

PILFERING AND THEFT FROM THE DOCKYARDS
AT THE TIME OF THE AMERICAN
WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

by R. J. B. Knight

THE traditional picture of the morality of naval administration has been painted in dark colours by historians, and the reputations of the administrators and the men under them have suffered continually from comparison with the sea officers. Words such as 'venal', 'vast speculation' or 'bare-faced roguery' are used freely when describing the complicated machine that kept the fleet at sea.¹ R. G. Albion summarized the view most succinctly when he wrote that, 'among the officers at sea a generally high code of honour prevailed, but ashore, corruption often permeated the entire service'.² Where these stern moralists saw a higher social class they automatically saw a higher moral code. They ignored the cases of haggling over prize money, the falsification of accounts, the pettiness and the political favouritism in the sea officers corps, and their judgements do justice to neither the fighting service nor the civil administration.

The reputation of the dockyards since Pepy's time for theft and speculation has formed a large part of the picture of corruption. Ehrman, writing of the 1690's, notes a problem which is perhaps universal; he writes of 'the attitude towards a government service which has not vanished in later times, that it is meritorious rather than dishonest to smuggle out a piece of its property . . .'.³ The high point for this reputation of corruption has been the eighteenth century, yet there has been little attempt to understand how the problems of discipline and security were faced by the dockyard authorities at this time, why they had so little success in stamping out theft, and why the workmen reacted in this way to their conditions of employment. It is hoped that this study of a small number of years may throw some of these problems into sharper focus.

These problems are best examined by looking first at the conditions of the system in which these large bodies of men worked. Economic pressures were considerable. Both skilled and unskilled labour tended to become badly caught out in the rapid price rises caused by war. In addition, the wages fixed, apparently immutably, in the 1690's began to lose in real value from about 1760.⁴ Temptation was also put in the men's way by

the custom of 'chips', which were the bundles of waste wood which the more privileged workmen were allowed to take out of the yard. This wood became a perfect cover for secreting more valuable material. Samuel Bentham, who was an apprentice shipwright at this time, thought that the only way to prevent pilfering was to stop the custom completely.⁵ The Navy Board held the same view. At several points in the century it proposed to the Admiralty that the privilege be commuted for cash; if this happened, it reported in 1783, 'discipline in the yards would be to a large measure restored'.⁶ However, this would have meant an increase in the Estimates, and as this went against every eighteenth-century Englishman's instinct, successive Admiralty Boards resisted the idea until the end of the century.

An unsympathetic senior board was not the only problem which faced the Navy Board and the yard officers in their efforts to impose discipline in the yards. Firstly, there was the problem of the shortage of skilled labour. Throughout the American War there was a shortage of shipwrights and smiths, especially at the important western yards. The dockyards were manned by a volatile and cohesive workforce which knew its value in wartime. In 1775 it struck with effect, as it had done several times in the two previous wars. Incautious handling at a critical point could be very serious, a fact which sea officers, used to the simple relationship between authority and subservience in a warship, found difficult to swallow. An idea of the problems which faced the Board is provided by a Standing Order of 1783; to have issued it during the war would have been unwise.

You are to suffer no person to pass out of the dock gates with great coats, large trousers or any other dress that can conceal stores of any kind. No person is to be suffered to work in Great Coats at any time over any account. No trousers are to be used by the labourers employed in the storehouses and if anyone persists in such a custom he will be discharged the yard.⁷

There were other problems. Commissioner Ourry at Plymouth reported that the warders at the gate 'daily detect women (who bring in breakfasts to the men of the yard) in carrying out with chips in their baskets pieces of iron and nails. To prevent such evil practices as much as possible, I have ordered the Porter to suffer no chips to be carried out of the yard in baskets . . .' Ideally, the women should have been prevented from coming into the yard, but Ourry confessed that, 'I don't know how to get at a mode of effecting it'. When Lecras succeeded Ourry, he found the situation still bad, and that the 'number of women and idle persons admitted into the yards from long practice is incredible'. Custom also allowed the whole neighbourhood into the yards at the launching of a new ship, while on pay days, 'persons of all descriptions, who on pretence

of coming to the pay office for wages, have it in their power to parade all over the yard, which is often attended with disturbances'.⁸

There were also considerable physical difficulties in making the yards secure against theft. Each yard had a long water front which was difficult to police, and the use of boats in taking away stores, especially those of any weight, was frequent and difficult to detect. Much was taken from ships in dock, and there were always many types of stores lying around, which could prove a 'temptation for idle people to purloin . . . 'til they can be weighed, separated and charged'. Ships in Ordinary were often some miles away from the centre of the yards, and security was never strict, affording ample opportunity for those intent on mischief.⁹ Perhaps the most insoluble problem was the nature of the work itself, for the gangs of shipwrights and labourers worked in no fixed place (except for those in the mast and boat houses), and this situation afforded every opportunity for picking up small stores. The stores most susceptible to embezzlement were coal, cordage – and various types of timber, but the particular trouble was metal in the form of nails and screws. With the widespread use of copper from 1779 came a rewarding source of remuneration; the price of manufactured metal, with its relatively higher cost before mass production, could be a very useful supplement to the income of a low-paid worker. One price quoted at Portsmouth from a receiver was 1s 3d for five pounds of used copper nails – more than a day's wages for a labourer.¹⁰ Peter Butt, the Clerk of the Survey at Deptford, proposed the use of,

a chest, more if necessary, constructed to run upon wheels for its more easy conveyance from and to the cabins, where it should be deposited every night for safety divided into suitable partitions for the reception of the several species of nails . . . in lieu of the present mode of every man breaking off almost when and for what he pleases.¹¹

It was undoubtedly the lower-paid, unskilled workers who were the chief offenders as petty pilferers. Apprentices were thought to be among the most frequent offenders, owing to lack of attention from their masters. Lecras reported in 1783 that there were, 'frequent depredations' done at the jetty heads and the docks, 'which we apprehend is done by the idle and depraved amongst the youths'. In the one case during the period in which an officer – the Master Smith at Woolwich – was dismissed, it was shown that he had been using his apprentices to take wood from the yard.¹² It does not appear, however, that many apprentices were dismissed; labourers seem to have been the chief offenders. Butt's scheme of the movable chest was aimed at 'the gleanings of the labourers, who, like most others, avail themselves of every opportunity to secret whatever they find scattered about the yard'. Of the 362 yard workers dismissed for all

misdemeanours in 1784, 135 were labourers and fifty-six were rigger's labourers, which represents 8 per cent and 21 per cent respectively of their number at the beginning of the year; yet only thirty out of a total of three thousand shipwrights were discharged for these reasons.¹³ It is difficult to know exactly what to infer from these figures; to say that shipwrights were comparatively blameless would no doubt be wide of the mark. The labourers were at a disadvantage in that they were not allowed chips, and were therefore more easily detected, but it can be reasonably surmised that the shipwrights had less motive for embezzling stores, and the comparative security of their employment meant that they had a great deal more to lose.

While the petty pilferer often acted on impulse, the planned theft brought greater rewards. The Woolwich officers sent an informer's report to the Navy Board in 1784.

He knows there has been stole out of this yard within about five months, copper, iron, nails, canvas, locks, stays, bolts etc. to the amount of fifty pounds . . . the embezzlements are after the stores are taken out to carry on the works, that some things are sunk and taken away at proper opportunities and others conveyed over the wall where it is low and obscure, that the articles are sent to London at midnight from the place of reception by a cart which comes into town often with fowl baskets.¹⁴

Particular offenders in this category were the men from the transports bringing contractors' stores to the yards, for they were given ample opportunity to get to the centre of a yard. On one occasion over fifty pounds worth of the King's cordage was found on a Sunderland coal brig at Portsmouth.¹⁵ Often the stores which the transport was delivering never reached the storehouses intact, and orders went out during the war that the master and crew were to pay for any missing stores, although, as the Portsmouth Store-keeper pointed out somewhat acidly, it was difficult to tell who was responsible for a theft when the transports were unloaded by gangs of labourers.¹⁶

The example of Sam Wyatt showed what could be achieved by persistent villainy. In 1774 he was caught stealing ash rafters from the deal yard at Deptford, where he worked as a shipwright. In spite of strong evidence against him, he was acquitted at Maidstone Assizes, much to the disgust of the Navy Board. He then managed to get into Woolwich yard (having unsuccessfully petitioned to return into Deptford), and he is next heard of in an anonymous complaint sent to the Admiralty in early 1777.¹⁷ By bribing the call clerk, he evidently had acquired an original if somewhat macabre hold over his fellow shipwrights. He was, according to the letter,

making such property in the undertaking business in charging such excess rate that we are not able to stand against it that if we poor do not employ him in the undertaking . . .

he tells us he will get us discharged out of the yard . . . if that any of our wives or family dies and we poor men let Mr Wyatt have it to do he will give us five or six days call at a time for which, Gentlemen, it is very undermining work.

Not only this, but the elm for Wyatt's coffins came out of Woolwich yard. The letter appeared to have some effect, for he was discharged three months later.¹⁸

The offenders who gave the yard authorities the most trouble were, however, the receivers of stolen goods. Some of this activity appears to have been on a small scale. Commissioner Ourry received information (which he ignored) of a Mrs Southwell of Plymouth, who bought old nails at a farthing per pound picked up by girls from dockyard rubbish, paid a man a farthing a pound for straightening them and sold them for 1½d at her shop. The Navy Board was convinced that the receiving trade went hand in hand with the keeping of public houses, and ordered that workmen who kept them should be discharged.¹⁹ However, there were receivers who operated on a very large scale, with a regular organization and outlets to the London market.

Edward Brine of Portsmouth was evidently such a man. As a result of information, Commissioner Samuel Hood searched Brine's house in June 1779, found nothing, and confidently reported to the Board that the information was 'malicious'. However, the following March a deposition on oath from one of Brine's servants, Robert Martin, 'of an astonishing and alarming nature', proved to be correct, and a quantity of copper was found at Brine's house. Thomas Binstead, the Deputy Admiralty Solicitor at Portsmouth, managed to get an indictment at the Winchester Assizes, and was convinced that Brine was, 'by far the most capital receiver in this country having sent melted down copper in the course of a few months to the London markets to the value of near £1,400, besides what he used himself'.²⁰

The receivers were well known to the yard officers. The Master Shipwright at Deptford reported to the Navy Board that, 'the port is situated with receiving houses on every side'. At Portsmouth they were usually at Gosport across the harbour; on one occasion, for instance, Thomas Hobbes, 'a publican and a noted receiver' was convicted.²¹ The difficulty was to catch the receivers with stolen goods in their possession. Although the Commissioner had considerable powers within the yard, and he was empowered to act as a Justice and therefore grant search warrants, this process was slow and cumbersome, and could not be attempted unless the information could be verified in some way. In 1780, the Navy Board sent information to Ourry at Plymouth, which it had received, concerning embezzled copper sheets, but since the information was anonymous it

was decided not to grant a search warrant. For this a deposition on oath was needed, although Ourry observed to the Board, 'I make no doubt that your informations are true'.²²

The yard authorities were, however, unlikely to receive much information on oath, for it is clear that any individual who attempted to bring offenders to justice took on not only the offenders but also the community. Bentham reported an instance of a dockyard officer who had to be guarded on his way to and from the dockyard because he had been zealous in enforcing regulations.²³ Such was the feeling that considerable courage or malicious intent was needed to 'lay an information'. Robert Martin, who informed on Brine, seemed to have had a combination of the two. Life was not easy for him afterwards. He complained to Hood that, 'in consequence of my exposing my late master . . . the trades people and merchants of this and adjacent places treat me with a great degree of coolness and indifference; I may with propriety term it contempt'. His application for employment in the yard could not be granted by Hood for fear of disturbance, because 'there are so many people who have been checked in their notorious embezzlements'. The Navy Board, on Hood's recommendation, paid Martin 2s 6d a day subsistence money, after being told that he had been obliged to pawn his clothes. Martin's troubles had, however, not ended here, for more than a year later the Admiralty received a letter from him; he was now in Winchester Gaol as a result of a counter charge of Brine's, who accused him of having planted the goods in Brine's house. 'I presume he thought', wrote Martin, 'there was but one chance - which was to blacken me as much as possible in order to weaken my evidence. In this (by deceptions, money flying, etc.) he has obtained his desire, to my misfortune'. Martin, like Binstead, saw this as a test case, for if Brine was not convicted, embezzlement would, Martin pointed out, 'undoubtedly go on with more spirit than ever, not apprehending any danger of being informed against as the consequence of informing has proved so fatal to me'. Three weeks after this letter Brine was found not guilty at Winchester Assizes, and he won his civil case against Martin, with damages of five hundred pounds.²⁴ In a similar case, an informer at Sheerness, John Cleversal, was dismissed in 1785 for what was considered a 'totally malicious' representation.²⁵ In both cases, the evidence presented by the informers was too strong and detailed to be completely disbelieved. There was, however, little the authorities could do; it was the informers' word against many.

Even when information was used, the receivers were far too quick for the authorities. Commissioner Proby at Chatham reported that a rope had been found at a receiver's warehouse which had been made the same

morning. According to Robert Martin, on one occasion Brine received word that a search was to be made, and all the stolen goods were carefully hidden; while arrangements were made with the shipwrights to 'keep their metal . . . for a few days 'til matters (were) a little quiet'.²⁶ The next difficulty was to prove that the stores were in fact the King's, and also that they had not been legally bought at a dockyard sale of old stores. Cordage made for the King was to have a white thread, 'laid the contrary way', and rope of less than three inches was to have twine instead of this thread. Canvas had a 'blue streak', and all metal goods had the broad arrow stamped on to them. However, these marks could easily be removed; according to Martin, Brine employed a copper-smith in pickling and cleaning copper sheets, two blacksmiths in beating out the broad arrow mark from bolts and the yard founder for filing the mark from brass pieces.²⁷

There were also legal difficulties in securing convictions against petty pilferers, for more than circumstantial evidence was required. Cases often had to be abandoned before proceedings were started because of insufficient evidence; only when an offender was found with the stores upon his person was a prosecution initiated. In spite of highly incriminating evidence, Wyatt was acquitted on these grounds in 1775.²⁸ In 1778 Binstead presented his expenses for the previous five years; there were five cases when the offender was discharged because there was no mark, eight of detection but insufficient evidence, seven of unsuccessfully searching a receiver's house and seven when information proved false. There was only one successful conviction.²⁹ In some cases it was not thought worth the time and expense of the courts, for often officers had to spend valuable time away from the yards to appear as witnesses. From 1769 any case of embezzlement could be prosecuted at the discretion of the Commissioner, but in October 1783 the Navy Board ordered that, in cases of small embezzlements, the offender should be discharged by the yard and fined three times the value of the article.³⁰ This was no more than recognizing an already-existing situation; in order to save money and time, the Board hoped that the post-war employment situation would act as a deterrent rather than the threat of proceedings at law. Neither was very effective.

Even when a conviction was secured, the law was, by the standards of the day, comparatively lenient. Smaller offences were treated as petty larceny; for instance, a shipwright found stealing iron bolts at Plymouth, and found guilty at the Borough sessions, was ordered to be 'publicly whipt at the dock gates'.³¹ Under statute law the penalty for *making* stores with the King's mark, without being a contractor, was a fine of two

hundred pounds, and imprisonment until the fine was paid. This provided a loophole, which was exploited in 1775 by one Armado Limbery at Maidstone Assizes. He was found with 'new nails, ropes and sails', and was convicted of being in possession of naval stores, 'not being a contractor', but he was found not guilty of unlawfully concealing them. Although the prosecution attempted to prove a felonious offence, he was only found guilty of misdemeanour, fined forty pounds and imprisoned until the fine was paid.³² Juries were unwilling to see these crimes, unlike the stealing of personal property, as a felony.³³

In the face of these difficulties, more effort could have been made to tighten and enforce the regulations. Much depended upon the Commissioner, who had a special responsibility for the ships in Ordinary. Gambier made an effort at Portsmouth, but with the outbreak of hostilities there were more pressing claims upon his time. The yard officers, who had to take turns as officer of the night watch, were over-worked, and were slack in their performance of this duty. Proby found that the Clerk of the Survey at Chatham, who was permanently ill, had been charged with the watch, and he reprimanded the officers because no one had taken his place. Nearly two years later he had to make exactly the same complaint.³⁴

The second problem was the inadequacy of the people employed to watch the yard. It was not difficult to induce a warder or watchman to turn the other way when a theft was to be committed. The job of warder could also be unpleasant; some courage was needed to stop a section of a crowd of several hundred workmen who left the yard on the ringing of the bell; ill-feeling could very easily break out. Gambier had to warn the warders to 'behave with civility and good language' after an incident involving blows.³⁵ There were more subtle methods of rendering warders at the gate ineffective; Lecras discovered that one warder had to go to the Exeter Quarter Sessions on a warrant served by a Justice named Mitchell. The warder had tried to stop three women who wanted to come into the yard, and they had, 'behaved so outrageously that he was obliged to give one of them a shove with a broom by which she fell down'; and, he reported to the Navy Board, 'I understand Mr Mitchell has too frequently countenanced the practice of receiving such information so that the men are afraid to do their duty'.³⁶

Lecras attempted to improve the effectiveness of the watchmen by obtaining Navy Board approval for taking on some more men, including four who were to roam the yard picking up stragglers. There were continuing complaints throughout 1779 and 1780 of insufficient numbers of watchmen, and the Board approved increases at every yard.³⁷ The main difficulty, however, was to improve their quality. Early in the war, Ourry

complained that many were old and incapable, and that it was customary to take them from the common labourers, and that 'a more respectable person' would be desirable. He attempted to get the quartermen to perform the duty, but they refused, and he had to be content with shipwrights. An attempt was made to improve conditions in 1779 by increasing the pay of the warders at the gate from 1s. 6d. to two shillings a day, but it had little effect. When Lecras came to Plymouth he still found labourers at the gate, many of them, 'from whose ages cannot possibly go through the duties required'. The watchmen exasperated Hood; he wished, 'that the sentries may be relieved in a military way, instead of . . . being detached from the main guard . . . and returning to it alone . . . in an irregular straggling manner'.³⁸

The final shortcoming was the fault of the central administration. It was only too easy for a workman who had been dismissed from one yard to make his way to one of the other five and enter again; the Navy Board was aware of this frequently happening. Gambier informed the Board that he had discharged several smiths for insulting the Master Smith; 'several of the smiths', he reported, 'having on late occasions, told the Master that they did not regard being discharged, as they could go and enter at Chatham'. The Clerk of the Cheque of each yard was to inform his counterparts at the other yards of any dismissals, as well as the Navy Board, but it was a system which did not stand the strain of the extra work caused by the war, and these notifications fell away to virtually nothing. This is hardly surprising, because there was a high turnover, particularly of unskilled labour, and accurate accounting was extremely difficult. There were even cases of workmen re-entering the same yard, having waited a few months for their record to be forgotten or lost. Sir Charles Middleton, the Navy Board Comptroller, tackled this problem after the war; each yard was to compile an alphabetical index of each man discharged, with the reason, and returns were to be made to centralize the information.³⁹

It is not easy to gauge the total loss to the navy from theft. Middleton's central record of the 1780's reflects only the surface of these activities, since it records only those misdemeanours which were discovered. Gambier was surprised at the extent of the problem: 'it increases every day to an enormous degree'. Ourry remarked that it was, 'so frequent that we might fill Exeter Gaol'.⁴⁰ Yet these were the reactions of sea officers, used to the military discipline of a ship, and for too long the only source of evidence on the performance of the civil administration of the navy. It was inevitable that with such huge concentrations of stores that temptation would be put in the way of men who were not well paid, and who had the oppor-

tunity and the knowledge to make smuggling material from the yards a comparatively simple task. The officers had only a clumsy legal process with which to combat this situation and had to be constantly beware of antagonizing the workforce as a whole.

Yet it is doubtful whether it was financially as damaging as, say, inaccurate accounting and use of stores, ineffectual maintenance of the ships in ordinary, loss of money to contractors or inaccurate estimates. Millions were written off to the navy during the American war; a few thousand a year in lost stores was of less significance. What was more damaging was the loss of timber or stores that could not be quickly replaced, the loss of the time of the workmen who directed their energies to outwitting the authorities or the engaging of the Commissioner's attention. In short, it was the efficiency of the dockyards which suffered.

References

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- 2 R. G. Albion, *Forests and Seapower* (Cambridge, Mass., 1926), p. 47.
- 3 John Ehrman, *The Navy in the War of William III* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 93; for nineteenth-century evidence see National Maritime Museum, Portsmouth Yard Records, 'Report of Trials of Dockyard Workmen', POR/L/5, 1824-1857; for this century, see Philip Banbury, *Shipbuilders of the Thames and Medway* (Newton Abbot, 1971), p. 73.
- 4 See H. E. Richardson, 'Wages of Shipwrights in H.M. Dockyards', *Mariner's Mirror*, 33, 1947, p. 273.
- 5 Maria Bentham, *Life of . . . Sir Samuel Bentham* (London, 1862), p. 143.
- 6 N.M.M., Navy Board letters to the Admiralty, ADM BP/4, 1 Oct. 1783; see also R. Middleton, 'The Administration of Newcastle and Pitt; the Departments of State and the Conduct of the War, 1754-60 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Exeter, 1968), pp. 140-1.
- 7 Public Record Office, Navy Board Standing Orders to the Yards, ADM 106/2509, no. 172, 4 Aug. 1783.
- 8 P.R.O., Plymouth Yard Records, ADM 174/115, 31 Oct. 1775; 174/116, 16 March 1777, 23 Feb. 1779; 174/118, 14, 23 Jan., 25 May 1783; 174/116, 21 Oct. 1777; N.M.M., Chatham Yard Records, CHA/E/33, 20 Aug. 1777.
- 9 e.g. P.R.O., Deptford Yard Records, ADM 106/3405, 24 Jun. 1783; 106/3320, 12 Sep. 1781; 106/3319, 19 Dec. 1778; N.M.M., POR/D/22, 17 Aug. 1779; POR/F/16, 13 Feb. 1776; POR/C/22, 15 April, 3 Jul. 1775.
- 10 N.M.M., POR/D/23, 21 Oct. 1783.
- 11 P.R.O., ADM 106/3404, 28 Oct. 1778.
- 12 P.R.O., ADM 106/3006, 10 Aug. 1784; ADM 174/118, 27 Feb. 1783; N.M.M., Admiralty orders to Navy Board, ADM A/2737, 18, 27 Mar. 1779.
- 13 P.R.O., Dismissals Book of Artificers, 1784-1803, ADM 106/3006.
- 14 N.M.M., ADM BP/5, 15 Oct. 1784.
- 15 N.M.M., POR/D/23, 27 Sep. 1782.
- 16 N.M.M., POR/D/22, 11 Jun., 21 Jul. 1780.
- 17 P.R.O., ADM 106/3385, 2, 6 Dec. 1774; 106/2592, 18 Jan. 1775.
- 18 N.M.M., ADM A/2713, 14 Mar. 1777 (enclosure); P.R.O., Yard Pay Books, ADM 42/1924, 20 Jun. 1777.

- 19 P.R.O., ADM 174/116, 18 Jun., 26 Jul. 1779; N.M.M., ADM A/2736, 8 Feb. 1779; ADM B/198, 9 Feb. 1779.
- 20 N.M.M., POR/F/17, 8 Jun. 1779, 15 Mar. 1780; POR/D/22, 3 Aug. 1780.
- 21 P.R.O., ADM 106/3320, 14 Dec. 1782; N.M.M., POR/F/16, 22 Jul. 1776.
- 22 P.R.O., ADM 174/117, 18 Jun. 1780; see W. Nelson, *The Office and Authority of a Justice of Peace* (London, 1718), p. 535.
- 23 Maria Bentham, *Samuel Bentham*, p. 196; for similar grievances and tone of two officers sixty years apart see *Mr Williamson's Memoirs of a few Passages transacted by Mr Joseph Allen* (London, 1717) and Yeoman Lott, *An Account of Proposals made for the benefit of His Majesty's Service* (London, 1777).
- 24 N.M.M., POR/G/1, 21 Mar. 1780; POR/F/17, 27, 31 Mar. 1780; ADM A/2762, 19 Apr. 1781 (enclosure); P.R.O., Southampton, Lent Circuit, ASS/22/3, 23/8, 1781.
- 25 N.M.M., Sheerness Yard Records, CHA/X/2, 9, 11 Mar. 1785; CHA/A/4, 10, 19 Mar. 1785.
- 26 N.M.M., ADM BP/4, 5 Mar. 1783; A/2762, 19 Apr. 1781 (enclosure).
- 27 9 & 10 Will c. 41; N.M.M., ADM A/2762, 19 Apr. 1781 (enclosure).
- 28 P.R.O., ADM 106/3385, 6 Dec. 1774.
- 29 N.M.M., POR/D/21, 16 May 1778.
- 30 9 Geo III, c. 30; P.R.O., ADM 106/2509, no. 221, 24 Oct. 1783.
- 31 N.M.M., POR/D/23, 7 Apr. 1783; there were occasions in the century when harsher punishment was meted out; several cases in 1749 ended with transportation sentences (Kent Assizes, ASS/35/189/6). I am grateful to Miss Norma Landau for these references.
- 32 9 & 10 Will c. 41; P.R.O., ADM 106/2592, 10, 15, 17 Mar. 1775; Kent Lent Assizes, ASS 31/11, 35/215, 1775; see also N.M.M., POR/F/15, 15 Oct. 1774; P.R.O., Western Circuit Minute Books, ASS 21/7, 1775.
- 33 This was paradoxical, for the right of search (for dockyard stores), established by 19 Car II c. 12, implied a felony.
- 34 N.M.M., CHA/E/33, 11 Feb. 1777, 4 Nov. 1778.
- 35 N.M.M., POR/C/22, 5 Jul. 1774; for examples of incidents see P.R.O., ADM 106/3319, 29 Mar. 1781; 174/115, 24 Oct. 1775; 174/118, 5 Jan. 1783.
- 36 P.R.O., ADM 174/118, 14 Jan. 1783.
- 37 P.R.O., ADM 106/2508, nos. 818, 896, 904, 911, 1001, 27 Feb. 1779 to 6 Jul. 1780; 106/2509, no. 12, 17 Jan. 1783.
- 38 P.R.O., ADM 174/116, 17 Dec. 1776; 106/2508, no. 849, 27 May 1779; N.M.M., POR/D/21, 25 Feb. 1779.
- 39 N.M.M., POR/F/16, 1 Jun. 1777; N.M.M., Registers of entries of yard workmen, e.g., 26 Feb. 1774 29 Sep. 1774; P.R.O., ADM 106/2509, no. 133, 24 Jun. 1783.
- 40 N.M.M., POR/F/16, 16 Jul. 1776; P.R.O., ADM 174/116, 16 Mar. 1777.