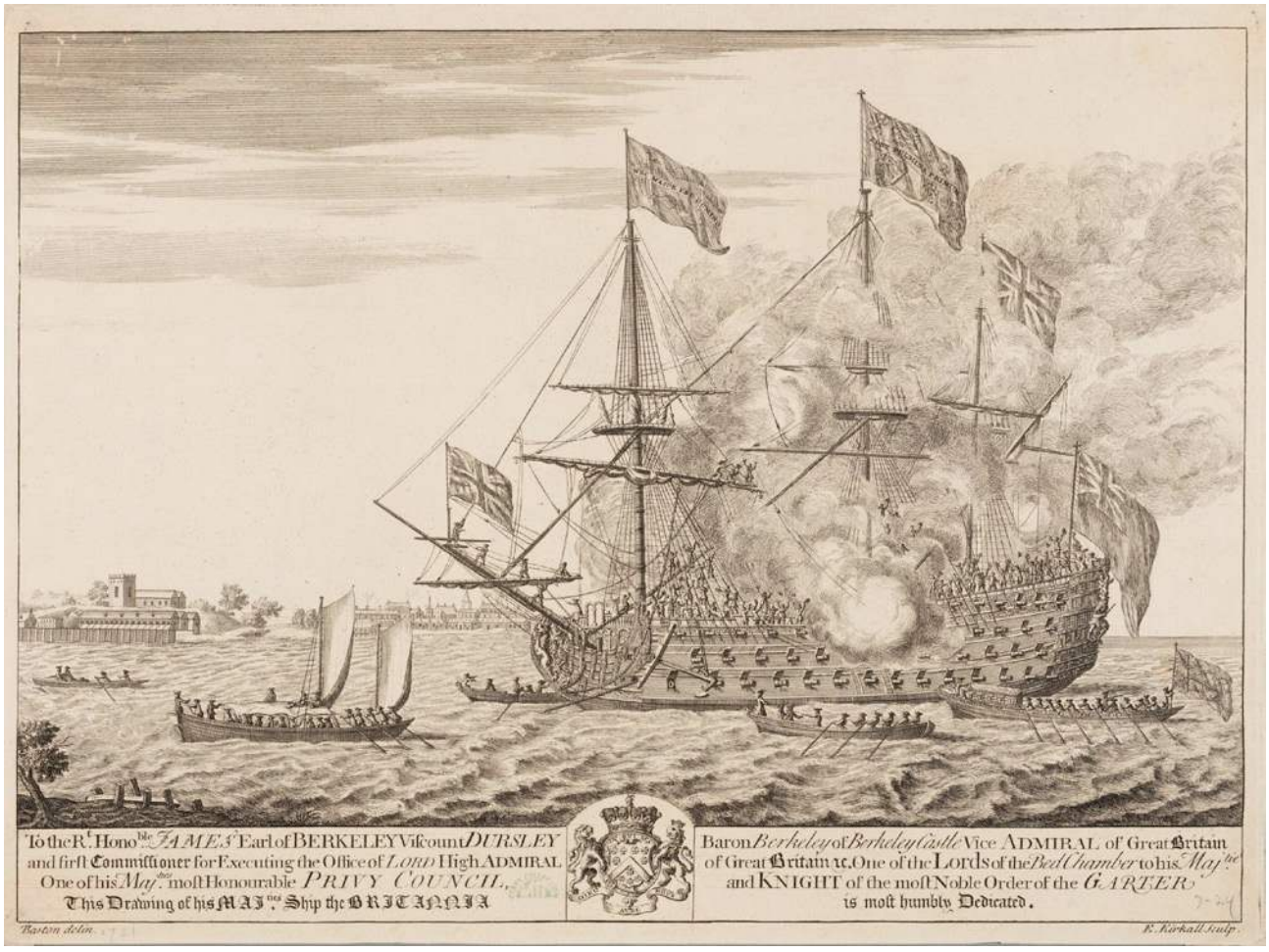


Fig. 11
Thomas Baston (Active 1699-1730), *The Britannia* (1682)
Plate 7 from the series '*Twenty-two prints of several of the capital ships of his Majesties Royal Navy with variety of other sea pieces*'. London 1721. Signed by Thomas Baston and engraved by Elisha Kirkhall. Etching. 29.8 x 40 cm. MIT Museum. Cambridge Massachusetts USA. Arthur H. Clark Collection. Inv. no. CC-F-0045..

The caption shows that the image of the *Britannia* is dedicated to James Berkeley (c. 1679-1736). He was appointed Lord High Admiral and a member of the King's Privy Council in 1717 and inducted into the knighthood as Knight of the Garter in 1718. The Lord High Admiral was the head of the Department of Admiralty and Other Naval Affairs and responsible for providing ships, but did not usually command ships at sea. The Privy Council consisted of advisors to the king and were often former politicians and former members of the House of Commons or the House of Lords.

Baston was also responsible for the ship portraits of, for example, *Royal George*, *Royal Anne*, *Blenheim* and some seascapes and harbour views included

Caption: *'To the Hona*[ra]*ble JAMES Earl of Berkeley Viscount Dursley and first Commissioner for Executing the Office of LORD High ADMIRAL One of his May*[es]*ties most Honourable PRIVY COUNSIL, This Drawing of his MAJ*[es]*ties Ship the BRITANNIA*

Baron Berkely of Berkeley Castle Vice ADMIRAL of Great Britain of Great Britain of Great Britainiae.
One of the most Noble Order of the GARTER is most humbly Dedicated'

Fig. 12
Thomas Baston, *Ship portrait of Royal Sovereign.* Washed pen and ink drawing on vellum.
33 x 29.8 cm. Credit: Christie's London (June 5, 2014).

in the compendium of engravings. The signatures show that he engraved nine etchings himself. The publication featuring the ships '*of his Majesties Royal Navy*' was clearly intended for persons affiliated with the Admiralty or one of the great trading companies, and a misrepresentation of the ships would have been inexcusable.

Almost all of the prints refer to the superiority of Britain's naval affairs in fisheries, trade and defence, and the caption dedicates each print to someone of noble rank who served on the Admiralty Council or in Parliament. The picture book appeared in 1721 under King George I, to whom the title print is dedicated, but Baston's drawing career is traceable as early as the reign of Stadtholder King William III. In the late 90s we find him as a clerk at the Admiralty, but he also produced drawings commissioned by the court. A petition reveals that he had made two drawings of the Eddystone lighthouse near Plymouth and '*several of the King's ships of war*'. In January 1702 he received 30 pounds for these.[12] Possibly some of these old drawings, one of which still occasionally appears at auction, formed the basis for the etchings published in 1721. Baston's earliest known work to date was offered for auction at Christie's in 2008 and is a drawing of *'His Majesty's Yacht William & Mary'*. It is marked *'T. Baston Fecit/96'* and the inscription reveals that it refers to the launching of the royal yacht at Chatham on the 10th of September 1694. The coloured and gold-highlighted drawing, which appears to be drawn to life, is dedicated to Sir Robert Rich (c. 1648-1699), Member of Parliament and Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty.[13]

However, there is little doubt that Baston, who died in 1730, was knowledgeable where shipbuilding was concerned and, as a pen painter working in the tradition of Willem van de Velde the Elder, presided over both detailed and truthful depictions of ships. The New British First Rate ship of the line *Britannia* was acquired in 1719 at Chatham Dockyard. In 1634, she was ready for service and the armament of a nominal 100 guns was placed on board and the crew was complemented with 780 men. Sir John Norris was the Admiral of the fleet and Nicholas Haddock its captain, so Baston could not have portrayed the second *Britannia*.[14]

THE *BRITANNIA*

The ship on the right side of the painting can be identified as the *HMS Britannia,* a 100-gun, first-rate ship of the line of the Royal Navy. A 'first-rate' ship was the first largest class of warships in a hierarchical system of six 'ratings' based on size and firepower.

The only first-rate ship of the 1677 programme was laid down at Chatham in June 1679. Christened *Britannia,* she was launched three years later amid much fanfare on 27 June 1682. Her builder was Sir Phineas Pett II, who had previously produced the *Prince* of 1670.[15]

An order was issued for the construction of a group of Royal Navy ships of the line, resulting in thirty new warships, to restore the power of the Navy. It included the construction of one first rate of 1400 tonnes, with 100 guns, (*Britannia* 1682, built in the Royal Dockyards at Chatham), nine second rates of 1100, and twenty naval thirds of 900 tonnes. This was intended to bring the British fleet up to the same level as the French fleet, which was seen as the major threat to England's expanding trade.

The design served to initiate standardisation in the ships to include the mast structures, rigging to stabilise the masts, and the sail plans. Included in this standardisation were the ordnance carried and crew size. The dimensions of the ships were according to a standardised formula, though individual shipbuilders were still allowed to tweak the designs of individual ships.

The standardised dimensions were as follows: for a gundeck of 150 feet (45.72 meters) with a keel (length for tonnage calculation) of 121 feet (36.88 meters) with a breadth of 39 feet 8 inches (12.09 meters) and a depth of hold on 17 feet (5.18 meters) to obtain a builder's measure tonnage of 1,012 65⁄94 tonnes.[16]

Fig.13
The *Britannia,* detail of fig. 6

THE SERVICE HISTORY OF THE *BRITANNIA*

The ship was launched and laid up in 1682 and refitted at Chatham in 1684. The *Britannia* was not commissioned until several years after her completion and her shortcomings were not immediately apparent. It was not until 1690, when the long-expected armed engagement with France finally took place, that her full wartime armament was loaded aboard. She was found to be so unstable that no one dared to risk taking her to sea without major modifications and the Admiralty ordered her to be docked. She consequently missed the first great clashes in the English Channel. The ship received a thick girdling - of fir, for some reason - increasing the beam to 48ft 8 in but even then, the overloaded hull continued to give trouble. At this stage the bow of the ship must have been changed to the Nassau Lion. This happened after the Glorious Revolution of the Dutch William III and Mary Stuart. By 1691, the *Britannia* was again ready for sea. The following year she was the allied flagship at the Battle of Barfleur with the commander-in-chief Edward Russell, Admiral of the Blue, where she was matched against the Comte de Tourville's mighty *Soleil-Royal.* Both ships were crippled in the encounter, but the outnumbered French fleet was eventually forced to retreat. Tourville's reluctance to abandon his shattered flagship was an important factor in the success of the Anglo-Dutch pursuit, leading to the destruction of the French 'great ships' at La Hogue and Cherbourg. The *Britannia* gained enough glory at Barfleur to secure a place among the Navy's famous warships, but she was never in action again. A great repair was administered in 1700-01.[17]

In 1705 she took on board Charles III of Spain, when on her way to Catalonia.

The *Britannia* remained in service until 1715, after which it was refitted at the Woolwich Dockyard and again rebuilt as a first-rate warship of the line in 1719. After several years of dockyard service, it was scrapped in 1749.[18]

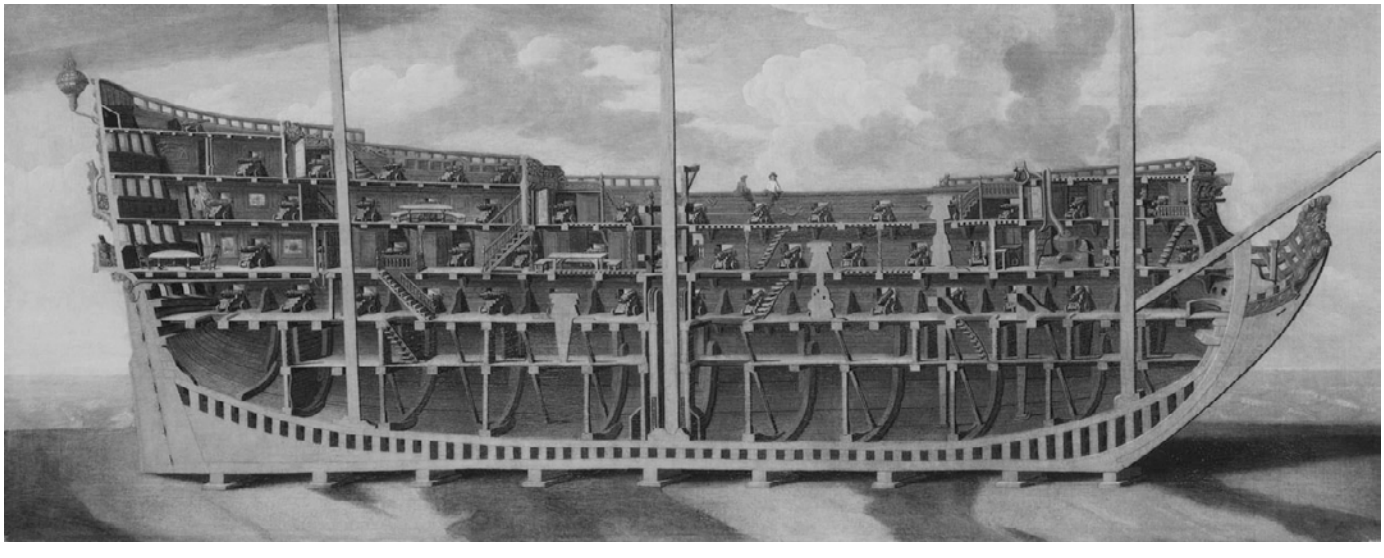


Fig. 14
Philips after Thomas
Section Through a First-Rate, about 1690
An impression of a first-rate, depicted as a cross-section profile of a wooden model.
Frame: 774 x 1698 x 100 mm
Painting: 558 mm x 1486 mm
Dated ca. 1690; ca. 1701
Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum, inv. no. BHC0872

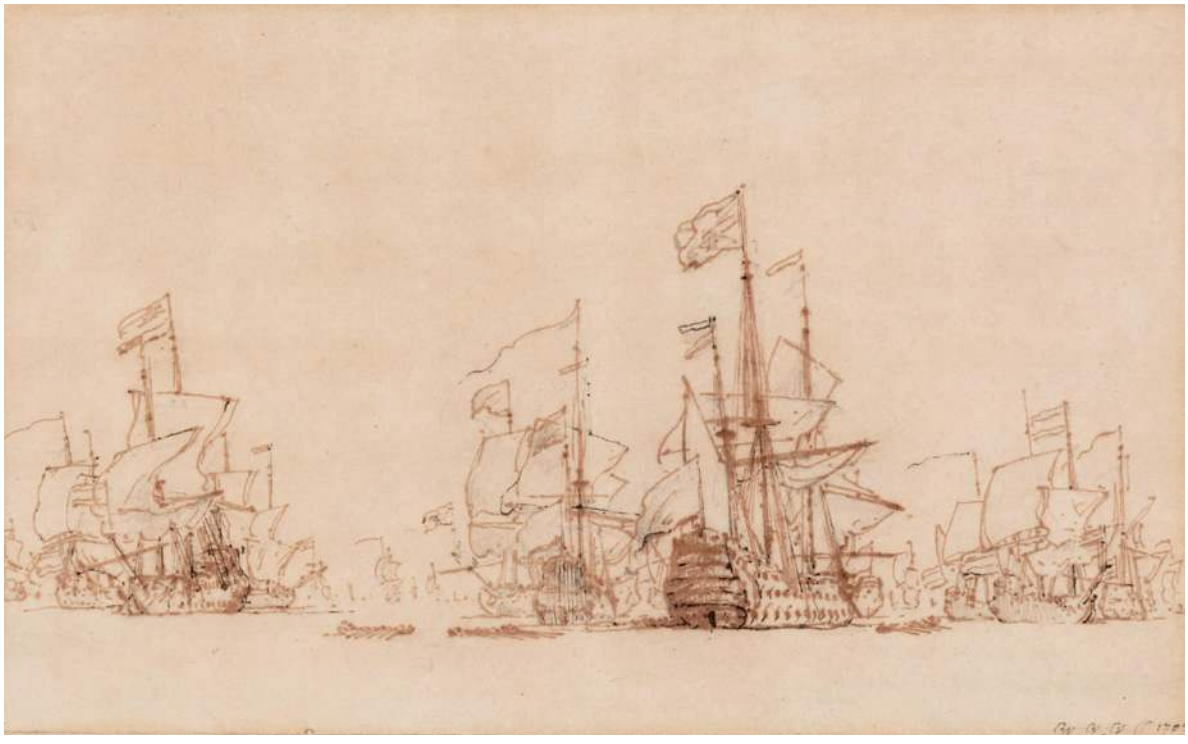


Fig. 15
Willem van de Velde the Younger
The 'Britannia' and other English and Dutch warships in combat at sea
Brown ink on paper, with small self-corrections in black ink by the artist, 18.7 x 30.4 cm
Signed with initials and dated: *W.V.V. f 1705*
Formerly Rob Kattenburg Collection

The fact Van de Velde the Younger was also well acquainted with the *Britannia* is evidenced by a number of sketches and related correspondence that have survived between him and Sir Richard Edgcumbe, who was eager for a painting of the ship to decorate his mansion at Cornwell. Van de Velde suggested painting the ship from the bow side, which could have directly resolved the issue before us, but the client preferred a view of the stern side. This painting with the *Britannia* seen on the transom side Van de Velde also executed, but is known only from a photograph. It was presumably lost in a bombing raid in 1941.[19]

THE ISABELLA, A ROYAL YACHT

The yacht, which Robinson suspected was the *Fubbs*, could be identified as the Royal Yacht *Isabella* based on the clearly identifiable transom. It was built in 1683 by Phineas Pett at the Greenwich shipyard during Charles II's reign.[20] It was the last yacht commissioned by the King and was intended for his illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton, who served as Vice Admiral from 1682 to 1689. The identification of the yacht is based in part on a Van de Velde the Younger drawing showing, among other things, a decorated window and gun port and the proprietary annotation '*de isabel*'.[21]

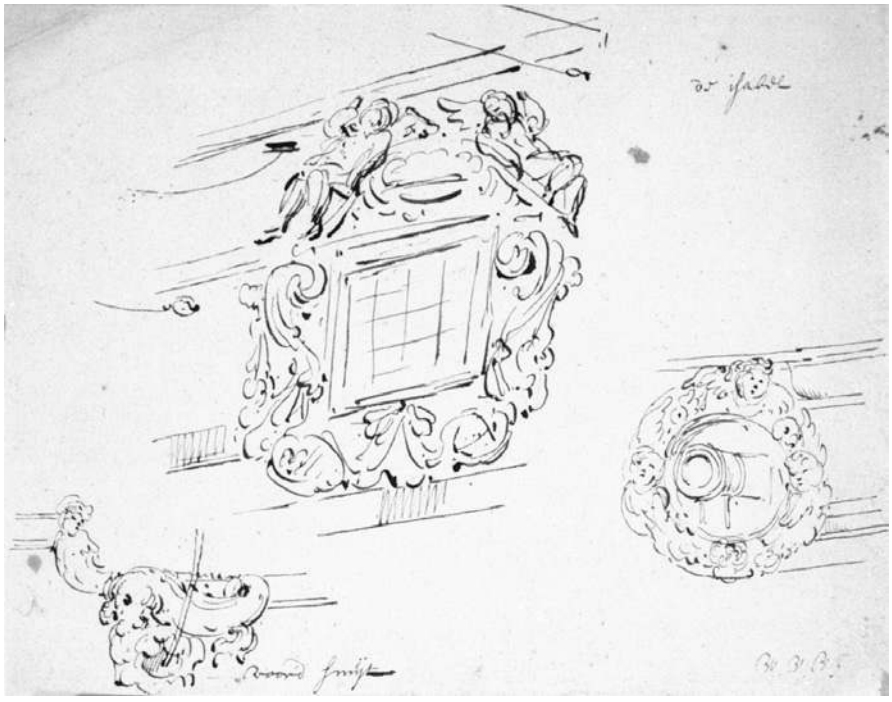


Fig. 16
Willem van de Velde the Younger
Details of decoration of the 'Isabella' yacht 1683
Pencil, pen and brown ink on paper, 214 x 275 mm
Signed: *W.V.VJ*
Inscribed*: de Isabel*
It has been approximately dated by the subject and style.
Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum, inv. no. PAF6626

The drawing by Van de Velde the younger of details of the *Isabella* is thought to be the only positively identified depiction of the yacht.[22] Willem van de Velde the Younger made this drawing of the *Isabella* of the port quarter-badge depicting a single window with elaborately decorated frame and two reclining figures at the top.

The chess tree and the indications of brace and main sheet near the badge show that these are the details of the ketch-rigged *'Isabella'*, and not the earlier yacht of the same name.

On the right is a wreathed gunport. This description comes from M.S. Robinson's catalogue of the museum's drawings by the Van de Veldes, which in turn refers to Carr Laughton's description in *The Mariner's Mirror.*[23]

The other piece of evidence is an etching by Venetian geographer and astronomer Vincenzo Maria Coronelli (1650-1718), one of the most celebrated map and globe makers of his era. He made the crossing from Rotterdam to London in 1696 in the retinue of the Italian ambassador and drew several ships there that were useful to him for his book on shipbuilding. There were only three square-rigged yachts in operation during Coronelli's stay in England: the *Fubbs*, the *William and Mary* and the *Isabella*. Based on the number of gun ports and the fact that the *Isabella* was in dock for repairs in 1696 and the other yachts were elsewhere, it is almost certain that Coronelli drew this yacht. He had his drawing printed for '*Navi o vascelli, halee, galeazze, galeoni e galeotte*', a book on shipbuilding published in Venice in 1697.[24] Curiously, no allowance was made for the fact that the print would be mirrored.

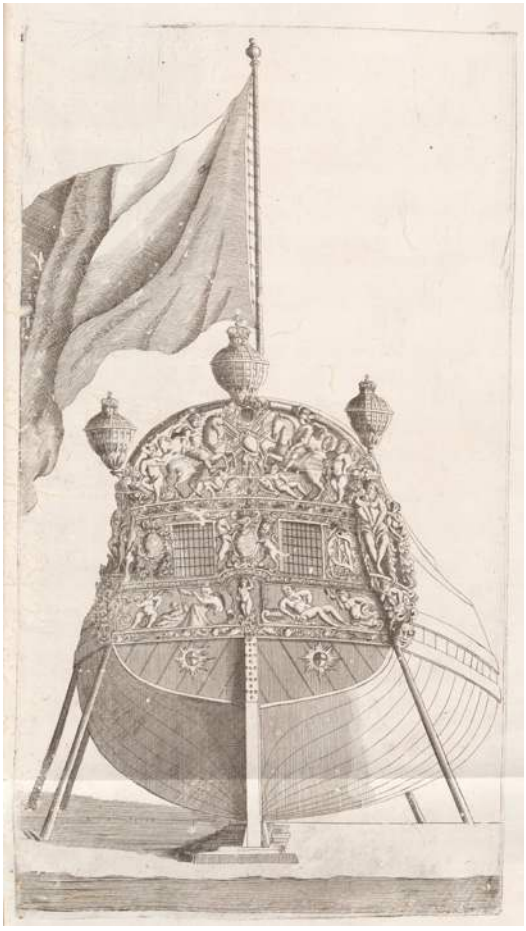


Fig. 17
Vincenzo Coronelli (1650-1718)
'Navi o vascelli, halee, galeazze, galeoni e galeotte...'.
Venice 1697.
Credit: Photograph by K. Moneypenny, taken with permission
from the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

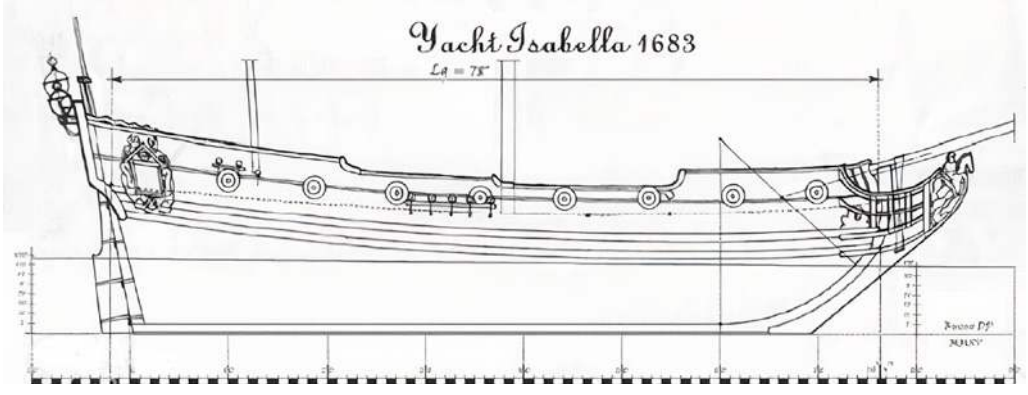


Fig. 18
Profile of the 'Isabella' yacht (1683) (Drawing by D. P. Bucur)[25]

Fig. 19
The *Isabella* (1683), detail of fig. 6

THE FIGUREHEAD

The sites for decoration on this part were the figurehead, the beak, and the beakhead bulkhead with the catheads. As a general rule, equestrian heads were to be found only on big ships named after members of the Royal Family. Other big ships had allegorical figures but for the majority of English ships, however, a lion sufficed. The lion was in fact the most common seventeenth century figurehead and the Dutch used no other figure. Lions were popular with the Danes and Swedes, and also the Spaniards but not, apparently, with the French. English lions were commonly gilded.[26] Only the most important ships had elaborate figureheads but the style went through several iterations over time, for example, after the death or when a monarch was deposed of the throne. In this case, when James II (1633–1701), who was King of England, Ireland, and- as-James VII – Scotland from 1685 to 1688, was replaced after William and Mary ascended the throne in 1689 as joint monarchs. The figurehead of the *Britannia* must have been changed from a rider on horseback to the Nassau Lion in the years 1691/92 when the ship was girdled before the Battle of Barfleur 1692.[27]

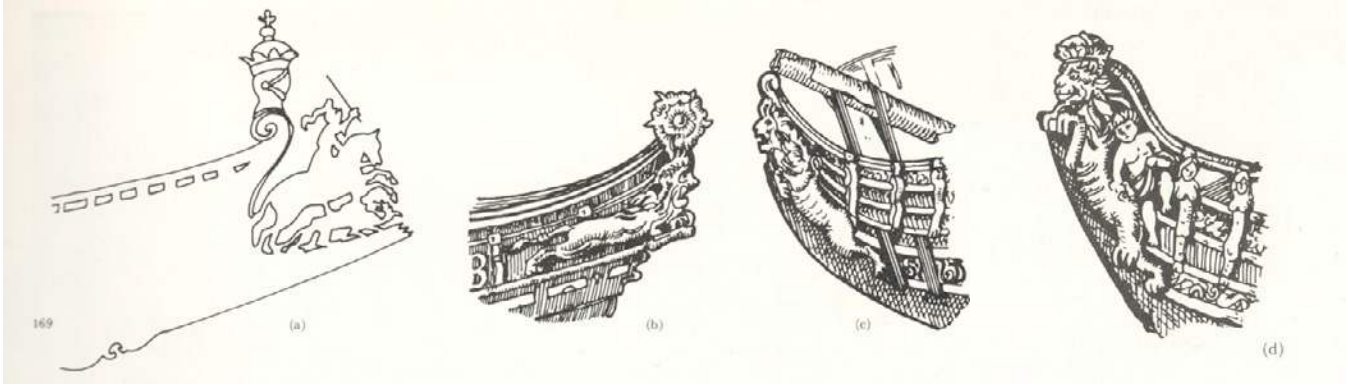


Fig.20
Seventeenth century figureheads
Prince Royal (a), *Red Lion* (b), *Victory* (c), 70-gun ship of about 1670 (d)[28]

THE NAVAL BATTLES OF BARFLEUR AND LA HOUGUE, MAY 1692

Within the space of eight hours on the 10th of July 1690, the Anglo-Dutch alliance fleet under the command of Lord High Admiral Torrington went down ingloriously at Beachy Head on the south coast of England. The French Admiral De Tourville had the upper hand tactically and materially. A total of eight ships of the line were lost, and the Dutch squadron lost all but three of its 22 ships. The battle was part of what later became known as the Nine Years' War (1688-1697), a battle in which Protestant countries such as the Netherlands, England and German free states such as the Palatinate, Saxony and Bavaria and Catholic Spain formed an alliance to curb the expansionism of French King Louis XIV.

The Battle of Beachy Head was the French response to the deposition of England's Catholic King James II. Although he had gained a son and successor in 1688, his French affiliation and absolutist politics found no support among the people or in parliament.

Fig. 21
Portrait of Louis XIV of France, 'Le Roi Soleil'
Hyacinthe Rigaud (1701)
Oil on canvas, 277 x 194 mm
Dated: 1701
Paris, Musée du Louvre, INV 7492; MR 2391

Fig. 22
Portrait of James II of England (1633-1701)
Attributed to Benedetto Gennari II (1633-1715)
Oil on canvas, 241. 7 x 148.9 cm
London, National Army Museum, inv. no. NAM. 1987-01-1-1

Seven highborn parliamentarians, '*the Immortal Seven*', which included Edward Russell and Admiral Torrington, contrived a revolution. In 1688 Russell travelled specially to The Hague to convince Prince and Stadtholder William III of Orange to come to England with a strong army and claim the crown.

William III, who in 1677 had married Mary Stuart II, the eldest daughter of James II and heiress to the three thrones of England, Scotland and Ireland, allowed himself to be persuaded. In the fall of 1688, he ventured across with 250 ships and a large force, and without a drop of blood being shed he 'captured' the English crown. However, the deposed James II still had support in predominantly Catholic Ireland and Scotland. He sought and received military support from Louis XIV to regain his throne.

Fig. 23
After Jan Hendrik Brandon
Portrait of King Willam III of England (1650-1702), Prince of Orange. From 1689 on King of England
Oil on canvas 2480 x 1640 mm
London, National Portrait Gallery, inv. no NPG 4153

Admiral Torrington was overloaded with criticism after the lost battle at Beachy Head for the way he had abandoned the Dutch squadron to its fate and eluded the French fleet to save his own ships. He declared to have too little firepower to oppose the enemy fleet of up to 80 ships, but this was challenged by Russell, among others, who even offered to take over command during the battle.

It was clear that William III could not continue with Torrington and needed to move forward with reorganising the Admiralty and preparing the fleet, and all this before the French would strike again. A week after Torrington was dismissed from his service, Russell, then Admiral of the Blue, was tasked with assembling a war fleet and immediately appointed commander of the entire fleet. He acquitted himself of his duties and at this time had a printed paper issued, which described in detail the ships in the fleet were to behave at sea and how signals and flags were to be communicated.

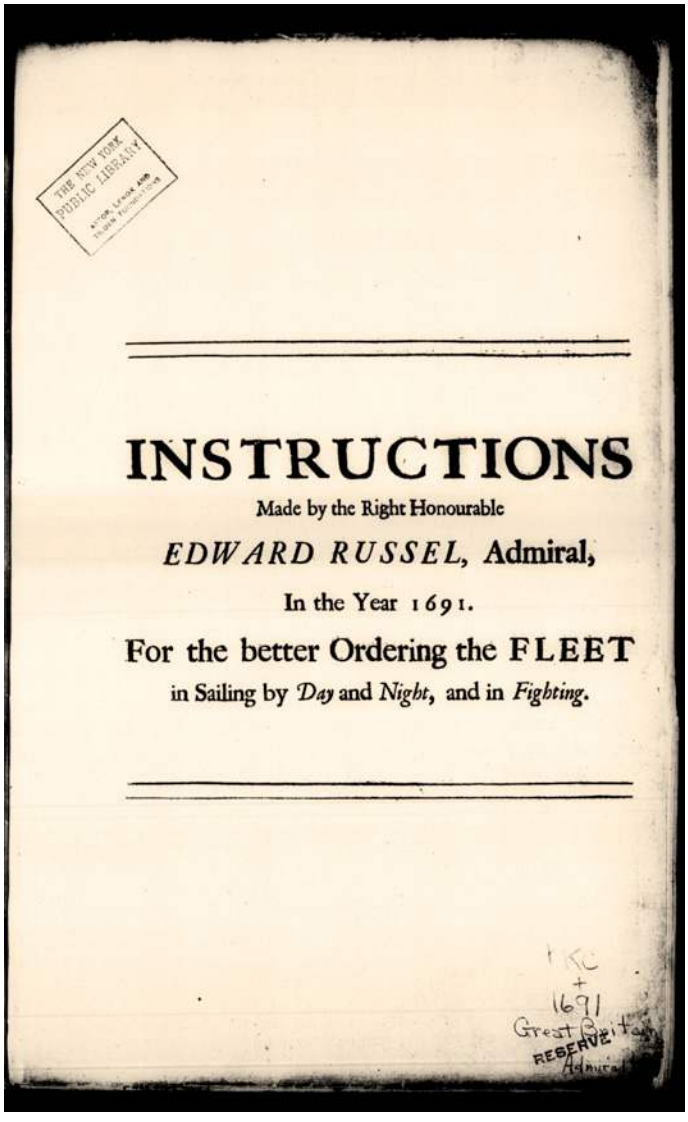


Fig. 24
'Instructions Made by the Right Honourable Edward Russel, Admiral, In the Year 1691. For the better Ordering the Fleet in Sailing by Day and Knight, and in Fighting'. The instruction manual of about 40 pages was also translated and distributed to the Dutch naval officers of the Allied Fleet.

All this was probably not a luxury in an alliance fleet of two seafaring nations, which traditionally used different communication methods and battle tactics. Dutch fleet officers unfamiliar with English jargon also called on an interpreter. Thus, Hubert Cram, 'secretaris van 's Lants Vloote' (secretary of the Dutch national fleet), requested payment from the States General for his time aboard Admiral Almonde's ship 'gedurende de expeditie deses Jaers 1692' (during the expedition of 1692). He had translated 'gelijck inde voorgaende Jaren, de Engelsche Zeijnen, Crijgs-raets resolutien' (the English Council of War resolutions, as in previous years) and the numerous letters of Mr Russell, 'ter occasie vande combinatie met de Engelsche Vloot' (on the occasion of the combination with the English fleet).[29]

THE COMBINED ANGLO- DUTCH FORCE WITH BRITISH ADMIRAL EDWARD RUSSELL AND PHILIPS OF ALMONDE DIRECTING THE DUTCH

By May 1691, Russell had nearly 90 English and Dutch ships at his disposal, including 57 ships of the line supported by some 25 smaller frigates, burners and yachts. The rendezvous with the Dutch squadron took place rather late, as at the time of sailing, the Dutch fleet under Almonde's command appeared not to be ready. Meanwhile, the French, led by Admiral De Tourville, were assembling a war fleet at Brest to carry out a landing in Ireland with 10,000 soldiers in 300 transport ships in order to push on to London from there. Louis XIV, the French King was aware that his fleet was not yet ready and could not yet compete with the alliance fleet and ordered De Tourville to keep the enemy busy in the Channel, but to avoid direct confrontation. Partly for this reason, with the exception of containing the Dunkirk privateers and protecting the merchant ships returning home, Russell could do little in the summer of 1691. On more than one occasion, his ships had also been forced to return to Portsmouth, as they were constantly damaged by stormy weather. Early in 1692, James II was at Cherbourg, preparing to re-invade England with French help. In the spring of 1692, William III returned to the Netherlands.

On March 26, 1692, Phillips van Almonde (1644-1711), was appointed Lieutenant-Admiral and commander of the Dutch fleet, succeeding the late Cornelis Tromp. William III was instrumental in getting the Dutch fleet ready to rejoin the red-and-blue squadron of the English fleet earlier, although both squadrons regularly lost sight of each other due to weather conditions. When Russell re-embarked his flagship the *Britannia* at Ray-Bay[30], in May 1692, he recognised this problem. It was decided to keep all squadrons cruising between the Isle of Wight and Cape La Hougue until the order for union took place. Russell, meanwhile, also sent out small yachts to scout the Normandy coast to ascertain where the French were active and where the main force of the fleet was.

Prior to the naval battles, contemporary sources revealed that Admiral Russell personally went on board of all Men of War, to animate both officers and seaman, assuring them he had no distrust that they wanted courage or loyalty, and for his own part, if he failed his duty, he desired that they would not spare to throw him over-board.[31]

On the 17th of May, the French fleet sailed from Brest and were attacked by a superior Anglo-Dutch force under Admiral Russell with the allied flagship the *Britannia*, off Cape Barfleur.

The French escaped but a few days later the allies burnt three of their ships including their flagship the *Soleil Royal*, 104 guns, in Cherbourg Bay. On the 23rd and 24th of May, James II saw 12 more French ships and most of his transports burnt in the Bay of La Hougue. This ended all real hope of regaining his throne.

The French commander off Barfleur was the Comte de Tourville. With a force half the size of the Anglo-Dutch fleet and hampered by fog, he put up a brave fight.

The French fleet under De Tourville was seeking to realise an invasion of England by a French army to restore James II to the throne, but was intercepted by an Anglo-Dutch fleet under Edward Russell, 1st Earl of Orford on the 19th of May (Old Style; 29th of May according to the New Style) 1692. They were successful on the 29th of May 1692, despite dense fog. Near the Cape of Barfleur, a French fleet of 44 ships of the line was discovered preparing to take an invasion force to Ireland. Russell ordered the fleet to sail in formation. The Dutch squadron commanded by Lieutenant-Admiral Almonde became the replacement for the English white squadron, so to speak, and took the vanguard, Russell's own red squadron was in the middle and the blue squadron in the rear closed the line. The French were taken by surprise. To avoid being hemmed in against the coast, an attack was launched immediately at the sight of the alliance fleet. The middle squadron with Russell on the *Britannia* was heavily attacked

Fig. 25
Anonymus
Portrait du Comte de Tourville (1642-1701)
Oil on canvas. 131 x 98.5 cm
Paris, Collections of Musée National de la Marine, inv. no. 8897

Fig. 26
Simon Verelst (1644-1710 ?)
Portrait of Phillips van Almonde (1644-1711), Dutch fleet commander and Lieutenant-Admiral.
Oil on canvas, 56.5 x 44.5 cm
Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum, Caird Collection, inv. no. BHC3136

by De Tourville's *Soleil Royal* and other ships. But the French flagship was also damaged and forced to withdraw from the battle. Through all the confusion, the blue-and-red squadrons managed to break through the French line. Things might have been decided, were it not for the wind dropping and rising fog caused the battle to cease. The English and Dutch ships of the line were forced to drop anchor, allowing De Tourville and some ships to escape and seek safe haven. When the fog cleared slightly in the evening, the English ships of the blue squadron went in pursuit and shots were still exchanged, but this had no further major consequences. The next morning on the 20th of May it was again foggy, but the Dutch ships again detected some large French ships on the Normandy coast. De Tourville's flagship, along with two ships of the line and several frigates, had made it to safety in the port of Cherbourg.
It was Vice Admiral Delaval of the *Royal Sovereign* who destroyed De Tourville's flagship and two other ships of the line after three consecutive attacks, the last of which was with burners. On one of the first days of June, it became known that another 13 French ships were entrenched in La Hogue Bay. Despite being protected by coastal batteries, six smaller ships carrying supplies and ammunition were set alight that night and another seven the following morning. Russell believed there was little to be gained after this, although this was later heavily blamed on him.

He ordered Vice-Admiral Ashby and Dutch Vice-Admiral Callenberg to head for Le Havre with some 25 more ships to track down any that might have escaped, but stormy weather forced this mission to be aborted. Nevertheless, the Anglo-Dutch fleet's victory was complete. Although the alliance fleet was numerically outnumbered and barely half the size of that of the French, it was later revealed that half the Anglo-Dutch ships had not even participated. Upon returning home, Russell was the celebrated man and he was richly rewarded for his efforts.[32]

Van de Velde's drawing, inscribed in Dutch, was made some years after the event. It shows the English ships at anchor or under easy sail, while the boats and fireships are sent to burn the French ships. The drawing is inscribed 'no 4' which suggests that it is one of a series of drawings of the battle.

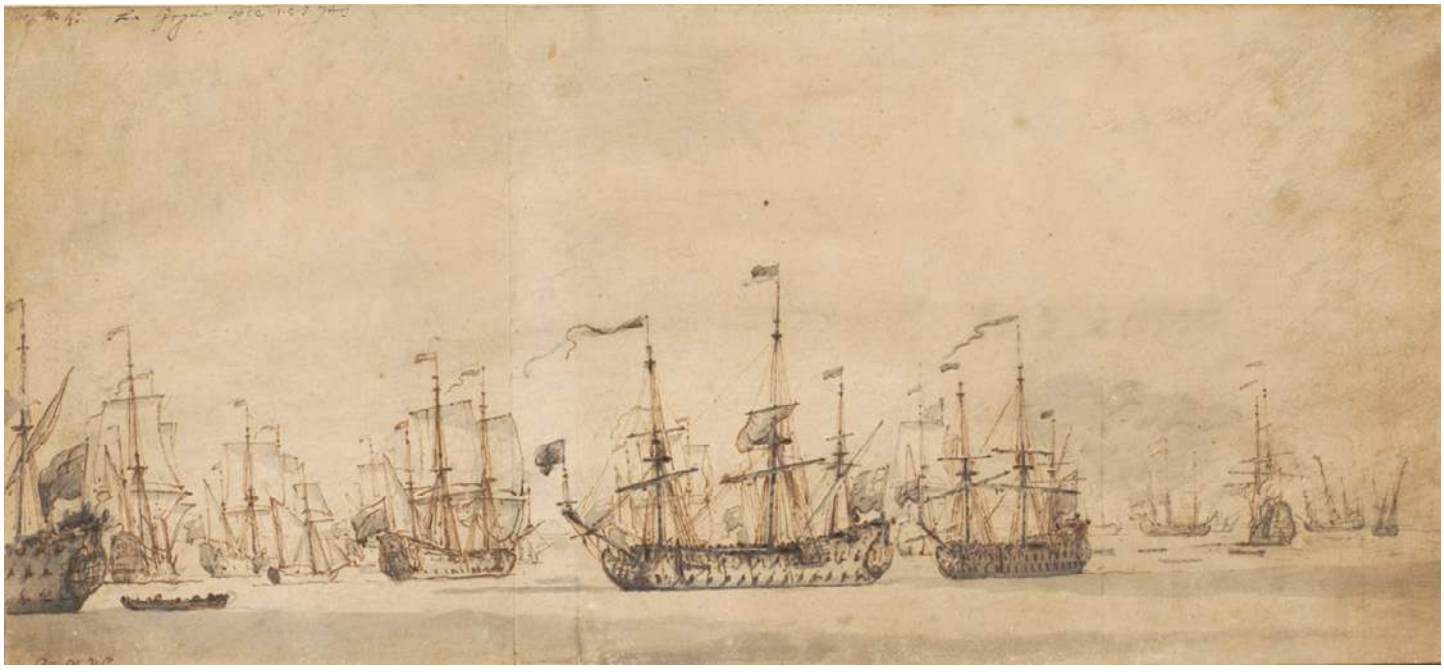


Fig. 27
Willem van de Velde the Younger
The battle of La Hougue, 23 May 1692
Drawing on paper, 231 mm x 510 mm
Dated: ca. 1701
Greenwich, London, National Maritime Museum, inv. no. PAG6273

THE SHIP OF THE LINE

The ship of the line was sailing warship that formed the backbone of the great fleets of the Western world from the mid-17th to the mid-19th century. Ships of the line evolved from galleons, which had three or four masts and a high superstructure at the stern and usually carried heavy guns on two decks.

When a flotilla of these ships was at war, it used a 'line of battle', in which two opposing lines of ships manoeuvred to fire their guns at broadside (a simultaneous discharge of all the guns arrayed on one side of a ship) against each other. Combat using this formation was known as line-of-battle warfare. In these battles, the heaviest ship, with the largest and most powerful cannons, usually won. This resulted in a natural progression toward fleets of big line-of-battle ships, or big ships of the line. Through the 17th century, the ship of the line acquired its definitive shape by settling on three masts and losing the ungainly superstructure aft. Lengths of 200 feet (60 meters) became common for such ships, which displaced 1,200 to 2,000 tonnes and had crews of 600 to 800 men. A ship of the line's armament was arranged along three decks: the bottom-deck battery might consist of 30 cannons firing balls of 32 to 48 pounds; the middle-deck battery had as many guns firing balls of about 24 pounds; and the upper battery carried 30 or more 12-pounders.

Great Britain's Royal Navy, which rated its sailing ships by the number of guns they carried, considered ships of the first through third rates – that is, ships carrying 60 or 70 to 100 or 110 guns – to be ships of the line. The rating system of the British Royal Navy was used to categorise warships between the 17th and 19th centuries. There were six rates of warships based on size and firepower. A ship's rate was basically decided by the number of guns she carried, from the largest 120-gun first rate, down to the sixth rate 20-gun ships. Captains commanded rated ships, which were always ship-rigged – meaning they had three square-rigged masts.

First-rate ships like the *Britannia* were the biggest of the fleet with their gun batteries carried on three decks. They were generally used as flagships and fought in the centre of the line-of-battle. They were armed with a minimum of 100 heavy cannons, carried a crew of about 850, and were over 2000 tonnes (Builder's Old Measurement). Although very powerful, first-rates had a reputation for poor handling and slow sailing. Ships of this size were also extremely expensive to operate. As a result, the first-rates were typically reserved as commanding admirals' flagships. Historically, first-rates were never common, and hardly ever sent to overseas stations. They existed purely to fight in set-piece battles, and were not used for mundane duties such as protecting merchantmen, policing the seas and hunting down privateers.

The second rates mounted between 90 and 98 guns on three gun decks, and like the first-rates fought in the centre of the line-of-battle. Both first- and second-rates carried lighter guns on their forecastles and quarterdecks. Generally, around the 2000-ton mark, they had a crew of about 750. They had a reputation for poor handling and slow sailing. The second-rates were popular as flagships of admirals commanding the Windward and/or Leeward Islands station, which was usually a Rear-Admiral of the Red.

The third-rate ships were the most common battle ships of the line with 64–80 guns on two decks. The most effective and numerous of these was the 74-gun ship, in many ways the ideal compromise of economy, fighting power and sailing performance, which formed the core of the battle fleet. They carried a crew of about 650 men. It was an easier ship to handle than a first- or second-rate ship, but still possessed enough firepower to potentially destroy any single opponent. It was also cheaper to operate.

The fourth-rates were ships of the line with 48 to 60 guns and two decks and their extra accommodation made them suitable flagships for minor overseas stations, while their relatively shallow draught made them useful as headquarter ships for anti-invasion operations in the North Sea and the English Channel. They were also useful as convoy escorts, troopships and even on occasion, as convict transports. In normal service they had a crew of 350 and measured around 1000 tonnes.
The fifth-rate ships were frigates, the Navy's 'glamour ships' with 32 to 44 guns on one gundeck. They were the fast scouts of the battle fleet, when not operating in an independent cruising role, searching out enemy merchant ships, privateers or enemy fleets. Tonnage ranged from 700 to 1450 tonnes, with crews of 215 to 294 men. To be posted aboard a fifth-rate ship was considered an attractive assignment because they were often assigned to interdict enemy shipping – meaning the prospect of prize money for the crew. Fifth-rate frigates were regarded as useful because of their combination of manoeuvrability and firepower and are theoretically capable of outsmarting a larger enemy force and defeating a smaller enemy force.

As such, frigates of this type were often used to patrol and to disrupt enemy shipping lanes, as were battlecruisers in later history.

The sixth-rates were smaller and more lightly armed frigates, with between 22 and 28 guns, a crew of about 150, and measured 450 to 550 tonnes. Some sixth-rates were small frigates. Some larger ship-rigged, flush-decked vessels, known as 'post-ships', were rated, which meant they were large enough to rate a Post-Captain in command, instead of a Lieutenant or Commander.
There were two unrated classes, a Sloop-of-War with 16 to 18 guns on 1 deck and a Gun-Brig or Cutter with 6 to 14 guns on 1 deck.[33]

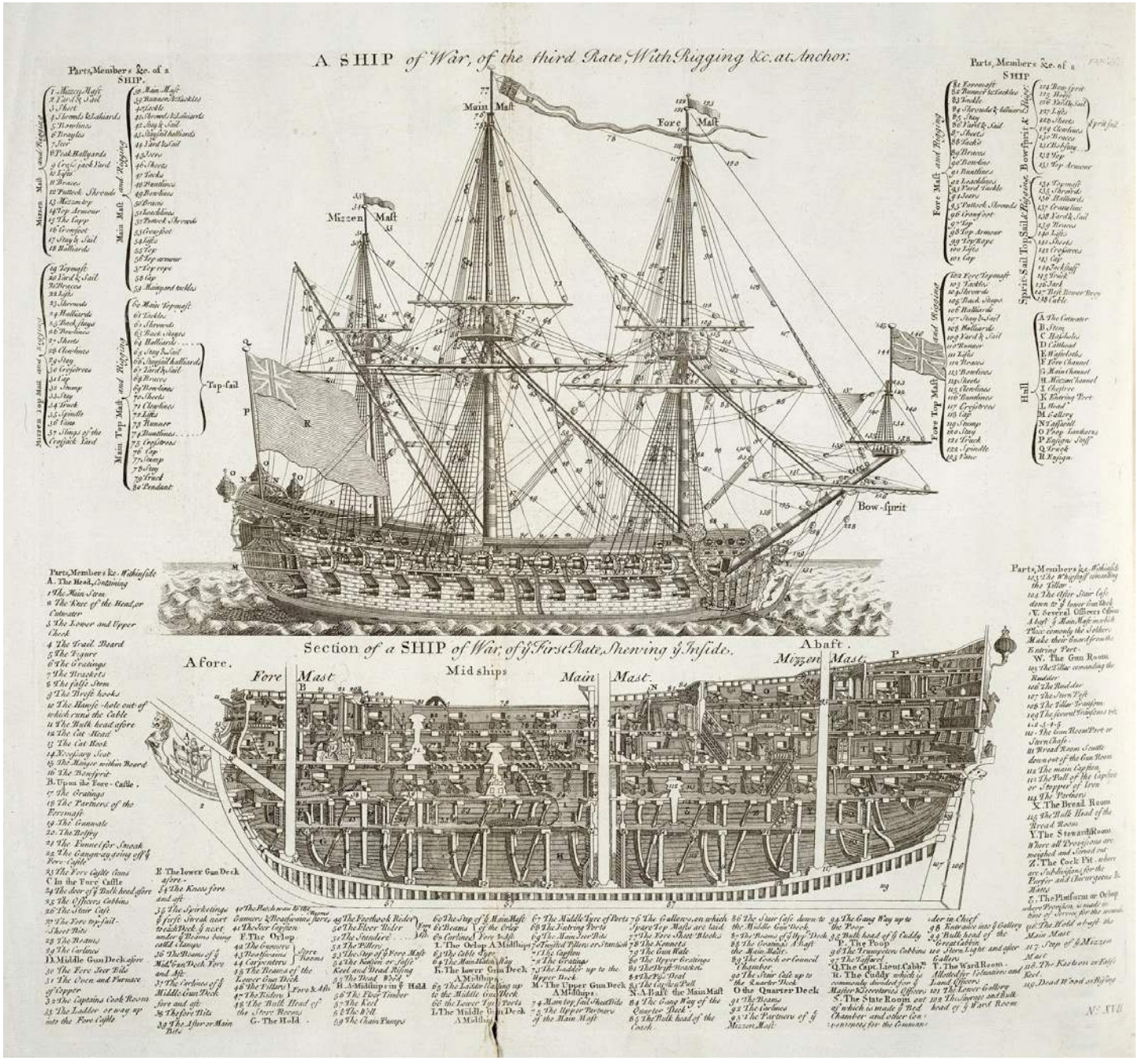


Fig. 28
A ship of war
Diagram of a British warship. "A SHIP of War, of the third Rate" and "Section of a SHIP of War, of first Rate."
From the 1728 "Cyclopædia: or, A Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences" (two volumes in folio).
An encyclopedia published by Ephraim Chambers in London. Artist unknown, 1728.
(Credit: Photo by Pierce Archive LLC/Buyenlarge via Getty Images)

LINE-OF-BATTLE WARFARE

Around 1660, the English introduced line combat, a tactic in which ships sail in a formation in which one ship sails in the wake of another and all ships could fire at the enemy with their full breadth. This tactic proved more efficient than engaging in boarding battles, which the Dutch admiralty had favoured until then. Since line combat had also been adopted by the French fleet, in practice the ship with the greatest firepower gained the advantage.

In the British fleet, from 1688 to 1804, the Admiral commanded the red squadron. This squadron was the first in rank and was usually placed in the centre of the battle line. The flagship of the red squadron was seconded fore and aft by two narrow sections commanded by a 'red' Vice-Admiral and 'red' Rear-Admiral, roughly equivalent to the Dutch rank of 'Schout-bij-nacht'.

The white squadron was usually the forward squadron in the battle line and was commanded by the 'Admiral of the White'. The blue squadron closed the line. If the white or blue squadron had a relatively large number of ships, these too were divided into narrow sections, each with their own Vice-Admiral and Rear-Admiral.[34]

Sailing in line meant that the ships had to have the same sailing characteristics as much as possible. Sailing in line also required a great deal of seamanship, training and discipline. The ships had to keep their place in the line by adding more or less sail, and actions such as changing course or tack required meticulous timing. It should be borne in mind that a line could be several miles long, and ships were often damaged in battle and had lost rigging, sails or masts. There could be strong winds and visibility was sometimes minimal due to artillery smoke developments.

Operating in such fleet conditions placed high requirements on the seamen involved. In this, discipline was the key to all things. The captain was the only one who could oversee all operations and the fleet commander was the only one who could understand the coherence of the entire operation. To keep everything as orderly as possible, signals were agreed in advance. By hoisting certain flags, squadron commanders indicated what was expected of others. The flag officers led the battle and the Admiral (or in the Republic, the Lieutenant Admiral) was the highest in rank.[35]

ADMIRAL EDWARD RUSSELL, 1652-1727, 1ST EARL OF ORFORD

Fig. 29
Thomas Gibson
Admiral Edward Russell, 1652-1727, 1st Earl of Orford
Oil on canvas, 1270 x 1015 mm
Dated: ca. 1715
Greenwich, London National Maritime Museum, Greenwich Hospital Collection, inv. no. BHC2991

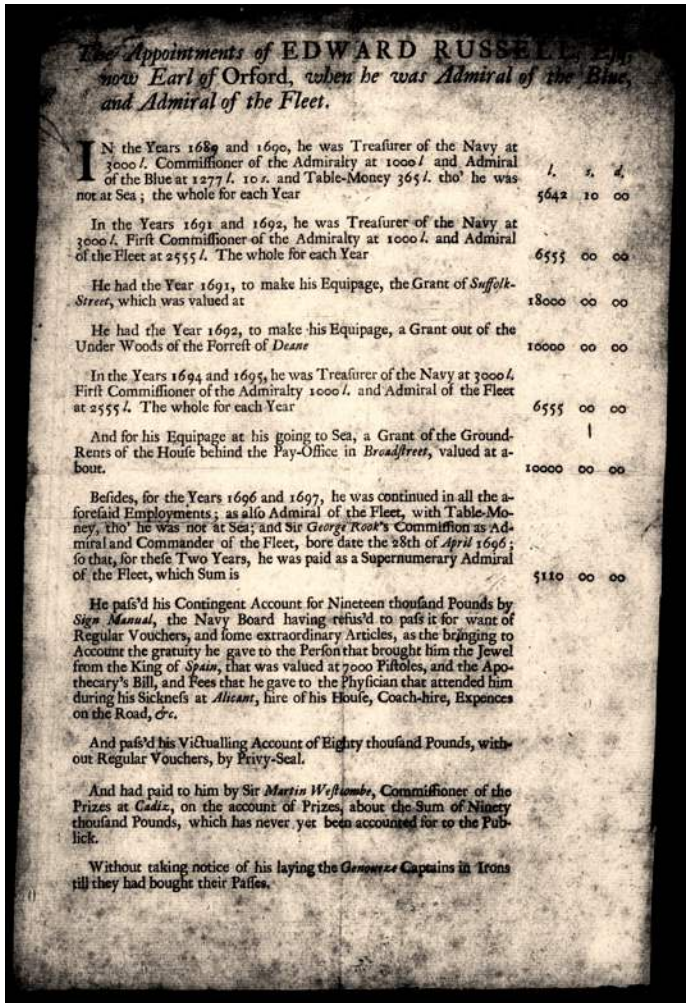
EDWARD RUSSELL'S CAREER

Edward Russell was born in 1653, the son of Edward Russell, the 4th Earl of Bedford. As the fourth son in the family, he had little chance of inheriting his father's title and estates and went to sea at the age of 17. In 1671, he was appointed lieutenant at sea and a year later captain.

In this rank, he was active in the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674) and was involved in several expeditions in the North Sea and Mediterranean until 1682. In 1683, his hitherto successful career as a naval officer came to an end and he fell into disgrace. Although the charges brought against him proved unfounded, his elder brother was accused of plotting an attack on King Charles II and his brother and rightful successor James II, then Duke of York.

In 1688, Russell seized his chance for revenge. Together with five other nobles in parliament and a bishop, he had drafted a document in which they successfully convinced the Dutch Prince and Stadtholder William III to cross the channel to England and depose James II from the English throne.

After William III's installation as king, Russell was royally rewarded with several positions within the Admiralty that had not previously been vested in a single person. In 1689, for instance, he became Treasurer of the Navy, similar to a Dutch equipage master, a position he would retain until 1699, earning 3,000 pounds annually. As commissioner of the Admiralty, he received 1,000 pounds, and as admiral 'on land' another 1,277 pounds as annual pay and 365 pounds in messing allowance.



The Appointments of EDWARD RUSSELL *Esq; now Earl of* Orford, *when he was Admiral of the Blue, and Admiral of the Fleet.*

IN the Years 1689 and 1690, he was Treasurer of the Navy at 3000 *l.* Commissioner of the Admiralty at 1000 *l.* and Admiral of the Blue at 1277 *l.* 10 *s.* and Table-Money 365 *l.* tho' he was not at Sea; the whole for each Year — *l.* 5642 *s.* 10 *d.* 00

In the Years 1691 and 1692, he was Treasurer of the Navy at 3000 *l.* First Commissioner of the Admiralty at 1000 *l.* and Admiral of the Fleet at 2555 *l.* The whole for each Year — 6555 00 00

He had the Year 1691, to make his Equipage, the Grant of *Suffolk-Street*, which was valued at — 18000 00 00

He had the Year 1692, to make his Equipage, a Grant out of the Under Woods of the Forrest of *Deane* — 10000 00 00

In the Years 1694 and 1695, he was Treasurer of the Navy at 3000 *l.* First Commissioner of the Admiralty 1000 *l.* and Admiral of the Fleet at 2555 *l.* The whole for each Year — 6555 00 00

And for his Equipage at his going to Sea, a Grant of the Ground-Rents of the House behind the Pay-Office in *Broadstreet*, valued at about. — 10000 00 00

Besides, for the Years 1696 and 1697, he was continued in all the aforesaid Employments; as also Admiral of the Fleet, with Table-Money, tho' he was not at Sea; and Sir *George Rook*'s Commission as Admiral and Commander of the Fleet, bore date the 28th of *April* 1696; so that, for these Two Years, he was paid as a Supernumerary Admiral of the Fleet, which Sum is — 5110 00 00

He pass'd his Contingent Account for Nineteen thousand Pounds by *Sign Manual*, the Navy Board having refus'd to pass it for want of Regular Vouchers, and some extraordinary Articles, as the bringing to Account the gratuity he gave to the Person that brought him the Jewel from the King of *Spain*, that was valued at 7000 Pistoles, and the Apothecary's Bill, and Fees that he gave to the Physician that attended him during his Sickness at *Alicant*, hire of his House, Coach-hire, Expences on the Road, *&c.*

And pass'd his Victualling Account of Eighty thousand Pounds, without Regular Vouchers, by Privy-Seal.

And had paid to him by Sir *Martin Westcombe*, Commissioner of the Prizes at *Cadiz*, on the account of Prizes, about the Sum of Ninety thousand Pounds, which has never yet been accounted for to the Publick.

Without taking notice of his laying the *Genoweze* Captains in Irons till they had bought their Passes.

Fig. 30
The appointments of Edward Russell Esq. now Earl of Orford, when he was Admiral of the Blue and Admiral of the Fleet.
London (?) 1705. University of Oxford collection.

Russell was one of the few nobles within the British Admiralty who was not appointed by virtue of his pedigree, but actually boasted years of active naval service. After the glorious victory at Barfleur and La Hougue, he was given supreme command over the Mediterranean Fleet in 1694 and 1695, and upon his return in the summer of 1695, he was appointed First Lord of the Admiralty.

He would hold this post for only a year. He probably took a step back. Various records show that his 16-month stay at sea had been hard on him and from 1695 to 1697, he served as MP on behalf of Cambridgeshire and focused more on administrative duties. In 1697, William III granted him the titles of Baron of Shingay, a village in the English county of Cambridgeshire, Viscount of Barfleur and Earl of Orford for his meritorious efforts, this granting him a seat in the House of Lords.

Fig. 31
Patent letter from King William III endowing Russell with the titles Baron of Shingay, Viscount of Barfleur and Earl of Orford. Westminster, 7 May 1697.
Parchment, 65 x 81 cm.
The letter bears a portrait of the king, decorated at the edges with heraldic arms and gold raised.
(Credit: Christie's London)

CHIPPENHAM PARK

With Russell's newly acquired status also came a fitting estate: Chippenham Mansion (or Chippenham Park) in Cambridgeshire. He bought a derelict house within his own family and had it rebuilt in several stages between 1698 and 1712 by the architect Thomas Archer. On the associated estate, he had some village houses moved and created a large walled park with bridges and canals. No pictures are known of the house he had built, but we do know of a description. Celia Fiennes, a noble who made several tours of rural England on horseback, visited Chippenham Park in 1698 during her journey from Cambridge to Lichfield. *'I went to admiral Russells who is now Lord orfford'*. She describes how she arrived in a beautifully landscaped park with in the middle *'a large gate into ye ground, and built over with a high lantern where hangs the Clock and bell: this stands higher than ye house like a tower'.* She could see the tower with its clock and bell from 10 miles away in the village of

Cambridgeshire. The large residence was set in a court with pavilions and stables and had a flat roof that was *'leaded and railed out full of Chimneys'*. The large entrance hall was paved with marble and she saw precious marble tables, walnut wall panelling, cedar furniture in other rooms and the walls of the stairwell were lined with a series of portraits of Charles I and other members of the House of Stuart. In response to seeing the rooms, she also expressed her admiration for the rich furnishings with curtains of damask, large mirrors and the fireplaces that were decorated with beautifully detailed carvings. In the great hall, besides portraits, she also saw '*ye battle at la Hougue a Large sea piece wth an jncription of ye admiralls valour when ye great ship ye Gunn* [?]*was burnt and mightily valued by ye ffrench King'*.[36] Nothing is mentioned about any other maritime art.

Daniel Defoe wrote shortly before his death in 1731 that Chippenham Park was externally still in good condition: '*The building is very fine, the avenues noble, and the gardens perfectly finished'*.[37] However, he lamented that no one lived there. He saw nothing but the lack of a family and heirs to support the glory and legacy of this illustrious ancestor who produced it.

The mansion, probably vacant at the time, was sold by Lord Sandys to George Montgomery in 1749 and came into the hands of a London merchant Drummond Smith in 1787, who sold it to John Tharp. He had it rebuilt between 1792 and 1820 into the present Chippenham Mansion, which is still occupied by his descendants.[38] With the exception of a few parts of a staircase, nothing remains of Russell's old house.[39]

Under the reign of Anna Stuart, better known as Queen Anne, Russell seems to not have been considered for a senior position within the Admiralty. Anna, a daughter of James II, reigned from 1702 to 1714, and had appointed her Danish husband Lord High Admiral. After his death in 1708, a different wind probably blew at the Royal Court and in Parliament, because in 1709 Russell was again called upon given his appointment as First Lord of the Admiralty. The post was to last only a year due to internal reorganization, but in 1714 he was reappointed for another three-year term.

Despite rumours of corruption, he was honoured with a royal visit to Chippenham in his last year of service. King George I, toured Cambridgeshire in October 1717. He had attended the horse races in Newmarket. Members of Cambridge University thanked him for his donation of a library and on Saturday the 23rd of October he used *'the midday meal by den Graef van Orford at Chippenham'*.[40]

Russell died at his home in Covent Garden in London on 26 November 1727. His marriage to Lady Mary Russell had produced no children. His only heirs were two second cousins from the Tipping family. Catharine Tipping inherited his house in Covent Garden and Letitia Tipping the mansion and estate in Chippenham. She was married in June 1725 to Samuel Sandys (1695-1770), better known as Lord Sandys of Ombersley, who served as a parliamentarian and minister. The English Minister and Historian Nash, who lived next door to the Sandys couple in Worchester, mentions the rich interior of Chippenham Mansion and *'With these treasures they rebuilt and decorated Ombersley Court as a modern country seat'*.[41]

OMBERSLEY COURT

Once owned by Evesham Abbey, the estate and mansion of Ombersley was acquired by the Sandys family in the early 17th century when Sir Samuel Sandys, the eldest son of Edwin Sandys, Bishop of Worcester and later Archbishop of York, leased the estate before receiving a direct grant in 1614.

Eighteenth-century Ombersley Court took its shape in the time of Samuel, 1st Lord Sandys of Ombersley. He had the architect Francis Smith of Warwick build a modern house in the Gregorian style flanked by two pavilions between 1723 and 1730.

The present estate of Ombersley Court dates from 1812-1814 and was built by John Webb in a Regency style, with the two pavilions being demolished. As mentioned earlier, Lord Sandys and Letitia Tipping probably reused a good portion of the furniture and interiors of Chippenham Park to furnish their new mansion, although no clear traces of this can be found in the current property after almost 300 years. Over time, numerous individual pieces sold off from Letitia's famous ancestor. Only Russell's collection of paintings seems to have survived almost completely to the present day.

Fig. 32
V. Green and F. Jukes
Ombersley Court, the Seat of Lord Sandys.
Ca. 1775. Aquatint on paper, 23.8 x 31.6 cm. Ca. 1775.
London, British Museum. Inv. no. 2010,7081.2571
The print was published in volume 2 of the 1781 two-volume 'Collections for the history of Worcester' by the preacher and historian Treadway Russel Nash. The building is still flanked on both sides by pavilions that were removed around 1815.

THE RUSSELL COLLECTION OF THE SANDYS FAMILY

The painting *The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV* was commissioned by Russell directly from Van de Velde the Younger. It is signed and dated *Aº 1698 W.V.Veldᵉ f.'*, Russell, however, acquired more works from Van de Velde's studio to decorate Chippenham Mansion. According to the last known records, there were as many as seven. Four works offered on auction at Christie's in 2023 are known to have remained together in the Sandys collection from their inception. The paintings were displayed together in the same room to depict the important maritime events of Admiral Edward Russell's life. Apart from the maritime piece showing the Council of War on the *Britannia*, these include a work depicting a hitherto unidentified two-decker, a panoramic scene depicting the Battle of Barfleur and La Hougue, and a view of an English war fleet at anchor under a rocky Mediterranean coast.

Three other maritime pieces are known to have been part of Russell's collection, but were sold at an earlier time. These included an oil painting by '*Willem vandevelde*', which we know only from literature depicting the Battle of Lowestoft, which took place on 13 June 1665 during the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667). The battle was a major English victory over the Dutch fleet, with Van Wassenaer van Obdam's flagship the *Eendragt* exploding at the hands of the *Royal Charles*. The work was offered on auction by London auction house Christie and Ansell in February 1782, by the heirs of John Law along with a pendant depicting a scene from The Two-Day Sea Battle of 4 and 5 August 1666. The catalogue description of The Battle of Lowestoft is interesting in this case, as '*This picture was painted for Secretary Pepys of the Admiralty and afterwards purchased by Admiral Russell Earl of Orford*'.

It is not clear whether Russell bought the work directly from Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) or only acquired it after his death in 1703.[42] On 8 March 1742, we find the same work at a London auction, where the collection of paintings held by the English former prime minister Sir Robert Walpole, then Earl of Orford, was sold. The work was auctioned off for £ 5 and 9 shillings, becoming the property of Lord Cavendish.[43] The painting has not yet been identified, but was possibly a pen painting by Van de Velde the Elder. The work must have been put up for auction by Samuel Sandys or Letitia Tipping about 15 years after Russell's death. Sandys is recorded as an ardent supporter of Walpole, Prime Minister of England from 1721 to 1742, and it is possible that Walpole saw the work at Sandys' house at Ombersley Court and bought it privately.

The current whereabouts of two large standing sea pieces from Russell's collection, which were still seen in the Sandys collection in 1953, are unknown. They were photographed in 1953 for Country Life magazine, but it is not known how long they remained together or when they were disposed of.[44] The finest work shows the transom side of a large three-decker at anchor in a harbour with other ship traffic ahead. The work measures 218 x 147 cm and is marked *'W.V.Velde f 1697'*.[45] A gun salute is fired and the ship is approached from several sides by several manned sloops. The warship was identified in 1953 as the *Britannia* and it was in the collection of the family at least until 1967, according to an inventory prepared by the Sandys family. Around 1985 it was on loan for some time to Clifton Castle in North Yorkshire, but afterwards must have been sold.

The other work shows a ship in a stormy sea. To the right in the distance are two other ships in distress, one of which almost disappears behind the waves. The work measures 216 x 132 cm. It is sometimes seen as the pendant of the previous one and also dated around 1697, although the current sizes of both works make this less certain.[46]

Fig. 33
Willem van de Velde the Younger
An English Two-Decker at Sea
Oil on canvas, 243 x 350 cm.
England, private collection

Fig. 34
Willem van de Velde the Younger
The Burning of the 'Soleil Royal' during the Battle of La Hougue in 1692
Oil on canvas, 201.9 x 306.5 cm.
England private collection

AN ENGLISH TWO-DECKER AT SEA

A painting that probably relates directly to Russell's position within the Admiralty and his career at sea is the one portraying a two decker in a busy harbour.[47] The work measures 243 x 350 cm. The ship is seen almost across its starboard side and it has probably just fired a cannon shot, announcing her arrival. Coming from the left is an admiralty yacht bringing over some people who have transferred into two sloops. The yacht's transom can be clearly seen, but the ship has not yet been identified. Further to the right on the canvas, we see the arrival of three three-deckers and several small ships of the line lying at anchor. The transom of the ship starring in the foreground is invisible, but it is quite possible that Russell made his way to Van de Velde the Younger's studio around 1695 and commissioned him to paint out the two decker *Russell* named after him. The *Russell* was an 80-gun ship of the line and ran off Portsmouth Dockyard on 3 June 1692.[48]

The only other painting depicting the *Russell* with certainty is 'The Capture of the Glorioso on 8 September 1747', which is kept in the Greenwich Maritime Museum.[49] The ship is shown here from the front and bears a figurehead with a lion just like the ship in the painting discussed here, *The Council of War of the English fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the naval battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV*. The ship of the line *Russell* served for 15 years before being rebuilt and modernised in 1707. When it was launched again in 1709, it had gained three decks, but remained qualified as a third-class liner.

Fig. 35
Willem van de Velde the Younger
An English Two-Decker at Sea
Oil on canvas, 243 x 350 cm.

THE BURNING OF THE SOLEIL ROYAL DURING THE BATTLE OF LA HOUGUE

Admiral Edward Russell's most important feat was undoubtedly the victory against the French at Barfleur and La Hougue in 1692, in which a good part of the French war fleet was destroyed. Thanks to this victory and his excellent seamanship, Russell was regarded well into the eighteenth century as the most important admiral England had ever known. On the painting, '*The Battle of La Hougue*', which was once part of Russell's collection, and described by Celia Fiennes in 1698, we get a bird's-eye view of La Hougue Bay and how the French ships have been driven to shore and are on fire. The painting measures 201.9 x 306.5 cm and the gilded frame bears Russell's family crest at the top centre: a climbing lion with three scallops above it. A print showing his portrait from 1716 shows that he used *'Che Sara Sara'* as his motto, but this has not been inserted.[50] In the bottom centre of the frame, a cartouche reads: '*The Destruction of Great Part of the French Fleet off La Hougue near Cape Barfleur on the Coast of Normandy after General Defeat of their Main Body by Edward Russell Admiral AD. 1692'.*

Contrary to what one might expect, Russell did not order a scene from Van de Velde on which the burning *Soleil Royal* was the main subject, although several 18th-century auction results indicate that the scene was often associated with his atelier where customers apparently could choose from one or more prototypes and formats. For example, in 1762 the London auctioneer Longford sold *'A large Sea Fight, representing the Battle of La*

Fig. 33
Willem van de Velde the Younger
The Burning of the 'Soleil Royal' during the Battle of La Hougue in 1692
Oil on canvas, 201.9 x 306.5 cm
England, private collection

Hougue' by *'Vandevelde'* for 16 pounds sterling.[51] In 1773, Christies sold '*two sea-pieces, with the Battle of le Hoog, 1692*' by '*Vanderveld*e' of 139.7 x 96.52 cm, and in 1787 the London art dealer Benjamin van der Gucht sold *'The famous Battle of La Hougue, between Admiral Russell and Monsieur Tourville, 1692' by 'W. Vandevelde'* measuring 142.24 x 251.46 cm.[52] Presumably the work did not sell, for in 1778 Van der Gucht had it auctioned off at Christie's in London and it was purchased for £70 and 7 shillings by Nichols.[53]

The high horizon and full-frame composition of Russell's painting is reminiscent of the pen paintings Willem van de Velde the Elder made decades earlier of the naval battles of the Anglo-Dutch wars from 1652 to 1674, after which tapestries were also woven. The wall-filling painting depicting the *Battle of La Hougue* could also easily have served as a model for a tapestry, but Russell probably abandoned this costly exercise. The choice for a work with a clear view of the battlefield may have had to do with the fact that he personally had no part in destroying the French flagship *Le Soleil Royal* and was more interested in a work showing much more clearly the strategy used and positioning of the squadrons that ultimately led to victory. It seems that Russell also had rows of linden trees planted in his park garden representing the battle lines of the alliance fleet and French fleet as they lay off the Normandy coast. He even had the trees trimmed and the branches tied so that they were shaped like the hull of a ship.[54]

Fig. 37
Willem van de Velde the Younger and studio
An English fleet running along a high coast.
Oil on canvas, 146.2 x 180.3 cm

AN ENGLISH FLEET RUNNING ALONG A HIGH COAST

The collection of the Sandys family also included a painting depicting an English war fleet under a high, rocky (probably Mediterranean) coast.[55] It is considered a work from the studio of Willem van de Velde the Younger. It depicts an English War Fleet of more than 25 ships at anchor. Russell was the commander of the Mediterranean Fleet from 1694 and 1695, commanding the *Britannia*, but it is not entirely clear which feat is depicted and where it took place. The starring role is taken by the two-deckers in the foreground.

Robinson considers it possible that one of the ships represents the *Defiance* or *Swifture,* on which Russell was captain in 1677 and 1678, respectively, and that we are looking at a rather unnatural representation of the Dover coast. However, he concludes that it is more likely a convoy fleet under the Spanish or Portuguese coast.[56]

It is known from the records that William III, against the wishes of his British admirals, launched the plan for an Anglo-Dutch fleet to winter in the Mediterranean. In April 1694, Russell, who had been appointed First Lord of the Admiralty, received orders to assemble a fleet with the intention of attacking the French war fleet wherever possible in ports or on the open sea. However, he was not to sail further south than Cape Finisterre, in the extreme northwest of Spain, unless he had reliable information that French ships could be found further south.[57]

It was rumoured that De Tourville had travelled to the southern French town of Toulon to arrange fleet affairs and a French fleet of smaller line ships from Brest was heading for the Straits.

In May of 1694, Russell was about to depart with a fleet of 63 ships, including 20 from the Dutch squadron under Callenburgh to travel to the Mediterranean. This number would be augmented by a dozen Spanish ships. Meanwhile, it became known De Tourville had left Toulon with his naval force and was off the coast of Barcelona with 70 ships. On the news that Russell had passed through the Strait, he retreated back to Toulon and strengthened the city's defences.

In August 1694, Russell wrote that he was getting tired of the cat-and-mouse game and it was time to return as *'the French will not let me see them and I dare not venture to attack them at Toulon…the place is to strong'*.[58]

Important figures in England, however, feared that Barcelona would fall into French hands immediately after Russell's departure with all its consequences and that the French would gain complete hegemony over the Mediterranean.

In response, William III decided on his own authority that Russell should winter in the Spanish city of Cadiz, just west of the Strait. The following spring, new ships with fresh men were sent to the Strait to replace the old ones and keep the numbers the same.

By September 1695, however, Russell had still not been able to wage battle with his archenemy De Tourville and returned to England unsuccessful. The reinforcements remained behind in Cadiz, but were recalled before winter set in. The French threatened to cross the Channel and all ships had to return home as soon as possible. The Mediterranean expedition had brought little advantage militarily.

That more fighting was expected in England is evident from the fact that Russell had been ordered before departure to take Willem van de Velde the Younger with him as a sort of war correspondent. *'Orders to Admll Russell to cause Mr Wm Vande Veld junr to be borne aboard some of ye Ships in the Fleet in order to make Draughts & Figures or Imitations of what shall pass & happen at Sea by Battle or Fight of ye Fleet, and that he have such an Allowance for the same as his Father had in Holland, upon proposals from him now read.* [Russell also had to ensure that] *Mr. Vande Veld & a serv*[an]*t* […] *be born in Victualls on board such ship as he desires*.'[59]

Van de Velde the Younger received a similar allowance as his father had previously received in the Netherlands, and the painter would be accompanied by a servant, as befitted his status and age, for he was now sixty years of age and a celebrated marine artist, and all the food they desired on board would be procured for them. Father Willem van de Velde the Elder had

died in 1693, but apparently Van de Velde the Younger could still produce the papers that granted his father permission to sail with the Dutch war fleet.[60]

It is quite possible that Van de Velde de Jonge did not spend the winter in Cadiz and had already boarded one of the Dutch ships in the fleet for the return voyage. There were ample opportunities for this. In 1694, the Amsterdam directors of the *Levantsche Handel* asked the Admiralty to allow some captains from Russell's fleet who had left Cadiz and sailed to Smyrna [Izmir] and Aleppo to call at Italian Livorno to pick up Dutch cloth '*wel een millioen guldens waerdigh*' (as much as a million gulders worth). If possible, they sought permission to transport the silk goods from Smyrna and Aleppo back to Livorno or the Dutch merchant ships there could convoy home. The proposal was approved and the Admiralty was ordered to do all that was necessary '*met allen meest doenlijcken spoet*' (with all possible haste).[61] An earlier home voyage for Van de Velde on one of the Dutch ships is supported by a painting of a North African port he painted in England in 1694, possibly based on a drawing he had made en route.[62]

The expedition to the Mediterranean will also have been a military failure in Russell's eyes, but it seems he still wanted a memento of his longest stay in the fleet ever. He had been at sea for nearly 16 months. The idea of an English fleet at anchor under a Mediterranean rocky coast possibly appealed to him. The exact location is not yet known, but suggests the coast of Alicante. In dealing with the Spanish mainland, Van de Velde will undoubtedly have taken the opportunity to put this spectacular rocky coast to paper.[63]

The most important pieces from Russell's collection of paintings were held as a group by the Sandys family at Ombersley Court over the centuries, but after the death of Richard Michael Oliver Hill, the seventh Earl of Sandys (1931-2013), and his wife Particia Hall in 2015, Ombersley Court was put up for sale. The most historically interesting interior and art pieces were donated to English museums, but the bulk of the family collection was put up for auction as a number of partial collections, through various auction houses. All proceeds from the sales went to the Sandys Trust, a charity committed to supporting the varied charitable interests of the late Lord and Lady Sandys.

CONCLUSION

The painting by Willem van de Velde the Younger of *The Council of War of the English Fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the Naval Battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV,* was commissioned directly from the painter by Admiral Edward Russell.

After acquisition at auction by us, we began an in-depth investigation of the painting. The provenance was clear as the painting, which had been commissioned directly from the artist along with six other paintings.

What was not clear, however, was what exactly was being portrayed. Robinson, who is considered an authority on father and son Van de Velde, suspected the *Duke* was depicted on the right-hand side and the Royal Yacht the *Fubbs* on the left-hand side but we suspect this is erroneous. One of the first indications that a mistake has been made in this assessment the painting, was the fact that no dimensions could be indicated and that the assessment description states that it 'seems to be signed and dated'.

Signature and date are clearly visible in the lower right-hand side of the painting, '*Aº 1698 W.W. Veldt f.*'. Furthermore, the painting was exhibited together in the same room with three other paintings, which all displayed the admiral's maritime exploits, so it contextually had to be a portrayal of something in the same vein. As our research continued, we also began to doubt the identity of the ships portrayed. So, we continued our research, enlisting the help of several experts and authorities and we concluded that the vessels portrayed are the first-rate warship of the line, the *Britannia,* and the *Isabella*, a Royal Yacht.

Contemporary research has also shown that the representation is completely different. The painting represents *The Council of War of the English Fleet under command of Admiral Edward Russell on the 'Britannia' before the Naval Battles of Barfleur and La Hougue, May 1692, against the French invasion fleet of Louis XIV.*

Edward Russell was a member of a powerful and influential family of the landed aristocracy, with connections in the royal court, a taste for material luxury if not for learning or literature, and, above all, high ambitions. Within the Navy his excellent seamanship and his victory at La Hougue secured him immense prestige, and besides being a sound seaman and commander he was also a skilful politician.

Early in 1692, James II was at Cherbourg, preparing to re-invade England with French help. On the 17th of May the French fleet under command of Admiral Anne Hilarion de Tourville sailed from Brest and were attacked by a superior Anglo-Dutch force under Admiral Russell with the allied flagship the *Britannia*, off Cape Barfleur. With a force half the size of the Anglo-Dutch fleet and hampered by fog, both parties put up a brave fight.

A combined fleet of 100 Dutch and English ships under Edward Russell brought a French fleet of forty-four ships to action off Cape Barfleur. The French, under de Tourville, resisted stubbornly, but were eventually scattered. One group escaped, but three other groups were driven onto the French coast and destroyed.

De Tourville's flagship, the *Soleil Royal*, carrying 104 guns, was burnt with two other ships by the Anglo-Dutch force at Cherbourg. On the 23rd and the 24th of May, James II saw 12 more French ships and most of his transports burnt in the Bay of La Hougue. This ended all real hope of regaining his throne.

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MASTER PAINTINGS
Bijl-Van Urk

A monumental painting by

WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER

(Leiden, 1633 – Westminster, 1707)

The painting is a joint acquisition by:
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