

SOMERSET PLACE TO WHITEHALL:
Reforming the Civilian Departments of the Navy, 1830-34

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CONTENTS

Abstract

Introduction i

1. Naval Administration on the Eve of Reform
 - The Navy's Civilian Support Facilities 1
 - The Board of Admiralty 15
 - The Navy Board 36
 - The Victualling and Sick and Wounded
Departments 56
 - The Navy Pay Office 77
 - The Ordnance Board 83

2. The Background to Reform 104

3. Abolition of the Civilian Boards
 - Introduction 158
 - Post-war Retrenchment 159
 - The Whigs Return to Power 171
 - The Civil Boards Abolished 185

4. The Civilian Departments within the Admiralty
 - Introduction 203
 - The New Administrative Arrangement 206
 - The Principal Officers and their Departments 215
 - The Outstation Superintendents 239

5. The Creation of a Myth
 - Introduction 246
 - Consolidation and Simplification 254
 - A Board of Detail 263
 - The Principal of Individual Responsibility 276
 - Financial Accountability 289
 - The Outstations 303

6. Conclusion 342

Bibliography 350

CHARTS

Fig.1 Naval expenditure, 1830	vii
Fig.2 Major areas of government expenditure, 1830	viii
Fig.3 Workforce employed in the Royal Dockyards, Mar 1814	4
Fig.4 Workforce employed in the Royal Dockyards, Mar 1832	4a/b
Fig.5 The combined costs of the civil departments, 1830	9
Fig.6 Numbers employed in the home victualling yards, Nov 1830	12

ABSTRACT

The subject matter of this thesis is that of a series of reforms undertaken by the newly elected Whig coalition of 1830, culminating in the abolition of two of the navy's civilian administrative bodies: the Navy and Victualling Boards. Since the 17th century, these two boards had been responsible for governing all Royal Navy dock and victualling yards, with the latter having more recently acquired responsibility for the care of sick and wounded seamen. As shown in the thesis, responsibility for these various undertakings was not an inconsiderable task, the two boards each managing large numbers of civilian employees. Indeed, those employed in the various naval dockyards (of which there were seven home yards) exceeded that of any other civilian employer in the world.

The opening chapter is primarily descriptive. Little research has previously been undertaken into the workings of the civilian departments during this period, it being necessary to clearly state how the boards operated and the extent of their powers. In addition, attention is given to the Navy Pay Office and the Ordnance Board, two other bodies that were charged with ensuring that the Fleet could put to sea. A further element of the first chapter is the relationship of these four administrative bodies with that of the Admiralty, the board charged with responsibility for all warships once they were at sea.

The factors directly leading to the abolition of the navy's two civilian boards is considered in the second chapter. Here, reference is made to some of the problems that resulted from having a permanently appointed group of civilian commissioners (those appointed to the Navy and Victualling Boards) having to take instructions from a politically appointed and usually short-lived superior board (the Admiralty). At the heart of the problem was the developed expertise of the naval commissioners (with which those at the Admiralty were rarely able to compete) and the occasional inability of the various boards to understand the particular viewpoint of the other.

Chapters 3 and 4 examine the reforms themselves. While much attention is devoted to the abolition of the two civilian boards and the administrative structure that replaced them, some attention is also given to a series of other reforms that were instituted by the Whigs upon their return to power. These included a reduction in the number of civilian officers employed, classifying the annual estimates under more distinct heads and the laying before the house of actual expenditure following completion of the financial year.

Chapter 5 gives consideration to the outcome of the reforms. It is contended that the entire reform package was an unmitigated disaster and one that caused the British Navy problems which were not to be rectified until the latter part of World War One. Yet, this has to be offset by the stated belief of most 19th and early 20th century commentators that the reforms were generally considered to be a huge success. The reasons leading to this particular assumption, combined with a general appraisal of the reforms, are the central subject matter of this, the penultimate chapter.

The thesis is rounded off with a concluding sixth chapter and a full bibliography.

INTRODUCTION

The British navy, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries played a key role in the furtherance of national ambitions. Without a powerful seagoing force that could be put to sea whenever need demanded, the British empire would not have come into existence and British merchant traders would have been threatened wherever they attempted to impose themselves. Indeed, the very idea of a small nation state becoming a world power would have been simply impossible unless Britain had been in a position to control sea lanes that eventually extended around the entire globe. However, no admiral, captain nor matelot could actually put to sea without his ships having first been built, equipped and subsequently maintained. This was work performed by those employed within a massive administrative structure that embraced both the large-scale dock and victualling yards, together with government owned gun-manufacturing facilities, ordnance wharfs, shore-based hospitals and a complex of offices.

Yet, despite the integral importance of these facilities for the pursuit of national policy, the civilian side of naval administration is a much neglected area of historical research. Whereas, numerous historians have given attention to naval strategy, battlefleets and individual ships, few have considered the immensity of organisation that allowed the British navy to put to sea in the first place. For John Brewer, the financial arrangements necessary for the creation and upkeep of the British fleet forms a central part of the 'fiscal-military state' which he recognises as having emerged during the years that followed the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. In 'The Sinews of Power' he refers to the state, in these years, as becoming 'the largest single actor

in the economy while indicating that the fixed capital assets of the dockyards alone dwarfed all other national industrial enterprises.[1]

In fact, with the exception of Oppenheim's study of the administration of the navy under the Tudors and early Stuarts, most academic forays into this area have been of fairly recent vintage.[2] Of these, Ehrman's study of the navy under William III proved particularly important, treating the civil side of the navy as an important element in the acquisition of seapower.[3] In turn, Ehrman's study was followed by those of Merriman and Baugh, both of whom examined the administrative side of naval affairs during the early 18th century.[4] As for the later years of this same century, this has been much better served than any other period with several historians directing themselves to the American Revolutionary War.[5] At the same time a number of more general studies of the Admiralty have been made by Murray, a former second secretary, and Rodger. However, in both cases, their interest is primarily upon the Admiralty rather than the navy's civilian administrators. Prior to 1832, so it is worth mentioning, control of the dock and victualling yards, together with naval hospitals, were in the hands of separate boards.[6]

In addition, more precise studies of naval administration have also been undertaken. Several, for instance, have concentrated upon the dockyards. These have either looked at one particular dockyard or the workings of all of the yards during one period of time.[7] Less well served, and an equally important facet of keeping a fleet at sea, concerns the supply of provisions, caring for the sick and wounded and the supply of ordnance. As for the first two, apart from inclusion within the general works upon naval administration which have already been

mentioned, there is only one specific study. This is Paula Watson's consideration of the work of the victualling and sick and wounded boards during the reign of Queen Anne.[8] As for the supply of naval ordnance, there is a similar lack of research, that which has been produced restricted in its entirety to the period 1660 to 1714.[9]

Putting all these various works together, it is not only clear that the amount of research has been extremely limited, but that immense gaps exist. In particular, little thought has been given to naval administration in the years that followed the ending of the wars with Napoleon. Admittedly Lambert directed some attention to the work of the Navy Board and the subsequently appointed Surveyor-General, but he gave no attention to a range of other important administrative matters.[10] Furthermore, this neglect of naval administration in the 19th century continues right up to the 1860s and beyond.[11] Only with Marder's five volume history of the navy during the first two decades of the present century is there an attempt at stemming this apparent short coming. As regards the civil side of the navy at a more local level, this neglect is even more apparent. Of the various studies made of the dockyards, most concentrate upon the 18th century, with Waters' study of 19th century Chatham proving the exception.[12] As for the victualling and ordnance yards together with naval hospitals, these are a more or less closed book.

This need to give a greater emphasis to the civil side of naval affairs becomes even more apparent when consideration is given to other linked areas. Those responsible for administering the civil affairs of the navy handled immense sums of government money, employed a larger workforce than any other industrial concern prior to the beginning of the

20th century and were responsible for a huge number of buildings for use as offices, manufacturing units and storage. As a result, it becomes clear that those researching the emergence of financial accountability, labour history and architecture would be well served by a more thorough treatment of the civilian side of naval affairs. Reference to most studies carried out within these linked branches of history show little or no reference to matters falling within the province of the navy's civilian departments. Roseveare, for instance, devotes a few paragraphs to the important financial reforms imposed by Graham upon the Admiralty during the 1830s, but fails to give attention to their limited success both in the long and short term.[13] Similarly, while recognising the office of Treasurer of the Navy, Roseveare fails to make any real sense of this ancient office.[14] In the work of Rule and Dobson upon 18th century labour, only passing reference is made to those employed within the dock and victualling yards. This, indeed, is a serious shortcoming. In fact, the artisans and labourers employed within these two groups of yards were much better organised than any other group of workers during this period and showed every sign of acquiring a degree of class consciousness that was not to be achieved by other groups until the following century.[15] Finally, in her study of Victorian and early 20th century office buildings, Locker makes not a single reference to the many such buildings used by the navy departments. In particular, she fails to recognise the importance of Somerset House as the earliest purpose-built office complex, bestowing this accolade upon a much later London building.[16]

In part, much of this needs to be said in order to demonstrate not only the necessity of further research but of the claims to the originality of the present thesis. It has already been shown that the

navy's civilian administration, despite its importance for the well-being of the nation state, is a much neglected topic. Furthermore, the period 1830 to 1834 lies mid-way in a span of years that are, in themselves, totally untreated. As with matters pertaining to the three linked branches of history already mentioned - labour history, financial accounting and architecture - this neglect is even more noticeable. Those compiling biographies and collected letters of statesmen and politicians who were once connected with the administration of the navy during this period, usually ignore this particular facet in their lives.[17] Even with regard to Graham, whose reputation as an administrator heavily depended upon the perceived success of the reforms he imposed on the Admiralty during his first period in government office, a recent biographer chooses to devote only a page to a discussion of these reforms.[18] Even less well served are Croker, Hardy and Cockburn. With regard to Hardy, his appointment to the Admiralty and subsequent importance with regard to civil matters is barely recognised by his only 20th century biographer.[19] As for J.W. Croker, who was first secretary at the Admiralty for twenty-one years, the compiler of his collected letters chooses to include only two letters that primarily deal with naval administration. Furthermore, there is not even a reference to Croker's uncompromising opposition to the abolition of the civilian boards. [20] Finally Cockburn, had also had a lengthy period of service at the Admiralty, serving from 1818 to 1830, yet his biographer devotes only five pages to this period, uncovers nothing new and only re-iterates that which can be found in the memoirs of Second Secretary John Barrow.[21]

As for the time span of the thesis, no more than four years, this is simply explained. The arrival in office of a new coalition government, headed by a Whig premier, was to prove a watershed for the civil

administration of the navy. In appointing Graham to the office of First Lord, the second Earl Grey made it clear that he wished for the abolition of the navy and victualling boards with the duties previously undertaken by the navy and victualling commissioners to be absorbed by the Lords of the Admiralty. In carrying out this task, Graham not only created an entirely new infrastructure at Somerset House but also oversaw a range of financial reforms that were supposedly designed to make the navy departments more accountable before the House of Commons.

Much attention throughout the thesis will be given to the nature of these reforms. However, several of the chapters will pass beyond the tight four year period of the title. In particular, the second chapter will discuss why the Whigs were so opposed to an administrative system that had been in place since the reign of Charles II. To achieve this, it will be necessary to examine some of the problems that had beset naval administrators in the preceding thirty years. Similarly, in the final chapter, with consideration given to the appropriateness of these changes, an analysis of their long and short term success will be undertaken. To facilitate this latter aim, it will be necessary to extend the terms of reference into the mid-19th century and beyond. In particular, given that these reforms had to work for a navy both at peace and at war, consideration will be given to the operation of Graham's reforms during his second tenure of office at the Admiralty (1853-4) in the Aberdeen coalition. This, as it happens, coincided with the outbreak of the Russian War. First, however, in order to establish the scope of the thesis and explain some of the complexities involved, it has been felt necessary to devote the opening chapter to the organisation of naval administration as it existed immediately prior to Graham's elevation to the post of First Lord. In doing so, this chapter will also encompass a discussion of the perceived need for such changes, together with an

Fig. 1
Naval Expenditure, 1830

In February 1830, estimates presented to Parliament required the following sums (before deduction of £112,896 received for the sale of old stores) to be set aside for the needs of the Navy.

Source: Parliamentary Papers. Estimates of the Navy, for the year 1830, 1665.

For wages and victuals of those serving in the Navy and reckoned on 29000 men.	£1,583,400
For the salaries, expenses of the public departments in London and other naval establishments; wages of artificers and labourers employed in the dock and victualling yards; materials for building, fitting and repair of warships; charge for pilotage and other contingencies; wages and victuals to officers, shipkeepers and men serving on vessels in ordinary.	£1,970,202
For those on half pay, superannuation and pensions.	£1,421,563
For the superannuation and pensions of those formerly employed in the dock, victualling yards and hospitals.	£174,584
For repair and improvement of dockyards, victualling yards and naval hospitals.	£99,000
For hire of store, army and convict transports and related matters.	£250,000
For the purchase of provisions for troops on foreign stations.	£210,000
Total	£5,708,749

Fig. 2 Major areas of government expenditure (including the Navy and its civil departments) as a percentage of all government expenditure for the year 1830.

Source: Mitchell (1962), 396

Debt charges	54.2%
Army and Ordnance	17.3%
Navy	11.0%
Cost of collecting	07.4%
Works and buildings	01.3%
Colonial, consular and foreign	00.7%
Salaries of public departments (other than Army and Navy)	01.0%

The total net government expenditure in that year was 53.7m.

appreciation of why such a powerful resistance to these reforms also emerged.

NOTES

1. Brewer (1989), xvii, 34-7.
2. Oppenheim (1896). In his study of the Restoration navy, Tedder (1916) also includes a section on naval administration that complements his more general study of the navy during this period.
3. Ehrman (1953)
4. Baugh (1965 and 1977); Merriman (1961)
5. Williams (1962); Usher (1942); Wickwire (1962). In addition, Mackesy (1964) includes an appreciation of the navy's civilian departments in his study of the American Revolutionary period.
6. Briggs (1927); Murray (1937-9); Rodger (1979)
7. See, in particular, Knight (1972); MacDougall (1983); Middleton (1991) and Morriss (1983).
8. Watson (1965)
9. Tomlinson (1975 and 1979)
10. Lambert (1991)
11. Waters (1980)
12. Waters, *op cit*; Marder (1961-70)
13. Roseveare (1969), 138
14. *op cit*, 91-2
15. Dobson (1980); Rule (1981)
16. Locker (1984)
17. Similar deficiencies can be found in the political biographies of Grey and the Dundases. See Furber (1931); Fry (1992); Smith (1990) and Trevelyn (1920).
18. Ward (1967), 128. Of the few biographies that do justice to those involved in naval administration attention should be given to Street's portrait of Sir William Penn (both a navy and victualling commissioner between 1662 and 1669) and Lloyd's study of Sir John Barrow (second secretary to the Admiralty between 1804-6 and 1807-45). See Street (1986) and Lloyd (1970). However, the pioneering work in this area must be two early 19th century studies of St Vincent, First Lord between 1801 and 1804. See Brenton (1838) and Tucker (1844).
19. Broadley and Bartelot (1909)
20. Jennings (1885), II, 75; I, 429.
21. Pack (1987), 263-8; Barrow (1845).

CHAPTER ONE

NAVAL ADMINISTRATION ON THE EVE OF REFORM

The subject matter of this opening chapter is an examination of the navy's civil administration as it existed in November 1830 when a Whig-led coalition under Earl Grey assumed office. Consideration of the administrative structure at that time would seem essential. If nothing else, it allows for a full appreciation of the nature of the changes subsequently introduced. In carrying out this examination, attention will initially be given to naval dockyards, victualling yards and hospitals - collectively referred to as the outstations. Here was the end product. These, together with a number of clerical branches working in London offices, were the units actually managed. For this reason, it becomes readily apparent why a consideration of these outstations should appear at such an early stage. Without an appreciation of their size and complexity, much that follows will prove exceptionally difficult to explain.

1.1 The Navy's Civilian Support Facilities

A major factor in the costing of any seagoing marine force is the civilian support services necessary for keeping a variety of warships either at sea or in a near state of constant readiness. Such duties can include the building and repair of all vessels considered to be part of the fleet, together with the construction and maintenance of all items of equipment held on board. In addition, attention needs to be given to those who serve on board. These same ships will have to be provisioned, their crews

paid and shore-based facilities established for the care of those who are either injured or become sick during the course of their duties.

Of course the precise nature and extent of civilian involvement will not be the same for each and every national state that chooses to provide itself with a fleet of seagoing warships. A small and relatively unsophisticated navy might require only a minimal amount of civilian assistance. Many of the small galley fleets that were once owned by the former city states located on the shores of the Mediterranean relied upon crews of these same vessels undertaking much routine maintenance work. In fact, it was quite normal for these galleys to be hauled onto a suitable beach, with the assembled crew devoting themselves to the task of cleaning or repairing the exposed hull. As galleys grew in size and their numbers increased, most of these city states directed part of their marine budget to the employment of specialist civilian labour while going on to construct a complex galley arsenal.[1]

It was from similar beginnings that the civilian work force employed by the Royal Navy also emerged. During the early years of Henry VII's reign a dockyard was established at Portsmouth, with employment given to a small number of civilian workers. Mostly, these were shipwrights, with other less skilled individuals employed only on a temporary basis. To give assistance, particularly when a ship was brought into dry dock, both additional labourers and members of the ship's company would be given the task of digging out the mud gates.[2] However, as the Royal Navy grew in size, so did its civilian work force. Further dockyards were established by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, sited at Deptford, Woolwich and Chatham. As for the provisioning and equipping of ships, the 16th century

also saw a victualling yard with a bakery located on Tower Hill while victualling storehouses were acquired at Portsmouth and Chatham. In addition, ordnance facilities were developed at the Tower and alongside existing dockyards. During the following century, further dock, ordnance and victualling yards were positioned at Harwich, Sheerness and Plymouth with facilities at existing centres expanded. While all this was going ahead, very little attention was given to the care of the sick and wounded. Surgeons on board ship were the primary instrument of care with sick quarters occasionally hired at the major ports. Matters substantially improved in the 18th century, with specialist naval hospitals built at Gosport (Haslar) and Plymouth (Stonehouse). In addition, a hospital at Greenwich (the Royal Hospital) was founded in 1705 for the care of naval seamen who were either aged or infirm. Predictably, the 18th century also saw a continued expansion of facilities already established, with Portsmouth and Plymouth, the designated fleet bases, receiving the largest slice of all capital expenditure. It was the 18th century that also saw the creation of a number of foreign outstations, these acting as repair and replenishment centres for warships operating in more distant waters.

With the continued growth of shore-based naval support facilities, the number of civilian workers also grew. Each of the various outstations employed a not inconsiderable workforce, whose numbers varied according to whether the nation was at war or at peace. In addition, the London offices of the various administrative bodies that oversaw the progress of these outstations also employed numerous clerks. Their duties not only entailed corresponding with the principal officers of the outstations, together with contractors and naval officers, but

Workforce employed in the Royal Dockyards, March 1814
 Source: NMM ADM BP/34A, 2 Apr 1814; Morriss (1983), 108-9

	Deptford	Woolwich	Chatham	Sheerness	Portsmouth	Plymouth	Total
Bed makers	018	010	000	000	000	000	028
Blockmakers	004	003	004	004	007	006	028
Braziers	001	000	002	000	002	000	005
Bricklayers	012	023	028	013	038	057	182
___labourers	010	020	027	009	042	022	130
Carvers	002	000	001	000	000	000	003
Coopers	000	001	001	000	001	000	003
Engine repairers	000	002	000	000	000	000	002
Founders	000	000	000	000	002	000	002
Glaziers	001	001	001	000	000	000	003
Housecarpenters	089	021	110	078	245	245	888
Joiners	047	038	076	039	158	107	465
Labourers	640	486	520	153	556	606	2961
Locksmiths	001	002	002	001	002	004	012
Masons	002	003	005	002	021	029	062
Millwrights shop	000	000	000	000	072	000	072
Messengers	009	010	010	010	016	011	066
Metal mills	000	000	000	000	066	000	066
Oakum Boys	013	013	021	017	044	045	153
Or makers	001	001	001	001	000	001	005
Painters	013	015	015	010	047	029	129
___labourers	000	012	000	005	014	000	031
Paviors	002	001	000	000	000	000	003
Pitch Heaters	001	001	001	001	002	002	008
Plumbers	002	002	004	003	007	005	023
Riggers	075	058	108	033	181	141	596
Sailmakers	047	029	052	026	077	068	299
Sawyers	140	135	167	044	240	208	934
Scavelmen	040	040	090	040	120	170	500
Shipwrights	553	584	793	267	1433	1316	4936
Smiths	099	086	120	049	182	234	770
Teams	019	021	022	009	040	031	142
Tinmen	000	001	000	000	001	001	003
Treenail Mooters	000	002	000	000	000	000	002
Warders	012	013	020	023	036	026	130
Watermen	001	000	000	000	000	000	001
Wheelwrights	002	002	002	002	003	003	014
Woodmills	000	000	000	000	094	000	094
ROPEYARDS							
Foremen		003	004		003	005	015
Overseers		001	000		000	000	001
Spinners		124	210		183	189	706
Cordage makers		019	000		000	000	019
Hemp dressers		006	013		016	014	049
Layers		004	004		005	004	017
Twine spinners		003	006		005	016	030
Messengers		001	001		000	001	003
Porters		002	000		000	000	002
Wheelboys		007	013		010	018	048
Yarn knotters		001	019		030	013	063
Total	1886	2026	2672	888	4257	3869	15598

Fig 4

Workforce employed in the Royal Dockyards, March 1832

Source: NMM ADM BP/52c

	Deptford	Woolwich	Chatham	Sheerness	Portsmouth	Plymouth	Pembroke	Total
Blockmakers		1	2	4	5	5		17
Boys House			17		19	20		56
Braziers	2 (1)	3 (1)	4 (4)	3	9 (1)	9 (1)		30 (8)
Bricklayers		8	10	4	17	22		61
___labourers		4	3	1	8	9		25
Caulkers		41 (6)	42 (4)	25 (2)	76 (11)	63 (6)	2	249 (29)
Coopers	1	1	1	4	1	1		9
Engine repairers		6 (4)	3	2				11
Grinders		1	1	1	1	1		5
Housecarpenters			53 (1)	12	60	8	15	148
Joiners		38 (1)	36	12	79	73	13	251 (1)
Labourers	16	23	156	35	170	268	100	768
Locksmiths		1	2	1	2	3 (1)	9 (1)	
Masons		1	1 (1)		11	16	13	42
Millwrights		3	4	6		1		14
Millwrights shop					50			50
Messengers	3	6	6	8	7	7	4	41
Metal mills					51			51
Oakum Boys		4	5	4	6	8	2	29
Oar makers		1	1	1				3
Painters/Glaziers	1	6 (1)	15	9	24	21	1	77 (2)
___labourers			3					3
Paviors		1						1
Pitch Heaters		1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Riggers	3	17	33	38	54	61		206
___labourers	2	7	9	16	14		55	
Sailmakers		27 (2)	22 (1)	13 (2)	44 (1)	42 (1)	1	149 (17)
Sawyers		71	77	28	96	28	48	348
Scavemen	1	7	40	7	61			116
Shipwrights	3	341 (37)	465 (41)	179 (13)	708 (66)	861 (46)	188 (13)	2745 (216)
Smiths	1	85 (20)	77 (15)	28 (4)	126 (24)	171 (32)	20 (1)	508 (96)
Teams		2	4			8	11	25
Treenail Mooters		2						2
Turners		1	1					2
Warders	4	7	15	22	16	14	6	84
Wheelwrights	1	1	2	1	3	2	1	11
Woodmills					24			24
ROPEYARDS								
Spinners			111 (11)		96 (4)	131 (6)		338 (21)
Twine spinners			13		18			31
Key bearers			1		1	1		3
Total workmen	39	788	1310	477	1961	1989	429	6993

Apprentices to various trades in parenthesis.

A

	Deptford	Woolwich	Chatham	Sheerness	Portsmouth	Plymouth	Pembroke	Total
INFERIOR OFFICERS								
Assist. converters		1	2	1	2	2	1	9
Cabin keepers						4	1	5
Civil engineers				1				1
Conduct lead mills			1					1
Engine repairer		1						1
Foremen of yard		4	8	3	10	9	2	36
Foremen of ropery					1	1		2
Foremen: line spinn						1		1
Foremen: smiths		1	1	2	2	3	1	10
Layers: ropery			4		3	3		10
Leadingmen:Stores 3		1	2	2	1	3		12
Leadingmen:bricklay		1						1
Leadingmen:sailmaker		1						1
Under Storekeeper			2		3			5
Measurers		6	9	6	17	15	3	56
Purveyors 1								1
Super'd bricklayers					1	1		2
Super'd metal mills					1			1
Super'd millwright					1			1
Super'd of painters		1	1		1	1		4
Super'd steam engine		1						1
Super'd woodmill					1			1
Superior shipwrights		2	2		4	1	1	10
Total:inferior off. 4		20	32	15	48	44	9	172

Numbers employed in 1832 were similar to those of 1830 with the exception of Deptford yard.

also the keeping of accounts and the paying of ships' crews. Indeed, by the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the civilian workforce directly employed in servicing the navy stood in excess of 16,000.[3]

By the 1830s post-war retrenchment had considerably reduced the scale of operations. The dockyards were particularly affected, numbers in each yard generally reduced by about 50%. Nevertheless, despite plans to close some of the yards, the navy could still call upon the services of seven operational home yards (Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham, Woolwich, Deptford, Sheerness and Pembroke).[4] In 1830, these yards combined employed a workforce numbering approximately 7000 while their total value was not less than twenty million pounds.[5] Despite the recent and somewhat dramatic reduction in numbers employed, the royal dockyards remained, as they had been throughout the previous two centuries, the largest and most complex industrial enterprises in the world. Within each of these yards, facilities included a range of dry docks (necessary for the docking of ships so that work might be undertaken upon the underside of the hull), numerous storehouses and a great range of workshops.

However, the work of the various royal dockyards was not simply restricted to that of repairing and maintaining warships. The primary role of Pembroke yard and a secondary role for each of the other yards was that of constructing ships. For this reason each dockyard possessed a number of specialised building slips, although it was equally possible to utilize the existing dry docks for this same purpose.

A third task undertaken within the royal dockyards, and helping to

explain the wide range of skills on offer in each yard, was that of the manufacture of most of the products necessary for completion of a warship. While it might seem obvious for shipwrights and sawyers to be engaged in the cutting, shaping and bending of timbers necessary for a ship held either in dry dock or upon a building slip, it was not so essential that a dockyard should also manufacture anchors, flags and hammocks. Most of the yards, for instance, possessed extensive sail lofts (for the cutting, shaping and repairing of sail canvas), smitheries (for the production of numerous iron products including the huge bower anchors that could weigh up to 4.5 tons) and mast houses (for the cutting and shaping of mast timbers).

In addition, a number of the larger dockyards specialised in the production and subsequent supply of other yards with certain mass produced items. This was particular so with rope (the use of which on board ship encompassed everything from rigging and anchor cables through to bucket handles and the infamous cat o' nine tails), supplied by the extensive roperies at Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth. Similarly, flags were supplied by women workers employed in the colour lofts at Chatham and Plymouth, while lead and paint were supplied from a purpose built mill at Chatham. Indeed, the only major item which, as yet, was not produced in one or the other royal dockyards, were the steam engines fitted to the small paddle steamers then being introduced into naval service.[6]

Apart from the royal dockyards there also existed naval yards at Deal and Haulbowline (Cork Harbour), these acting as supply centres. More important were six overseas dockyards, located at Malta, Gibraltar, Halifax, Antigua (English Harbour), Jamaica (Port Royal) and Bermuda

(Ireland Island), these having the task of supplying ships and providing facilities for the cleaning of hulls beneath the waterline. This latter function was of particular importance as seaweed and other accretions could seriously impair a fast sailing performance. None of the overseas yards of this period possessed dry docks but they were equipped with special wharves fitted with capstans and rope tackles for a process known as careening. In order to careen a ship, the rope tackle was fitted from the capstan to the upper masts. The ship was hauled down by the capstan pulling on the rope and forcing the vessel to heel until the hull was sufficiently exposed to be cleaned.

Attached to the home yards of Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham and Sheerness were large stretches of water that were utilized as harbours. During periods of peace, especially those years that followed the cessation of hostilities in 1815, these harbours generated much of the work performed by those four naval dockyards. It was within these adjacent areas of water, known as the ordinary, that large numbers of de-commissioned ships were held for future need. Stripped of most of their equipment, with items such as masts, rigging, sails, armament and gunpowder taken ashore for safe storage, these vessels were under the strict care of the dockyard. On board each vessel would be a small number of individuals known as shipkeepers, employed to carry out any minor repairs and keep the bilges free of water. Additional and more complicated repair work, together with regular inspection of the ship, were performed either in the dockyard or by a gang of civilian artisans and labourers employed 'afloat' and regularly directing their attention to each of the vessels held in ordinary.

The commissioning of a vessel, either from the ordinary or one newly launched, would involve the vessel having first to be dry docked. An initial inspection would be undertaken and, if all was found to be in order, then sheets of copper plate would be fastened over the entire underwater area. This latter task was necessary as uncoppered ships were easy prey to ship worm (a boring mollusc that could eat its way through timber) while the unprotected timber hulls rapidly collected various accretions that would affect sailing performance.[7] Once the vessel had been inspected, any necessary repairs completed and the vessel coppered, she would be returned to the harbour where she would take on board additional ballast, upper masts, sails, rigging, guns, powder, stores and comestibles. The majority of these items were supplied from dockyard stores and might be either newly assembled or previously taken from the vessel when she first entered the ordinary. However, neither weapons nor comestible products were within the province of the dockyards, brought to the vessel from the nearest ordnance wharf or victualling yard.

Turning to the ordnance wharves, the primary role of the civilian workforce was that of maintaining and storing all weapons and associated items used on board warships that had entered dockyard care. Such items not only included the guns themselves but also extended to boarding pikes and cutlasses. In order that this function be performed properly it was necessary that each dockyard should have an ordnance wharf with the facilities to take off and return these guns as and when required. Normally, such a task involved the particular vessel about to enter either a dry dock or the ordinary having first to anchor close to the wharf and her guns, gun carriages and other items of armament lowered into a series of small boats for relaying to the ordnance wharf.

Figure 5. The Combined Costs of the Civil Departments of the Navy, 1830.

[Figures based upon estimates presented to Parliament in 1830 but not necessarily representing actual expenditure.]

Source: *Estimates of the Navy, for the year 1830*. House of Lords Library (62) XVIII. 327.

Salaries paid to officers and principal officers of yards	£137,460
Wages to artificers and labourers employed in dockyards and victualling yards	£458,720
Salaries and contingent expenses of those employed in the London offices	£180,017
For repair and improvement of yards both home and overseas	£ 99,000
Charge for material employed in the building, fitting and repair of warships	£680,000
Wages, allowances and victualling of officers and men belonging to ships in ordinary	£105,834
Medical establishment: salaries and contingencies	£ 64,026
For victualling yards	£ 61,038
For dockyards	£137,460
Superannuities and pensions to those formerly employed in the dockyards and the London offices of the civil boards	£174,584
Greenwich Hospital	£270,000
TOTAL	£2,368,139
(Representing 42.3% of the total naval budget.)	

The main ordnance wharves, not surprisingly, were those at Chatham (sited immediately up river from the dockyard), Plymouth (Morice yard, also immediately up river from the dockyard), Portsmouth (immediately south of the dockyard) and Sheerness (adjoining the northern side of the dockyard). However, this was far from being the complete list of ordnance facilities associated with the navy. Apart from anything else, because of the dangers of an explosion, it had become customary for large stocks of gunpowder to be stored in areas further away from the busy dockyard and ordnance wharf. As a result, separate powder stores were sited at Keyham (for Devonport dockyard), Priddy's Hard, Gosport (for Portsmouth) and, up until 1827, at Upnor (for Sheerness and Chatham). Finally, a much more extensive store of gunpowder was held at Purfleet and distributed to these locally sited stores as and when necessary.[8]

Unlike the royal dockyards, the vast majority of items distributed to warships from the ordnance wharves were not manufactured on site. Instead, the heavy iron barrels were produced either at the government foundry at Woolwich or in one of several private foundries. Similarly, the lead shot, cutlasses, boarding pikes, hand guns and items of gunners' equipment were supplied in this way. The only exception to this was the gun trucks for, although large numbers were brought to the ordnance wharves ready made, it was also the case that a number of these were locally produced within the work shops located within each of the ordnance wharves.

The main work tasks undertaken by the civilian workforce belonging to the ordnance wharves was that of inspecting or repairing equipment that had been removed from vessels entrusted to dockyard care. For this

reason, the four listed ordnance wharves all contained a blacksmith's shop, armourers' workshop, carpenters' shop (for the wooden gun carriages) a carriage painters' shop and various storehouses. In addition, each gun wharf also possessed a range of offices and accommodation for officers employed in the supervision of the workforce.

Directing attention to the supply of comestible products, a number of victualling yards were located close to the home dockyards while others were to be found in the vicinity of fleet assembly points. In size, they differed considerably. Some were little more than a couple of conveniently sited storehouses, while others were vast centres for the processing and manufacturing of foodstuffs. Most important of these yards was the one at Deptford. Immediately adjoining the dockyard, its facilities included a slaughterhouse, bakery, cooperage, flour mill, distillery and buildings for the manufacture of cocoa and biscuits. Conveniently located for the supply of ships fitting and refitting at Deptford (when this particular yard was operational) and Woolwich it also directly supplied ships assembling in the Downs, Thames and Dover area. By comparison, the victualling yard at Sheerness was fairly small. Indeed, this was no more than a collection of storehouses, with most of the held food stocks also sent from Deptford.[9]

Chatham, which once possessed large victualling facilities, had ceased to be a main centre either for the processing or storage of food. Since 1826, facilities here had been closed, with ships refitting in the Medway taking on supplies either direct from Deptford or from stocks held at Sheerness. For the immediate needs of the adjacent ordinary, one or two hulks had been converted to the purpose of storing a three month

Fig 6

Numbers employed in the home victualling yards, Nov 1830. These figures drawn from the agreed establishment of 24 Dec 1827 (with allowances made for subsequent reductions. Source PRO ADM1/3802 and 3793.

JOB DESCRIPTION	DEPTFORD	PLYMOUTH (Weevil)	PORTSMOUTH (Cremill)	SHEERNESS	
PRINCIPAL OFFICERS					
Commissioner	01	01	01		
Master Attendant		01	01		
Storekeeper	01	01	01	01	At Sheerness the storekeeper was the senior office holder
Clerk of the Check	01	01	01		
Supt'd of wharf	01	01	01		
CLERKS					
1st class	03	03	03		
2nd class	05	02	04	01	
3rd class	11	05	03		
INFERIOR OFFICERS					
masters of trades	04	04	02	01	
inspector of works	01		01		
porters		01	01		
foremen of stores		03	02	01	
leadingmen		13	02		
Supt'd of watering			01		The Portsmouth watering place was sited at Haddon
Boatswain			01		
Coxswain			01		
ARTISANS/LABOURERS					
coopers		14	12	01	
apprentice coopers		03	04		
sawyers		02	02		
millers		04			
apprentice millers		01			
engineers		01	01		
bakers		11			
apprentice bakers		05			
stokers		01			
breadweighers		01			
carpenters		01	01		
plumbers		01			
warders	01	01	05	01	
painters			01		
bricklayers		01	01		
blacksmiths		01	05		
brewers		03			
labourers		55	46	04	
hoymen		20	22	04	
boys		03		01	
messengers			03	01	
TOTALS	29	165	129	17	

supply of comestible items.[10]

Portsmouth and Plymouth, because of their distance from Deptford had, by 1830, acquired separate manufacturing and processing facilities. In fact, both the Weevil yard at Gosport (responsible for provisioning ships based at Portsmouth) and the Cremill Yard at Plymouth (which took the name of Royal Clarence Victualling Yard in July 1832) were undergoing extensive improvements by this date. New tidal basins, cornmills, bakeries, flour mills, storehouses and wharves had either been built or were in the process of construction.[11]

Arrangements for the victualling of ships overseas were sometimes left to a local merchant who would supply the necessary comestibles as and when required. This was particularly the case with anchorages attached to the very small yards. However, Gibraltar, which was taking on increased importance during this period, and which had a very limited hinterland for the supply of sufficient quantities, took most of its food supplies from the Cremill yard at Plymouth. To a lesser extent this was also the case with Malta, although facilities here did include a bakery.

Combined, the home and overseas victualling yards employed, in 1830, a workforce of approximately 2000. Included were millers brewers, packers and labourers together with a large number of clerks. Mainly, this latter group of individuals were involved in work connected with ensuring that appointed contractors both fulfilled their obligations and were paid. As for the value of the various victualling yards, this could not have been less than a million pounds. It was certainly the case that the new victualling facilities of the Royal William Yard were to be finally valued

at three hundred thousand pounds while those of the Royal Clarence Yard were reconstructed at a cost of two hundred thousand pounds.

Civilian involvement in keeping the navy at sea did not end with the building, repairing, maintenance and supply of warships. A further shore based facility, primarily involving a civilian workforce, was that of caring for the sick and wounded. Hospitals for those wounded or taken ill while serving on warships existed at Portsmouth (Haslar), Plymouth (Stonehouse), Chatham (Melville) and Malta. Largest of these hospitals was that of Haslar, this having the ability to accommodate over 2000 patients in 84 general medical and surgical wards while that of Stonehouse could accommodate about 1,250 patients. The hospital at Chatham, on the other hand, was much smaller, able to accommodate only 200 patients. It was the most recent of the hospitals, having had been completed in July 1828 at a cost of thirty-five thousand pounds.[12]

Combined, the ordnance wharves, victualling yards, hospitals and dockyards served the fleet. Theoretically, co-operation between these differing bodies would have been best served by the existence of a single administrative authority. However, prior to 1832, there existed several separate controlling bodies, each with a distinct area of authority. These were the Navy Board (responsible for dockyards, design of warships and the payment of ships' crews), the Victualling Board (responsible for victualling yards and hospitals), the Navy Pay Office (which carried out all financial transactions) and the Ordnance Board (responsible for the arming of warships). Between them existed only limited lines of communication, these often passing through a fourth body, the Board of Admiralty while for ordnance demands, there was also the War Department.

1.2 The Board of Admiralty

At the pinnacle of naval administration was the Board of Admiralty, more correctly 'the Commissioners constituted to Execute the Office of Lord high Admiral'. At the beginning of 1830, with the Whigs still firmly in opposition, this Board consisted of five members of whom Robert Dundas, 2nd Viscount Melville, as First Lord, chaired all meetings. The other four members were Sir George Cockburn and the Hon Henry Hotham, both former naval officers, together with Sir George Clerk and Frederick 2nd Viscount Castlereagh, the civilian members of the Board.[13] All were political appointees, holding office so long as the Tory administration that had appointed them continued in office. At other times, therefore, the continuity of holding office would be singularly lacking, but in a situation where different factions of the Tory party had continued to maintain control of the government for approximately twenty-five years, an appearance of near-permanence had descended upon the Board. Thus Melville had held office, with one short break, for eighteen years, while Cockburn, the senior naval lord, had been at the Admiralty since 1818. In addition, Sir George Clerk, the senior civil lord, had held office since 1819. Unlike other members of the Board, his membership did not cease upon the change of government in November, Clerk having chosen to retire three months earlier. The subsequent vacancy was filled by Charles Ross.[14]

Those appointed to the Admiralty were members of a small, closely knit group, who had much in common. Apart from anything else, they were either members of the House of Lords or the unreformed Commons. Regular in attending one or other of these institutions, their nomination to the Admiralty was part of a system by which early 19th century government

rewarded those upon whom it could rely. But the homogeneity of the Board's membership did not cease at this point, those who held office were often related to former office holders or freely mixed in the same groups. Melville (1771-1851) was a classic example, his father, Henry 1st Viscount Melville, apart from twice holding the office of Treasurer of the Navy (1782-3 and 1783-1800) and serving under Pitt as both Secretary of State for Home Affairs (1791-4) and Secretary of State for War (1794-1801) had also himself been First Lord (May 1804 - May 1805).[15] Indeed, the Dundas family, of whom he was a member, had its own special relationship with naval administration at this time, for his second son, the Hon Robert Dundas was a past and future member of the Navy Board (Feb 1825 - May 1829 and Oct 1830 - Jun 1832) while his fourth son, the Hon G.H.L. Dundas was to become a future member of the Board of Admiralty (Nov 1830 - Oct 1834).[16] Furthermore, Sir George Clerk was in the patronage of the Melville family while Charles Ross had family connections.

Of the other naval lords, George Cockburn (1772-1853) was undoubtedly the most famous. As a naval officer he had gained enduring fame as the man who burnt the White House, leading the military attack upon Washington during the year 1812.[17] He was the second son of Sir James Cockburn Bart. and related, through marriage, to Lord Littlejohn. Early naval promotion had come through the patronage of Lord Hood while he had also been favoured by Nelson and St Vincent. At that time he had been M.P. for Weobly in Hertfordshire for ten years.[18] The second naval lord, Hon Sir Henry Hotham (1777-1833), was the youngest son of Beaumont, 2nd Lord Hotham, who had succeeded to the title upon the death of his brother, Rear Admiral Sir William Hotham.[19]

The civilian lords, Sir George Clerk (1787-1867) and Viscount Frederick Castlereagh, were also members of influential families. Sir George Clerk, the sixth baronet, was a legal advocate by profession, holding a Doctorate of Civil Law (Oxford). In May 1827 he had been appointed Clerk of the Ordnance while he had held the Melville controlled seat of Midlothian since 1811.[20] Viscount Castlereagh was the nephew of the 1st Viscount Castlereagh (the former Foreign Secretary who had represented Britain at the Congress of Vienna) and son of Charles William, Lord Stewart (a former ambassador to Venice) and close colleague of his half brother, the 1st Viscount Castlereagh).[21] As the youngest member of the Board, the twenty-five year old Viscount Castlereagh would have had very little real say in naval affairs and was present merely to sign documents and perform certain given assignments. From this, so it might be inferred, his presense on the Board was a further example of political sinecure due to family connection.

The existence of a Board of Admiralty had been, more or less, a permanent feature of naval administration since 1689. However, there had been two brief intervals when the Board had been disbanded and the earlier office of Lord High Admiral re-instituted. This had been the case between 1702 and 1708 when the Earl of Pembroke and Prince George of Denmark had successively held this office. More relevant to the present period was the holding of this same office, between May 1827 and September 1828, by the Duke of Clarence (later King William IV).[22] This was an intriguing political experiment prompted by the refusal of Melville to serve under a new administration formed by Canning. In his recent biography of William IV, Tom Pocock explains,

The following month [February 1827], the Prime Minister, Lord Liverpool died and a new

administration was formed by the former foreign secretary, George Canning. In the political upheaval that this brought, one of those who refused to serve in the Cabinet was Lord Melville and a replacement as First Lord of the Admiralty had to be found. Canning and the King, casting about for a successor, seemed to have passed over the long-standing claim of the Duke of Clarence on the grounds that he was not suitable as a Cabinet minister. Then they had second thoughts. An idea struck them, which Canning knew would appeal to the King's love of mock-historical pageantry and the Duke's longing for recognition, and would also dispose of any attempted return to office by Melville. The archaic and extinct title of Lord High Admiral would be revived.[23]

However, it had been assumed at the time that the Duke would act as a mere figurehead and that he would accept the advice of a specially created council whose members eventually included both Sir George Cockburn, as head of the council, and Sir George Clerk.[24] In the event, the Duke adopted a less than passive role, introducing a number of worthwhile reforms but failing to consider their financial implications. Furthermore, he did not always believe in consultation, clashing with Cockburn over an attempt to set up a gunnery committee. Cockburn, who was considered an expert in the field of gunnery, had simply not been consulted and felt much aggrieved. An angry exchange of letters followed, with Clarence demanding Cockburn's resignation. The matter was eventually brought to the attention of the Duke of Wellington, Prime Minister since the beginning of 1828. Wellington, in turn, referred the matter to George IV, indicating that it should be Clarence who should resign. In supporting his prime minister, the king subsequently wrote to Clarence, pointing out a few essential facts relating to the position of Cockburn.

. . . it is with feelings of deepest regret that I observe the embarrassing situation in which you have placed yourself. You are in error from the beginning to the end. You must not forget, my dear William, that Sir George Cockburn is the King's Privy Councillor, and so made by

the King, to advise the Lord High Admiral.

What becomes of Sir George's oath, his duty towards me, his Sovereign, if he fails to offer such advice as he thinks necessary to the Lord High Admiral? Am I, then, to be called upon to dismiss the most useful, perhaps the most important naval officer in my service for conscientiously acting up to the letter and spirit of his oath and his duty? The thing is impossible . . . [25]

Following Clarence's resignation a new Board of Admiralty was established, Melville returning to the office he had held since 1812 and Cockburn returning to the post of First Naval Lord.[26]

It was at the Admiralty building in Whitehall that Board meetings were held on a near daily basis. The room reserved for these is still in existence, much famed for its Gibbons' carvings and weather vane over the fireplace. The building, itself, was constructed in 1725 with an extension added in the 1780s. Apart from housing the Board room, the Whitehall building also provided accommodation for each Board member together with the necessary space for the 55 clerks employed in carrying out the business of the office.

At the head of this office were John Wilson Croker and John Barrow, respectively first and second secretaries. It was their business to lay before the Board all memorials, letters and papers transmitted to the office while minuting any orders and seeing that they were properly executed. At one time the two posts had been fairly indistinguishable, with both secretaries not only members of parliament but also largely unaffected by political change. Since 1807 however, it had become accepted that only the First Secretary should hold a parliamentary seat and that his tenure should be on a similar basis to that of members

of the Board.[27] For this reason, Croker, who was also a major literary figure and friend of Wellington, wielded infinitely more power than Barrow, using his position to oppose 'everything in the shape of reform and improvement'.[28]

The actual business of the Board of Admiralty was that of taking responsibility for the ships, men and facilities of the Royal Navy. A printed report of December 1787 and addressed to George III described the work of the Admiralty in the following terms:

The Business of the Board of Admiralty is to consider and determine upon all Matters relative to Your Majesty's Navy, and Departments thereunto belonging; to give direction for the Performance of all Services, all Orders necessary for carrying their Directions into Execution; and generally to superintend and direct the whole Naval and Marine Establishment of Great Britain.[29]

As regards the civil departments of the navy, much of this power was exercised through two subordinate bodies: the Navy and Victualling Boards. A detailed examination of the work and organisation of these two Boards will follow; all that is necessary to say here is that the former was primarily responsible for the dockyards and payment of seamen and the latter for all matters associated with the supply of provisions and the health of seamen.

Relationships between the superior Board of Admiralty and the two inferior Boards was, to say the least, somewhat complex. It was not simply a matter of the Admiralty issuing instructions and the Navy and Victualling Boards ensuring that they were effectively carried out. Often these two Boards, who communicated both between themselves and directly with the Admiralty, might choose to question such instructions or

deliberately delay their introduction.

A major problem was the very different perspective from which the superior and inferior boards might view the same problem. Both were concerned with ensuring that an efficient seagoing fleet was always available in times of national emergency. For the Admiralty however, the main concern of the Board was directed towards the fighting ability of such ships once they were at sea. Members of the Navy and Victualling boards, on the other hand, had to direct all their attention to the preparation of such ships, giving considerable thought to the costs and difficulties involved. An Admiralty instruction for the introduction of a slightly lengthened or re-designed warship might, initially, appear to be a relatively easy task. After all, the dockyards were constantly producing a variety of vessels. However, if it turned out that such a vessel exceeded the length of most dry docks, or that its masts were of a different dimension from those standard to its class, then a massive increase in expenditure would result. At whatever dockyard such a vessel was to be maintained, dry docks would have to be lengthened, while a collection of suitable masts would have to be assembled at not just the building yard, but at all fleet bases, both home and abroad.

A factor that exacerbated the sometimes difficult relationship between the superior and inferior boards was the limited contact between members. This applied both socially and professionally. Although the Admiralty building at Whitehall and the Navy and Victualling offices at Somerset House were within easy walking distance of one another, the boards rarely gathered together for a discussion of problems in hand. Any difference of opinion normally appears to have been conducted by means of written communication, with such arguments spanning months or even years.[30]

Socially, there was a similar lack of contact between the boards. Whereas all five members of the Board of Admiralty were drawn from either the upper or lower chambers of Parliament, only one navy commissioner, Sir T. Byam Martin, Comptroller of the Navy Board, was so connected. Indeed, Martin was the only member of either inferior board who could have been usefully deployed at the Admiralty. In common with all three navy lords he had served at sea, having risen to the rank of admiral.[31] Furthermore, Martin was also aware of his own value, frequently pushing the point that he should serve on both the Admiralty and Navy Boards, an arrangement that would have the advantage of overcoming the many problems that emerged from the lack of direct contact between the two boards. As for the other commissioners on the two inferior boards, they had all been appointed as a result of their clerical abilities or experience in the fields of shipbuilding, food processing or medicine.

In fact, when it came to administering the civil affairs of the navy, those appointed to the Board of Admiralty were at a very serious disadvantage. No member of the Board, upon first appointment, had any real knowledge of the mechanics involved in running either a dock or victualling yard, while the ability of the naval lords to manage was founded primarily upon military discipline. Furthermore, the political nature of their appointment, combined with the uncertainty of tenure that frequently accompanied membership of the Board of Admiralty, meant that it was difficult for those who made up the superior board to gain the experience they lacked. For this reason, the permanently appointed navy and victualling commissioners frequently resented being told what to do by a group of 'amateurs' whose term of office was uncertain. To minimise any damage created by an Admiralty decision that they felt to be ill-advised, the inferior boards would often delay carrying out such

instructions, hoping that the personnel of the superior Board would be altered as a result of changing political fortunes.

Of course, it was not every Admiralty request or instruction that was questioned or delayed. In fact, the vast majority of Admiralty orders were carried out to the best ability of the board to which such instructions were directed. Mostly, these involved routine duties relating to the preparation of particular vessels. Under such circumstances, a letter signed by one of the two secretaries at the Admiralty, would simply direct the Navy Board to have a particular vessel prepared for sea service. As for the choice of vessel, this would have been drawn from a list of suitable ships previously submitted to the Admiralty by the Navy Board. Similar instructions, such as the laying down of a new ship to a proven design, requests for information on the quantities of stores held at particular yards and the price of such commodities, were also subject to immediate compliance. The difficulty, however, was with regard to non-routine matters or in areas of naval administration that one or other of the boards considered to be an infringement of a customary authority that had emerged over 170 years.

A particularly difficult area was that which revolved around occasional Admiralty requests to reduce expenditure through a reduction of the numbers employed within the dock and victualling yards or in the offices at Somerset Place. Normally, such requests were made at the end of a period of hostility when the Admiralty, itself, was under government pressure to economise. For its part, the Navy Board rarely proved in the least bit sympathetic or co-operative, especially when it came to the dockyards. A large proportion of those employed in the yards possessed skills that were always in short supply. A decision to shed such artisans would only result, so the inferior Board normally argued, in creating

difficulties upon the outset of any future period of mobilization. To protect its policy of retaining an inflated number of artisans (and the necessary unskilled workers to assist them in any tasks they had to perform) the Navy Board would either agree to make such reductions as the Admiralty requested, but at some vague point in the future (part of the well established tactic of delay) or actually begin making reductions, but at such a minimal level as not to undermine the basic policy of retaining sufficient numbers to meet a future emergency.

If necessary, it was not impossible for the Admiralty simply to deny the inferior Board the necessary funds for the employment of the additional number of workmen. Here, if in few other areas, the Admiralty had some direct control, for it was the task of the superior Board to prepare and then present before Parliament the annual naval estimates. If, therefore, the Admiralty determined that money required by the Navy Board was too much, then a substantial reduction could be made in any chosen areas of expenditure. However, even if such policy was pursued, there was no guarantee that the hoped for outcome would be achieved. While the Navy Board could be asked to specify how it intended to spend such sums once the vote had been sanctioned by Parliament, there was no requirement that there should be an adherence to such statements once the money was available. In other words, the Navy Board had complete authority over the use of this money once Parliament had approved the overall sum. Furthermore, given the Admiralty's lack of expertise on such matters, then it was perfectly possible for a request to be made for inflated sums to meet areas of expenditure approved by the Admiralty, with this excess actually directed elsewhere. In fact, it was only as a result of the close scrutiny of the civil departments during the period leading up to the abolition of the inferior boards that such ploys were fully brought to light.

Because of such difficulties, the Admiralty preferred to adopt alternative strategies for bringing about a reduction of numbers within the royal dockyards. Rarely, however, were these completely successful. In 1829, as one example of how the Admiralty actually did approach this problem, the Navy Board was instructed to reduce those employed in the home yards from 7,716 to 6,000. To encourage compliance, the inferior Board was informed that when the number had been reduced to 7,000 then an earlier Admiralty order that no work was to be carried out on Wednesdays would be rescinded. Furthermore, when the number employed was finally reduced to 6,000, then a further restriction on Saturday working would also be lifted. However, to the superior Board's annoyance, the number reduced in the dockyards, by the end of January 1832, had been little more than 200, with the numbers employed in the dockyards by that date standing at 7,493. As it happens, the target of 6,000 was eventually reached, but only after the Admiralty itself, upon the abolition of the Navy Board, had taken direct control of the dockyards.[32]

Exactly the same problem had, as already intimated, occurred on previous occasions. While in 1832 the Admiralty had finally solved this particular problem through the abolition of inferior boards, in earlier times a different strategy had to be adopted. In the spring of 1749 the numbers employed in the different home yards was approximately 7000, a total, so the Admiralty noted, that was greater than that employed during the War of Spanish Succession (1701-1713). According to Richard Middleton, in a recently published paper:

The ministry of Henry Pelham had adopted an ambitious programme to reduce the national debt, which all parties agreed was too high. Hence every department was being asked to make economies and the navy was no exception. Naturally Lord Sandwich, who had become First Lord of the Admiralty in February 1748, hoped

to do this by cutting out waste. Like naval administrators more recently, he and his colleagues wanted value for money. Reducing the labour force seemed the answer.[33]

An order for reducing numbers employed within the dockyards was duly sent to the Navy Office, but the inferior Board chose to reject the idea, informing the superior Board that the fleet was in need of considerable repair. On this occasion, members of the Board of Admiralty decided that the only way it could achieve its objective would be through the use of the strategy of inspecting each of the dockyards in turn and informing the Navy Board just where the reductions might be made. The decision was taken on 9 June 1749 and minuted accordingly:

The Lords, taking into their consideration the number of men borne in the several Dock and Ropeyards, the great expense attending the same and that the works are not carried on with Expedition that might be expected from them [had determined] forthwith to visit all His Majesty's Dock and Ropeyards to examine into the Ability and Conduct of the officers, the sufficiency of the workmen, the condition of the ships and Magazines, together with what works are carrying on, that such Reformation may be made as shall be found needful.[34]

The inspection of the various dockyards occupied a period of approximately seven weeks and resulted in the Admiralty making a number of specific recommendations for a general reduction of the work force. In particular it was concerned at the number of elderly and infirm workers to be found within the yards, suggesting that many of these could be dismissed. In addition, it also felt that many workers appeared to be generally indolent and that they, too, should be dismissed. Somewhat more radical however, was the proposal that the Navy Board should introduce a method of payment by results. This, if properly instituted, so members of the Board of Admiralty believed, would result in greater work output, so allowing a reduction in numbers without harming the work to be undertaken in each yard.[35]

The Navy Board, however, was having none of it. They simply delayed on the matter of reducing numbers employed while pointing out that payment by results (known as task work) would probably create a good many problems. In particular, they predicted that if task work was introduced, it would result in a general lowering of standards while the work force would be inclined to 'mutiny'. But time was working in the Admiralty's favour. By mid-1750 the numbers employed within the dockyards had dwindled to a figure below that which the Navy Board found acceptable. Many shipwrights, in particular, were being lost through retirement and death or because some of them were choosing to seek employment in the merchant yards:

The commissioners knew that shipwrights were especially hard to recruit in wartime when competition from the merchant yards raised wages beyond the navy's means. Consequently they argued in favour of a fixed establishment of about 6,500 persons, including 2,810 shipwrights, whose loyalty would be assured because their employment would be secure. The Admiralty, however, rejected the idea. They argued that the number of men must be determined by the work in hand and the availability of funds. No replacements were to be hired. By the end of the year the work force had shrunk to 6,007, including 2,698 shipwrights.[36]

The continued persistence of the Admiralty finally broke the Navy Board's resolve. After three years of fighting the issue through the use of both reasoned argument and delay, the Navy Board failed to alter the Admiralty's stance. Constantly the superior Board returned to the matter of numbers employed in the dockyards, highlighting levels of expenditure and extolling the virtues of task work. Against such pressures the Navy Board felt forced to agree. In January 1753 it began a programme of dismissals that would eventually include 442 shipwrights and 448 additional artisans and labourers. By March, the

numbers employed in all of the yards had been reduced to 4,834.[37]

An inspection of the dockyards, always referred to as a visitation in contemporary documents, proved to be a particularly useful strategy for the Board of Admiralty when it entered into periods of conflict with the Navy Board. By actually visiting the dockyards, members of the Admiralty were not only in a position to gain some understanding of how these complex industrial centres operated, but would sometimes place themselves in a position completely to refute given reasons as to why the Navy Board should not comply with a particular instruction. Perhaps the best example of this comes from a visitation conducted in 1771 by the then First Lord, the Earl of Sandwich. At that time he was particularly concerned that the dockyards should make the best use of timber stocks at a time when this essential commodity was becoming increasingly difficult to obtain. At Chatham, Sandwich and other members of the Board of Admiralty, took a view of the timber, plank and thick stuff in the yard, observing all the plank to be laid on the flat and in high piles which is the worst method for seasoning and preserving it; that great part of the rough timber is laid in two and three tiers high; although there are many vacant spaces in the yard.[38]

It was as a result of those visits to the various dockyards in 1771 that the Board of Admiralty insisted upon the erection of specially designed sheds that could be used to accommodate oak timber in the most advantageous manner. With plans drawn up and dated 23 May 1771, these sheds were to be grouped in multiples, with each separate unit to have a depth of 45ft and a length of 25ft. Within each shed there was to be a series of internal racks for the proper stacking of the timber, while louvred gables would allow free circulation of air.[39] The Navy Board, unhappy with the Admiralty's interference in the direct running of the

dockyards, chose not to co-operate. Instead of welcoming the sheds, it was claimed that there was insufficient space in the various dockyards for the addition of these new buildings. Sandwich, for his part, drawing upon the experience of that recent visitation, countered such claims by pointing out the most obvious area in each yard. At Chatham, for instance, a relatively empty space was located in front of the general timber storage area. However, in order to construct the requisite number of sheds, they had to be built in four separate groups.[40]

While the visitation was clearly of some value in providing members of the Board of Admiralty some control over the Navy Board, a far more valuable tool was the use of patronage. The appointment of all naval and victualling commissioners, together with the principal officers in both the dock and victualling yards, was in the hands of the First Lord. Although, once appointed, so it should be pointed out, these same individuals could not be dismissed, continuing to remain in office until removed by death or voluntary retirement. Effectively, this meant that given a sufficient length of time, the First Lord could create reasonably compliant inferior boards. On the other hand, it also meant that a newly appointed First Lord might well be faced with a group of potentially hostile civil commissioners. In fact, the entire history of the Board of Admiralty's relationships with the inferior boards is littered with examples of short periods of hostility, matters only resolved upon the appointment of either a new comptroller or other key members of one or other of the inferior boards.

Lord Anson, who was First Lord on two separate occasions during the mid-18th century, went one stage further during his first tenure of office. Particularly keen to see the introduction of warships of greater length per number of guns carried, he found his ideas were initially

opposed by Jacob Acworth, the navy surveyor. Acworth, who had first been appointed in 1715, was the commissioner appointed to the Navy Board to oversee the design of warships. Unfortunately, when Acworth was eventually replaced, his successor was no more sympathetic to Anson's plans. The outcome was that Anson appears to have earmarked Thomas Slade, a fairly junior dockyard shipwright, as the man most likely to introduce the warships that Anson felt the navy required. From 1749 onwards Anson ensured that Slade was promoted on every possible occasion, moving him from one post to another until his final appointment to the Navy Board in 1755.[41]

A further point that needs to be considered when it comes to any discussion on the relationship between the Board of Admiralty and the inferior Boards is that of changing government attitudes in the 1780s.[42] The move towards 'economical' reform that had, as one of its aims, 'the saving of money'[43] meant that, inevitably, the naval departments, with their high levels of expenditure, would eventually come under official scrutiny. Not surprisingly, therefore, a number of the reports undertaken by the Commission of Fees were directed towards both the Admiralty and the inferior boards.[44] In undertaking this work, the commissioners not only produced a series of reports that would eventually lead to the total abolition of 'fees, gratuities, perquisites and emoluments' paid to those employed within these departments, but would also devote much of their time to a further brief, that of reporting 'such Observations as shall occur to them, for the better conducting and managing the Business transacted in the said Offices' into which they were inquiring.[45]

The completion of these reports, combined with a general desire on the part of Pitt's ministry to impose reforms that would result in a

reduction in levels of inefficiency and waste within the various government departments, placed the Board of Admiralty in a better position to establish a more effective form of control over the inferior boards. This is a point which Roger Morriss highlights in his study of the dockyards during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars period:

. . . such was the pressure for government reform that the Admiralty could also avail itself of the constitutional powers of Crown and Parliament to impose its will on the Navy Board.[46]

In fact, a great number of the reforms proposed by the Commission of Fees, after having first gained Admiralty approval, were brought before the Privy Council and passed by Order in Council. Such reforms included a re-structuring of the internal organisation of the Navy Board [47] and the introduction of specific regulations for dockyard officers.[48]

This momentum for reform was to be used far more effectively by the Earl of St Vincent who was appointed First Lord in February 1801. Whereas his predecessor, Lord Spencer, had been content simply to accept the findings of the fee commissioners, St Vincent chose to go a great deal further. Instead of relying upon a group of individuals to look into every major government department, St Vincent obtained parliamentary legislation that allowed him to establish a new commission, with commissioners appointed by himself, to concentrate entirely upon the civil departments of the navy. Their particular brief was to uncover all abuses and frauds within these departments, a task which proved particularly difficult due to a clause added to the original bill that allowed individuals 'the right to refuse to answer when their answer was likely to incriminate them'.[49] As a result, many of the reports concentrated upon abuses already uncovered by the inferior boards themselves. Nevertheless, there were a number of undoubted benefits that resulted from the work of

this second group of commissioners, not least of which were further reforms of the administrative arrangements of the inferior boards and a better understanding of how similar abuses to those reported upon might best be avoided in future years.[50]

Although the Commission of Naval Inquiry may have been generally beneficial in collecting detailed information relating to the various civil departments of the Navy, St Vincent's period at the Board of Admiralty must be considered as distinctly harmful. As First Lord, he had a typical naval officer's view of the civil departments, believing them to be 'rotten to the core'. For this reason, he refused to place any confidence in the commissioners of the various inferior boards. Admittedly, as several enquiries showed, the civil departments of the navy were free neither of corrupt officers nor a degree of inefficiency, St Vincent for his part was prone to much exaggeration. Middleton, who uniquely served both as Navy Comptroller (1778-90) and First Lord (1805-06), was probably directing his thoughts to St Vincent when he wrote that 'sea officers are very seldom judges of the civil branches of the navy. They view it only in parts [and] . . . imbibe prejudices against the civil boards and overturn in ignorance what has cost ages and long experience to establish.' Given, therefore, that St Vincent held such views and that he arrived at the Admiralty to be confronted by commissioners appointed entirely by groups now out of government, clashes were certain to occur.[51]

As part of a subsequent campaign against the civil board, it is clear that St Vincent coveted the possibility of dismissing some of those who administered the civil departments. However, as such power was not in his possession, he appears to have used every means to encourage the individual commissioners to resign. Among tactics he resorted to were

those of constant criticism and occasional insult. In Parliament he accused members of the Navy Board to be guilty of permitting the government 'to be defrauded to a very considerable amount'.[52] Even the successful Commission of Naval Enquiry was designed to secure those sought after resignations. According to William Marsden, Second Secretary at the Admiralty during this period, 'to crush them was the object of the bill [establishing the Commission of Inquiry] and the frauds in the dockyards (which we are daily detecting and punishing) are only a pretext'.[53]

The arrival of St Vincent at the Admiralty was shortly followed by the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Amiens. This brief period of peace was completely mis-read by the First Lord, St Vincent appearing to assume that it would have a degree of permanency. Only this explains why he allowed such a serious deterioration in the relationship between the various boards at a time when Britain might once again be threatened by invasion. Nor were matters helped by his decision to dismiss, against the advice of the Navy Board, many of those involved in a massive strike of dockyard workers that took place during the summer of 1801. This had the unfortunate effect of depriving the yards of many of the skilled workers upon whom the Navy Board was usually so diligent at retaining. Murray, a 20th century Admiralty secretary, in commenting upon this period makes the observation that:

On the renewal of the war in 1803 his [St Vincent] error recoiled on his own head. He had started his administration . . . by weakening the Navy. He was now called upon to increase its strength again, but have estranged the Navy Board and embittered the Dockyards, he found that he had rendered the old machinery of administration almost unworkable and had devised nothing to take its place.[54]

Politically, it might be added, St Vincent's period in office did much to undermine the ability of Addington to remain in power. Initially, the

First Lord's reputation as a great naval commander had provided the administration with a degree of strength. However, his subsequent dealings with the dockyards were used by Pitt to mount a stinging attack upon the situation as it then existed. According to Murray, St Vincent 'from being the strongest bulwark of the Addington Ministry he rapidly became its most vulnerable point and not only shared but precipitated its fall in 1804.'^[55] Perhaps, indeed, McCahill in a paper which looks at the role of the House of Lords in the collapse of the Addington administration, might have made more of these perceived failings on the part of St Vincent. While the attacks upon the First Lord were primarily directed by Pitt in the lower house, it did result in St Vincent becoming increasingly isolated. As a result, he was unable to use his influence to prevent an erosion of support in the upper chamber.^[56]

One further commission looking into the affairs of the Navy might be usefully considered at this point. Styled the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of His Majesty's Navy, it began its work in 1806. Unlike the former Commission of Inquiry it was established not for the purpose of criticism but for the purpose of creating an efficient machine that was capable of more effectively running the vast complex of naval support facilities. That it was established at all, however, was a direct result of St Vincent's commission. The newly installed administration under Pitt, aware of the good work of that earlier commission, was not in a position to simply terminate its powers. The criticism would have been too intense. Instead, an alternative had to be created. The result was the Commission of Revision that proceeded to build upon the work of the earlier body, laying down detailed instructions for each and every naval commissioner, dock and victualling yard officer while reviewing the organisation of the various offices and institutions involved in keeping the navy at sea.

That the fifteen year period following the end of the Napoleonic Wars was to prove a time of relative calm for those involved in the administration of the Navy was due to two separate factors. First of these was the work of the two specialised commissions discussed in the foregoing paragraphs. Between them they ensured that the dock and victualling yards were not only free of abuses that they had previously harboured but that they were much more efficient in undertaking the work they performed. As a result, those selected to join the Board of Admiralty had fewer grounds upon which to base a complaint.

Secondly, there was the matter of patronage. With Melville holding the office of First Lord for approximately seventeen years, he found himself in a unique position to ensure that all of those commissioners appointed to the Navy and Victualling Boards, were sympathetic to any ideas he might wish to pursue. Of particular advantage to Melville was that the all important post of comptroller had become available within only four years of his arrival in office. As a result, he was in a position to make a suitable appointment to replace Sir T.B. Thompson who, as a Whig appointee, might have proved a most difficult individual with whom to work. That events could well have turned full circle upon the removal of the Tory administration in 1830 was averted partly by the early resignation of the Navy Comptroller and the clear intent of the new Whig administration to bring about some form of radical change in the civil affairs of the navy.

1.3 The Navy Board

The Navy Board, which had a continuous existence of 172 years and which had originally been founded by Henry VIII, was concerned, until its abolition in 1832, for most matters connected with the civil affairs of the British navy.[57] In particular, it took responsibility for the material condition of the fleet and control of naval expenditure. The former was undertaken through either the Board's direct control of the royal dockyards or the issuing of contracts for building and repair of ships in private yards. Control of expenditure, on the other hand, was more wideranging, involving not only the purchase of stores and formulating various contractual arrangements, but also that of paying both seamen's wages and that of the civilian work force employed within the dockyards.

By the year 1830 membership of the Board was confined to seven principal officers who were known as navy commissioners, these were: the Comptroller, Deputy Comptroller, two surveyors, the Accountant-General, the Storekeeper-General and the Superintendant of Transports. Each was expected to attend, on a regular basis, the daily meetings of the Board, during which all non-routine in-coming correspondence was considered and a wide range of decisions taken. A typical Board meeting, in that year of 1830, might consider anything up to fifteen distinct items of business, with the average number of minuted points per meeting that of eight.[58] These, from a glance at the existing minute books, ranged from expenses incurred in supporting the on-going coastal blockade, construction of the Plymouth breakwater, examination of various accounts and discussion of any noted discrepancies, the carriage of naval stores by merchant shipping and completion of a scheme to re-build Sheerness dockyard.[59] In all, that particular year resulted in the Board considering a total of 1,966 separate minuted items.[60]

Also in attendance at Board meetings was the Secretary. This was a clerical post, with the holder only present for the purpose of offering advice and the recording of minutes. As secretary to the Board however, the holder was the most senior member of the office attached to the Navy Board and which was always referred to as the Navy Office. Divided into seven distinct branches, the one hundred clerks (not including the Secretary) who formed the Navy Office, were responsible for the day-to-day running of its affairs together with the implementation of any decisions taken by the Board at their daily meetings. In addition to the Secretary's office, which was headed by the Secretary, the six other branches of the Navy Board were the Ticket and Wages Branch (headed by the Comptroller), Contracts Office (Deputy Comptroller), Office for Bills and Accounts (Accountant-General), Office for Stores (Storekeeper-General), Surveyor's Office (the two surveyors) and Transport Branch (Superintendent of Transport).

To provide sufficient room for the running of these various branches of business the Navy Office had, in 1786, taken up accommodation in an expansive range of offices known as Somerset Place, now Somerset House.[61] The Navy Office itself, took up the largest single area within the complex but it was not the only occupant. In addition, this large office complex was also shared with the Victualling Office and various unrelated government bodies such as those offices responsible for taxation, auditing and the licencing of hackney carriages, lotteries and hawkers.[62] For the Navy Office, which occupied in common with the Victualling Office and Treasurer of the Navy, the west side of Somerset Place, accommodation existed not only for the essential offices and meeting rooms but also provided living quarters for those principal officers finding it necessary to remain in London.

Most senior of the navy commissioners was the Comptroller. This office, since 1816, had been in the hands of Sir Thomas Byam Martin.[63] A post only available to those who had considerable naval experience, Martin had been an active commander throughout the entire period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. His service in the Baltic, commanding a small squadron with the task of cutting French sea lines had resulted in Tsar Alexander proclaiming Martin the saviour of Russia.[64] In 1811, Martin had been raised to the rank of Rear Admiral, having gained his captaincy in 1793.[65]

As Navy Comptroller, it was Martin's task both to co-ordinate and regulate the work of the Board. To undertake these duties, he not only had the right of access to all financial accounts, but chaired all meetings of the Board. This gave him the opportunity of drawing out verbal reports from fellow commissioners but also gave him the opportunity to question them as to progress of work within their respective departments. His status was further enhanced by the Comptroller being the only member of the Board allowed a seat in Parliament. Martin, since first taking office, held one of the two Plymouth seats for the out-going administration.[66]

According to Sir Charles Middleton, later Lord Barham, holder of this particular office from 1778 to 1790, the Comptroller's duties were:

. . . to superintend the offices belonging to his department, to attend the great officers and offices of state, and, on some occasions, the cabinet council; to carry their orders, which are frequently secret, into execution, and in short to see every part of the business of the office properly executed. It is also his duty to control the payment of half-pay at the pay office; the payment of the dockyards of Deptford and

Woolwich, and of such ships as are paid at these ports. But the business of the board having increased to such a degree as to require his daily attendance, he has been obliged to call for the help of the commissioners who attend payments in Broad Street to assist him in this part of his duty. The comptroller also visits Deptford and Woolwich yards weekly, when in his power, and the more distant yards occasionally, when duty requires it.[67]

As originally laid down in 1662, the terms of appointment given to the Comptroller had more or less placed him on an equal standing to the other commissioners who made up the Board.[68] However, the general nature of the business the Comptroller was expected to attend and the authority he exercised over the auditing of accounts had made it inevitable that any holder of the post would take pre-eminence over all other commissioners. Yet, it was not until June 1796 that recognition of this authority was officially given. In that month an Order in Council officially sanctioned a number of radical changes to the organisation of the Navy Office while going on to indicate that, upon the shoulders of the Comptroller should be lodged a general superintending and directing power for the regular management of the business and controlling the expense of every branch of the office. This same Order in Council further bestowed upon the Comptroller a second vote 'when matters of dispute' were brought before the whole Board while any letters or orders sent out should be signed by the Comptroller, or his deputy, this being 'necessary to give effect'.[69]

The post of Navy Comptroller was, therefore, a key one within terms of naval administration. Held, as it was, by one who had been appointed by an outgoing First Lord, a strong possibility existed that Martin and the new First Lord would be unable to forge a harmonious working relationship. Given, also, that Martin had held office for fourteen years, acquiring a fixed viewpoint as to how matters should be arranged,

then the likelihood of such a relationship was even more remote. Finally, and most certainly guaranteeing that some sort of clash would occur, was the desire on the part of the new First Lord to uncover any failings on the part of the civil boards. Martin, of course, who would be seen as directly responsible for such failings, was equally determined to defend both himself and his own Board as a whole. Ill-prepared to give Graham full access to important documents relating to the financial arrangements of the Navy Board, the situation was made considerably more complicated by a variety of political manoeuvres associated with government attempts to secure passage of the controversial electoral reform bill. As a Member of Parliament who now held office under a government headed by Earl Grey, the Whigs expected Martin to give them his full support. The Navy Comptroller, far from agreeing, chose on one occasion to ignore an important three-line whip, the consequence of which was his eventual removal from office.[70]

The choice of Robert Dundas as Martin's successor might, on the face of it, appear somewhat bizarre. After all, he was the son of the 2nd Lord Melville, Graham's predecessor in office. However, as will be subsequently demonstrated, some sort of rapprochement appears to have taken place between Graham and Melville. At the heart of this understanding appears to have been a desire on the part of the former to secure a number of Scottish parliamentary votes for the Whig cause, while for the other it ensured a continued connection with naval administration. On this point, it could also be added that another of Melville's sons, the Hon G.H.L. Dundas, was also serving on the Navy Board. Providing further evidence of the likely rapprochement was that this last named Dundas survived the final abolition of the civilian boards, appointed by Graham to the newly created post of Storekeeper General.[71]

The branch of business for which the Navy Comptroller was personally responsible was that of the Ticket and Wages branch. This department concerned itself with verifying any payments to be made to seamen and those employed within the civilian departments. This work also extended to the overseeing of partial payments made for the support of wives and the payment of entire sums owing in the event of death. Should the latter take place, then 'Tickets' were made out and transmitted to the Ticket and Wages branch. Once verified, relatives of the deceased would be in a position to immediately receive wages due to those who had died in service.

To undertake this work, two chief clerks and twenty-six junior clerks were employed within the branch. They did not, however, make the actual payments or handle cash sums. Once the amounts to be paid out had been confirmed, this information was passed to the Navy Pay Office, where a separate group of clerks oversaw the actual payment of cash sums.[72] Normally, this necessitated the dispatch of large sums of ready money to the dockyards where Navy Pay Office clerks would ensure that the seamen of the ordinary, dockyard workers and crews from returning ships received the amounts due to them. When so doing, these clerks, of which a number were permanently stationed at the dockyards, came under the direct authority of the resident commissioners stationed at Chatham, Plymouth, Sheerness or Portsmouth.[73]

Given that the work of the Navy Office was so immense, it would have been quite impossible for any one Comptroller to carry out all of the work expected of him. Unable, therefore to effectively direct and supervise much of the work of his colleagues were expected to undertake, most of those appointed to the post tended to specialise in certain areas of business. The previously quoted Charles Middleton, a particularly

forthright and outspoken individual, concentrated much of his time upon the rooting out of general inefficiencies and codifying the duties of the various principal officers and senior clerks employed by the Board.[74] Sir Thomas Byam Martin, for his part, chose to direct himself to the more specific issues of shipbuilding and dockyards. Previous Comptrollers rarely inspected the yards, relying instead upon reports from the Naval Surveyor or yard officers. In fact Middleton, despite including visits to the yards as one of the stated duties of the Comptroller, only conducted two official inspections (known as Visitations), during the twelve years he held office. Martin, on the other hand, embarked upon thirteen, more or less one for every year he held office.[75] On some occasions only the yards to the east of London were visited, while in other years it might be only Portsmouth and Plymouth. Usually, however, his visitations included a thorough inspection of all seven home yards.[76]

Of course, in this day and age, it is easy to underestimate the immensity of such a task. While Woolwich and Deptford, using the Navy Office barge, might be reached, from Somerset Place, in only a matter of hours, the yards of Plymouth and Pembroke could only be reached after several days of journeying. In all, something like three months in the year had to be put aside for the conducting of these visits. During such times, the inspecting commissioners, over a period of four or five days at each yard, mustered the workforce, boarded ships in ordinary and entered all the dockyard storehouses, work shops and manufacturing centres. Although visitations doubtless had some value, knowledge of the Comptroller's imminent arrival naturally resulted in the yard officers expending a great deal of time and effort in minor cosmetic improvements for the purpose of hiding those things that were generally amiss.

The Comptroller, as a reflection of his supervisory role, received

a salary of two thousand pounds per annum, this amount being at least 60% above that received by any of his colleagues. In fact, as will shortly be noted, the majority of commissioners received an annual salary of one thousand pounds.[77]

Little really need be said about the Deputy Comptroller. A post first introduced in 1793, it was created simply to support the increasing work load that was devolving upon the Comptroller. Unlike the Comptroller however, the appointed deputy was not always a former naval officer. The holder of the post at the beginning of 1830, the Hon Henry Legge, who had first taken up this office in May 1829, had no seagoing experience, being an administrator who first joined the Board in 1804. In fact, his promotion to the office of Deputy Comptroller resulted entirely from his lengthy experience of the Board's work and was, consequently, the most suitable person to replace Martin during any period of absence. For this reason, of course, the Deputy Comptroller would not accompany the Comptroller during the official dockyard visitations, remaining at Somerset Place to oversee the progress of business.[78]

On occasions, assuming he had adequate seagoing experience, the Deputy Comptroller might rise to the rank of Comptroller. This had happened in 1794 when Sir Andrew Snape Hamond, having held the post of Deputy Comptroller for six months, was promoted Comptroller. In addition,

it might be noted, Martin himself was to have been Deputy Comptroller, but this appointment remained unconfirmed at the time of his actual accession to the post of Comptroller. Legge, through his lack of naval experience, could never have entertained any hopes of succeeding Martin. In fact, Legge retired before the end of the year, replaced by the Hon Robert Dundas.

This new Deputy Comptroller, who as the son of the out-going First Lord has already been mentioned, was a former member of the Navy Board whose patent, as a result of widesweeping changes to the general arrangements operating within the Navy Office, had been revoked in May 1829. At the time of this revocation of his authority, Robert Dundas had been promised a return to the Board once a vacancy had occurred. Thus, on Legge's retirement, Dundas automatically succeeded him in office.[79]

The particular branch of the Navy Office for which the Deputy Comptroller was responsible was that of Contracts. This department employed one chief clerk and two junior clerks. In remuneration for the work he undertook, the Deputy Comptroller received an annual salary of £1,200.[80]

As for the two Navy Surveyors they were, between them, the Board's experts on matters relating both to the design of warships and the running of the dockyards. Although it was not always the case that the Board would have two Surveyors, this natural division of work allowed each to specialise in a particular area. Thus Seppings concentrated on design while Tucker gave greater attention to the dockyards. However, neither duty was exclusive of the other. Indeed, during official visitations, when the Surveyor was expected to accompany the Comptroller in his tour of inspection, either might be delegated to undertake this duty. In addition, one or other Surveyor might, when necessary, undertake inspections on his own account, but no visits or orders were to be made without 'the concurrence and by the direction of the Board at large'. As for the background of those appointed to the post of Surveyor, this was always firmly entrenched within the dockyards. In fact, the appointee was always chosen from the ranks of Master Shipwrights currently serving in the yards.[81]

At one time it also fell within the remit of the Navy Surveyor to lay down the design for dockyard buildings. This doubtless explains why many existing 18th century yard buildings have many features, including the use of internal strengthening knees, that have much in common with the warships of the period.[82] However, this task of designing buildings had been taken away from the Surveyor's department by the employment of a specialised architect who carried the title Surveyor of Buildings.[83] The annual salary received by the two individuals holding the post of Navy Surveyor in 1830 was one thousand pounds per annum each, while the Surveyor of Buildings, who was not a member of the Board, received eight hundred pounds per annum.[84]

The existence of two Navy Surveyors, as already pointed out, was not a regular constituted feature of the Navy Board. An Order in Council of 1829, which introduced various changes both to the Board and its office, had indicated that there should be only one Surveyor.[85] Prior to this Order in Council it had been quite common to appoint two Surveyors. Indeed, between 1813 and 1822 there had actually been three Surveyors, while assistant surveyors had also been appointed during the recent war. However, by 1829 the pressure of work, as a result of peacetime retrenchment, had been much reduced, with the decision taken that only one Surveyor was necessary. But rather than dismiss one of the post-holders, it was decided to retain them until one should retire.

Both Robert Seppings and Joseph Tucker had duly served their apprenticeships in the royal dockyards and both had been Master Shipwrights immediately before they joined the Board. Joseph Tucker however, who had become a commissioner in June 1813, was something of an exception as regards his general working experience. Having completed his

indentures at Woolwich, he remained at the yard for only seven years. In 1784 he joined the East India Company as an overseer of shipbuilding and repair work before becoming an assistant surveyor with the company. Eventually he was appointed, by St Vincent, to Plymouth dockyard as an Assistant Master Shipwright and, eight months later, a Master Shipwright.[87]

Robert Seppings' rise to Navy Surveyor was far more typical. Serving both his apprenticeship and most of his working life in the dockyards, he was appointed Master Shipwright at Chatham in 1803. It was as a result of pioneering work carried out at that yard that he was eventually appointed to the Navy Board, his warrant also dated June 1813.[86] The work in which he had become involved was that of giving ships-of-the-line increased strength when at sea. Most important was the "Seppings System" of diagonal bracing which was first incorporated into 'Kent', a large 74-gun third rate which had been brought to Chatham for docking. Since this vessel was noted for her tendency to warp along the keel, it was considered that the new system would help solve this particular problem. Later, in 1810, Seppings was given permission to use the same system in 'Tremendous', but this time he also included cross pieces between the various gun ports and additional timbers in the spaces between the lower frames. A second improvement that was pioneered by Seppings while at Chatham was that of giving large ships a round bow. This had the double advantage of providing greater strength, while providing more room for this traditionally under-gunned area of a warship. Both innovations, it should be noted, were eventually to be incorporated into all new warships.[88]

Unlike other members of the Navy Board, those appointed to the office of surveyor were drawn from very restricted backgrounds. While

there were a number of possible candidates to fill the majority of commissionships, this was not so with regard to the post of Surveyor. Given that the holders of this post had to be drawn from among the ranks of serving Master Shipwrights in the royal dockyards, then the potential number of candidates was automatically restricted. Indeed, given that there were only seven yards, with one Master Shipwright in each, then the number of possible candidates to fill a vacancy never totalled more than seven. This probably goes some way to explain why Melville, as the appointing First Lord, should select Joseph Tucker as one of the Surveyors. Already it has been noted that Tucker's return to the royal dockyards, together with his appointment to the rank of Master Shipwright, were brought about by St Vincent. Seemingly, the Tuckers were a good Whig family, St Vincent having already appointed Benjamin Tucker, Joseph's brother, his private secretary.[89] Upon St Vincent leaving office, Tucker received no further promotion until his elevation to the Navy Board. Perhaps, during the short-lived Talents administration, both Grey and Grenville, who both served in the capacity of First Lord, believed Joseph Tucker to have been too recently employed at Plymouth to merit further promotion. However, by June 1813, the date of his appointment to the Board, no other possible candidate could claim a comprobable amount of experience. As a result, Melville felt forced to permit this known Whig to join one of the inferior boards.[90] Not surprisingly, given these earlier connections with St Vincent, Tucker was not to be fully trusted by some of his colleagues. In 1818, he was suspected by Martin of having passed some politically sensitive papers to his brother, these subsequently used in an attack upon the workings of the navy at that time. The evidence, as it happens, points against the Surveyor having been the guilty party.[91]

The remaining three members of the Navy Board were John Deas

Thomson, Robert Gambier Middleton and the Hon Courtenay Boyle. Between them, they respectively held the posts of Accountant General, Storekeeper General and Superintendent of Transports. All had been appointed to those posts on 4 May 1829, following the same general re-organisation of the Navy Office that had led to the revoking of the Hon Robert Dundas's earlier commission. Each had previously served on the Board, but in differing capacities, with only Boyle appointed by Melville. The other two, the longest serving members were appointed by earlier Pittite First Lords. Boyle, as a prerequisite of the post he held, had seagoing experience. The third son of the 7th Earl of Cork and Orrey, he first entered the navy in 1781 gaining the rank of Captain in 1797. Subsequently he served as resident commissioner at Sheerness before joining the Navy Board. As for Thomson and Middleton, they were strictly administrators and acquired their respective posts through family connection. While Thomson's family cannot be traced, Middleton was the nephew of Lord Barham. In common with the Navy Surveyor, all three of these commissioners received an annual salary of one thousand pounds.[92]

The work of the Accountant General and Storekeeper General can be summarised by reference to Orders in Council which laid down the duties of these two commissioners. It was the responsibility of the Accountant General 'to superintend, examine and pass all accounts; subject to the approbation of the Board at large'.[93] Similarly, the Storekeeper General was 'to consider the proper quantity of stores necessary to be provided for the service in general; to direct their distribution and to take cognizance of the receipt, issue, remains and returns of all stores of every kind and every service'. Both commissioners were in charge of their own offices, with the Bill and Accounts Office employing two chief clerks and twenty junior clerks while the Store Office had two chief clerks and nine junior clerks. [94]

The Superintendent of Transports was responsible for all matter connected with the transport of troops and stores by sea. In particular, it involved negotiating all contracts with the ship-owners, to cause surveys to be made of vessels under hire, to adjust the accounts and pay the balance.[95] These were matters not strictly connected with the navy and were performed on behalf of the War Office. However, the fact that it involved shipping, albeit hired merchant vessels, meant that such a service fell more naturally into the hands of the navy. In particular, these hired vessels, when undergoing survey, were often brought into one of the royal dockyards. As a result, there was a certain advantage in having both the Navy Surveyor and Superintendent of Transports sitting on the same board.[96]

During peace time, the work of the Transport Branch was fairly limited. However, in war time, the work of this department grew ten fold. In previous wars it had become normal for a separate Transport Board to be formed which, during the latter years of the Napoleonic Wars had consisted of six commissioners, a secretary and nine clerks. Subordinate to the secretary of state, the Transport Board's offices had been in Dorset Square. Shortly after the culmination of hostilities, in 1817, the Transport Board had been abolished and its duties taken over by the Navy Board. The number of clerks employed within the Transport Branch of the Navy Office was ten temporary junior clerks and two permanently established chief clerks. The Transport Branch was a distinct entity from other branches of the Navy Office. This allowed for easy separation, and the establishment of a separate board, in the event of a future war.[97]

Although the Board, as described, consisted of as many as three naval officers (of which the Comptroller was one) these individuals never

dominated the decision making process. Instead, a consensus approach was adopted. This was very different from the Admiralty, where the First Lord could, and frequently did, overrule his colleagues. However, in having said this, it should also be recognised that the Navy Board was subordinate to the Admiralty. Frequently, points brought before the Board had to be referred to the Admiralty before a decision could be taken. This was especially so when it came to financial expenditure or major alterations to the dockyards. However, as already shown, it was not impossible for the commissioners of this inferior Board, using a variety of differing ploys, to undermine the authority of the Admiralty. Only with regard to the appointment of commissioners did the superior board possess an undisputed degree of authority.[98]

Having dealt with the seven commissioners, it would seem apposite to give attention to the eighth individual who was always in attendance at Board meetings: the Secretary. Since September 1820, this post had been held by George Smith, an employee of the Navy Board who had first entered the Navy Office as a temporary clerk in 1791. Having subsequently been raised to the establishment, he was appointed to the secretary's branch in 1796 rising to chief clerk in July 1804. Later, in 1807, he became Assistant Secretary. His salary, in 1820, stood at £1,200.[99]

There seems every indication that George Smith was an able and conscientious secretary to the Navy Board. Responsible for the basic organisation and running of day to day business, he produced numerous reports, all of them undertaken upon his own volition, on how the Navy Office and dockyards could be better organised.[100] The office which he was responsible for running and on the same basis as those directly headed by a principal officer, consisted of two chief clerks and nineteen junior clerks.[101] A further clerk, the Petitions Clerk, was also loosely

attached to the office. The Petitions Clerk in 1830 was Samuel F. Ray, and his duty was that of receiving all individuals making inquiry at the Navy Office and for the preparation of petitions from seamen for the Board's consideration.[102]

That the Secretary should be in such a powerful position, and allowed to run his own branch of the Navy Office, relates to the outgrowth of this post from the earlier Clerkship of the Acts. This had, prior to 1796, been a further office held in commission with Samuel Pepys the most famous incumbent. In common with the later secretaryship, the Clerk of the Acts was also expected to take responsibility for correspondence, general running of the Navy Office and the keeping of minutes. However, as a commissioner he also shared in the decision making process. In fact, as his diaries make clear, Pepys was a particularly active member of the Board, frequently visiting the dockyards and uncovering a number of abuses. It was the Commission on Fees which deemed it 'absolutely necessary' to separate the Office of Secretary from the Clerk of the Acts, this being officially sanctioned in 1796. The, then, existing Clerk of the Acts, George Marsh, was re-appointed to an alternative post on the Board while the Assistant Clerk of the Acts was re-designated secretary:

That the Office of Assistant to the Clerk of the Acts should be converted into that of Secretary who should attend the Board, take minutes, see to the execution of the Board's orders, carry on the correspondence, take care of the Board's papers, see that the whole be duly registered and be responsible for the secret and due execution of business of that department.[103]

Regarding clerks employed within the Navy Office, their salaries were dependent upon a combination of ability, application and length of service. At one time, all clerks were guaranteed the opportunity of attaining the highest salary echelons merely by their own longevity. As one clerk retired, or left the service, those clerks below him in

seniority and employed within the same branch, merely moved up a rung. However, as such a system clearly discouraged the most able, a completely new system of regulating the clerks was introduced in 1816.[104] This created a more developed career structure that divided the established clerks into three distinct classes. All new entrants were placed on the lowest echelon, that of third class, with promotion to the second class dependent only upon application and ability. Within each class a separate pay structure existed, providing all clerks with an annual increment of ten pounds annum until the upper limit, permitted for that class, was reached.[105] In the case of third class clerks, this allowed, in 1830, for a continued increase of annual salary for thirty-one years while for second and first class clerks it was twenty and twenty-five years respectively. Those selected for promotion would enter the next class on the lower limit available to that class (but equivalent to the highest limit of the previous class).[106] The reasons for the Admiralty choosing to introduce this system were set down in the preamble to the Order in Council responsible for the division of clerks into three classes. This stated that, in the past, salaries given to clerks had not always reflected their responsibilities. The result was that great irregularity had been produced between the remuneration paid to officers whose Duties were nearly equal. To correct this, it was hoped that the new system would result in payments 'really proportional (as far as may be possible) to the responsibility and weight of the Duties which are to be performed'. At the same time, by allowing annual incremental increases within each class, some rewards would exist 'for long and faithful service'.[107]

As indicated by several references to various orders in council, the Navy Office was in the midst of considerable change. During the months leading up to its abolition, one addition to its responsibilities was that of paying the Marines, this resulting from the abolition of the Marine Pay

Department. To undertake this work a Paymaster of Marines was appointed to the Navy Office, the holder of this post a clerk who had formerly been employed within the abolished department.[108] In addition, and representing a further change to the structure of the Navy Office, was the breaking up of the Transport Branch towards the end of 1830, with the clerks of this department re-distributed to other offices.[109] Finally, the Surveyor's Office, by October 1831, had been reduced to one chief clerk and a junior clerk.[110]

However, these alterations to the Navy Office were relatively minor when compared to changes witnessed in the years immediately prior to 1830. Only a few months earlier, in January 1829, the entire organisation of the Board, and its various branches, had been completely re-vamped in order to create the structure which has just been described. In particular, the Order in Council which sanctioned these changes, introduced the idea of individual responsibility, with each commissioner taking charge of a specific department. For this reason, the Order in Council also created the posts of Accountant General, Storekeeper General and Superintendent of Transports, the work of these individuals previously shared by several commissioners.

The organisational system in existence prior to the more recent changes of January 1829 was one that centred around four committees: the Committee of Correspondence, Accounts, Stores and Transports. Individual commissioners, instead of jointly meeting as an entire group, were allocated to these committees, with each made up of three different commissioners. The work of three of these committees, those of Correspondence, Accounts and Stores, were set out by the Order in Council of June 1796 that was responsible for their implementation:

Under this idea We [the Lords Commissioners

of the Admiralty] propose that the [Navy] Board shall be divided into the following committees. vizt. A Committee of Correspondence; a Committee of Accounts and a Committee of Stores.

The Comptroller to belong to and preside over every committee. The Committee of Correspondence to consist of the Deputy Comptroller, one Surveyor, the present Clerk of the Acts and the Secretary.

The Committee of Accounts to consist of the present Comptroller of Treasurer's Accounts, the present Comptroller of Victualling Accounts, one Commissioner and Secretary (to be the Comptroller's first clerk for the time being).

The Committee of Stores to consist of one Surveyor or Sea Officer, the present Comptroller of Storekeeper's Accounts, the present Sea Commissioner and secretary (to be the chief clerk and Accountant of Stores for the time being).

The several duties attached to the various committees are to be as follows. The Committee of Correspondence to conduct correspondence of the Board. Committee of Accounts. To superintend, examine and pass all accounts; subject however to the approbation of the Board at large. Committee for Stores. To consider the proper quantity of stores necessary to be provided for the service in general; to direct their distribution and to take cognizance of the receipt, issue, remains and return of stores of every kind and every service depending on this branch.[111]

The progenitors of this particular administrative arrangement, which placed an emphasis on the value of collective responsibility, were the Commissioners looking into fees and other emoluments. Having, in their fifth report, made a study of the workings of the Navy Office, taking copious evidence from Lord Barham, they proposed that the committee system would ease the problems of an overworked single governing Board. In addition, and also sanctioned by the same Order in Council, the post of

secretary was introduced while fees among Navy Board clerks were completely abolished.[112]

In time, several more changes and minor alterations to the basic system were introduced. Much of this concerned the appointment of an increased number of commissioners, some of them with new specialist expertise.[113] Of perhaps greater significance however, was a recommendation by the Commission of Naval Revision, and its acceptance by the Admiralty, that the general 'superintendence and direction of business' of each committee should be placed in the hands of the most senior commissioner appointed to each committee. The Comptroller, who had been unable to make anything but an infrequent appearance at meetings of the various committees, was allowed a more general superintending role.

That an Order in Council of 1829 should subsequently dissolve the committee system and replace it with a system that was, in some ways, not too dissimilar from that in force prior to 1796, results from a failure to successfully operate a system of collective responsibility. Instead, and this is where the new system differed entirely from anything previously attempted, an emphasis was placed on individual responsibility - each commissioner totally responsible for one area of Navy Office business. It was a style of government that was to be perpetuated in the civilian departments of the Admiralty once the Navy Board, itself, had been abolished. However, further discussion of this point will appear elsewhere.

1.4 The Victualling and Sick and Wounded Departments

The Navy Board had a general responsibility for all matters connected with the civilian branches that assisted in keeping the British Navy at sea. As warships grew, both in size and quantity, the Admiralty concluded that it would be better if a number of additional and specialised boards were created, each subject to the overall administration of the Navy Board. Of particular importance were those concerned with responsibility for medical needs (the Sick and Hurt Board),[114] the hire of ships for the transport of troops and stores (the Transport Board) [115] and the procuring and supply of provisions for seamen (the Victualling Board).[116] By the autumn of 1830 only the Victualling Board continued to exist in anything like its original form, the other two boards having been abolished. For the Sick and Hurt Board, abolition occurred in 1806 when its duties were absorbed into the Transport Board. Later, in 1817, the Transport Board was abolished, the hire of transports taken over by the Navy Board through the creation of a Transport Committee, while responsibility for sick and wounded seamen was placed in the hands of a reformed Victualling Board.[117]

As a result of this remaining the situation at the end of 1830, the present section of this thesis will briefly examine the administrative framework of the Victualling Board in its amalgamated state. Attention will be given to those departments concerned with the supply and accounting of provisions, the supply of medicines, upkeep of hospitals and the appointment, by warrant, of ship's surgeons and physicians.

The Victualling Board had originally been created on 1 January 1684. Prior to that date, the work of provisioning British warships had fallen, more or less entirely, into the hands of merchants placed under

contract.[118] The Navy Board, upon its formation, took responsibility for the examination of accounts belonging to both merchant contractors and ship's pursers. Later, with the establishment of the Victualling Board, the Navy Board gained a new appointee, the Comptroller for Victualling Board Accounts, a commissioner responsible for examining the financial aspects of the work of the new Board. This post of Comptroller for Victualling Board Accounts was abolished in 1794, the task of examining victualling accounts taken over by the Committee of Accounts and then, in 1829, by the Accountant General.[119]

Although the creation of a separate board responsible for the provisioning of warships was to bring about greater efficiency, the Commissioners of Naval Victualling were to come under much criticism for their inability to liquidate long outstanding accountancy arrears. This was the focal point of attention in two Admiralty investigations into the work of the Board and both conducted during the early part of the 18th century. In the first of these reports, that of April 1711, they discovered numerous examples of unpassed accounts.[120] In the words of the Board of Admiralty,

. . . upon their [the Board of Admiralty] examination into the Victualling Office in the year 1710, [they discovered] that there had not only been very great but very many neglects and omissions in all parts thereof, but more especially in not obliging the several officers who had for many years been entrusted with provisions and stores, which cost the Public some millions of money, to pass any regular account for the same, and for near eight hundred thousand pounds impressed, notwithstanding some of the said officers had been removed many years from their employment, and that others were dead . . . [121]

Orders were given for these arrears, without obstructing current business, to be immediately brought up to date. At the same time, instructions were also given for each commissioner to be given

responsibility for a particular branch of the Board's work. Prior to this date, all commissioners had only a general responsibility. As a result of these instructions, two commissioners were denominated as responsible for the accounts, these being the Accountant for Cash and the Accountant for Stores.[122] Of the other commissioners, four acted as overseers of the manufacturing departments managed by the Victualling Board, with one of them to inspect the 'Cooperage at Tower Hill, a second the 'affairs of the bakehouse and mills', the third the 'Cutting house and Master Butcher' and the fourth the 'brewhouse at Hatshorne'. The seventh commissioner was to inspect into the business of the hoytaker and was concerned with the hire of transports for the movement of provisions and the work of the hoys employed by the various victualling yards for carrying provisions to ships in harbour.[123] At that time, according to these instructions, all commissioners were considered to be of equal standing, with chairmanship of Board meetings rotating between them.[124] Eventually, in November 1784, the Board of Admiralty directed that the Accountant for Cash would preside at all Board meetings with the Accountant for Stores acting as Deputy Chairman.[125]

It was hoped that these new arrangements, together with the accompanying order concerning the upkeep of accounts, would result in a much improved situation. However, this was not to be. A second inspection of the work of the Victualling Board was undertaken in 1714 when the Admiralty noted that few advances had been made. According to their own preface to this report,

. . . great part of the old accounts remain still unadjusted and many of the imprest uncleared but several accounts which have since occurred as well as great sums of money which have been granted by them [the Admiralty] by way of imprest, remain likewise unadjusted and uncleared . . . [126]

As a result, the Admiralty further directed that all accounts in arrears should be adjusted and any imprest 'standing out' should also be cleared. At the same time, the commissioners of the Victualling Board were instructed to inform the Admiralty how this was to be done.[127]

The Victualling Board was to remain free of any further scrutiny of its affairs until the appointment of the Commissioners inquiring into fees. It was their 8th report that was directed towards an examination of the Victualling Office, with their findings printed and dated 17 April 1788. Before looking at some of the recommendations made by this particular commission, it is worth noting the general duties of the Victualling Board at this time as defined by the Fees Commission,

The business of the Victualling Office is, to provide, either by Contract or otherwise, all the Provisions, and also certain Stores required for Your Majesty's Navy; arranging and distributing the whole to the several ports and places at home and abroad, as the service may require; to take care that the different Provisions and Stores, when so issued, be properly charged to the Agents, Storekeepers, Pursers, Masters of Transports or others, to whom they were issued; and to compel the respective parties to pass timely and regular Accounts; also to take care that all offal arising from articles manufactured be properly disposed of, all old Stores be sold to best advantage, and the proceeds duly accounted for; to attend to the various Checks, &c. which have been instituted for the security of the Public, with other and numerous objects, which are constantly and necessarily attached to this office.[128]

In keeping with the Act of Parliament that had set this inquiry into motion, much of the attention of the commissioners was directed towards an examination of the 'fees, gratuities, perquisites and emoluments' received by the clerks and officers of this department. As with their fifth report that had looked into the Navy Office, they made a general recommendation that all such extra payments should be abolished

and replaced by a general increase in salaries paid.[129] However, as already noted, the Act had also indicated that the appointed commissioners should make 'such observations as shall occur to them for the better conducting and managing the Business' of the offices they were investigating.[130] For this reason a number of additional reforms were proposed, the most far reaching of these directed towards the solving of two particular problems noted by the Commission. The first of these was the inability of the victualling commissioners responsible for inspecting areas of manufacture adequately to perform this task. It was noted that they were not trained in the skills of the department they oversaw, being 'Gentlemen'. Furthermore, the commissioners apprehended:

. . . that to direct with Effect the Process of Manufacture, requires a regular, daily and unremitting Attendance, which no Commissioner can possibly bestow . . . [131]

A further problem resulted from placing a single individual at the head of each department. It was felt that this provided an inadequate check, with an individual, so placed, more able to defraud the system and avoid detection. Although the Commissioners did not uncover any considerable frauds, they did draw attention to one particular former commissioner:

When the late Hoy Taker was in Office, we find, that many Transports were hired by the Board which belonged to himself, and to other Persons in Your Majesty's Victualling Service. At the same Time that we do in the strongest Terms express our Disapprobation of such Conduct on the Part of the Persons in Question, we cannot avoid testifying our Surprize, that such improper Proceedings should have escaped the Censure and Correction of the Board . . . [132]

A final problem was that of the continuing failure of the Board's cash and store departments to liquidate long outstanding accounts:

In the course of our investigation into the

Modes of keeping Accounts, and of passing them through the various Departments of the Victualling Establishment, we naturally directed a Part of our Attention to such Accounts as were in Arrear, and to Outstanding Debts due to the Public: With respect to the former the Arrear in Question had been disregarded, as well from Neglect, as from other Causes which no longer exist . . . and consequently the several Debts in Question have continued to accumulate, between the 1st January 1750 and the 31st December 1786, till they amount collectively to the Sum of One hundred Seventy-five thousand Two hundred Seventy-four Pounds, Five Shillings and Eight Pence . . . [133]

However, the Commissioners noted in their report on the Victualling Board that, since March 1786, the Board, alarmed it should seem at the state of the Account employed a Chief Clerk to direct himself to the collection of outstanding debts. Within eighteen months he had successfully collected arrears amounting to £31,606.[134]

To solve these various problems it was felt that the work of the Board should be managed by committees with individual commissioners ceasing to have responsibility for separate departments. It was a means of managing Board affairs that had much in common with that previously proposed (and subsequently adopted) in their fifth report which had looked into the affairs of the Navy Office [135]:

We have already adverted to the Impropriety of allowing the Superintendance and Direction of each of the Principal Departments to separate Members of the Board: To rectify this therefore we recommend, That the respective Commissioners be exempted forthwith from all superintendance of separate Departments: That the chairman should continue to preside over the whole Establishment, and, That the remaining six commissioners be formed into Two Committees, under regulations as nearly correspondent to those recommended for the Navy Office, as the nature of the two services will admit.

Under this Arrangement the Chairman will of course preside over the Board, and likewise be a member of, and preside at, each Committee. In case of his absence the like powers shall devolve upon the Deputy Chairman . . .

One of these committees, We propose, shall be styled the Committee of Correspondence and Cash, and the other the Committee of Stores.[136]

When this report was submitted to the Admiralty, in January 1792 for their consideration and comment [137], it is interesting to note that, despite the acceptance of this same proposal for the Navy Board, they rejected it for the Victualling Board:

This Proposal, extending to a complete and entire Change of a System under which the very extensive and complicated Business of the Victualling Department has for a long Series of Years been conducted, has undergone our serious Consideration: And after weighing all the Reasons assigned by the Commissioners of Enquiry in Favour of the Plan, and those which have been stated by the Commissioners of Victualling . . . we have no hesitation in giving our decided Opinion, that the Change proposed would not be attended with any Advantage to the Public Service, nor tend to remedy the defects of the Establishment which the Commissioners of Enquiry represent to exist.[138]

Addressing themselves more particularly to the matter of having inspectorial commissioners the Admiralty report declared:

. . . that if the Commissioners of the Victualling were well acquainted with the Mode of conducting the Manufactures which they are appointed to superintend, they would be more competent to the Execution of the Duties of their respective Situations; but, assisted as they always have been by skilful Men, we have no Reason to think that any Inconvenience has arisen in the Management of these Departments.[139]

And then turning to the matter of establishing committees:

Supposing, however, some Inconvenience

to have arisen, we do not perceive how the forming of Committees would remove it; for each Member of the Committee would be less likely to exert himself in acquiring information in any Business which was to be executed by the Whole, than in that which he alone should be appointed to execute.[140]

Fundamentally, the Fee Commissioners had failed to put forward a strong enough case for reforming the Victualling Board in the ways they had recommended. Unlike the arguments they had put forward with regard to the Navy Board, they had said nothing about the increased amounts of work undertaken by the Victualling Board - a factor that played an obvious part in the horrendous backlog of unliquidated accounts. It was a point to which the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy was to direct itself in an equally thorough report produced in 1807.[141]

By that date, the argument for adopting the committee system was much strengthened. The Navy had more than doubled in size while expenditure on victualling, since 1788, had increased eleven-fold.[142] Furthermore, the Victualling Board had also taken on the duty of supplying 'to the different stations abroad all provisions necessary for the Army'.[143] Finally, as the Revision Commission also noted:

To this growing increase of duty is now to be added, the vast body of accounts of cash and stores, which have been gradually falling into arrear, for more than the last twenty years, and which, still remaining unliquidated, require to be examined without further delay.[144]

The result of the increased work load brought about by the intensity of war and the task of provisioning the Army, was that Victualling Board meetings were increasingly lengthy affairs, with individual commissioners constantly dragged away from the essential work of overseeing and inspecting their own departments. As with the Navy Office, a decade

earlier, a goodly proportion of managerial decisions were having to be taken by employees.[145]

In common with the Fees Commission report, the Commission of Naval Revision also proposed the introduction of committees:

We shall, in the first place, recommend that the seven Members be divided into two Committees, [if] it shall be found that the arrears of accounts cannot be liquidated, that growing arrears cannot be prevented, and that the increased scale of the service requires that further aid should be given by the addition of another Committee, Government must take such further measures as experience may then shew to be necessary; but, without the test of trial, we feel it is proper caution on our part, to avoid recommending so great an increase in the establishment as a third Committee would render necessary.[146]

The two committees, so it was proposed were to be styled the Committee for Cash and Stores and the Committee for General Business. The first of these was to be responsible for the financial affairs of the Victualling Office, directing itself to the management and direction of clerks involved in the examination of accounts submitted by contractors. It was also to be the work of this committee to keep a charge upon stores held at the various victualling points or in transit. Three commissioners, two civilians and a former naval purser, were to make up this committee. The second committee, that for conducting general business, was to be the Victualling Board's equivalent to the Navy Board's Committee of Correspondence. It was to deal with all incoming letters, directing these to the commissioner most able to deal with their contents. In addition, the members of this committee were to look into the quantity of stores required and the quality of provisions manufactured at the victualling establishments, giving thought to how improvements might be made either to existing buildings or methods used. Membership of this

committee was to be made up of four commissioners, two of whom were to be civilians and two former naval personnel, one to have been a captain and the other a purser.[147] Having considered the reasons given by members of the Commission for Revising the Civil Affairs of the Navy in this, their tenth report, the Admiralty, through an Order in Council, gave its approval to the scheme in 1808.[148]

A further alteration to the administrative arrangements of the Victualling Board was necessitated in 1817 with the abolition of the Sick and Hurt and Transport Board. Resulting in the need to establish a medical section within the Victualling Office, immediate continuity and expertise was provided by the transfer from the defunct Board a number of clerks and two medical commissioners. Although this initially meant an expansion in the total of commissioners, the number was eventually returned to its original seven, with two outgoing commissioners failing to be replaced.[149] To accommodate the addition of a medical department, the committee system, as laid down in 1808, was placed under review, resulting in a decision to make a number of fundamental reforms. From the beginning of April 1822 the Victualling Board was to consist of two specialist committees for the examination of accounts, these designated the Committee for Stores and Purser's Accounts and the Committee for Medical and Cash Accounts, while all general business was to be considered by the Board collectively.

This was more or less the situation that was to continue until the abolition of the Board in June 1832. However, one important alteration was subsequently to be made to this new system when the work of the Medical and Cash Committee was divided into two separate committees: the Cash Committee and Medical Committee. Upon the introduction of this change, the work of the Victualling Board fell into the hands of three

committees, with general board meetings also continuing. Each committee, instead of consisting of three members, was composed of two members, with the chairman of the Board able to attend any of these committees as occasion arose.[150]

This re-styled committee system, in its original and expanded state, had been devised by members of the Victualling Board, with details sent to the Admiralty for approval. The resulting correspondence throws a good deal of light upon the workings of the Board during the final decade of its existence. According to a lengthy report submitted to the Admiralty on 15 March 1822 it was to be the task of the Committee for Store and Pursers Accounts to:

take cognizance of the receipt, issue, and remains of all stores and provisions (excepting medical stores) examine and pass all accounts of stores and provisions (except medical stores) including pursery and transport accounts, and transact the current business relating thereto . . . [151]

Regarding the Committee for Medical and Cash Accounts this was to:

take cognizance of the receipt and disbursement of the monies, adopt measures for the speedy recovery of all outstanding balances and money due to the public, examine and pass all accounts of cash, including pursers accounts as far as they relate to cash, and also the medical store as well as cash accounts, and transact the current business relating thereto . . . [152]

With the subsequent introduction of the Cash Committee, the work primarily itemised was to be taken over by that committee, with only matters directly relating to medical affairs taken away. This was a logical move, as by placing cash and medical matters together, it meant that the Board's two medical commissioners (who had been automatic members of the Cash and Medical Committee) were forced to acquire a greater zeal for general accountancy matters than they might otherwise have felt inclined.

Instead, by allowing the two medical commissioners to form a separate committee, they could concentrate upon the work upon which they were best at performing. As a result, the new Medical Committee examined 'all Medical Accounts, Surgeons Journals, and executed other professional duties'.[153]

As for the duties to be undertaken by members of the Board, when meeting together collectively, these were detailed as follows:

They shall consider the proper quantities of provisions and medicines and victualling and medical stores to be provided at both home and abroad, and cause the same to be timely provided, and direct the distribution thereof; And attend to the economy of manual labor, and all matters in the civil victualling and medical establishments at home and abroad.

They shall decide upon all such questions of importance, difficulty or doubt, as either of the two committees shall after having had recourse to the advice and assistance of the chairman refer to the Board at large.

All contracts and agreements . . . shall be made by the Board at large.

On two days each week, viz., Tuesdays and Fridays the Board shall, before they separate, hear the minutes of the committees read over in order that every individual member may know what has been done in each committee, and may, if necessary, bring under discussion or further consideration any transaction which may appear objectionable, and if no objection occurs, the Board shall confer.[156]

Board meetings, it was further pointed out, were to be undertaken on a daily basis, with commissioners to 'repair from the Committee Rooms to the Board Room' at mid day.[157]

The details of the work to be undertaken by the committees and Board collectively, having been submitted to the Admiralty, the new procedure was subsequently introduced at the beginning of April 1822. Although, the committee system underwent a final alteration that led to the creation of

a third committee, it did not, as shown, constitute a major change, only a logical redistribution of duties. Furthermore, with the retention of the committee system, right up to the final abolition of the Board, it meant that collective decision making was still at the heart of Victualling Board affairs. This was markedly different from the Navy Board, where the move to individual responsibility had necessitated the abandonment of its own similar committee system. In view of this, it must be supposed, if the Victualling Board had not itself been abolished, considerable thought would have been given to the introduction of a similar organisational framework as that practised by the Navy Board.

Moving away from the detailed workings of the Board itself, attention should be given to the individual commissioners who constituted the Board during the final months of its existence. Once again, this survey will begin in the Autumn of 1830, allowing consideration to be given to membership of the Board as inherited by the Whigs upon their return to office in November.

Chairman of the Victualling Board since February 1822, and continuing in office until abolition of the Board, was the Hon Granville Anson Chetwynd Stapylton. Appointed to the post by the then First Lord, the 2nd Lord Melville, he had previously been Paymaster of Marines (1815-1819) and a Navy Commissioner (1819-1822). Stapylton had been one of the civilian members of the Victualling Board, it having previously been laid down by the Commissioners of Naval Revision, that the person appointed to the chairmanship of this Board should be selected for his administrative experience.[156] Chetwynd Stapylton's annual salary was £1,200. As chairman, his duties had been laid down by the Commission for Naval Revision and, with a few minor amendments to allow for changes in the committee system, retained in the Victualling Board's

recommendations to the Admiralty of March 1822. Most important of these duties were those of presiding at all general Board meetings and attending Board committees when it was deemed necessary. It was also one of Stapylton's duties to 'superintend, direct and controul [sic] all the departments and business of the Victualling Office'; attend the Treasury, Admiralty and great offices of state when required and obtain information from the Admiralty and Treasury as to the amounts of provisions that would be required, passing this information on to the respective committees.[157] Finally, in the words of the Revision Commission, but also repeated in the later report:

He shall never be absent from his duty without leave first obtained from the First Lord of the Admiralty; and, in case of necessary absence from sickness, he shall make the same known to the First Lord. He shall have authority to grant to the commissioners occasional leave of absence, when the public service will admit of it. He shall have authority to call the whole of the Members together whenever any matter shall arise, which, in his judgement, or that of either of the Committees, as the case may be, shall require the consideration and determination of the Board at large.[158]

The Deputy Chairman in the Autumn of 1830 was Isaac Woolley. He had also been a Melville appointment, his patent dating to July 1823 [159]. A brother of Admiral Thomas Woolley he had, himself, reached the naval rank of post-captain. During the French Revolutionary War he had served as a lieutenant on Sir John Jervis' flagship before going on to command the *Nonsuch* (64) and several third rates. Later, he had taken up the post of Superintendent of Jamaica Naval Yard (1808-13) followed by the resident commissionerships of Gibraltar (1813-18) and Malta (1818-23) dockyards. Apart from his annual salary of £1000, Woolley also received a pension of £250 for wounds received at Guadaloupe in 1795.[160]

As Deputy Chairman, Woolley had few specified tasks other than that of performing the duties of the Chairman whenever Chetwynd Stapylton was

absent. Additionally, however, it was the Deputy Chairman's duty to preside over meetings of the Committee for Medical and Cash Accounts. Indeed, since May 1829, he had been the only member of that committee. This had come about as the result of a retirement from the Board, with the Board of Admiralty deciding that the retiring member, Commissioner Bathurst, should not be replaced. Thus, in a rather unplanned and haphazard manner, the Victualling Board had already taken a step towards individual responsibility, although it was not codified or officially recognised in any form. Woolley remained a member of the Victualling Board until February 1831 when the post of Deputy Chairman was abolished.[161]

Chairman of the Store and Pursers Committee was Frederick Edgumbe. He had been appointed to this position upon the retirement of Nicholas Brown during the Summer of that same year. Prior to his elevation to the chairmanship of that committee, he had acted under Brown as second member. Edgumbe, who had begun his working life as a naval midshipman in 1779, had subsequently become a ship's purser and then Admiral's Secretary. In 1796 he transferred to the civilian departments, becoming a naval storekeeper and later Comptroller of the Sixpenny Office. That he should join the Victualling Board in May 1811 was due to his also serving as Secretary to First Lord Charles Yorke. A traditional reward, holders of such posts were usually rewarded with a transfer to one of the civilian boards. Edgumbe remained Chairman of the Store and Pursers Committee until his death on 2 June 1832. With the Board already in its last days of existence, he was not to be replaced. As a Victualling Board commissioner, Meek received an annual salary of eight hundred pounds.[162]

Serving under Edgumbe as the newly appointed second member of the

Store and Purser's Committee was James Meek. He was, in fact, the newest member of the Board, having been appointed in July 1832 upon the retirement of Commissioner Brown. Prior to his joining the Board, Meek had been a member of the Commissariat department before going on to serve as secretary under several flag officers in the Mediterranean. He remained on the Victualling Board until June 1832, retained by James Graham as the newly appointed Comptroller of Victualling and Transport Services. This, in fact, was one of five principal officer posts that were introduced for the purposes of undertaking the former duties of the civilian boards. In common with Edgecumbe, Meek also received a salary of £800 per annum.[163]

Serving on the Medical Committee were the two final members of the Board, Dr John Weir and Dr William Burnett. The former had been a member of the Sick and Hurt department of the Transport Board while Burnett had been appointed directly to the Victualling Board in February 1822.[164] Both received a salary of £800 per annum. As the Board's two medical members, and apart from their particular committee duties, they gave attention to the running of hospitals and sick quarters established for the care of sick and wounded seamen. In addition, they oversaw the supply of all necessary victuals, clothing and medicine to these same institutions as well as medicines to surgeons on board naval ships. It also fell within the province of the two medical commissioners, but only with the consent of the Board as a whole, to appoint officers to hospitals (with the exception of governors, chaplains and lieutenants as these were within the patronage of the Admiralty) and surgeons to naval ships.

The commissioners of the Victualling Board, in carrying out their work, had the assistance of a fairly sizeable office, known as the Victualling Office. Since 1822 this had been divided into seven distinct

branches. At one time these branches, with the exception of the more recently created Medical Stores Department, would have been supervised by either the Accountant for Cash or the Accountant for Stores. Since the abolition of individual responsibility, and the emergence of the committee system, all branches were directly responsible to the Board at large or one or other of the committees. Within the Victualling Office, there were 71 clerks, this being the number allowed by the establishment for clerks that had been fixed by the Admiralty and enforced, in January 1822, by Order in Council.[165] As with the Navy Office, these clerks were appointed by the principal officers and commissioners under which they served. Terms of service were also similar, with clerks divided into three classes and receiving the same rates of pay.[166] However, this having been said, it was nevertheless the case that promotion within the Navy Office was undoubtedly easier. Quite simply, the latter had been permitted a greater proportion of senior clerks than that allowed to the Victualling Office. Whereas, in the Victualling Office there were 6 first class, 14 second class and 51 third class clerks, the Navy Office had 10 first class, 21 second class and 61 third class. This, in effect, meant that 34% of Navy Office clerks were ranked in the two superior classes while only 28% of Victualling Office clerks were so placed.[167] It was doubtless this disparity which prompted the commissioners of the Victualling Board to indicate, in February 1831, the limited chances of promotion available to the clerks that they employed,

the establishment of our office comprises so few clerkships of the first and second class with reference to the total number of clerks, that the promotion to the higher classes is very rare, and can only be obtained by a very few of the clerks. Indeed, on this point we may observe that the limited number of clerkships of the second class obliges us, in some instances, to assign to third class clerks the execution of Duties which ought properly to be entrusted only to clerks of the second class.[168]

General supervision of all the clerks employed in the Victualling Office was in the hands of the Board Secretary. This arrangement had been adopted in February 1822,

We do hereby order and direct the several clerks in all the departments in our office in Somerset House to consider themselves as subordinate to our secretary so far as their official conduct and attendance and are at all times to obey strict obedience to his directions.[169]

Holder of the Secretary's post during the final years of the Board's existence was Marshal Waller Clifton. Formerly an Admiralty clerk for seventeen years, he had been appointed to the secretaryship of the Victualling Board in February 1822. Apart from supervising the clerks, his duties also included overseeing the general running of the Victualling Office and attending all Board meetings. With regard to this latter task, it was his responsibility to carry out much of the related paper work. Such tasks included the reading of letters, receipt and execution of instructions and the keeping of minutes. In addition, he was to ensure that the minutes were properly entered into the official book and indexed, transmit attested contracts to the proper departments and to personally prepare all letters on matters of importance, laying these before the commissioners for signing. The secretary, because of his paramount importance and supervisory powers, was not paid according to the scale allowed for clerks, awarded a separate salary of £1000 per annum. As for the three committees, each had a clerk attached to them and paid as first class clerks of the second section. Their duties were similar to those of the secretary, but were restricted only to their respective committees.[170]

As well as his general responsibilities for the running of the Victualling Office, the secretary also had special responsibilities for a separate branch of clerks within the Victualling Office and denominated

the Secretary's Department. It consisted of one chief clerk, who was responsible for the day-to-day running of this office, together with 3 second class clerks and ten third class clerks. The chief clerk was paid as a first class clerk of the first section. Apart from assisting the secretary in the duties already described, the Secretary's Department wrote up all letters from the minutes (other than those to be written by the secretary personally), entered them into the Letters Book, sent out all necessary instructions, prepared all sea contracts and agreements, drew up instructions for victualling agents and kept a list of medical officers.[171]

The largest single branch of the Victualling Office was the Purser's Office. It consisted of 1 first class clerk of the first section, responsible for the running of this office and designated a chief clerk, 3 second and 11 third class clerks. Primarily, this branch dealt with ship's pursers, the officers appointed by Admiralty warrant to take charge of the victualling stores issued to each warship. It was the purser's duty to provision the ship to which he was attached, ensure that they were correctly stored and to see that the correct daily amounts, as laid down by the Admiralty, were issued. At the end of each voyage the purser's daily accounts had to be submitted to the Purser's Office where they were examined and checked against the muster books. If any short fall was discovered, the particular purser would be called upon to make an explanation.[172]

A further branch of some size was that of the Medical Store Department which consisted of 1 Chief Clerk, 2 second class and 11 third class clerks. The duties of this department were to examine a vast number of hospital accounts that ranged from general provisions through to surgeon's implements and bedding. In addition, this branch made out

certificates for surgeons allowing them to be paid, reported on the eligibility of injured seamen who were making claims for compensatory payment (known as 'smart money') and examined muster books as to the correctness of men who had entered sick quarters or hospital.[173]

The Imprest Office, which consisted of a chief clerk, 2 second and 7 third class clerks, was responsible for the examining, arranging and stating the accounts and payment vouchers presented by those merchants who had supplied various food items either to the victualling yards or directly to naval warships. It was the work of the clerks of this department to ensure that vouchers issued to merchants tallied with received accounts from victualling yards or naval vessels and the merchant's own submitted bill. Once proven, this submitted bill could be passed on to the Cash Office for payment.[174]

The Cash Office consisted of 1 chief clerk and 2 second and 7 third class clerks. Whereas the Imprest Office was only concerned with the certification of bills, this department directed itself both to the making of payments and the issuing of certain bills. Clerks from this office were not only responsible for overseeing the payment of merchants but also those employed within the Victualling Office and those at the various outports. It was also the work of this department to keep a close check on provisions supplied to foreign garrisons so that the appropriate amounts could be collected for payment. Additionally, the Cash Office was responsible for the examination of accounts of sales of old stores, the calculation of tenders made to the Board for the supply of provisions on standing contracts and the keeping of accounts of all claims outstanding against pursers. Finally, the clerks of the Cash Office had to be aware of the likely levels of all future payments likely to be made, transmitting this information to the Navy Board so that they could make

demands on the Treasury for payment.[175]

The sixth branch was the Agency Department. The smallest of all the Victualling Office branches, it was made up of 1 chief clerk, 2 second and 5 third class clerks. Among the tasks undertaken by the Agency Department was that of ensuring all storekeepers - both home and abroad - sent to the Victualling Office regular accounts of all stores received and issued. Once in possession of this information, statements could be made as to the quality of stores and the amounts wasted or lost. In turn, this would allow for estimates to be made of future amounts of provisions that need be ordered. It was also the responsibility of the clerks of this department to keep a careful account of all stores and provisions supplied to non-naval departments such as those issued to the Customs and Excise and for the victualling of convicts.[176]

In concluding this section on the work of the Victualling Board and its attached office, all that need be added is that since 1783, all these various departments described were housed in that complex of offices which made up Somerset Place. Indeed, the Victualling Board shared the west wing in common with the Navy Office. Doubtless this was an aid to general co-operation and an improvement on the pre-1783 period when the Victualling Office had been based at Tower Hill, the Navy Office at Crutched Friars while the Transport Office, prior to its abolition, had been at Dorset Square. However, communications with the Board of Admiralty still remained problematic as their offices were situated in Whitehall, a mile to the west of Somerset House. This particular problem, however, was not to be solved for a good many years. Even after the abolition of the Victualling and Navy Boards, the civil departments of the Navy were to remain at Somerset Place while the operational side continued at Admiralty House.

1.5 The Navy Pay Office

The Navy Pay Office, which since 1782 had also been situated in Somerset Place, had duties closely linked with those of the Navy and Victualling Boards. In fact, it acted very much like a private bank, receiving and disbursing all cash sums for and on behalf of the civilian boards. Whether it was seamen's wages, officers' pensions or cash demands by contractors, all payments were handled by the cashiers and clerks of the Navy Pay Office. As for the various ledgers that recorded these payments, they were eventually forwarded to the relevant branch in either the Navy and Victualling Board where they were audited and then filed.

At the head of the Navy Pay Office was the Treasurer of the Navy. Originally, he had not only been a member of the Navy Board but had been considered the principal commissioner of that board and once had authority in excess of the Comptroller. However, even by the time of the Restoration, he was rarely attending Board meetings, having already established a separate office for the disbursement of cash. Prior to the move to Somerset Place, this had been in Broad Street.[177]

Although, when originally established as an office of state, the Treasurer of the Navy had very real duties, these had slowly been discarded. In fact, by the end of the 18th century, the post was considered little more than a sinecure, with the former duties of the Treasurer undertaken by a senior clerk of the office and carrying the title Paymaster of the Navy. On occasions, the Treasurer might confer with the Paymaster, but little else was now expected of him. For this reason, and the fact that the Treasurer of the Navy was drawing, by the end of the 18th century, an annual salary of £4000, it was a much sought after post.

Yet, sinecure or not, serious problems could sometimes arise for the postholder. For Henry Dundas, the First Viscount Melville, who held the post from 1783 to 1801, failure to curb a series of questionable transactions carried out by Alexander Trotter, the Navy Paymaster, resulted in his having to defend himself against impeachment by the House of Commons. Trotter's activities were first revealed by the Commissioners of Naval Enquiry in their tenth report. This showed that the Paymaster, who had family connections with Coutts Bank, had opened a series of accounts in his own name, placing large sums of navy money into these accounts and profiting from the accrued interest. On one occasion, so the commissioners reported, a sum of £1m was deposited into these accounts. While the Navy had, at no time, suffered a loss, such speculation was deemed unacceptable. That Henry Dundas, as Treasurer of the Navy, was drawn into the controversy, resulted from the possibility of his being aware of these transactions. Furthermore, the fact that Dundas had borrowed money from Trotter, money that might well have been drawn from public funds, did little to strengthen his position. With the opposition baying for his blood, he was forced to resign from his recently acquired post of First Lord but his impeachment ended with his acquittal.[178]

The most accessible breakdown of the duties and internal organisation of the Navy Pay Office exists in the form of the 4th Report of the Commissioners on Fees. Examining the workings of the Navy Pay Office between February and May 1788, the report showed that the Pay Office was then divided into five separate areas of administration. These were the Pay Branch, Navy Branch, Victualling Branch, Accountants Branch and Inspectors Branch.[179]

Largest of these, consisting of seven clerks at Somerset Place

and six additional clerks at the out ports, was the Pay Branch. Adding to its importance was the fact that it was headed by the Deputy Paymaster, the second most senior effective officer employed within the Pay Office. This branch was responsible for paying the wages both of seamen and dockyard workers. For the purpose of paying seamen, this was carried out at Portsmouth, Plymouth or Chatham, by those clerks stationed at these out ports, or at Somerset Place. At the latter, seamen would present themselves on one of four days of the week set aside for this purpose. To draw their wages they had to produce signed vouchers that confirmed their eligibility for payment. This voucher would then be checked against the ship's pay book which had previously been sent to Somerset Place from the ship upon which they had once served.[180]

As for the Navy and Victualling branches these were really extensions of the two civilian boards. Both branches were headed by a cashier and, between them, employed an additional ten clerks. These two branches were responsible for the payment of all bills assigned by the Navy and Victualling Boards with money to be paid released by the cashier of the relevant department.[181]

The Accountants Branch was responsible for bringing up the accounts of former Treasurers while going on to make up the accounts of the Treasurer in office. Over the years, this was a task that had fallen behindhand, with the clerks of the Accountant's branch in 1788 still working on the books of Treasurers who had held office some twenty years earlier.[182] That this should occur was partly a result of the peculiarities of naval accounting procedures. When a Treasurer left office all ship's books had to be transcribed anew. However, the process of clearing the accounts of an earlier Treasurer could not begin until the last ship was paid off. To take one example, that of Lord Grenville, it

was not until 1771 - nine years after he resigned the Treasurership - that the last ship's books from his period of office, were ready for clearing.[183] While a Treasurer's books lay uncleared, his cash balance invariably remained within the hands of that Treasurer. In 1780, for instance, the heirs of Lord Falkland, who had left office in 1689, were held accountable for the truly staggering sum of £27,611. However, attempts were underway to bring the accounts of former Treasurers more up to date, with the Accountants Branch temporarily expanded for this purpose.[184]

The final branch, the Inspectors, consisted of only an inspector and his assistant. It was the business of this branch to inspect and examine all wills and powers of attorney made by seaman, ensuring that they were correctly executed.[185]

Of the recommendations made by the commissioners for improvements in the running of the Navy Pay Office, the most important related to the anomaly of having the Treasurer of the Navy as a sinecurial post while most of the work was undertaken by the Paymaster. At the time of presenting their report the commissioners were unaware that the Paymaster, Alexander Trotter, was beginning his nefarious practice of investing large sums of public money. Deeming him, and his office, to be one of trust, they recommended that his salary be increased from £500 to £800 per annum. As for the Treasurer of the Navy, they indicated that he might be otherwise usefully employed in the service of the state. In other words, the office should either be abolished or the holder of the post, in receipt, as he was, of such an exalted salary, be required to perform duties elsewhere.[186]

Apart from an eventual reduction in the size of the Accountant's

Branch as a result of it having brought accounts more up to date, few changes occurred within the Navy Pay Office until the wars with France had finally been brought to an end. Then, with the emphasis on economy, further thought was given to the huge salary paid to the Treasurer. The Finance Committee of 1817 recommended that this should be decreased to £3000. The government, in agreement with the principle, not only accepted the recommendation, but reduced this salary to £2000. In order to produce further savings, the government also permitted the office of Treasurer to be held conjointly with the Presidency of the Board of Trade. However, this was not considered a permanent arrangement. Graham, in March 1829, put forward the motion that, as the Treasurership of the navy was then vacant, the entire salary might be saved, 'without violation of any existing engagements', if the post was permanently amalgamated. Among those who opposed the motion was Robert Peel. He claimed, on the same occasion, that Vesey Fitzgerald, who then held both posts, was unable to undertake the immensity of work thrown upon him, and had fallen ill as a result.[187]

The Tories, under Wellington, during their final months of office, did make one significant change to the office of Treasurer. Rather than carry forward the Whig suggestion of amalgamation they 'abolished the effective office of Paymaster'.[188] As a result, the Treasurer was forced to perform those same duties, some of which were deemed, to be 'below the rank of the officer holding such a position'.[189] Leastways, that was the view of Charles Poulett-Thomson, the Whig appointee to the post of Treasurer of the Navy, expressed to the House in February 1831. Poulett-Thomson also went on to observe that the Tories had taken the worse possible course of action, blaming it upon their 'anxious desire' to retain patronage. However, once the Whigs had gained office, they undertook the change which they had sought when in opposition, appointing

Poulett-Thomson both Treasurer of the Navy and Vice President of the Board of Trade.[190]

Of course, given that the Treasurer of the Navy now had expanded duties and that one of his predecessors, Fitzgerald, had been unable to handle two posts combined, it is interesting to note that Poulett-Thomson had no reservations in this area. In answering Peel's claims in that earlier debate, Poulett-Thomson informed the House that 'it was within the power of one individual competently to discharge the duties of those offices'.[191] At the same time, Poulett-Thomson also presented a useful summary of the duties of the Treasurer as they existed in 1831. These, so he indicated, consisted of

general supervision of all that passed in his office - of an examination into the accounts, and of the warrants . . . His duty was also to examine the balances, and to check the mode in which the accounts were kept.[192]

The Whigs, themselves, took responsibility for expanding the duties of the Navy Pay Office when, in January 1831, they consolidated the Marine Pay Office with the Navy Pay Office. Both these branches of the Admiralty service, prior to this change, had carried out very similar duties, with the Marine Pay Office simply disbursing wages to another branch of the sea service.[193] As a result, consolidation led to considerable saving of time and effort, with the clerks of the combined departments not only paying the seamen of a particular vessel, but also the marines who served alongside them. Under this re-arrangement, the combined office of Paymaster and Deputy Adjutant of Royal Marines was dispensed with, the then holder, Sir James Cockburn, appointed to a new post of Inspector General.[194] This, in effect, was the military side of his previous post, with Cockburn ceasing to have any further connection with the disbursement of cash. However, in order to secure proper auditing of cash

payments a new post, that of Paymaster of Marines, was established. Designated as an appointment within the Navy Office, the appointee, William Robinson, a former chief clerk in the Marine Pay Office, received a fixed annual salary of £400.[195]

As for the Navy Civil Departments Act of 1832, both the Treasurer of the Navy and the Navy Pay Office were retained. However, the latter was considerably re-structured, allowing ten clerks to be retired and fourteen transferred to the new Accountant-General's department.[196] The Pay Office continued to disburse payments to contractors, dockyard workers, seamen and marines but the work of inspecting wills, letters of attorney and other documents was transferred to the newly created Accountant-General's office. In addition, for the purpose of alleviating the Treasurer of the Navy of some of his more tedious duties, a Treasurer's Assistant was appointed. Placed on an annual fixed salary of £800, this appointment fulfilled that earlier Whig desire of having both a Paymaster and a dual office Treasurer.[197]

1.6 The Ordnance Board

Although, technically, the means by which the Royal Navy received its military stores was not part of the civil administration of the navy, frequent reference throughout the rest of this thesis will, of necessity, be made to the Ordnance Board and its attached office. This particular Board was responsible for the supply of guns and other weapons to the Navy. As such, it was an independent administrative authority that could trace its origins back to the 14th century and the Wardrobe of Arms.[198] Apart from an overall responsibility for the supply and upkeep of the

familiar smooth bore cannons and carronades carried by each and every warship as it left harbour, the Ordnance Board also took similar responsibility for the carriages, upon which these pieces of ordnance were mounted, together with the shot and shell that they fired and the powder used to fire these same missiles. Finally, it was the function of the Board to supply all gun crew implements as well as pistols, swords, muskets and boarding pikes used by sailors and marines alike.

However, simply to dwell upon stores issued to naval warships would be to give a very incomplete picture of the duties of the Ordnance Board as they existed in 1830. In fact, the Board had a much wider range of activities which, when taken as a whole, completely overshadowed these purely naval duties. First, and foremost, the Board was responsible for the supply and maintenance of a similar range of military stores for use by the Army. Furthermore, and here it is useful to borrow a few sentences from the select committee on finance that scrutinised the activities of the Board towards the end of the 18th century, the Board defrayed 'the Expense of the Corps of Artillery, Corps of Engineers, and other Military Corps attached to the Ordnance Service; and also the Charge of repairing and building Fortifications, at Home and Abroad; excepting Field Works Abroad'. In addition, so the report continues, the Board oversaw the payment of 'all contingent expenses attending Ordnance Stores, as well as Camp Equipage for the Artillery'. [199] While these various duties continued to be performed in 1830 the Board had, since the publication of that report in 1797, also acquired responsibility for the maintenance and upkeep of Army barracks and for the supply of stores to convict establishments in the various penal colonies. [200]

Given that the Board of Ordnance had a distinct military and civil role, it is not surprising that this was reflected in the way that the

department was organised. The Board, itself, was made up of four members and had, at its head, the Master-General of Ordnance. The holder of this post was frequently of cabinet rank and always an illustrious soldier, with this office held by the Duke of Wellington between 1826 and 1828. The Master General in 1830, following the formation of Lord Grey's government in November, was the Rt Hon Sir James Kempt.[201]

Despite his taking precedence at Board meetings, the Master General was rarely to be found in attendance. This was as a result of his duties being entirely directed towards the military aspects of the Board's work while his three colleagues concentrated on civil matters. To make up for the Master General's non-attendance at these meetings, a considerable correspondence ensued, with the Master General having to be informed of all decisions taken. According to Sir James Kempt, when examined by the Commissioners Appointed to Inquire into the Civil Affairs of the Army in February 1836:

The Master-general may preside at the Board if he pleases, but his office is distinct from that of the Board . . . The Board is only executive in conjunction with the Master-general; all letters and orders are issued in the name of "The Master-general and Board;" and as the supreme power is placed in the Master-general's hands, I certainly considered myself responsible for the department.[202]

However, the correspondence between the Board and its head was very much a one way process. While the Board had to keep the Master-General informed of all its decisions and alter these in the light of any comments he might make, this did not apply in reverse. Matters of a military nature were not discussed or commented upon at Board meetings:

. . . the Master-General attends the Board only on special and very rare occasions, but all its proceedings in the form of minutes are regularly submitted to him for his approval, and are subject to his control. His authority is supreme in all matters, both civil and

military, and he is considered responsible for the manner in which the department is generally conducted.[203]

The Board of Ordnance, exclusive of the Master-General was, at the beginning of 1830, composed of five principal officers: the Lieutenant-General, the Surveyor-General, the Clerk of the Ordnance, the Clerk of Deliveries and the Principal Storekeeper.[204] However, in November, with the change of ministry and the appointment of Sir James Kempt, the posts of Lieutenant-General and Clerk of Deliveries were abolished. Meeting, usually three times a week, in their London office, which was situated in the Tower, the re-constituted Board continued to be responsible for civil business. According to the Commissioners inquiring into the civil administration of the Army, the class of business for which they had particular responsibility was reported in 1837 to be:

. . . of very great extent and importance; it comprehends in the first place, with regard to the Ordnance corps, the greater part of that business which, as relates to the rest of the Army, is transacted in the War Office; as for instance, the examination of pay lists and accounts, the decision of all claims by Officers to pensions for wounds, to compensate for the loss of horses or baggage, to command money, and to allowances for passages, and in lieu of lodgings and servants, &c. But by far the larger part of the civil duties of the Board of Ordnance have reference to matters concerning not merely their own particular branch of the military service, but the whole Army and even the Navy. Arms, ammunition, and military stores of every description (including guns and carriages for the Navy) are supplied by them to both services . . . The construction and repair of fortifications, military works and barracks, is another large branch of the business of the department . . . [205]

Of course, it was not the principal officers themselves who undertook all this work. They merely took, after written consultation with the Master-General, the necessary executive decisions. As with the Admiralty and Navy Boards, the Ordnance Board also had a large office of

clerks at its disposal, this office headed by a secretary who also attended Board meetings in a non-executive capacity. The Ordnance Office, in 1830, consisted of a little over 500 clerks, each of them serving one of the various departments into which the Ordnance Board was divided.

The principal officers themselves, apart from their executive role at Board meetings were also responsible for the running of these individual departments. This organisational framework was to prove of particular significance during the period in which thought was given to the Admiralty reforms of 1832. The Finance Committee, set up in 1827 reported favourably on this method of governing the Ordnance Board:

. . . and considered that the system it employed might well be followed in other branches of the administration.[206]

In referring to this, Hogg, in his study of Woolwich Arsenal, notes that,

this proposal did not pass unnoticed by Earl Grey's cabinet in 1831, and the scheme for consolidating the various departments of the Admiralty adopted by Parliament followed the Ordnance model.[207]

Despite Hogg's pronouncement, it should be remembered that the Navy Board had already adopted a similar system of individual departmental responsibility in 1829. It seems just as likely, therefore, that the successful introduction of this same system within the soon defunct Navy Board would also have had some bearing upon reforms eventually introduced.

In terms of handling naval ordnance, each of the principal officers, together with the branches that they headed, became involved during different stages of the overall process. The Surveyor-General, who was responsible for the surveying of stores, and ensuring that all labourers and artificers employed by the Board, undertook their work efficiently, had a general responsibility for the manufacture of ordnance. This was a

facet of the Board's work that has so far gone unmentioned. By 1830, the 31 acre site of the Woolwich Arsenal, developed for the manufacture of ordnance in the early 18th century, had become a massive centre for the production of items of ordnance that included gun carriages and cannons for use on board warships. Although, at the beginning of 1830, the number of workers employed at Woolwich stood at only 700, this number had been dramatically reduced from the 5,000 that had been employed within the Arsenal in 1814.[208]

As well as the Arsenal at Woolwich, further centres of manufacture, and overseen by the Surveyor-General, existed at Enfield Lock and Waltham Abbey. Established in 1811, the Enfield factory concentrated upon the production of small arms, some of these eventually destined for use at sea. At Waltham Abbey, the Ordnance Department had a factory for the manufacture of gunpowder. Since the end of the Napoleonic Wars, other manufacturing sites had been closed, these including a gunpowder mill at Faversham and a second small arms establishment at Lewisham.

However, not all military supplies were produced within the Ordnance manufacturing departments. Large numbers of naval guns and other items were also purchased directly from private manufacturers. The advertising of tenders, issuing of contracts and final payment was the responsibility of the Clerk of the Ordnance. This office holder was also responsible for drawing up all estimates for the supply of stores to warships and he assisted in stocktaking in relation to ships. Finally, he kept receipts for all payments made in connection with the naval gun wharves.

The Principal Storekeeper had overall responsibility for ordnance when in store. His main concern was directed towards the arsenal at Woolwich, but additional arms were also stored in the ordnance wharves at

at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Chatham and Sheerness. At one time the Principal Storekeeper had, together with the Clerk of Delivery (who had been responsible for inspecting new stores) been jointly responsible for the receipt of stores. However, upon the abolition of the latter office the principal storekeeper had gained greater responsibility within this area.[209]

Undoubtedly there were considerable advantages in having one organisational body responsible for the supply of military equipment to both the Army and the Navy. Most important, perhaps, was that of economy. At this time, the large pieces of ordnance used on board warships were identical to those used on land. A 32-pounder smooth bore cannon, the gun upon which the Admiralty had determined to standardize, was exactly the same product whether on board ship and mounted on a sea carriage or taken to a fort and mounted on a land carriage. This allowed such guns to be manufactured on the same site and by the same group of skilled workmen. It was certainly a situation that existed within the arsenal at Woolwich, the Ordnance Board not having to employ a duplicate set of artisans for the needs of the two services. This same advantage of economy also worked for the manufacture of gunpowder at Waltham Abbey and small arms at Enfield. Although with regard to the latter, it should be noted that seamen were usually issued with a different pattern of musket, generally shorter, while that issued to the Marines was of an identical pattern to that received by the Army.[210]

The saving of costs did not just end with the advantages to be seen within the manufacturing departments of the Ordnance service. Guns, and other military stores, when acquired under terms of contract, were also likely to be cheaper with the existence of just one board. The Clerk of the Ordnance, when tenders were requested by advertisement, was

undoubtedly offered materials at lower prices because of the great number of items required. Furthermore, it seems likely that a system which encouraged separate tendering for both Navy and Army ordnance might have resulted in a degree of competition with one of these organisations probably forced to pay a higher price than the other in order to fulfil their requisite needs. An example of this had certainly occurred during the American Revolutionary War. During that period the costs of hiring ships for transport had been artificially inflated by the Navy and Ordnance boards and Treasury competing against one another for the limited number of transports then available. This problem was eventually solved by the formation, in 1794, of a separate Transport Board responsible for the hire of all shipping regardless of whether it was required for the transport of troops, guns or victuals.[211]

However, despite the considerable advantage of economy, the disadvantage for the Admiralty appears overwhelming. In particular, the Navy was reliant for its supply of guns upon an organisation more or less totally dominated by the Army. All Board members, from the Master-General down, were selected only from among serving Army officers and rarely had any seagoing experience. As regards the basic gun, this was not a problem until the later years of the 19th century.[212] The difficulties that arose concerned various associated items such as the carriage and flintlocks.

The most appropriate method for mounting a gun on a seagoing warship would appear to be some form of slide mount as used by the carronade.[213] This had the advantage of providing a controlled recoil rather than the unpredictable movement of the gun when mounted on the standard sea carriage with trucks (or small wheels). [214] Referring to the latter type of sea carriage, Lavery states that,

because it was mounted on wheels, it could be highly dangerous if it broke loose. There was no effective way of bringing it slowly to a halt, and it tended to stop with a sharp jerk when the breech ropes were fully extended. The direction of its recoil was unpredictable, especially on a rolling and heaving deck, and this could be dangerous to the unwary seaman. It was not very efficient mechanically, for it was restrained too near its rear, and this probably caused it to jerk violently near the end of its recoil.[215]

Lavery, for one, believes that the failure to introduce a better carriage was a possible reflection of this division between the Admiralty and Ordnance Board. He goes on to state:

. . . any other type of carriage would have been a permanent fitting in the ship, but the truck carriage was easily removable, and could be taken into the Ordnance stores when the ship paid off.[216]

However, Lavery does further add:

Perhaps it is not safe to make too much of this last advantage [the carriage being easily removable], for other naval powers used the truck carriage as much as the British, and only in Sweden, where the innovating genius of Chapman was applied to the task, was there any real movement towards its replacement on the main deck guns of ships of war.[217]

It also seems likely that this division of responsibility between the two boards also held up other developments. The flintlock is, perhaps, one further example. Although officially introduced into the Royal Navy in 1790, its adoption was partly delayed by the lack of importance attached to the device. The flintlock was the means by which powder in the vent of the gun could be more systematically ignited than by the use of the more traditional quick match. That the Ordnance Board would not have considered the flintlock to be of overwhelming importance would have resulted from Board members having a lack of experience in the rolling of a ship when at sea and the effect of this movement upon the elevation of a gun and its subsequent accuracy. However, it must also be

pointed out that the device, as originally recommended by Sir Charles Douglas of the Royal Navy in 1778, was initially rejected by the Admiralty itself. The argument regarding the disadvantage of divided responsibility still holds true however. Divorced, as they were, from guns and gunnery on board warships, the Admiralty had, as a result, less interest than it should have done in the development of the naval gun.

Other disadvantages in the existence of a system in which one group was responsible for the supplying guns to another were highlighted by Sir John Barrow, second secretary to the Admiralty, when giving evidence before the Committee appointed to Inquire into the Civil Departments of the Army. On being asked, 'How are the ships armed?' he replied:

After a ship (built for a particular class, to carry so many guns) is to be commissioned, we desire the Board of Ordnance to put so many guns on board for the lower, upper and quarter decks, according to her intended armament; their orders are accordingly sent down to their officers at the port where the ship may be, and they are in time put on board; but it happens very frequently that when they come on board the carriages will not fit the ports, or something is amiss with them, and we are obliged to write again; probably they have to be taken out of the ship and sent back to the gun-wharf; all this occasions great delay. There is a vast deal of correspondence carried on with the Ordnance Office on trifling subjects; for instance, if a bolt or hinge happens to be wrong in one of the carriages, our people on board must not alter it, but we must write to the Ordnance to desire them to write down to their officer at the gun-wharf to have it put right, which also adds to the delay.[218]

A further problem was brought to the attention of this same Commission by Captain the Hon George Elliott, a member of the Board of Admiralty and a former first secretary, when he was examined:

The complaint in the Navy is that the Ordnance department are not so well aware of the fittings that are required for guns, and more particularly for slide

carriages, which require great nicety, as naval men would be; and for not understanding the exact reason for wishing to have alterations, or wishing to have them fitted in a peculiar manner, they are apt to disapprove of those things; but they never show their disapprobation by ultimately resisting in any way . . . [219]

To the question 'Then you do not find that there is any great practical inconvenience from the present system?', Captain Elliott went on to state:

It causes delay, certainly, as will be easily understood when I explain, that if anything is required, if a naval officer applies for any peculiar mode for fitting his guns, or for any other thing that has to do with the Ordnance department, he makes his application to the Admiralty; the Admiralty send that letter to the Ordnance, requesting that it may be complied with; the Ordnance write down to their officer to carry it into execution, who is not always aware of the exact manner in which it should be done, and that frequently causes a correspondence back and forwards four or five times before it is set to rights. Then another thing is, that the the gun-carriages entirely depend upon the Ordnance, whereas the fitting of the ports, and of every other part of the ship connected with the gun, depends upon the dock-yard; so there are two sets of people working with opposite plans or upon opposite ideas, and that frequently leads to trouble and difficulty.[220]

A possible separation of ordnance administration between the Army and Navy was clearly on the minds of the commissioners when they further asked Elliott for his views on allowing the Admiralty responsibility for the 'fabrication' of sea carriages. According to Elliott:

It would remove a great portion of the difficulty, but not the whole . . . the mode of fitting locks, powder cases, and a variety of things, in which a great many alterations and improvements have been made of late years; and when all these things are undergoing improvement in the Army, they are more apt to think that the same things would suit us than we are.[221]

As for the Admiralty entirely gaining responsibility for its own ordnance, this question was directed to Henry Duncan, naval member of the Board of Ordnance, by the commissioners sitting in 1833. His reply, similar to that given by a number of ordnance personnel more directly associated with the Army, was damning in its rejection of such a notion:

I think it would be a very injurious thing to the economy of the country and to the benefit of the service if the separation were made, because the supplies of naval ordnance stores, being in a great degree similar to what we use, it would involve two sets of stores, and two sets of persons to take care of them, and more would be kept up than requisite; for example - at present, at Gibraltar, a ship may be supplied from the guns of the place, for they are exactly of the same construction as those used for the sea service. The separation, therefore, would involve a much greater quantity of stores to carry it on in a regular manner, and the services would always be borrowing and lending.[222]

In the end, the commissioners in this same report, decided to skate over the entire issue:

Upon the whole we are inclined to believe that it will be better . . . to leave this matter to be settled between the two departments [Admiralty and Ordnance Board]; as we think that if there is good understanding between them, there can be no difficulty in coming to such an arrangement as will best suit their mutual convenience, taking as the principle to be observed, that each should afford as much assistance to the other, so as to avoid the creation of double establishments and double stores for an object common to both, and that in all cases the expense of arms or stores required by either service should be borne upon its own estimates even when supplied by the other.[223]

The difficulties in having a separate organisation responsible for the supply of naval guns were not entirely restricted to matters presented

by those giving evidence to the above Commission. A particular problem was generated by the necessity of siting the ordnance wharves (necessary for the storage of guns) immediately adjacent to the dockyards themselves. As a result, later expansion of these dockyards was frequently hindered by the need to acquire or build around the ordnance wharf. Admittedly, this would have been a problem even if these facilities had been supervised by the Admiralty. However, the fact that they came under the authority of a distinct and separate body often prevented the easiest pathway to expansion being followed.

At Devonport, the construction of a steam yard, between the years 1846 and 1853, was greatly hindered by the Ordnance department. In particular, the steam yard itself had to be built some distance from the main yard, due to the Board of Ordnance wishing to retain those facilities already in existence. Furthermore, although the Ordnance did agree to re-position some of its gun powder magazines, so creating the site for a new basin, the agreement was so long in being reached that the entire project for a steam yard was subsequently delayed.

Matters were even worse at Sheerness. Here, the Ordnance Board possessed one of the few areas of land upon which the dockyard could expand. As a result, the strategic value of Sheerness was to remain somewhat limited throughout much of the 18th century. Eventually, a determined effort to expand the yard, during the first three decades of the following century, resulted in an agreement by which the gun wharf would be re-located on land owned by the Admiralty at the northern end of the dockyard. Even so, this did not prove to be an end to the entire matter. Lengthy correspondence, between the Ordnance and Navy boards subsequently developed over the exact boundary that would divide the dockyard from the gun wharf. In fact, so protracted was this later

difficulty that it even threatened to delay completion of the massive project to rebuild the dockyard at Sheerness. Indeed, this was the point raised by Sir T. Byam Martin in a letter written to the Ordnance Board in March 1825:

It is of great importance that these points (the setting of a boundary and the building of a wall for partition purposes) should be speedily decided on by the Board of Ordnance, in order that the contractors may not have just cause to complain of being delayed in the execution of a work which they are bound to complete in a given time.[224]

An eventual termination to such difficulties were only brought about towards the end of the 19th century when the Admiralty gained eventual control of its own ordnance. That such a move was finally deemed essential was because of the changing nature of naval and army ordnance, with such weapons no longer of sufficient similarity as to be interchangeable between the two services. Prior to that move however, the Ordnance Board, itself, had been abolished in 1855. The immediate result, much to the annoyance of the Admiralty, was that procurement of all guns was placed under Army supervision.

NOTES

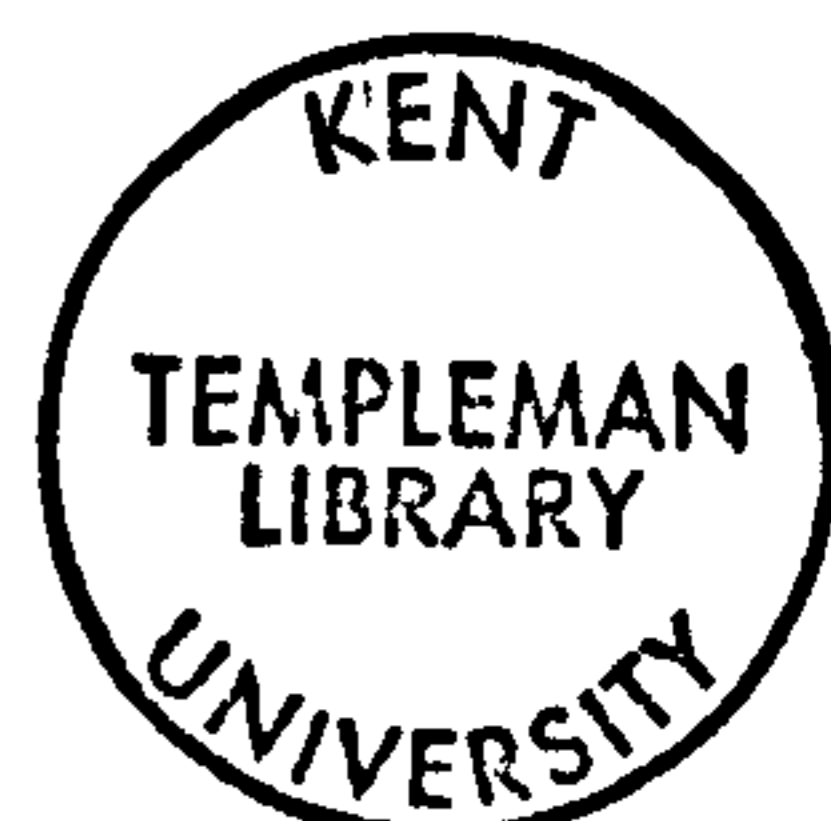
1. Venice, during the height of its naval power, employed a 2000+ labour force within its galley arsenal. Referred to by Dante in his 'Inferno', the arsenal here was founded in 1104. Arenson (1990), 72; Lane (1975), 146.
2. British naval dockyards, at this time, were comparatively unsophisticated. The one mentioned at Portsmouth consisted of nothing more than a series of mud embankments with the gateway also of mud. When ships entered or left this gate had to be dug out and later re-built. A fuller description of early naval dockyards can be found in MacDougall (1982), 18-35.
3. NMM ADM BP/34B. 31 May 1814.
4. The dockyard at Deptford was to be placed in a temporary state of closure in 1832.
5. NMM ADM BP/52C. 11 Apr 1832.
6. For a fuller discussion of the work of the various artisans and labourers employed see MacDougall (1982, 1987 or 1989).
7. A fuller discussion on the introduction of coppering in the Royal Navy can be found in Knight (1973).
8. A fuller discussion of naval ordnance facilities may be found in Coad (1990), 245ff.
9. NMM DP/42. 15 Feb 1822.
10. PRO ADM 109/91. 16 Jan 1826.
11. PRO ADM1/3387. 1 Dec 1832. Monthly Progress of Works at Cremill Victualling Yard. ADM1/3379-90 contain numerous references to the rebuilding works at both Cremill and Weevil yards.
12. PRO ADM114/40. 6 Jan 1826. This document contains references to building costs while other documents in this same collection provide a complete picture of the planning and building of the new hospital at Chatham. See also MacDougall, P., 'The Building of Melville Hospital' in Bygone Kent (1991).
13. Sainty (1975), 28
14. *ibid.*, 27-8
15. *ibid.*, 26
16. Collinge (1978), 98
17. Details on the life of Admiral Sir George Cockburn may be found in Pack (1987).
18. Cockburn, at this time, was also a Commissioner on the Board of Longitude, a holder of the Knight Grand Cross of the Military Order of the Bath and Major-General of the Royal Marines. See Marshal (1827) I ii, 518, 871.
19. Marshal (1827) I ii, 615, 872.
20. DNB. Entry: Sir George Clerk.
21. Hyde (1959), 25, 31.
22. Sainty (1975), 28; PRO PC2/208, 10 May 1827.
23. Pocock (1991), 188.
24. Sainty (1975), 33. The full membership of the Council advising the Duke of Clarence as appointed on 2 May were Sir W. Hope Johnstone (Naval member), Sir George Cockburn (Naval), W.R.K. Douglas and J.E. Denison. In February 1828 Sir George Clerk and the Earl of Bereknock replaced the two civilian members previously appointed while in March 1828 Cockburn replaced Johnstone at the head of the council with Sir E.W.C.R. Owen appointed as the new naval member.
25. Pack (1987), 266.
26. Sainty (1975), 28
27. *ibid.*, 34
28. Rodger (1979), 96

29. Fees Commission. 5th Report, 1
30. Although it should be added that informal meetings did take place between the Navy Comptroller and First Lord.
31. Sir T. Byam Martin is treated in more detail in a later section.
32. Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. Vol X. First reading and debate on Navy Civil Department's Bill. 14 Feb 1832. p.35.
33. Middleton (1991), 21
34. PRO ADM 3/61, 9 June 1749. The value of the 18th century visitation is discussed by Rodger in his biography of the 4th Earl of Sandwich. Sandwich was a member of Anson's board and Rodger suggests that he was responsible for initiating the use of visitations. Certainly no further such inspections were carried out by Anson when Sandwich was not a member of the Board. Furthermore, when Sandwich himself became First Lord he once again used the visitation. Interestingly enough, these later visitations included members of the Navy Board, seemingly in an effort to achieve co-operation rather than confrontation. See Rodger (1993), 64-5; 138-9.
35. Middleton (1991), 24
36. *ibid.*, 26
37. *ibid.*, 28
38. PRO ADM 7/659, 13 May 1771.
39. NMM ADM/B/185, 24 Jul 1771.
40. For more general information on the seasoning sheds as built at Chatham see MacDougall, P., 'Chatham Dockyard's Timber Seasoning Sheds' in *Bygone Kent* Vol 11:9, 515-8.
41. Lavery (1983) I, 96
42. According to Norman Baker, this change in government attitude resulted from a desire on the part of many parliamentarians to re-examine the workings of government following the loss of the American colonies. See, in particular, Baker, N., 'Changing Attitudes towards Government in Eighteenth Century England' in Whiteman et al [ed] (1973), 202-219.
43. Christie (1970), 296
44. The following areas associated with the civil administration of the Navy were considered by the Fees Commission: Admiralty (3rd Report), Treasurer of the Navy (4th), Navy Board (5th), Dockyards (6th), Sick and Hurt Office (7th), Victualling Office (8th and 10th) Navy and Victualling Departments abroad (9th and 12th), Transport Board (13th) and Victualling yards (11th).
45. The broad charge as carried on each report.
46. Morriss (1983), 191
47. PRO PC2/146, 8 Jun 1796
48. PRO PC2/150
49. Twiss (1846) I, 280
50. Morriss (1983) 198
51. Marsden (1838) 103-4
52. *ibid.*
53. *ibid.*
54. Murray (1938) XXIV, 344
55. *ibid.*
56. McCahill (1987)
57. A brief history of the Navy Board can be found in Collinge (1978).
58. PRO ADM106/2736-9
59. *ibid.*
60. PRO ADM106/2739
61. Hamilton (1896) p.186; Coad (1989) p.44
62. Surprisingly, in her thesis on the Victorian and Early 20th century office buildings, F.M. Lockyer quotes, without question, a claim by

- Edward I. Anson, that the first building to be specifically constructed for the accommodation of offices, was not constructed until the early 19th century. Somerset House and numerous earlier purpose-built offices in the victualling and dockyards is seemingly ignored. This can only be taken as a further indication that considerable research still needs to be undertaken into the civil administration of the British navy.
63. PRO ADM1/3793; Collinge (1978), 121.
 64. Hamilton (Navy Records Society vol.XIX), 25
 65. *ibid.*
 66. Hamilton (1890), p.70
 67. Hamilton (1893).
 68. *ibid.*
 69. Hamilton (1890), p.241.
 70. BL Add Ms 41,400, f.219.
 71. CRO D/GN/3/1/9, f.9
 72. Laughton (1909), p.235-6.
 73. Morriss (1983), p.210.
 74. PRO PC2/146 p.24ff.
 75. Falconer (1815) p.335.
 76. A reasonably comprehensive account of the moveents of John Dickens, while employed as a pay clerk, can be found in Allen (1982).
 77. Laughton (1909).
Accounts of these visitations are to be found in PRO ADM106/3230-9.
 78. Visitations to the dockyards, with Martin in attendance, were made in 1816 (Portsmouth and Pembroke), 1817 (Portsmouth and Plymouth), 1818 (all home yards), 1819 (Chatham and Sheerness), 1820 (all home yards outside of London), 1821 (all home yards outside of London), 1822 (all home yards outside of London), 1823 (Chatham and Portsmouth), 1824 (Devonport and Pembroke), 1825 (Portsmouth, Devonport and Pembroke), 1827 (Devonport, Pembroke, Portsmouth and Chatham), 1828 (Sheerness, Deal, Portsmouth and Plymouth). More frequent visits to Woolwich and Deptford, because of their proximity to Somerset Place, also took place but go unrecorded in the accounts of dockyard visitations held in the PRO ADM106/3230-9 series.
 79. Collinge (1978), 22.
 80. PRO PC/210. 30 Jan 1829.
 81. Collinge (1978), p.22.
 82. *ibid.*, p.20; PC2/210 30 Jan 1829.
 83. PRO PC2/210. 30 Jan 1829.
 84. *ibid.*
 85. See, in particular, the mast houses at Chatham and the adjoining wheelwright's shop.
 86. Collinge (1978), p.31-2; PRO ADM6/30 p.170.
 87. Morriss (1987), 155
 88. PRO PC2/210. 30 Jan 1829.
 89. Morriss (1987), 155. For many years after his dismissal, Tucker continued to work with St Vincent, going on to produce a biography (with collected letters) of the former First Lord.
 90. Evidence that Joseph Tucker was a Whig supporter is not based entirely on his having been in receipt of St Vincent's patronage. In the 1831 election at Plymouth, Graham felt sufficiently able to rely upon Tucker's vote in an attempt to oust Martin from this constituency. To ensure that Tucker was in a position to vote, he was allowed use of the Admiralty yacht for purpose of travel.
 91. BM Add Ms 41,402, 19 Oct 1818; GD51/2/437/9, 28 Aug 1818; Tucker (1848), 55-56. Further attention will be given to this matter in a subsequent chapter.
 92. *ibid.*
 93. Collinge (1978), p.22.

94. MacDougall (1987), p.101-2.
95. PRO PC2/146. 8 Jun 1796; PC2/210 30 Jan 1829.
96. PRO PC2/210 *ibid*.
97. Falconer (1815), p.578.
98. Collinge (1978), p.17. In the years leading up to 1830, the Admiralty had wrought changes upon the Navy Board through the use of orders in council which, on two occasions, 1796 and 1829, had resulted in changes to personnel for reasons other than retirement.
99. PRO PC2/210. 30 Jan 1829.
100. PRO ADM 106/3571.
101. PRO ADM 7/821.
102. Collinge (1978), p.70
103. PRO PC2/146. 8 Jun 1796.
104. PRO PC2/197. 30 Jan 1816.
105. *ibid*.
106. *ibid*. Salaries for clerks in the Navy Office in 1830 were as follows:
 Third Class Clerks - £90 (min) rising by £10 annual increments to £400 (max). However, the first three years were served without an incremental award.
 Second Class Clerks - £400 (min) rising by £10 annual increments to £600 (max).
 First Class Clerks - £600 (min) rising by £10 annual increments to £850 (max).
107. PRO PC2/197. 30 Jan 1816.
108. PRO ADM 7/821. p.64.
109. *ibid*., p.66, 69, 71, 75, 77, 81, 87.
110. *ibid*., p.81, 90-1.
111. PRO PC2/146. 8 Jun 1796.
112. *ibid*.
113. The particular appointment of interest here is that of Samuel Bentham, appointed to the Board in December 1808, as Civil Architect and Engineer. See Collinge (1978) p.86. This office was abolished in November 1812. See PRO PC2/194. p.67-70.
114. The Sick and Hurt Board, at one time the Commission for taking Care of Sick and Wounded Seamen, was initially constituted only during war time periods, going on to a permanent position within naval administration from 1740 onwards. For further details see Lloyd and Coulter III (1961).
115. The Transport Board had only two periods of limited existence. It was first instituted in 1690 for the transportation of the Army to Ireland. This Board continued to exist until 1724. It was again brought into existence in 1794 and continued until 1817. At other times the work of hiring transports fell into the province of the Victualling Board (for the transport of provisions) and the Treasury (for the transport of troops). A good appreciation of the work of the Transport Board during the American Revolutionary War period can be found in Syrett (1970).
116. Over the years comparatively little research has been undertaken into the workings of the Victualling Board. The exception is Watson (1965), but this concentrates exclusively upon the first two decades of the 18th century. No research appears to have been undertaken upon the Board during its final years of existence.
117. For details of this change, see Lloyd and Coulter III (1961).
118. Because of the failure of these merchants to supply provisions of adequate quality, the work of provisioning warships was placed, during the period 1654-1660, under the authority of three naval commissioners. See Oppenheim (1896), 326-7.
119. See previous section of this thesis which deals with the

- administrative framework of the Navy Board.
120. PRO ADM 49/59. Victualling Office Instructions, 1711.
 121. PRO ADM 7/648. Instructions, 1714.
 122. PRO ADM 49/59. Victualling Office Instructions, 1711.
 123. *ibid.*
 124. *ibid.*
 125. Fees. 8th Report, 1
 126. PRO ADM 7/648. Instructions, 1714.
 127. *ibid.*
 128. Fees. 8th Report, 2
 129. Fees. 8th Report, 21-23
 130. 25 Geo III cap 19.
 131. Fees. 8th Report, 15
 132. *ibid.*, 22.
 133. *ibid.*, 17.
 134. Naval Revision. 10th Report, 6.
 135. Fees. 5th Report, 17.
 136. Fees. 8th Report, 22.
 137. PRO PC2/136, 12 Jan 1792. Privy Office Registers.
 138. Further Proceedings . . . (Victualling Board), 1794.
 139. *ibid.*
 140. *ibid.*
 141. Navy Revision. 10th Report, 17-19.
 142. *ibid.*, 18.
 143. *ibid.*
 144. *ibid.*
 145. *ibid.*
 146. *ibid.*, 19-21.
 147. *ibid.*, 19
 148. PC2/175
 149. PRO ADM 114/57. Patent appointing Victualling Board Commissioners, Feb 1822.
 150. PRO ADM1/3794. 10 Feb 1831.
 151. Correspondence concerning the earlier change is contained in the minutes of the Committee for General Business for the period Jan-March 1822 and catalogued in the PRO as ADM111/256.
 152. PRO ADM 111/256. 11 Mar 1822.
 153. *ibid.*
 154. *ibid.*
 155. PRO ADM 114/57.
 156. Revision. 10th Report, 31.
 157. *ibid.*, 20-1; PRO ADM 111/256, 11 Mar 1822.
 158. Revision. 10th Report, 31.
 159. PRO ADM 111/257. Patent appointing Victualling Board Commissioners, July 1823.
 160. Marshall (1824), II i, 107.
 161. PRO ADM1/3794 10 Feb 1831.
 162. *ibid.*; PRO ADM1/3800 1 Jun 1832; ADM1/3793 4 Jun 1832; Sainty (1975)
 163. PRO ADM/3794 10 Feb 1831.
 164. *ibid.*
 165. PRO PC2/204 17 Jan 1822.
 166. PRO PC2/175
 167. PRO ADM1/3794 10 Feb 1831.
 168. *ibid.*
 169. PRO ADM 111/256, 1 Feb 1822.
 170. *ibid.*, 11 Mar 1822.
 171. *ibid.* 4 Feb and 11 Mar 1822.
 172. *ibid.*
 173. *ibid.*



174. *ibid.*
175. *ibid.*
176. *ibid.*
177. Collinge (1978), 1
178. Furber (1931), 142-71
179. Fees (4th Report), 3-6
180. *ibid.*, 4
181. *ibid.*
182. *ibid.*
183. Rodger (1979, 77-8.
184. George Grenville held the post of Treasurer of the Navy on three separate occasions: 1754-5; 1756-7; 1757-1762. Previous to this he had served as an Admiralty commissioner between 1744 and 1747 before becoming First Lord in Oct 1762. He continued to hold this post until April of the following year.
185. Fees, *op cit.*, 5.
186. *ibid.*, 7
187. Speeches of Sir Robert Peel, 107-11.
188. Poulett-Thomson, Treasurer of the Navy (1830-34), speaking before the House of Commons Supply Committee during the debate on naval estimates, 25 Feb 1831.
189. *ibid.*
190. *ibid.*
191. *ibid.*
192. *ibid.*
193. Sainty (1975), 117.
194. The following observation can be found in the Radical engendered 'Black Book' of 1831: "The Paymaster of Marines has a salary of £1000, for the discharge of duties that might be very well annexed to the Navy Office. "As to the reasons," says Sir H. Parnell, "that are given to the contrary, they are so plainly nothing more than ingenious pretexts for maintaining a lucrative office, that it would be a waste of time to notice them." See p. 376.
195. Collinge (1978), 33
196. 2William IV c40.
197. See reference to Graham's comments during the Commons debate of 12 March 1830.
198. The Wardrobe of Arms, which developed into the Privy Wardrobe of the Tower was the first specialised department of state and was responsible for the provision of arms and warlike stores to the military. At the head of this department was the Master of Ordnance. In 1543 the department was re-organised, Henry VIII creating four officers subordinate to the Master-General. These additional officers were designated Lieutenant, Storekeeper, Surveyor and Clerk of Deliveries. At this time all these officers were post holders by virtue of their individual letters patent, there being no obligation placed on them to work as a team. Eventually, in 1597, a Board of Ordnance was created, these five officers comprising its membership.
199. Select Committee on Finance. 21st Report. Office of Ordnance. House of Commons Sessional Papers. 19 July 1797.
200. Commission Appointed to Inquire into the Civil Departments of the Army, 1837. Report, 6-7.
201. *ibid.*, Minutes of Evidence, 34.
202. *ibid.* The Commission was originally appointed in 1833 to inquire into the practicalities of consolidating the different departments of the Army. As a matter of course, careful consideration was given to the Ordnance Board and the work it performed on behalf of

the Admiralty. Although it produced a draft report, the retirement of the Cabinet in 1834 prevented discussion. The Commission was re-appointed in 1835 and then produced a unanimous report in 1837. The evidence taken by the Commissions established both in 1833 and 1835 have been extensively used in gathering information on the Ordnance Board during this period.

203. *ibid.*, 35.
204. *ibid.*, 35.
205. *ibid.* Report, 6.
206. Hogg II (1963), 1086.
207. *ibid.*, 1086.
208. *ibid.*, 1289.
209. *ibid.*, 1053
210. Civil Administration of the Army, 1837. Evidence, 8.
211. Syrrrett (1970).
212. As naval ordnance developed it took on a design that markedly differed from land guns.
213. The carronade was a short, light gun that made use of a small charge that fired a relatively heavy shot over a short distance.
214. From almost their first use in British warships, the carronade was mounted on slide carriages that allowed the gun to recoil backwards after firing without taking the entire carriage. Additionally, the carronade was elevated and depressed by means of a screw at the back of the weapon, this gave it a further advantage over the existing long gun mounted on a truck carriage as they were elevated and depresses by means of wedges. These had the unfortunate habit of flying out when the gun was fired, so delaying the operation of reloading.
215. Lavery II (1984), 153.
216. *ibid.*, 153.
217. *ibid.*, 153.
218. Civil Adminiistration of the Army (1837). Evidence, 8.
219. *ibid.*, 9.
220. *ibid.*, 9.
221. *ibid.*, 9,
222. Civil Admin. of the Army (1834). Evidence, 30.
223. Civil Admin of the Army (1837). Report, 17.
224. SRO, GD51/2/1009/1-2.

CHAPTER TWO
THE BACKGROUND TO REFORM

One useful point of entry for undertaking an analysis of the events that resulted in abolition of the navy's civilian boards is that of giving consideration to the individuals primarily responsible for bringing about this change: John Jervis, Earl St Vincent (1725-1823) and Charles, 2nd Earl Grey (1764-1845). Outwardly, these two men appear to have had little in common. While St Vincent was of relatively humble background, eventually achieving fame as a naval commander, Grey was born into the riches of a landholding family and pursued an entirely political career. However, there were points of important similarity. For a start, they were both faithful to the Whig cause, supporting certain selected principles through both thick and thin. While St Vincent had endangered his naval career, refusing to take arms against those who sought independence for North America, Grey had stuck rigidly to the issue of reform at a time when desertion of the cause appeared to be expedient for the majority. Furthermore, and of great importance for the future of the civilian boards, both served in the capacity of First Lord of the Admiralty.[1]

In bringing to a conclusion the long established tradition of having boards separately responsible for procurement and strategy, St Vincent was to prove himself the instigator and Grey the man who carried it through. The former, a man of strong views and autocratic temperament, brought to the Admiralty, during his term of office, an excessive dislike of all those associated with the management of the navy's civil affairs. This hostility, combined with heavy handed efforts to impose a series of reforms, eventually led to a complete breakdown in communication between

himself and the naval comptroller Sir Andrew Snape Hamond. Of such gravity was this breach, occurring at a time when the navy was being held in readiness for a likely renewal of hostilities following the Treaty of Amiens, that it was not only brought to the attention of parliament, but became a central plank in Pitt's attack upon Addington's ailing Ministry. Although Fox, and his fellow-Whigs, held no particular brief to support Addington, such increasingly vitriolic attacks ensured their entry into the battle, the cause of naval reform consequently becoming part of the Whig political armoury.

Having entered the political arena, the whole future of the navy's civilian boards was to depend entirely upon the declared persuasion of those groups holding office at any point in time. Upon the fall of Addington and the return of Pitt, the future of these boards was temporarily secured. Any thoughts directed towards abolition, to which St Vincent had certainly given attention, were beyond the realms of feasibility under such circumstances. However, the eventual demise of those civilians boards was ensured by the appointment in 1806 of Grey to the office of First Lord. This took place during the short-lived administration of the 'Talents', with Grey also having his share of difficulties with the inferior boards. That experience, according to at least one biographer, was the reason for his decision, upon the emergence of a Whig administration in 1830, to oversee, through his appointee, the amalgamation of the civilian boards into that of the Admiralty.[2]

At the heart of the problem was the differing terms under which members of the superior and inferior boards were nominated. While those appointed to the Admiralty only held office at the behest of the prime minister, those selected to sit on the civilian boards had the security of a life time tenure. Further explanation of this point however, appears

unnecessary as it has already been dealt with in an earlier section of this thesis. For St Vincent, this arrangement was to prove disastrous. Upon his arrival at the Admiralty, in February 1801, his own hostility towards those who controlled the workings of the inferior boards was not eased by most of them having been appointed by Pitt and only removable if proved to be incompetent.[3] On the other hand, as a result of Addington's compliance, St Vincent was able to bring to the Admiralty a devoted team of supporters. His sea lords, both of whom had served under him during the blockade of Brest, were Sir Thomas Troubridge and John Markham, while the civilian lords were Sir Philip Stephens, the Hon William Eliot and William Garthshore. Of later significance, was the appointment of Benjamin Tucker as his private secretary. Tucker having also served under St Vincent, for many years his clerk while at sea.[4]

St Vincent, as newly appointed First Lord, had already shown himself to be concerned with the need for economy within the civil sphere of naval operations. Additionally, he had a fervent desire to bring about improvements in the general operational efficiency of the dock and victualling yards. In a series of letters to Lord Spencer, his predecessor as First Lord, he had indicated numerous areas of inefficiency and how they might be alleviated. These letters were written while St Vincent was officer in command of the Mediterranean Fleet and indicated a belief that failures within the civil departments were hindering the speed with which ships were returned to the Fleet. At the heart of this failure, so he frequently declared, was the existence of widespread corruption within these same departments. During the Summer of 1797, St Vincent informed Lord Spencer that considerable changes were necessary and that,

If all the clerks in the Dock-Yards were dismissed, with annuities, payable on one condition only, that they reside fifty miles from any Dock-Yard, the public would benefit exceedingly.[5]

To this he added, just a few weeks later,

You may rest assured, the Civil Branch of
the Navy is rotten to the core.[6]

Upon first taking up the appointment of First Lord, St Vincent went on to
inform Filmer Honeywood, soon to be elected member for Kent, that

. . . I will endeavour by the exertion of all
my faculties to eradicate the numberless abuses
which have crept into every department of the Navy,
civil and military, and to prove myself a faithful
servant to the Public . . . [7]

At this same point in time, St Vincent intimated to Collingwood the
difficulties that lay ahead,

In my endeavours to restore the Navy, in all
its branches, to that vigour which can alone
maintain our superiority at sea, both in arms
and commerce, it is no small encouragement that
I can safely calculate upon your support and
that of all honest men like you. There is much
to do, and a late attempt of my great Predecessor
[Spencer] meets with every species of opposition
and obloquy, I mean 'a partial reform in our Dock-
Yards' and comparing small things with great
(which must come or we are all ruined) I shall
have a very difficult task to perform, if I
preside at the Board in time of Peace . . . [8]

At the outset of his campaign, which coincided with the Treaty
of Amiens, so making his task possible, St Vincent took the correct and
proper course of instituting a full inspection of the civilian-run
facilities. Among reasons for this move was that of allowing both himself
and other members of his newly appointed Board of Admiralty a more
detailed understanding of the workings of these facilities.
Furthermore, it also allowed them to confront many of the perceived
failings first hand. However, this planned 'visitation' was to be unlike
any of those witnessed during the preceding decades. Whereas Sandwich, in
particular, had attempted to work with the civilian boards, often seeking
to gain their confidence, St Vincent pursued a course that could only
lead to confrontation. Instead of formally seeking approval, he
merely informed the commissioners of the inferior boards, that the

hospitals, dock and victualling yards would be inspected. Additionally, he took the most unusual step of directly communicating with the dockyard commissioners at Chatham, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Sheerness, informing them that they should have various accounts laid out and ready for the visiting committee to inspect:

Secret and confidential. I desire you will take immediate measures for securing all the Books of the Checque, Survey, Storekeeper and Master Shipwright's Offices, containing the accounts of Timber and Stores of every description received, converted and issued, between the 1st January 1793, and 30 June, 1801; all Books or Papers containing the Measurements of Works performed by Contract: all Job and Task Notes: the Master Smiths' Books, stating the Works performed by the Smiths, the quantities of rough Iron received from the Storekeeper, and wrought Iron delivered; the receipts of Hemp to be included and the clerk of the Rope Yard's accounts of the Work performed by the Ropemakers, &c., and the Cable and Cordage delivered to the Storekeeper; also all the Books kept by the Master Attendant containing accounts of Sails received and issued, or any other matters in their department.[9]

Although it was not unusual for the Admiralty to open a line of correspondence with the dockyard commissioners, the nature of such communication was frequently of a routine nature and rarely involved a direct instruction. After all, the yard commissioners were Navy Board appointees and directly responsible to the inferior Board.[10] Instructions of this nature, by long established tradition, were communicated first to the Navy Board, from whence the instruction would be re-issued to the yard commissioners. In choosing to write directly to the yards, and prefacing the letter 'secret and confidential', St Vincent was clearly guilty of giving insult. Apart from the suggestion that he did not wish the navy commissioners to know of his instructions, it also implied that had he used the normal channels of communication, the instruction would have been delayed, altered or simply ignored.

As for the visitation itself, this was originally planned for May 1802. However, the holding of a coinciding general election resulted in a deferring of this date. Apparently, St Vincent was concerned that many of those connected with the yards might turn against the government if his reform plans were given undue publicity at that particular point in time.[10] In a letter to his former flagship captain and fellow Whig George Grey, St Vincent explained with reference to the civilian facilities that the reforms which must take place in them would have operated powerfully against the interest of Government in all Western Boroughs.[11] As a result, the long awaited inspection of the yards did not take place until late-Summer, with the following explanation of its purpose set out in an Admiralty Board minute that was written on the day of the visiting committee's departure:

The Lords taking into their consideration the extraordinary Expences in the several Dock and Rope Yards, beyond what was known in any former period of War, in proportion to the number of ships employed; and having received Reports from various quarters of flagrant abuses and mismanagement existing in the several departments, which there is reason to believe is but too well founded: and being determined, as far as in them lies, to discover and remedy the same, do judge it expedient forthwith to visit all His Majesty's Dock and Rope Yards, to examine into the conduct and ability of the Officers, the sufficiency of the Workmen, the condition of the Ships and Magazines, together with the Works carrying on, in order that such Reforms and Improvements may be made as shall be found advisable to prevent an unnecessary expenditure of the Public Money; to see that the several rules and orders for the government of the Yards are duly enforced, that the ships and vessels of the Royal Navy are kept in constant readiness for service, and that the money granted by Parliament for keeping up the same is wisely and frugally expended; and they think proper to direct that the Comptroller and 3 other members of the Navy Board do attend them in their visitation. [12]

The members of the committee of inspection left London on 20 August 1802, returning to the capital at the end of September. During a period

of just over five weeks they visited all six royal dockyards together with the nearby victualling yards, hospitals and marine barracks. As can be easily imagined, this was an immense undertaking, resulting in many of these huge complexes receiving only a cursory glance. Indeed, fatigue would have been a further factor militating against overall thoroughness, with committee members missing far more than they would have seen. However, St Vincent and his fellow Board members had already determined upon certain priority areas with a reduction in the size of the work force at these establishments a major target that could be fulfilled on the spot.

Upon arrival at the various naval facilities, the civilian work force was mustered and those who gave the appearance of being too frail to perform work tasks were selected for dismissal. Those who had been employed for a suitable length of time, or had been injured while in the service of the civilian boards, were allowed superannuation but some, inevitably, were thrown on to the parish. At the inspection of the naval hospital at Plymouth on 30 August it was noted that several of the nurses, though not many years in the Hospital, appear to be aged. [The committee] Gave directions that the regulation, which orders that none should be entered above the age of forty-five years, be strictly attended to, and that a preference be given to Widows of Seamen.[13] A separate group of dismissals was also undertaken at Sheerness, this being a group of caulkers who had failed to comply with an earlier Admiralty instruction to remove themselves to the Thames-side merchant yards for the purpose of filling the places of striking caulkers.[14] The issuing of instructions for the dismissal of workmen was an important aspect of the aggressive policy now being pursued by St Vincent. While Sandwich and Anson, in their time, had used the visitation to achieve reductions in the civilian workforce, they had only submitted recommendations to the Navy Board. St

Vincent, for his part, was going much further, with members of the visiting committee themselves validating the dismissals.

In matters other than that of numbers employed, members of the inspecting committee tended to restrict themselves to making a variety of observations that were later forwarded to the respective boards. At Chatham, for instance, it was noted of the victualling yard 'that no Commissioner of Victualling has visited the Yard since December 1799' while the poor state of cleanliness of the slaughterhouse was considered 'offensive'. [15] As always however, St Vincent's venom was sharpest when it was directed towards the Navy Board. In particular, he was concerned that the Board should strengthen the role of the yard commissioners, ensuring that the holder of this post was given greater responsibility for overseeing the activities of the principal yard officers. To this end the visiting committee expressed concern at the treatment of Commissioner Fanshawe at Plymouth:

The Commissioner having stated some Orders which had been given to the Navy Board, which tended to lower him in the eyes of the Officers of the Yard, and to weaken his authority: the Navy Board are directed to communicate all Orders and Instructions, and Regulations, for the internal management of the Dock Yard, to the Commissioner only, by whom they are to be made known to the inferior Officers, and on all occasions they are to strengthen his authority, by which alone a proper subordination in the department can be preserved, and responsibility made to attach. [16]

At Sheerness, Admiralty members of the visiting committee showed themselves to be impressed with Isaac Coffin, the resident commissioner of the dockyard. They appeared to have viewed him as an ideal, going on to highlight some of the corrupt practices which he had uncovered since his appointment in 1797. The report indicted that prior to his arrival at the yard 'every irregularity . . . was committed and connived

at.[17] In particular, Coffin had obtained the dismissal of both the Master Smith and the Master Shipwright. The former, so Coffin soon realised, had not been in the yard for many years although he had continued 'to draw his pay'. As for the Master Shipwright, he had been receiving large sums of money for allowing repairs to be carried out within the yard upon private vessels.[18] Of equal importance, was Coffin's discovery that many of the artisans and labourers were receiving overtime payments, known as 'extra' for work that was never performed.

It is clear that St Vincent already had in mind something much greater than the correction of the various shortcomings uncovered during this cursory five week inspection. From Plymouth, during that August, he had written to Addington on the need for an investigative commission:

. . . my time has been fully occupied since my arrival at this place where we find abuses to such an extent as would require many months to go thoroughly into, and the absolute necessity of a Commission of Enquiry to expose them appears to the Admiralty Board here in much stronger light than ever. [19]

In addition, it also appears that St Vincent was giving thought to the creation of an intermediaery body that would exist between the Admiralty and the civilian boards, its purpose being that of providing greater control over the latter. It was an issue highlighted, in November 1802, by the London 'Times',

A new Board of Control is, it seems, likely to be established as a kind of medium between the Board of Admiralty and the Navy, Victualling, and Sick & Hurt Offices. The new Board of Control, it is said, is to consist of two Naval Officers, two Gentlemen of acknowledged experience in public business, and two Gentlemen of the Law. The measure, it is understood, has been particularly recommended by Earl St. Vincent. [20]

However, this proposed scheme came to nothing, with attention only

given to the establishment of the Commission of Enquiry.

The setting up of such a commission which was to look, in detail, at matters connected with naval administration was not, in itself, something entirely new. In fact, this particular commission could be seen as a natural outgrowth of the earlier Commission on Fees. As a body, this earlier commission had given its attention to the various gratuities paid to those holding public office, with separate reports devoted to the Admiralty Office, Navy Board, Dockyards, Treasurer of the Navy, Sick and Hurt Office, Transport Board, the Victualling Office and its various out departments. Furthermore, the same commission had not simply been restricted to the payment of such fees, but had also been directed to report "such Observations as shall occur to them for the better conducting and managing the business transacted" in the various offices examined.[21] Subsequently, in 1797, Pitt had supported the establishment of a parliamentary Select Committee, known as the Select Committee on Finance, to look into public finance. Once again various naval departments were subjected to examination, with the select committee, finally producing thirty-six reports, of which three of them were directed towards naval administration.[22]

Markham, when introducing into the House of Commons the bill that would eventually see the establishment of the Commission of Enquiry, referred to both the Commission on Fees and the Select Committee on Finance. Of the first, he stated that the new Commission was simply a revival of that earlier body while he made a point of quoting a passage in the 31st Report of the Select Committee in which pledges were made that, upon the return to peace, the Board of Admiralty would inquire into abuses in the civil departments of the navy. However, as the report of his speech indicates, the Board of Admiralty could not, at that moment:

. . . undertake the matter themselves because they had sufficient business on their hands to occupy their time entirely; and this matter would require a very laborious investigation.[23]

As to the need for this commission, Markham was further reported to have said that,

He had been with the present First Lord of the Admiralty in his late visitation of the several Dockyards of the Kingdom; and they had witnessed such scenes of plunder and business on their hands to occupy their time entirely; and this matter would require a very laborious investigation. [24]

The bill was to receive royal assent on 29 December 1802, with the appointed commissioners undertaking their enquiries from the beginning of the new year. Within parliament, opposition to the establishment of the commission had mainly centred upon the extensive legal powers with which the commissioners had been armed. However, some of this criticism was assuaged by adoption of a clause, inserted by Lord Chancellor Eldon, that permitted those called to give evidence, 'the right to refuse to answer when their answer was likely to incriminate them.' It was an amendment with which St Vincent was less than happy. In his later account of this period of office at the Admiralty he strongly condemned this weakening of the commissioners' powers, indicating it to be entirely inconsistent with the way in which such matters were handled elsewhere:

whereas it is not only the practice, but the distinctive qualifying feature and character of equity, and of its administration in the Court of Chancery in particular, that every man can be examined in his own cause, and compelled, upon his oath, and under the penalties of perjury, to disclose and account for whatever he may have in his possession, without a just title to retain it. [25]

Between May 1803 and June 1806, the commission was to produce a total of fourteen highly critical reports that encompassed a wide area of naval administration.[26] The first report, for instance, looked at accounts belonging to the naval storekeeper at Jamaica while the last was

directed towards an examination of the affairs of the Royal Naval Hospital at Greenwich. Among the most important however, was their third report which examined a series of glaring abuses long undetected by the Navy Board, committed by the holder of the coopers' contract at Woolwich dockyard. As a result of the investigation, those perpetrating the frauds were prosecuted, receiving a combination of fines and various terms of imprisonment. Of even greater significance perhaps, was the commission's second report which looked at the administration of the Chatham Chest. Again, past frauds were investigated, while for the better administration of Chest funds it was recommended that it should be amalgamated into monies held by the Greenwich Hospital. This recommendation was to be put into effect by the Chatham Chest Act of 1803. [27]

In Parliament, the new year witnessed even greater attention directed towards the activities of St Vincent at the Admiralty and the deteriorating relationship between the superior and inferior boards. In particular it was noticed that the Admiralty was frequently overriding the advice of the civilian boards. Over the matter of dockyard reductions, the Navy Board, fearing that the period of peace might only be temporary, had strongly opposed the pruning of numbers that had occurred during the previous year's visitation. In January 1803 however, official relations between the Navy Board and Admiralty broke down altogether. The issue, on this occasion, was that of the Admiralty's insistence that, for the purpose of economy, no orders should be given to merchant yards for the building of third rate ships. Instead, they were all to be built in the royal dockyards, St Vincent wishing to reduce the power and strength of the merchant yards:

Were there a fair competition between the Merchant Builder and the King's Yards; were there anything like honesty, either in the terms or the performance of these contracts - there would exist no objection

to having recourse to them as often as the royal slips should prove insufficient to the demand of shipping which the Admiralty might make upon them: but, if recourse be had wantonly to them, without necessity, and for the mere motive of conciliating a great body of interest to the political measures of the day, it is impossible for any system to be invented more corrupt, and prejudicial to the state; more pernicious to the royal Dock-Yards; more fatal to the safety and independence of the Navy. [28]

While Hamond at the Navy Board might have agreed with the principle he could certainly not agree with the reason which was used to provide justification. Once again it implied gross negligence on the part of the Navy Board. On this occasion commissioners were not only accused of allowing such contracts to be signed but also of providing an insufficient check upon government work subsequently performed within these yards. An attempt by the Navy Board to circumvent St Vincent's decision, which had been communicated to them verbally, resulted in his insistence that, for purposes of preventing 'any further misconceptions' on this and other subjects, all future communications would have to be undertaken in writing.[29]

Such problems between the Admiralty and Navy Board could certainly have been minimised during any period of guaranteed peace. However, the rapidly deteriorating situation with France, leading to a re-opening of hostilities in May, meant that the ability of the dockyards to work with maximum efficiency, and reliance upon merchant yards, were of paramount importance. Nevertheless, Addington continued to support his colleagues at the Admiralty, while the 'Old Opposition', led by Fox and Grey, also came to the defence of the First Lord. On 19 May 1803, the future First Lord and Prime Minister, Charles Grey, in making a motion for supplementary papers deemed necessary for a forthcoming debate on defence, paid great tribute to the work of St Vincent. 'The Times' in reporting

the speech, quoted Grey as saying:

Such was his opinion of the Noble Lord, that he had no hesitation in saying, if he did not procure for the British Naval Force a decided superiority in all quarters of the world, over the face of our enemies, he would deserve every punishment that could be inflicted upon him. When he spoke thus much, he spoke with a perfect conviction of what the Noble Lord was capable of doing. [30]

In replying, Addington stated himself

as ready as the Honble. Gentleman [Grey] to vindicate the Noble Lord, who presides with so much honour to himself, and advantage to the country, at the Admiralty Board. He should ever feel himself happy in paying every tribute of respect and praise due to the great, aspersed, and injured character, against the falsehoods and calumnies that had of late been so industriously raised and circulated against that great and excellent man, who would soon be able to prove to the world that, instead of the penurious system with which he was stated to be starving our marine, we shall have a naval force that was never so great an overmatch for all the world as it is at the present moment. [31]

A particularly fierce debate erupted in mid-June 1803 as a consequence of Whitbread's motion that the minutes of the 1802 dockyard visitation should be laid before the House. Designed to give St Vincent every chance to defend his tenure of office at the Admiralty, it merely extended the debate with Hamond demanding the right of the civilian boards to defend themselves against the various accusations that were being made against them. According to the 'Times':

Sir Andrew Hammond (sic) said that the Board of Admiralty deserved great praise for the attention with which they made the investigation [into the dock and victualling yards]: and they had sat no less than six or seven hours every day for that purpose. But he was sorry to inform the House, that from the moment they came into power there had been so strong a prejudice, that it was impossible to go on as things now stood. Many matters were

changed from what they were formerly . . .
The Navy Board and Victualling Board were
desirous of the matter being tried. These
Boards should be heard in their justification.
It was surely fair to do so, and for them to
have a copy of the Report [of the Visitation];
then let them be called on to make their answer
to it. [32]

With increased likelihood of the war with France being renewed, the debate over St Vincent's crusade against the civilian departments took on a new significance at the beginning of 1804. Members of both Lord Grenville's 'New Opposition' and the supporters of former premier William Pitt were in agreement that the ability of the navy to retain supremacy at sea was now severely jeopardized. In particular, they viewed with alarm developments in the dockyards, noting that severe reductions in the size of the workforce had undermined the ability of these yards to keep pace with the demands of mobilization.[33] In addition, the embargo upon merchant yards undertaking new construction work had resulted in few new vessels joining the fleet. At the same time, separate attempts to improve the quality of materials delivered into the yards had resulted in conflict with some of the suppliers. Of marked importance was the rejection of large amounts of timber as sub-standard while elsewhere supply contracts were cancelled.[34] Although the actual objectives were difficult to criticise, it did result in a general depletion of stores, causing further problems for the repair and refitting of warships.

Among those drawn into the debate was Pitt himself. For a time, following his departure from office, he had remained aloof from party politics, only returning to the Commons in May 1803. Even then, this opposition to the governing administration was less than total, Pitt refusing to condemn the government during a vote of censure in June. However, by the beginning of the new year his attitude had altered. No more was he prepared to tolerate the continuance of the Addington

administration, mounting a series of blistering attacks upon the government. In particular, he chose to dwell upon the situation at the Admiralty, turning this into a major political issue. At the end of February, for instance, Pitt threatened that should he subsequently gain office then he would 'institute an enquiry into the conduct of the Admiralty'.[35] This, however, was nothing when compared with a far more personal attack, conducted in March, upon the character of St Vincent, indicating him to be 'less brilliant and less able in a civil capacity than in that of a warlike one'.[36]

It is significant that in the second of these two debates, Pitt chose to emphasize both the composition and strategic positioning of the fleet rather than that of problems associated with the dock and victualling yards. Such a change of direction would appear to suggest that the former premier was now less concerned with specific issues and wished to use St Vincent as a means of bringing down the government. Certainly, J.S. Tucker, the nephew of St Vincent's private secretary, believed that an ulterior motive existed. In putting his thoughts down on paper, Tucker indicated that party warfare had selected St Vincent's 'naval administration for the point of assault upon Mr Addington's Cabinet; because Lord St Vincent was its chief support.' In the event, Pitt's condemnation of the Admiralty on that latter occasion proved unsuccessful, the government securing a majority of 71 votes. That Pitt was able to achieve power only six weeks later was not a result of such deep laid plans, but of Addington's indecisiveness.

With the debate over naval administration having clearly entered the political arena, it now became an issue that would not disappear. The 'Old Opposition' under Fox and Grey had given considerable support to the

principles espoused by St Vincent and would not lightly neglect the issue if given further opportunity. Pitt, on the other hand, might not wish to see it remain on the agenda, but was in no position to terminate the debate. Primarily, this was because of the continuing work of the Commission of Enquiry, Pitt not daring to bring the work of the commissioners to an immediate end. Such a decision would have weakened his own newly installed administration with accusations made that he was fearful of what they might yet uncover. However, the existence of such a body was not altogether healthy, designed as it was to search out only maladministration and the existence of corrupt practice. From this point of view, it lacked a positive aspect, unable to replace that found to be at fault with something more efficient and less open to corruption. Only with the establishment, in January 1805, of the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, was this put to rights. Inaugurated by Pitt, this was a much more positive body that worked on implementing reforms rather than criticising that which was already in existence. In essence, this new body was to revise the directives for the management of the civil departments, giving special attention to 'the system and mode of accounting for the receipt and expenditure of monies and stores'.[37] Completing its work some three years later, the vast majority of its recommendations were adopted, bringing a degree of reform that was only to be matched by the Whigs upon their return to power in 1830.

However, it was not simply the continuance of St Vincent's Commission of Enquiry together with the setting up of this new commission that ensured the civil departments of the navy remained an important political issue. Frequent attacks continued to be made upon St Vincent's handling of the civil departments with an interesting letter to be found among the Melville papers, in which a correspondent to the new

First Lord claims that if St Vincent had remained in office 'six months longer, our navy would have been ruined.' [38] Melville, for his part, was also keen on keeping the debate going. In May 1805 he expressed surprise at how 'the Noble Lord could think of dropping all communication with Sir Andrew Hamond, and yet retain him as Comptroller of the Navy.' St Vincent, for his part, was not slow to rise to his own defence, participating in several parliamentary debates and finally producing his own 'Memoirs' of his period in office. [39]

The debate had far from settled when, in January 1806, following the death of Pitt, the 'Ministry of All the Talents' arrived in office. No attempt was made to re-appoint St Vincent to his former post, although he was provided with a vote of thanks for his work as First Lord and appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet. Instead, the post of First Lord was given to Grey, a man who had already shown interest in improving the efficiency of the civil boards of the Navy while counting himself one of St Vincent's friends. [40] Also appointed to the Board of Admiralty at this time were Admiral John Markham, Sir Charles Morice Pole and Sir Harry Burrard Neale, all of whom had been closely associated with St Vincent's campaign against the civil boards. All three continued to serve on the Board following Grey's removal to the Foreign Office with the new First Lord, Thomas Grenville, brother of Prime Minister Lord Grenville, hesitant over the retention of Markham. On 4 October 1806, while in the process of selecting his new Board he wrote, 'I am still quite at a loss for a sheet anchor, and wish Markham had not made so many enemies, for in zeal and quickness of resource he seems to me to have great merit'. [41]

As for Grey, he was to hold the post of First Lord for no more than seven months, a re-shuffle of the Cabinet being forced as a result of the

death of Charles Fox in September 1806. For this reason, combined with his time in office coinciding with an unremitting war, he was unable to bring about changes in the running of the civilian administration. On the other hand, he was still confronted by many of the problems that had confounded St Vincent, not least was the existence of an unco-operative Navy Board. As a result of this brief experience, so it is generally agreed, Grey gave considerable attention to the civil departments of the navy, eventually determining that reform of the administrative infrastructure would result in only limited improvements. Instead, Grey turned his attention to the future abolition of the civil boards, possibly utilizing a plan that was suggested to him by St Vincent.[42]

Returning, for a moment, to the years in which St Vincent held office as First Lord, it is worth considering some of the possible motives that he might have had for setting up the Commission of Enquiry. There is, of course, the likelihood that he simply wished to highlight and remove various shortcomings that he perceived to exist within the civil departments. Alternatively, having come to see the Naval Comptroller, Sir Andrew Hamond, as a bulwark of conservatism and opposed to the kind of reforms that St Vincent favoured, then he might have been seeking an indirect way to force him from office. But this seems a most improbable scenario. As well as seeing Hamond as an opponent, St Vincent also appears to have believed him to have been both unreliable and inefficient. If this was the case then Charles Fox, in parliamentary statement, indicated an easier pathway that might well have been trodden, that of removing Hamond directly from office:

There might be many cases where the Lords of the Admiralty, or any person in high situations, might discover a total incompetency in those they employed, and might even have strong suspicions of their integrity . . . [in such cases] it was the duty of the Lords of the Admiralty

not to employ in the public service persons who were unfit to be employed. This was a principle which delicacy to individuals should never allow them to depart from; otherwise they might go on with unfit persons, squander the public money in injudicious contracts, and place even the security of the country in greatest hazard . . . [41]

A final possibility, and one that appears most likely, is that St Vincent, having ensured that the commission consisted of those with similar views to his own, expected it to reveal the civil board in such bad light as to focus attention on possible abolition.[42] For evidence of such a possibility, reference may be made to a statement by William Marsden, Second Secretary in the Admiralty during this period. According to him 'to crush them [the inferior boards] was the object of the bill and the frauds in the dockyards was only a pretext.'[43] If St Vincent did wish to see an end to the Navy Board, then he was not the only member of the Admiralty to be so inclined. His own appointee, Markham also favoured such a course of action.[43]

Regardless of St Vincent's real motives, his term of office clearly paved the way for future abolition of the civil boards. By turning the whole issue into a political maelstrom, he ensured that any future Whig government would have to consider the precise future of the civil boards. Not only had mainstream Whigs, in supporting St Vincent, had been forced to turn themselves against the Navy Board, but those on the other side of the House had been provided with a similar need to defend it. Furthermore, coming to power, as they eventually did in 1830, after a period of two decades in opposition, the Whigs found themselves confronted by civilian boards appointed in full, by administrations to which they had been opposed. For this reason, regardless of Grey's experience in 1806, extensive changes to the organisation of the civil departments would need to be high on the political agenda.

Following the downfall of the 'Talents' in 1807 the long absence of any form of Whig government provided the necessary infrastructure for the Admiralty and the inferior boards to develop a more harmonious working relationship. Primarily this resulted from the long-term hegemony of one political group, so presenting Portland, Spencer, Liverpool and Wellington, with commissioners favourable to policies pursued by each of those successive administrations. However, it would be wrong to assume that, even given this important factor, those who composed the civilian boards were in complete agreement with all instructions presented to them. Despite one group having political dominance, the Whigs in opposition were not without impact. In particular, they brought about a degree of discontinuity between the Admiralty and civilian boards as a result of a series of well orchestrated campaigns to enforce government economy measures. Such attacks not only galvanized their own supporters but also drew considerable sympathy from those who normally voted with the government. To blunt these attacks, the ruling administration was forced to review its own future spending programmes, with the navy among those departments that bore the brunt of any resulting economies. Predictably, this created a degree of dissension, with the commissioners of the civilian boards using many of the traditional ploys that had been used in the past to prevent the Admiralty from successfully enforcing such demands.

Potentially, however, the period most likely to see controversy was that which followed the 'Talents' losing office. Although this particular administration held power for only fourteen months, the two successively appointed First Lords, Grey and Grenville, were in a position to appoint several navy and victualling commissioners, including the Navy Comptroller, Sir Thomas Boulden Thompson.[44] Appointed in June 1806, Thompson could easily have introduced a policy of non-co-operation

or have used his position to malign those currently in power. That he did not choose to do so was due, in part, to his having been drawn from those least committed to the Talents, while showing an overwhelming concern to ensure that the nation was in a fit state to combat the French upon the high seas. In addition, however, Thompson was aware that those holding power still possessed a good deal of patronage that might benefit him. In particular, as Navy Comptroller, he had been removed from the list of sea officers. This was quite normal; Comptrollers being drawn from the navy lists had, upon appointment, to forego both the opportunity of further naval promotion and the right to claim half pay. This, for Thompson, must have been particularly irksome. He had not only served successfully at sea, but had reached a position of considerable seniority on the captains' list and was eligible for early promotion to flag rank. As a result, and through his own desire to co-operate with Mulgrave, the First Lord, Thompson, while continuing as Comptroller, was not only returned to the list of sea officers but was also allowed promotion to Rear Admiral in 1809.[45]

Another likely source of friction between the superior and inferior boards was that of a personality clash between the Comptroller and First Lord. This, of course, might be totally unrelated to politics, with the Comptroller appointed by one First Lord on bad personal terms with his successor, even though all of the individuals concerned were committed to the same political cause. While the potential for such a situation existed prior to the return of the Whigs in 1830, it was offset by the arrival at the Admiralty of the 2nd Viscount Melville in March 1812. He was to remain First Lord until May 1827, returning to office for a second period that lasted from September 1828 until Grey took office as Prime Minister in November 1830. During those seventeen years, the longest period of service of any First Lord, he was in a position to ensure that

the personnel who made up the Victualling and Navy Boards were entirely to his liking. Indeed, by 1822, he had personally overseen the appointment of all the professional officers of the Navy and Victualling Boards, leaving only a few commissioners of a clerical or business background pre-dating his own appointment.

Most important was the selection of Sir Thomas Byam Martin for the post of Navy Comptroller. He was to hold office for thirteen years under Melville, taking up the appointment upon the retirement of Thompson in February 1816. The choice of Martin as Comptroller was to prove most fortuitous. The two were apparently able to co-operate on most issues and there was never a sign of a major break or serious conflict. This is not to say however, that the two men were always in agreement. Areas existed that would almost certainly produce problems. They included the differing attitudes normally held by a government minister and a civilian comptroller. While the former had to take into account existing economic constraints, the latter was only concerned with the precise needs of the fleet. Given, then, that the main issue of that period was one of economy, then it was inevitable that the two men would disagree as to the appropriateness of planned cuts, with Martin unrelenting in his efforts to see the Navy estimates held at the highest possible level.

One of the earliest discussions with Melville over the issue appears to have taken place at the beginning of 1817. During a private conversation, Martin indicated that he was discontented with the sum proposed to be made available in the forthcoming estimates to be submitted to Parliament. He indicated that on his figures this amount would be exceeded by £464,592, despite purchases excluding 'any article of store except Timber'. [46]

At the beginning of the following year, with a further round of naval cuts under consideration, Lord Liverpool chose to make a direct approach to Martin. He suggested that the most appropriate means to reduce expenditure might be that of cutting the number of ships scheduled to be repaired. This Martin was not prepared to accept. In reply, he pointed out, quite correctly, that large numbers of ships had recently returned from the war and any delays in carrying out necessary repairs would only result in their rapid deterioration and mounting costs for the future.[47] It was a point to which Martin had made reference in the previous year's 'Annual Report on the State of the Navy', indicating that many of the returning ships so far taken into dock 'were found much more defective than could be ascertained while they were afloat.'[48]

An alternative suggestion put forward by Liverpool was that of cutting back on the pace of work on large scale building projects at Chatham and Sheerness dockyards. This was also rejected by Martin:

The new docks at Sheerness and Chatham cannot be stopped or even delayed without great disadvantage and considerable remuneration to the contractors who have undertaken the work - it would therefore be necessary to grant an equal sum for the works in 1819 as in the present year.[49]

Alternative areas for making economies were, however, suggested by Martin, the Comptroller proposing that all work might be brought to a temporary standstill with regard to the construction of new ships. In addition, he also suggested the ordering of fewer naval stores during the forthcoming year.[50]

A further area of disagreement centred upon the numbers of workmen employed within the dockyards. While Martin did give his approval to some very considerable reductions, he still wished to retain as many skilled artisans as possible. Given that it was of particular importance to

curtail the wage bill, he chose to limit possible earnings by reducing the number of hours permitted to be worked. This allowed Martin to retain many of those who might otherwise have been dismissed, the Comptroller believing that it would be better in the event of war to have these skilled artisans on hand, rather than conduct an urgent recruiting campaign. However, this did not prove to Melville's liking. Following an enquiry into the state of the dockyards that was undertaken in 1822, members of the Board of Admiralty became very concerned at the degree of over-manning. Martin was called upon to correct the situation, with the Board of Admiralty no longer believing itself to be in a position to 'sanction longer continuance of the existing system' and requested that the yards 'be placed on a footing agreeable to the public interest'.[51]

In the event, it was one of the few disagreements between the two boards that was to enter into the public domain, with the ageing Earl St Vincent among those who chose to comment. He, as always, took a very independent view of the issue. In a private letter to his former secretary, Joseph Tucker, he attacked the administrators in a similar fashion to his 'if all the clerks were dismissed' letter of June 1797:

I agree with you in toto as to the rapid ruin of the British Navy; instead of discharging valuable and experienced men, of all descriptions from the dockyards, the Commissioners and Secretaries of all the boards ought to be reduced to the lowest number they ever stood at, and the old system resorted to: one of the projectors of the present diabolical measures should be gibbeted opposite the Deptford Yard and the other opposite the Woolwich Yard, on the Isle of Sad Dogs.[52]

Melville made several attempts to persuade Martin to reduce numbers employed in the dockyards. In May 1818, he suggested a 20% reduction in dockyard wage levels. At the time of making this proposal, the First Lord not only wrote to Martin, but also to Sir Robert Barlow, the commissioner at Chatham Yard. In doing so he seems to have received some support, with Barlow both accepting the necessity for a reduced day wage while also

suggesting the introduction of lower levels of remuneration for those working at piece rates (known in the dockyards as 'task' and 'job' work). Martin chose to oppose both ideas, believing that any cuts in the level of wages would prove, in the long run, quite disastrous. As he explained to Melville, the result would be dissension among the work-force, the men seeing it as a 'breach of faith'. While nothing immediate might transpire, it was likely that the yard employees would 'retaliate when war shall again make us sensible of their consequence to the state'.[53] As for the alternative proposal put forward by the Commissioner at Chatham:

Our friend Barlow seems to think that if we have the right to keep the men in the yard ten hours we have an equal right to demand ten hours active hard labour on a scheme of Task, when the very report of the Commission of Naval Revision admits that the exertion of the men working by Task shall entitle them to earn half as much again, and in the merchant yards double.[54]

Although these various differences in opinion have been highlighted, it must be made clear that at all times, there was no spirit of true animosity in these disagreements. Both the First Lord and Navy Comptroller were doing little more than protecting their respective preserves, each primarily concerned with the interests of the nation. As such, Martin was certainly not against all economies, he merely wished them to be appropriate to the situation. For this reason, he devised a number of long-term schemes that were designed to create fairly sizeable future savings. Among these was a plan to standardize the design of warships, so making it unnecessary for dockyards to carry such a wide range of ships' fittings. It was a scheme put forward at the very beginning of his entry into office, with first, second and third rates to be respectively built on the lines of Caledonia (120), Canopus (90) and Impeteux (74).[55] As for ship construction work, Martin believed that future savings might also be made if ships were built and repaired under

cover. This necessitated the construction of timber roofs over both existing slips and some docks, so providing protection for vessels when lying in frame. These huge coverings, which can still be seen at Chatham and Deptford, were expensive to build but did result in the construction of more durable ships.

By far and away Martin's most imaginative scheme, and one that was not actually pursued until the present century, was that of allowing each dockyard to specialise in the work to which it was best suited. Up to then, only Pembroke had a purely specialist role, the other yards variously sharing in the building, repairing refitting and fitting of ships. It was a system that had many drawbacks. For one thing, it was necessary for each of the dockyards to possess a complete range of stores and specialised buildings together with a diversely skilled work-force. In the concluding paragraph of a lengthy submission to Melville, Martin indicated the particular specialism that he considered appropriate to each of the seven dockyards,

Deptford is proposed as the great depot for stores, and for the Transport Service, Woolwich, Chatham & Pembroke as the principal building Yards & Sheerness, Portsmouth, & Plymouth as the great ports for the equipment of the Fleet, and their establishment be regulated accordingly.[56]

As well as proposing these schemes, Martin also approved various immediate economies. Of particular importance was an extensive cut in numbers employed, although as indicated, Melville would like to have seen something more drastic, with these cuts coming mainly from among the unskilled and those of the lesser trades. In addition, Martin also agreed to considerable reductions in the amount of materials held in the yards while ensuring that the storehouses were better ordered. This was of particular importance as, during the previous century, huge quantities of rope, sail cloth and timber were never used because of poor storage and

subsequent deterioration.

Despite these various economy-seeking schemes that Martin willingly imposed upon the dockyards, the ruling administration continued to press for even greater reductions in financial outlay. Where possible, as already demonstrated, Martin would endeavour to co-operate. But there were other times when the demands, to his thinking, appeared so excessive, that it drove him to anger. One such occasion was in 1830 when the Duke of Wellington, fighting against an increasingly buoyant opposition in Parliament, wished to impose a further 10% cut on the overall naval budget. On this subject Martin wrote candidly to an old friend, Admiral Malcolm:

We yield much too easily to a set of noisy, ignorant blockheads who make no discrimination between foolish and needless extravagance, & objects of vital importance to the interest and credit of the country:- but the thing, of all others, to me the most annoying is that they seem to forget that the safety & glory of England depends upon her naval strength, & her constant & ample state of naval preparation; & we shall perhaps (at no distant time) rue the day that such mischievous opinions prevailed. I shall, however, have the consolation to know that I am no party to such views or measures.[57]

In selecting Martin as Comptroller of the Navy Board, Melville had made an extremely wise choice. That he was in a position to make the choice in the first place was no coincidence. Upon first taking up the reins of office in March 1812, Melville was confronted by a comptroller originally appointed by a Whig. This, for Melville, must have appeared extremely threatening. While the two might have been able to work harmoniously during war time, this might not be the case once the nation had settled into a peace time routine. Fortunately however, Thompson was both ageing and open to the possibility of retirement. In 1816, therefore, he was persuaded to accept the less demanding post of Treasurer at Greenwich Hospital. In the meantime, Melville had already

looked around for a replacement. Having determined on Martin, he introduced him to the Board in December 1815. At that time Thompson had still to take retirement, eventually leaving the post in February of the following year. Martin, therefore, took the post of Deputy Comptroller, sharing this with the existing post-holder, William Shield. It was an arrangement that Martin appears to have accepted only with a great deal of reluctance. In a letter to Melville, and written in the third person, he indicated that

Rear Admiral Martin feels highly grateful by Lord Melvilles desire to place him at the head of the Navy Board, and it is a situation he will look forward to with great satisfaction and with an earnest wish to render himself useful to the public service, by an increasing application to the Duties of that Office.

In respect to the situation of Deputy Comptroller which Lord Melville has been good enough to offer to Admiral Martin, until the other becomes vacant, he cannot but feel the strongest repugnance to the acceptance of an inferior station, and one which seems to lose its consideration in time of peace, when the duties of the Comptroller appear so much within the compass of one persons Executions.[58]

It was in this same letter that Martin raised a further point that was causing difficulty, this was the desire on the part of members of the Navy Board to remove Admiral Fanshawe, Martin's father-in-law, from the post of resident commissioner at Plymouth. Fanshawe, in earlier years, had been a friend and supporter of St Vincent, informing him of many of the abuses that he had found at Plymouth upon his appointment to that yard in 1790. It appears that those who made up the current Board, including those appointed to the 'Talents' administration, did not really trust him. According to Fanshawe he was 'badly treated' although he 'endeavoured to discharge the duties' of his position in an efficient manner.[59] Over the years a fairly vitriolic correspondence had ensued, with Melville eventually called in to arbitrate. The situation could not be allowed to continue, with Fanshawe's retirement considered the only possible

option.[60] Although Martin did not hold the same political views as his father-in-law, he was concerned that certain assumptions might be made in the eyes of the public:

Rear Admiral Martin has if possible a still stronger objection to the situation of Deputy Comptroller namely - that the arrangement now in progress to give effect to the wishes of the Admiralty respecting Commissioner Fanshawe's retirement, would appear to the world as founded upon an agreement that Admiral Martin should obtain the situation of Deputy Comptroller.

And although the Commissioners' retirement, and Lord Melville's obliging proposals to Admiral Martin have never been coupled or spoken of in any relative way, yet it would not be without much hesitation that Admiral Martin would take any step that could give countenance to suspicion that he had gained an advantage to himself at the expense of one to whom he owes every feeling of attachment and affection; and under such circumstances he leaves himself in Lord Melville's hands.[61]

In the event, the whole matter was to be resolved quite amicably with Fanshawe agreeing to retire upon the receipt of both a generous pension and the promise that his son, a commander in the navy, would receive favourable promotion.[62]

In view of these efforts in 1815 to remove the politically tainted Thompson and Fanshawe, it seems strange that, only two years earlier, in June 1813, Joseph Tucker had been appointed Assistant Surveyor with a seat on the Navy Board. As an individual, Tucker had once been favoured by St Vincent, his rapid promotion to Master Shipwright at Plymouth the result of this patronage.[63] Even more compromising, should Melville have been entertaining doubts as to the appointment of Joseph Tucker, was that his younger brother, Benjamin, had been St Vincent's private secretary. Almost certainly, Joseph Tucker's appointment to the Navy Board during those first years of Melville's tenure, resulted from his undoubted abilities. Tucker had proved a most efficient Master Shipwright and to

pass him over for promotion would have been unforgiveable. Yet, in an age of patronage, the choice still appears surprising. Furthermore, Martin was certainly to doubt the advisability of that original appointment when later political machinations by Whig supporters were to leave certain unanswered questions as to the trustworthiness of the Board's surveyor. In 1818, and coinciding with an aggressive Whig attack upon the government's ability to effectively reduce spending, members of the Board of Admiralty were presented with an apparently carefully researched and highly detailed document that questioned recent claims by the Navy Board as to the degree of readiness of many ships held in the dockyard 'ordinary'. Although the actual writer of this document was Benjamin Tucker, the Surveyor's younger brother, it appears from subsequent evidence that St Vincent was also involved.[64] In particular, he would have seen this as a good opportunity to discredit current members of the Navy Board while furthering his cherished ambition of exterminating the civilian boards. According to the submitted document, and based on material that Martin later claimed to have been removed from Somerset Place, many ships listed as seaworthy did, in fact require 'great' repairs.[65] Among vessels specifically listed was the appropriately named St Vincent. This was a 120-gun first rate warship that had been launched at Plymouth in 1814. According to Navy Board representations already made to the Admiralty, this vessel was fit for immediate and permanent service. However, Benjamin Tucker seemed to be in a position to claim that

. . . it is as notorious as that the Sun is above the Horizons at noon, that she cannot go to Sea before she has undergone a very considerable repair: that in fact, the fastenings of her Deck have given way;- that the Beams are twisted from the Clamp, and the Clamps wrung from the sides;- in short that she is in such a state as no Ship of her class was ever seen before.[66]

As for Joseph Tucker, he was seen as the individual who had supplied the

necessary details which appeared to show the inferior board in such bad light. Although he denied such involvement, his position became somewhat less tenable as a result of a statement he made to Melville fully supporting his brother's accusations. According to Comptroller Martin,

Very soon after the receipt of the letter alluded to, Lord Melville sent for Mr Surveyor Tucker, and informed him of the representation that had been made by his Brother in the expectation that the Surveyor would, upon his Official knowledge at once satisfy his Lordship of the incorrectness of the report, but to his Lordship's disappointment, the Surveyor said "it is all very true and that he would send his Lordship some papers to convince him of it", and immediately forwarded to Lord Melville . . . [various papers including] a list of thirteen sail of the line, which he declared to be unfit for service.[67]

While an attack upon the Navy Board by someone outside the system might easily be ignored, the apparent accuracy of the information combined with Joseph Tucker's supportive stance resulted in both Melville and Liverpool taking it all very seriously. Not surprisingly Martin felt it essential that all of Tucker's claims should be refuted and established a special committee for the purpose. Consisting of himself, together with Surveyor Robert Seppings and Navy Commissioner Percy Fraser, this committee began its task by summoning the three Master Shipwrights of the principal yards [Chatham, Plymouth and Portsmouth] to survey and report upon the condition of the Ships, except at their own Ports, when one of the other Master Shipwrights were to be called in.[68] They were given permission to open any ships they chose, to any extent they pleased and to produce a full and frank report on their findings.[69] Although some problems were noted, especially with ships that had been hurriedly built at the tail end of the recent war, the three Master Shipwrights could find nothing that was in the least damning. As for the first rate St Vincent, one of the few ships specifically named, the committee went to great

lengths to demonstrate the inaccuracies of Tucker's allegations. Apart from the report of the Master Shipwrights, which showed her to be in sound condition, Admiral Lord Exmouth, the Commander-in-Chief at Plymouth was also asked to examine the vessel. Finally

While the Ship was undergoing examination by the Shipwright Officers the Earl of Liverpool, being then in the neighbourhood, desired to visit her, and accompanied by Lord Exmouth, We [Martin, Seppings and Fraser] had the honour to be present, when his Lordship looked very attentively at the part that had been opened, and expressed himself highly gratified by the evident soundness of the fabric . . . [70]

A second line of attack taken by Tucker and which the committee had to fend off concerned the approved naval estimates and how money voted for the repair and construction of certain ships had been transferred to other ships without seeking further approval. This is of particular interest as, in later years, and in a more developed form, it was to prove a central plank in Sir James Graham's attack upon the civilian boards shortly before their abolition. Whereas Graham was to be concerned with much greater capital sums, in particular amounts connected with building works within the naval dock and victualling yards, Tucker concentrated on this much narrower issue. In reply, the committee declared:

Mr Tucker might have known that the Navy Estimates cannot possibly afford proof of the actual sum laid out upon any one Ship, because without departing from the Spirit of the Grant by Parliament the sums voted for particular ships must in many cases be applied to others; for instance, in the first vote for the Stirling Castle, of £7,180 it was no doubt believed at the time of making out the Navy Estimates, that such a sum would be expended upon her; but it might, and very probably did happen that the Ship which preceded her in Dock was delayed longer than was expected, and consequently that there was not time in the first year to expend so much, or any money upon that particular Ship, though the money voted was laid out in an equal quantity of a similar description of work, and

therefore in a manner conformable to the Spirit
of the Grant . . . [71]

Furthermore, so they added, it might sometimes be necessary to expend monies in emergencies when a vessel was found to be in need of repair and likely 'to sink at her moorings'. [72]

The committee of enquiry did not merely restrict itself to the accusations of Benjamin Tucker but also with the extent to which Joseph Tucker, the Surveyor, might have been involved. The committee felt that much of the information upon which Benjamin Tucker drew was confidential and must have been passed to him by someone in the Navy Office. To this end they attempted to prove that the Surveyor had deliberately acquired papers for the purpose of passing them on to his brother. Referring to information respecting Agincourt, a third rate launched at Plymouth in March 1817, which Benjamin Tucker claimed to have been subject to unnecessarily rising costs,

We must also remark that the document from which Mr Tucker must have collected his information respecting the Agincourt was one procured from Plymouth Yard, at the particular desire, and in consequence of a minute which Mr Surveyor Tucker presented to the Comptroller for his initials, who signed the minute, supposing that the statement was required for the Public Service, or Mr. Surveyor Tucker's own information. [73]

Elsewhere it was noted that Benjamin Tucker had been given access to documents that indicated the current capacity of the yards for building and repairing ships. When Tucker indicated that the yards on average could 'build and give repair to Eight sail of the line a year', the committee felt itself in a position to conclude that,

this statement of Mr. Tucker's accords with the Navy Board's report, which, from its subject, is of course considered secret, and in the progress of our remarks, it will be evident that in other instances, as well as

this, he must have had direct reference to secret documents.[74]

In consequence of this conclusion, Martin demanded of Melville, that Tucker should be dismissed. However, for his part, Melville appears to have been less than convinced of Joseph Tucker's involvement, although he did establish an Admiralty enquiry into the matter. In later years, Tucker's son, also named Joseph, chose to write an account of his father's dealings with the Admiralty on this matter:

At the end of 1818 terminated some communications which my father . . . had, by Lord St. Vincent's command, with Lord Melville, respecting the progress of work in our dockyards; when some of my father's statements were ascertained to be so very accurate, that he was supposed to have obtained sight of an official document, which ought to have been considered confidential.

To remove that impression, he attended at the Board of Admiralty, and he did so to the "entire conviction" of Lord Melville and the Board . . .

"You have stated, Mr Tucker," said Lord Melville, "that eight sail of the line is the average annual produce of the yards. How did you get that information?"

"From the Navy Estimates."

"How so?" asked a Sea Lord.

"How? why thus:-The Navy Estimates show every line-of-battle ship building and repairing, and when she is expected to be finished, and by comparing the estimates of one year with another, it will be seen when any ship had been launched or put out of dock." [75]

While the source for this conversation is, of course, highly partisan, it is, nevertheless, the case that Joseph Tucker was not dismissed from the post of Surveyor. Furthermore, there is evidence that the First Lord was secretly delighted with the attack mounted by Benjamin Tucker. On this point he was fairly candid, writing to Lord Liverpool in the following terms:

Privately however I by no means regret that Mr Tucker has thus stepped forward, as these occasional little incidents do no harm at

the Navy Board or the Dock Yards and I think that the very minute enquiry which that circumstance as well as other considerations at the present moment have induced us to institute will be productive of considerable permanent benefit.[76]

Although it was the Whigs who were to be responsible for the eventual abolition of the civilian boards, their future under the Tories was not completely secure. Whig concern with excessive government expenditure had brought the opposition a number of successes, not least of which was the near overturning of the Navy Estimates for 1815 and the forcing of changes upon later naval votes. Such pressure forced the government to consider how further economies might be obtained, with some attention given to the creation of a more efficient management of the civilian departments. In 1817 the two wartime created boards, those responsible for the hiring of transports and for the care of sick and wounded seamen, had been amalgamated into the Navy and Victualling Boards respectively. This, as it happens, was little more than would have happened under any other administration entering into a period of peace, with a certain amount of contraction the recognised norm. However, the logical next move, that of uniting the Navy and Victualling Boards was also to be given an airing in the later years of this lengthy period of Tory administration.

In 1828, with the Duke of Clarence installed as Lord High Admiral, Melville was approached by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Henry Goulburn, to draw up such a scheme. It is interesting to note that Melville not only went ahead with this project, but enthusiastically produced a plan that would have seen the emergence of an entirely new board. According to Melville's own account, the scheme had numerous advantages and would 'undoubtedly simplify by concentrating the business of the Navy'.[77]

A further aspect of the scheme was the ending of the existing committee system. It was a move that has already been considered in an earlier section, with this reform also forced by opposition pressure. The government needed to show that it was economising where possible and creating greater efficiency within the various departments of state. According to Melville, on his own admission, the principle of individual responsibility, which was introduced to the civil departments of the navy in 1829, was based upon methods already operating within the Board of Ordnance:

I drew up at Goulburn's request a project for uniting the Navy & Victualling Boards, & conducting the business of the Navy on the same principle as the Ordnance which Board was then the favourite hobby of the House of Commons, or at least the Finance Committee.[78]

A somewhat more radical scheme for combining the navy's civil boards was also proposed during this same period by Sir George Cockburn. He was not simply interested in amalgamating the Navy and Victualling Boards but actually bringing them under the control of the Admiralty.[79] This would not only have resulted in a desired reduction of running costs but would have had the additional benefit of ensuring that any economies demanded of the civilian boards would have been fully carried into effect. Although they were not a regular occurrence, the superior Board was more than aware of the Navy Board's efforts to subvert certain planned economies, with monies designated for naval purchases occasionally transferred to areas not sanctioned by either Admiralty or Parliament. However, this will be dealt with as a separate issue.[80] As for Cockburn's plans for the Navy and Victualling Boards, these were placed in abeyance until the arrival of the Whigs and the announcement of their decision to abolish the two boards. As a result, he moved an amendment, rejected by 115 votes to 50, which stated:

That an adequate number of persons shall be appointed to superintend respectively one out of the several branches into which the Civil Department of the Navy may be divided; and that such persons shall form together, assisted by a Chairman, a Board for conducting and duties hitherto entrusted to the Commissioners of the Navy and Victualling Board, as the Commissioners for executing the office of Lord High Admiral may direct, subject to such regulations and arrangements as the Commissioners for the office of Lord High Admiral may think proper to establish.[81]

When the Whigs came to power in November 1830, the strong probability of the civilian boards undergoing extensive reform became an absolute certainty. Under Grey, the Whigs were not only pledged to reform Parliament, but were determined upon economic retrenchment. A major target, and one that had featured in a good many parliamentary assaults, was that of naval expenditure. Sir James Graham, a leading critic of administrative inefficiencies, was appointed First Lord and given no doubts that he was there for the purpose of reform:

When Lord Grey appointed me to the office, having himself been First Lord of the Admiralty, he expressed to me a strong opinion that I should have, as part of my duty, to look narrowly at the working of the three Boards - the Board of Admiralty, the Navy Board and the Victualling Board - and he expressed his belief that experience would lead me to the conclusion that concentration was necessary; and, guided by that opinion, from the very first I did direct my attention to the conjoint working of those three Boards and, after having formed my plan, I submitted to the Cabinet the view which I took of the expediency, by legislation, of abolishing those three Boards, and uniting in the Board of Admiralty concentrated power; and in consequence of the adoption by the Cabinet of the view which I ventured to open to them, affirmed by much higher authority of Lord Grey, I framed the measure with their consent, which I subsequently submitted to Parliament, and which became law.[82]

A programme of reform was not however, immediately embarked upon. Instead, Graham inaugurated an inquiry into the civilian boards, its apparent purposes being to seek information and to discredit the civilian boards. In particular, attention was given to the actual employment of

the naval estimates once they had been voted by Parliament. It was an issue that had been raised by Benjamin Tucker in 1818, but now the attention centred upon much larger sums of money and, in particular, votes relating to building and rebuilding works at the various naval ports. From information uncovered, now that the Whigs had greater access to the accounts of the civilian boards, it soon became apparent that sums voted to many of these projects were unrealistically small, with amounts having been taken from other, heavily underspent votes. In a lengthy letter to Martin, Graham outlined his principal findings:

I must confess to you that I should have felt less anxiety than I do with respect to the state of the Fleet and the supply of stores ready for immediate use, if I had not reason to know, that the entire sum voted annually by Parliament has been considered as a gross sum applicable to purposes not contemplated in the Estimates, and that in some Items, more, and in others, less, has been expended, than the precise sum allotted to each service under the appropriation act.

In a Document now before me the Accountant General of the Navy Board sets forth the understanding and the principle of the office in the following terms; "when the various items are voted they form one general sum at the credit of the Naval Service at the Exchequer".[83]

Having established the parameters within which he was to mount his attack, Graham then went on to itemise particular areas where Parliamentary votes had either been ignored or unsought in the first place. In doing so, he cited the expenditure of larger sums than those voted on building works at Woolwich while for shipbuilding at Bombay no amounts were set aside by Parliament, yet £40,000 was expended at this yard in 1830. Similarly, sums well in excess of those voted were spent on dockyards in Canada with £7,908 spent at Leith without the consent of Parliament. Most worrying, as far as Graham was concerned, were the areas of naval expenditure that were underspent in order to subsidise these other areas:

Accordingly I find that in the four years last past the gross sum of £3,217,346 has

been voted for Timber and Materials for the Navy and only £2,675,464 has been spent for this purpose; leaving a balance under this most important head of £541,882 applied to other purposes than those prescribed by the Appropriation Act.[84]

As Graham went on to point out, although he may well have been prone to exaggeration, as a result of this underspending on timber and other materials, the yards were generally deficient in these areas.[85]

Turning his attention to the Victualling Board, Graham was equally as critical. He indicated that the commissioners belonging to this Board appeared to have the same disregard for Parliament as those of the Navy Board. Again, he referred to the expenditure of unsanctioned money, included large additional sums on building works at the Cremill and Weevil victualling yards.[86] He also, in that same letter, informed Martin of an admission attached to returns he had received from the Victualling Board:

That the Accounts in the Department are not kept in the principle of applying the vote for the service for which it is granted, and the deficiencies under one head were paid out of the surplus under the other; or rather the whole expenditure was paid out of the whole vote, for the sums voted for the Victualling Department have not been kept under distinct heads, but one blended together and indeed are blended with all monies voted for the naval service.[87]

In approaching Martin, Graham soon became aware that he was not dealing with an ordinary administrator. Apart from having fifteen years experience as head of the Navy Board, the Comptroller was also a member of the House of Commons. Yet, all this paled into insignificance when compared with the host of allies Martin could call upon. Apart from the many senior members of the previous administration with whom he had amicably worked, he was also a favourite of the King. Martin had

served under William IV, then Duke of Clarence, as a midshipman and retained a direct contact with the monarch. As a result, he was in a position to get in the 'first word with HM', choosing to inform the King of the contents of that recent correspondence with Graham. It was a fact which the new First Lord noted in a letter written to Grey:

He [Martin] went to Brighton with his answer before I [Graham] had a chance of transmitting it to the King . . . [86]

For a time, it looked as if the King might choose to give his full support to the Comptroller. Behind such a fear was the fact that the King himself, while Lord High Admiral, had actually sanctioned the building works at Cremill and Weevil. On 24 January 1831, Graham informed Grey of this turn of events:

I send you a letter from the King, by which you will perceive he does not much like the close investigation of past Navy Expenditure without the consent of Parliament; Weevil and Woolwich were his own works, but the line to be taken is, that tho' he ordered the works to be begun he never sanctioned the subsequent concealment from the H[ouse] of Commons. It was impossible to overlook this abuse; and it was much easier to verify at once to the King; firmly but respectfully, the intention of vindicating the large votes of the present year by an exposition of past abuses and of serious misapplication of public money. When I have evidence of the low stock of our principle Stores in the Dock Yards, I will lay it before the King as conclusive proof that this neglect of the appropriate act has not been harmless.[87]

This matter appears to have been amicably concluded for Graham, only a week later, was able to inform the Prime Minister that he received another letter from the King in which he admits to the necessity for this 'systematic attention' and greater accountability to Parliament. In passing the letter to Grey, Graham appended the comment that it was 'a rare instance of good fortune to serve in Government under you with such a Sovereign on the Throne'. [88]

The careful scrutiny of the use of naval money in earlier years also meant that former members of the Board of Admiralty might find themselves coming under criticism. For them, however such parliamentary attacks could be fended off reasonably effectively. Unlike the civilian boards, where Martin was the only parliamentarian, the dismissed Board of Admiralty could muster former Board members Cockburn, Hotham, Croker and Clerk in the Commons, while Melville, if he so chose, could provide an adequate defence in the Lords. In preparing for this likely attack, Melville wrote a carefully considered letter to Sir George Clerk in January 1831. He seems to have had few real concerns that the Admiralty, under his leadership, would be found to have been at fault,

I have no idea that Graham will attempt the dangerous task of picking holes in the conduct of his predecessors, as far as regards details of that description, & at any rate they are easily answered in the way you state. Even the existence of a larger surplus at the beginning of this year than of last is no proof of over-estimating or voting. Ships may have been, & in fact have been, brought home which have not been relieved, particularly in the Mediterranean; & at any rate the surplus of one year is either applied (as last year at Sheerness) to liquidate a debt incurred under the authority of Parliament, or it goes pro tanto in diminution of the Estimates for the following year.[89]

He did note however, the likelihood of attention being drawn to Woolwich and Weevil victualling yards, but he did not feel that they created any problems for either himself or Clerk as 'they occurred when you and I did not belong to the Admiralty'.[90] Indeed, at this stage, Melville appears to have seen Graham's endeavours as no more than a continuation of work that he had already undertaken in attempting to de-mystify the estimates. However, for Martin he did see problems ahead and there are signs in his letter to Clerk that he was distancing himself from the Comptroller,

I quite agree in all you say as to Sir Byam, the difficulty of keeping him within bounds in his demands, and if this year he has not expended the sum which he said was absolutely indispensable to replenish our arsenals with a moderate proportion of Stores, he ought to be impeached.[91]

The first major parliamentary attack came during the Naval Estimates debate of February 1831. The main thrust of the attack was the suggestion that Parliament had been purposely kept in the dark as to the sums that would be required for naval works and that deliberately larger estimates than necessary were intentionally inserted elsewhere to cover these costs. Melville, upon hearing these claims, considered them to be a 'flagrant untruth'. In a further letter to Clerk he stated,

The greatest pains have been taken to keep down every item to the sum which it was believed would really be expended under every item.[92]

However, he did not believe that complete accuracy was really possible,

. . . until Mr Joseph Hume, or Sir James Graham, or some other ingenious gentleman, shall devise a method by which a previous Estimate at the beginning of the year shall be made to tally exactly, under each head of service, with the final account at the end of the year . . .
[93]

Of course, it had always been open for Melville to directly defend himself and the Board of Admiralty in London, something he threatened to do,

I should be much annoyed if I were obliged to go to London now, and yet I cannot help wishing that I was there. I should move to have a copy of the Navy Estimates laid before the House of Lords, and have a thorough set-too.[94]

Although he fails to give his reason for not going to London for purposes of initiating a debate in the Lords, one possibility may be surmised. This concerns his youngest son Robert, who was Deputy Comptroller of the

Navy Board. As such, this Melville scion was totally at the mercy of the new administration. By attacking the government, Melville would clearly be jeopardizing young Robert's future.

Martin, on the other hand, was less than circumspect. He took up Graham's parliamentary attack, claiming it to be an allegation of misappropriation of public funds. Indeed, he wrote to Graham, demanding that he publicly apologise on the floor of the House. To this, Martin received a reply from Graham, written on 5 March,

I have never stated that monies voted by Parliament in the Navy Estimates have been applied to other purposes than the Public Service: My allegation is that Monies voted by Parliament for one purpose have been applied to another: that public works have been begun, finished, and even paid without the previous consent of Parliament and without any subsequent explanation
. . . year after year.[95]

In this same letter Graham went on to point out,

. . . you must exercise your free and independent judgement with respect to any course which you may think necessary as a member of the House of Commons. There I am bound to answer officially all questions, but considering our relative positions as members of the same Government I can enter into no arrangement for explanation to be demanded of the First Lord of the Admiralty by the Comptroller of the Navy.[96]

By now, Graham clearly recognised Martin as a major obstacle to be overcome. Furthermore, Martin made it no easier for himself when he refused to support the Reform Bill. On 7 April 1831, Althorp sent him the equivalent of a three line whip which demanded his presence at the House of Commons for the Bill's committee stage. Martin failed to appear for the vote, a point of which the government took note.[97]

Unfortunately, for Martin, he was Member of Parliament for

the Plymouth constituency, one that was regarded by the government as being under Admiralty patronage. In the General Election held during that Summer, and in consequence of the government defeat in the vote at which Martin's presence had been requested, an attempt was made to remove Martin from Parliament. Initially he was asked to stand down, it being stated that it was not necessary for the Navy Comptroller to be a Member of Parliament.[98] This request was made to him in a letter from the King, signed by Herbert Taylor, following consultations between William IV, Grey and Croker. Martin however, claimed that the letter arrived when he had already left for Plymouth to begin his campaign.[99]

In the ensuing election, the Whigs used every means at their disposal to unseat him, but proved singularly unsuccessful. Over the years, drawing upon votes previously given to his father-in-law, Robert Fanshawe, who had held the seat up to 1790, Martin had acquired considerable support. As a result, he topped the poll with 101 votes while fellow Tory sympathiser Admiral Sir George Cockburn received 91 votes. Both were elected. The government's own candidate, George Elliot, First Secretary to the Admiralty, came bottom of the poll. Among those brought out to vote for Elliot was Joseph Tucker, who was given exclusive use of the Admiralty yacht to take him to the constituency.[100]

However, the battle was not over. Although Martin had not been removed from Parliament, he could at least be removed from the post of Comptroller. Both Grey and Graham saw the King in October, with William reluctantly agreeing to Martin's removal. No record exists as to why the King should have agreed. The argument used by the premier and his First Lord must certainly have been persuasive. Only a month earlier, William IV had spoken to Martin, concerned that he was about to resign. At this meeting the King indicated himself to have always been in agreement with

the actions of the Navy Comptroller.[101] The first indication that Martin received of his dismissal came in a letter sent to him by Graham and received in mid-October.[102] Martin must have been shocked at this rather sudden change in his fortunes. In reply, he sought to be informed of what had led the King to 'cancel those cherished expressions of his good opinion and confidence'.[103] Graham received this letter on 17 October and replied that same day:

Although I am not prepared to admit the Right of a Public Officer to enquire into the circumstances, under which His Majesty may have been pleased to cancel his appointment, yet on the present occasion I have no hesitation in stating that His Majesty has decided in conformity with the advice of his responsible and confidential servants.[104]

A further public attack upon the Navy Board came with the Naval Estimates debate at the beginning of the following year. Reference was again made to the inferior boards being able to make contracts 'without the knowledge of the superior' and their ability to appropriate money to other purposes 'than those for which it was granted'. Graham indicated such practices to have been frequent and that it was his intention 'to bring forward a measure to remedy such irregularities in future'.[105]

In answer to a question put forward by Joseph Hume, in which he asked if the government was to continue to erect brewing and baking machinery at Plymouth, which he pointed out was now found to be of no use, Graham went into a lengthy reply that gave him a chance to criticise the Victualling Board. The First Lord indicated that it was his intention to proceed with the works as he considered them to be of future value, but that the Victualling Board's original decision to proceed with the works, taken while Melville was First Lord, had been without the knowledge of the Admiralty. Furthermore, so Graham pointed out, the Victualling Board had entered 'into a private contract for the machinery with the brother, and,

as he believed, the partner, of the Superintendent of Works.' Avoiding use of the word corruption, he did declare it a 'most irregular' arrangement.

First, a private contract or bargain was made; next, it was made with the partner and brother of the Superintendent of Works; third, he had been misled as to the amount when he had first brought forward these Estimates. He had called upon the Victualling Board to state the entire sum which would be necessary for these works in the ensuing year; the reply was, "55,000l.", and a grant to that amount was, therefore, prepared. He was afterwards informed that a further sum of 42,000l would be necessary for the purchase of machinery, which sum was quite independent of the contract.[106]

A further parliamentary attack upon the civil boards came with the first reading of the Navy Civil Departments Bill, the legislation that would eventually bring about abolition of the civilian boards. A detailed assessment of its content will be considered in the next section; all that needed be included here is a note of some of the points raised during the debates that surrounded the various readings of the bill. In his preamble to the first reading, Graham drew attention to the limited control that the Board of Admiralty had over the expenditure of the inferior boards once that money had been voted by Parliament:

The individual who brings forward the estimates is, I am well aware, responsible for their correctness; yet, when they have been once voted, the Admiralty has no control over the expenditure of those sums; they are issued by the Treasury on the requisition of the Navy and Victualling Boards; and it was not until very lately that the Admiralty had an opportunity of knowing how the money was expended; for even the books of the Navy Office would not show under what heads the money was laid out.[107]

To illustrate his point, Graham proceeded to instance a few examples. Among these he included reference to large sums of unvoted money expended upon the newly built naval hospital at Chatham together with reference to

the victualling yard at Cremill. As regards the latter, so Graham pointed out, construction work had begun one year prior to a request for any money. Furthermore, up to then, Parliament had voted a mere £74,000 for a project that had almost reached the sum of £0.25m. In his speech, Graham pointed out that

There was no general plan or estimate submitted to the Admiralty, or laid before Parliament. A sketch was made, but it was not drawn up in the regular form of a plan or estimate. No general vote was passed by the House - nor one shilling more than he stated was voted. Yet the work was all but completed, and an additional sum of 155,334l had actually been paid.[108]

As a final example, Graham mentioned work upon a new dry dock at Woolwich where 'no general plan or estimate [was] submitted either to the Admiralty, or laid upon the Table of the House'.[109]

Among those who spoke against Graham was Sir Thomas Byam Martin. On this occasion he was extremely reserved, mostly directing himself to the system that was to replace the civilian boards. However, he did make reference to naval estimates not being applied to the exact purposes intended. He claimed, correctly, that this was not a new practice,

. . . the custom had always existed, in the Naval Service, to appropriate the gross sums voted by the House to whatever services it was found most convenient to apply them.[110]

Undoubtedly the most reasoned and eloquent defence of the Navy Board came from J.W. Croker. On 27 February, during the second reading of the Navy Civil Departments Bill, he carefully examined all of the charges made against the civilian boards. In a speech that must have lasted in excess of two hours he suggested that any deliberate attempt to undermine the superior board should really be placed at the feet of the Admiralty, 'for the Lords of the Admiralty might, if they had thought

proper to exercise the powers intrusted to them, have prevented or punished such insubordination'. As for claims that money for certain naval works had not been sanctioned by Parliament, this appeared to be a very 'fearful' charge,

yet when examined and explained, it really constituted no offence on the part of the naval administration, but was even some proof of merit and economy. In the first place the right hon. Baronet [Graham] expressed himself inaccurately, when he said 'the sums were not voted;' they had been all voted, regularly voted; but it was true that they had not always been applied to the exact items of service, for which they were voted
. . . [111]

Turning to the matter of inadequately stated estimates, Croker continued,

The right hon. Baronet seemed to him not to have sufficiently distinguished between estimates and accounts; though certainly no two things could be more different. An estimate was in its nature uncertain - we estimated what we could not ascertain, and all the naval monies were voted on estimate - an account, on the contrary, which related to the actual expenditure, might be given with perfect accuracy, and accordingly we might have at the end of any one year, an accurate and minute account of the actual expenditure of all those sums which were estimated at the commencement of the year. The estimate was to a certain extent a vote of confidence; the account afforded the check, and the control, and the proof, that the confidence was not abused.[112]

In other words, it was quite justifiable for the estimates to be an inadequate statement of actual expenditure, provided that the accounts tallied 'to a farthing'.

The money had been voted, and the service to which it was applied was also voted; although the exact amount spent on each head of service within a given time, was not and could not be estimated.[113]

Indeed, and this was the real point that Croker was making, Graham

did not pretend that any improper application of the money had been made - that one farthing

had been lost - that one farthing had not been
accounted for. It could not be argued that
any improper application had been made of
surplus money in the hands of the Navy Board
. . . [114]

However, Croker's eloquence had little chance of saving the civilian
boards. Both the committee and third reading stages were passed with
considerable majorities and royal assent given on 1 June 1832.

NOTES

1. St Vincent held office as First Lord of the Admiralty from 19 February 1801 until 15 May 1804 while Grey held the post between 10 February and 29 September 1806. St Vincent was the son of a civil servant who later became governor of Greenwich Hospital. He was raised to the peerage as a result of his great victory of that name on 14 Feb 1797, being formerly John Jervis. Politically he was closely linked with the Whigs, while having a strong attachment to the Greys. In Parliament he consistently supported the Whigs, voting for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (Mar 1787 and May 1789) together with Grey's motion for the parliamentary reform (May 1793). He also supported Pitt's reform motion (May 1783). [For this information I am indebted to Dr G Ditchfield of the UKC History Dept] St Vincent's associations with the Grey family include joint leadership, with the future 1st Earl Grey, of the West Indies expedition of 1793-5 and the appointing of Grey's sailor son George as captain of his flagship, Boyne. Later, while First Lord, St Vincent appointed George Grey to the dormant position of Adjutant-General of the Fleet and (in April 1804) to the post of commissioner of Sheerness dockyard. The two biographical accounts of St Vincent's career, written by his contemporaries [Tucker (1844) and Brenton (1838)], both take a partisan line. A more recent assessment of his character can be found in Lloyd (1963), a book primarily devoted to the battle of St Vincent. Grey, whose family were large landholders on the borders of Scotland, was the son of General Sir Charles Grey who was raised to the peerage in 1801. Two biographical accounts exist, these being Trevelyan (1920) and Smith (1990). Both provide much essential detail on Grey's varied political achievements other than those concerned with his involvement in reforming the civil departments of the Navy. Only a few lines, for instance, are devoted to his seven months at the Admiralty with only the odd line directed to the abolition of the civil boards.
2. Smith (1990), 243
3. This is a point emphasized by Fox in a Commons speech of 14 May 1806 and reproduced on page 122-3 of this thesis.
4. Markham (1904), viii.
5. 27 Aug 1797. Quoted in Bonner Smith (1927), 431-2
6. *ibid.*
7. 26 Feb 1801. Quoted in Bonner-Smith (1921), 378.
8. 15 Mar 1801. *ibid.*, 379-80.
9. *ibid.*, 182.
10. Dockyard commissioners were appointed by the Navy Board but the appointee had to be approved by the Board of Admiralty.
11. Bonner Smith (1927), 191. This letter was dated 6 August 1802. George Grey, uncle of the 2nd Earl Grey, was closely connected to the Whig MP Samuel Whitbread through his marriage to the latter's daughter while his eldest sister married one of Whitbread's sons. He became a naval captain in November 1793 commanding the flagship of the then John Jervis during operations in the West Indies and later commanded the Victory at the Battle of St Vincent.
12. Bonner Smith (1927), 8.
13. PRO ADM106/3224, 30 Aug 1802.
14. PRO ADM106/3006. Dismissals Book, 1786-1804. See entries for 22 September 1802.
15. PRO ADM106/3224, 13 Sep 1802.
16. Bonner Smith (1927), 10
17. Coffin, in fact, was the first commissioner to be appointed to Sheerness dockyard for a number of years. Because Sheerness was a smaller yard, it was the custom, during peace time years, for it to be administered by the commissioner at Chatham. For this reason,

- those employed in the yard may have been given more latitude than existed at other yards. Hence the reason for Coffin coming across so many infractions of the rules.
18. PRO ADM106/3224, 19 Sep 1802.
 19. Bonner Smith (1927), 193.
 20. London 'Times', 10 Nov 1802.
 21. 43 Geo III
 22. These were #17 Board of Admiralty, Navy Board, Navy Pay Office and Marine Pay Office; #18 Transport Office; #32 Victualling Office.
 23. Bonner Smith (1927), 18.
 24. *ibid.*
 25. *ibid.*, 482
 26. The membership of this commission was made up of five commissioners, all appointed by St Vincent and approved by parliament. They were Vice-Admiral Charles Morice Pole, Hugh Leycester, Ewan Law, John Ford and Captain Henry Nicholls.
 27. 43 Geo III, c119.
 28. Bonner Smith (1927), 456-7
 29. *ibid.*, 203.
 30. 'The Times', 20 May 1803 p.2.
 31. *ibid.*
 32. *ibid.*, 17 June 1803, p.2.
 33. McCahill (1987), 77; Rose (1911), 495; Breihan (1979), 172-4; Arthur (1983), 216-7.
 34. A factor leading to the rejection of large quantities of Timber was the introduction of a new post to the dockyards, that of Timber Master. Appointed to each of the yards, this officer was responsible for all timber delivered to the yards and its later use. It appears that those appointed were far too rigorous in the standards that they set, annoying the timber merchants by rejecting a high proportion of that delivered. Among contracts cancelled was the block contract, supplies again considered sub-standard.
 35. 'The Times', 1 Mar 1804, p.2
 36. *ibid.*, 16 Mar 1804.
 37. NMM MID 6/11/7.
 38. *ibid.*
 39. St Vincent, Earl of., *Memoirs of the Administration of the Board of Admiralty under the Presidency of the Earl of St Vincent* [nd] London. The whole of the impression of this tract, with the exception of one remaining in the British Museum, were destroyed by the 1st Earl's son, Mr Justice Jervis.
 40. According to Trevelyn (1920) Grey's 'labours at the Admiralty were sweetened for him by close official connection with the famous sailor, Lord St Vincent, who happened to be a personal and political friend'. This is, it appears, the only hint of an important relationship appearing in any of the biographies concentrating on the lives of either of these two individuals. Trevelyn further quotes a few lines of a letter written by St Vincent to Grey in July 1806, 'I hope that among you a Black Eye will be given at the ensuing General Election to some of the pitiful opposers.'
 41. Markham (1904), xii.
 42. Bonner Smith (1927), 79-80.
 43. Marsden (1838), 103-4; Markham (1904).
 44. Collinge (1978), 143.
 45. Thompson had only limited private means and this revival of his personal fortunes must have been considered of some value.
 46. BL Add Ms 41,400. 2 Feb 1817.
 47. *ibid.*, 24 Jan 1818.
 48. *ibid.*

49. *ibid.*
50. *ibid.*
51. PRO ADM1/3462. 20 June 1822.
52. Tucker (1844), II, 425.
52. BL Add Ms 41,400. 1 June 1818.
54. *ibid.*
55. Lambert (1991), 20
56. SRO GD51/2/1017. 25 Jan 1829.
57. BM Add Ms 41,398. 1 June 1830.
58. SRO GD51/2/983/1
59. SRO GD51/2/981/2. 22 Feb 1815.
60. SRO GD51/2/981/1. 22 Feb 1815.
61. SRO GD51/2/983/1. 10 Nov 1815.
62. SRO GD51/2/983/2. 11 Nov 1815.
63. See earlier discussion on the various promotions granted to Joseph Tucker.
64. Tucker (1849), 55. In this account, the son of Benjamin Tucker claims that his father's correspondence with Melville was at the 'command' of St Vincent.
65. BL Add Ms 41,368 f.36-7
66. *ibid.*, 9-10
67. *ibid.*, 37
68. BL Add Ms 41,402. 19 Oct 1818.
69. BL Add Ms 41,368 f.6.
70. *ibid.*
71. *ibid.*
72. *ibid.*
73. *ibid.*
74. *ibid.*
75. Tucker (1848), 56.
76. SRO GD51/2/437/9. 28 Aug 1818.
77. SRO GD18/3335. 8 Feb 1832.
78. *ibid.*
79. *ibid.*
80. See next chapter.
81. Smith, D.B., (1945), 159
82. Select Committee on the Board of Admiralty, 1861.
83. BL Add Ms 41,368. 22 Jan 1831.
84. *ibid.*
85. *ibid.*
86. Cumbria Record Office. Graham Papers. Graham to Grey, 2 Feb 1831.
87. *ibid.*, 24 Jan 1831.
88. *ibid.*, 4 Feb 1831.
89. SRO GD18/3335 Melville to Clerk. 28 Jan 1831.
90. *ibid.*
91. *ibid.*
92. *ibid.*, 2 Mar 1831.
93. *ibid.*
94. *ibid.*, 4 Mar 1831.
95. BL Add Ms 41,368. 5 Mar 1831.
96. *ibid.*
97. *ibid.*, 5 Sep 1831
98. *ibid.*
99. *ibid.*
100. *ibid.*
101. *ibid.*, 5 Sep 1831. Personal notes taken by Martin.
102. *ibid.*, 16 Oct 1831.
103. *ibid.*, 17 Oct 1831.
104. *ibid.*

105. Hansard . 14 Feb 1832. f.293.
106. *ibid.*, f.291.
107. *ibid.*, f.352.
108. *ibid.*
109. *ibid.*, f.353.
110. *ibid.*, 27 Feb 1832
111. *ibid.*
112. *ibid.*
113. *ibid.*
114. *ibid.*

CHAPTER THREE

ABOLITION OF THE CIVILIAN BOARDS

Two major causal factors are discernible in the decision taken by the Whigs to abolish the Navy's civilian boards in 1832. Most important was a dislike of the Navy Board, with the reasons for this aversion already outlined. Opposition to these particular boards, which began with St Vincent's period at the Admiralty (1801-4) and was re-inforced by Grey's own experience of this same office (1806) was singular in nature. It did not extend into a general desire to overhaul the nation's wider administrative framework. When, for instance, radical parliamentarian Joseph Hume on 25 February 1831, before the Committee of Supply, declared that 'Boards had been the ruin of this country'[1], his was a lone voice. Neither then, nor in later years, was this statement to receive support from the Whigs. They, or more particularly Prime Minister Grey, had no broader axe to grind than that of revenge upon the two remaining civilian boards of the navy. Indeed, the Whigs themselves were creators rather than destroyers of administrative boards. It was in 1847, for instance, that their own Home Secretary, Sir George Grey, replaced the Poor Law Commissioners with that of the Poor Law Board while the Board of Health followed in 1848. Interestingly enough, among those who supported the move for more boards, although by that time he was a declared Peelite, was former First Lord Sir James Graham. Additionally, the Whigs themselves had great attachment to one particular administrative committee: the Board of Ordnance. As will be seen later, this became a model upon which it was considered the reformed civil departments of the Admiralty might, in some way, be based.

The second causal factor leading to the abolition of the Navy's civilian boards was that of economy. Throughout the period 1815 to 1831

the Whigs campaigned on this issue, finding it to be one of the few subjects that not only united a disparate opposition but also attracted a degree of support from those who normally voted with the government. Furthermore, it was the Navy vote that was often at the centre of these parliamentary manoeuvres. This, in itself, made sense. In reality, there were few areas in which any real cuts could be made, large areas of government expenditure, such as servicing the national debt, required large fixed sums. On the other hand, the Tories themselves, within a few months of hostilities ending, had considerably reduced another high spending area, that of the Army. The Navy, on the other hand, continued to receive large negotiable sums that could be critically examined in Parliament.

As it happened the Whig opposition, before 1830, chose not to make any links between their campaign to reduce naval expenditure and their desire to abolish the civilian boards. In fact, this latter desire, as far as the public debate was concerned, had been effectively shelved. In part, no doubt, this was the result of Grey's semi-retirement. While others might have agreed with his thinking, it was very much a personal vendetta and one that Grey only chose to pursue upon acquisition of the premiership in November 1830. At that time however, the connection between the earlier retrenchment campaign and the advantage of abolishing the civilian boards began to be carefully fostered.

3.1 Post-war retrenchment

During the immediate post-war years the Whigs, and their occasional radical allies, mounted a series of parliamentary attacks upon perceived high levels of government expenditure. It was a campaign that proved itself to be in tune with public opinion while uniting a wide range of

dissident opposition elements. Those attracted to the cause on such occasions included not only the radicals but also Tory-liberals and numerous waverers who, for the most part, were more frequently found to vote in favour of the Liverpool administration. As a result, the government suffered several major defeats. Yet, in the final analysis, the opposition, during these early post-war years, were unable to convert this support into anything more permanent. Even with regard to matters relating to taxation and government expenditure, those in opposition could not regard such support as either enduring or to be guaranteed. When the governing administration showed itself to be able and willing to reduce expenditure, then the size of the opposition vote dramatically declined. Indeed, the only direct advantage gained during the earlier period when they led the campaign for government economy, was a small increase in numbers following the election of 1818.

Among the most ardent of government supporters there existed the belief that the Whigs only opposed government naval expenditure as a means of courting public support. Such an assessment however, ignores the long established Whig tradition of closely examining government expenditure, especially of a military sort. On numerous occasions, both during the recent war and the latter half of the 18th century, Whigs had made a point of highlighting ministerial extravagance, corruption and inefficiency. Most notable of these earlier campaigns were the attacks on Lord Sandwich during the late-1770s and the economical reform movement initiated by the Rockingham Whigs during the 1780s. Concerned primarily with achieving a reduction in the number of state sponsored offices and sinecures, this latter campaign had as its objective the target of reducing the influence of the executive in the House of Commons. This campaign which, over the years, had proved most successful, led directly to the establishment of the Finance Committee and the subsequent

Commission on Fees. Both gave considerable attention to the Navy's civil departments, with the published reports of these two bodies already extensively drawn upon for earlier parts of this thesis.

The post-war campaign to achieve reductions in expenditure and taxation had its first major success in March 1816. A prolonged campaign of petitioning against the property tax resulted in a government defeat and the ending of this universally unpopular measure. Boosted by this success, and concerned at the high levels of continued naval expenditure, the Whigs quickly turned their attention to the Admiralty and civilian boards. On 20 March 1816, just two days after the property tax vote, Methuen called for a reduction in salaries paid to the first and second secretaries appointed to the Board of Admiralty. Both secretaries had, in 1800, been awarded fixed salaries of £3000 and £1,500 per annum respectively. At that same point in time both salaries had also been augmented by special war time payments that amounted to £1000 and £500 annually. As members of the Whig opposition pointed out, the cessation of hostilities had now occurred, with both secretaries experiencing a considerable reduction in the amount of work they were expected to perform. Yet, instead of having their salaries reduced, an Order-in-Council of 21 June 1815 had resulted in an effective increase by integrating the war time bonus into their permanent salaries.[2] Methuen, in calling for an examination of the relevant papers, went on to ask,

if there was ever such a moment chosen,
in the wildest infatuation of ministerial
indiscretion, when such an alteration should
take place; when, to say nothing of the
reduction in labour, the great depreciation
of every article of consumption had already
raised the salaries to double their former
value?[3]

Methuen also went on to observe,

the great proportion that existed between

the remuneration of civil and military services; and a comparison must arise between the salary of the Secretary of the Admiralty, and the pay of the heroes who bled at Trafalgar and Waterloo. At the very moment, too, when ministers were raising the perquisite of this secretary, they must reduce the reward of those brave men who were crippled in their country's service, and abridge the pittance of the fatherless and the widow.[4]

On this occasion the government triumphed, the opposition receiving 130 votes to 159.

A simple lack of knowledge as regards naval affairs resulted in the opposition suffering a further defeat when they opposed the naval estimate on 25 March. On the face of it, the opposition had an extremely good case. The war had been terminated in June 1815, with the navy effectively demobilizing since the beginning of 1814. Indeed, that earlier year had not only seen the surrender of Napoleon but the ending of the American conflict that had begun in 1812. Despite all this, the government, in 1816, was still demanding from the navy estimates the staggering sum of £16.8m. As opposition M.P.s were quick to point out, this was an amount well in excess of the £6m which had become the normal sum voted in the estimates during the years that had immediately preceded the declaration of hostilities against the French in 1793. According to George Tierney, leader of the Whigs in the House of Commons, 'the naval estimates now before the House did not relate to the naval defence of the country by its naval officers, but solely to the civil department of the naval estimates'.[5] While Tierney stated that he did not wish to see the size of the Navy reduced beyond that level already made by the Government, he felt that money directed to the civil boards could be greatly reduced. To prove his point, he then took each department in turn, showing how expenditure had not only increased over those earlier peacetime years but also over and above that of 1814, the last year of the war.

However, in making these observations, Tierney failed to take one particular point into consideration. He ignored the difficulties of demobilizing the Navy as compared with the Army. While soldiers, and indeed sailors, could be quickly paid off upon the termination of hostilities, warships could not. Once brought into the harbours at Chatham, Portsmouth and Plymouth, these vessels had to be denuded of all their stores and ships furniture, unrigged and dismasted. Once this had taken place, often with the help of a retained ship's crew, these items had to be repaired and renovated in the dockyard workshops. At the same time, the vessel itself would join a long line of other vessels waiting to enter dry dock for examination and repair. With a massive fleet gradually returning to home waters, a fleet four or five times the size of that existing at the end of any other war, the task was not one that could be completed in a few months. As government supporters pointed out, it was quite normal for naval estimates to increase rather than diminish in the year that immediately followed a war. Croker, in particular, took great delight in tearing the opposition case to pieces, stating 'that from the Peace of Utrecht [1713] and the Peace of Paris [1814], not an instance had occurred in which the first year of peace had not swelled the Navy estimates beyond the amount of the last year of war'. Furthermore, in order to drive the point home, Croker proceeded laboriously to enumerate the comparative sums expended during the last year of war and first year of peace in each conflict that occurred during the period he had previously cited.[6]

Over the next three years the Whigs continued to use the annually presented naval estimates as a mainspring for their attacks upon government expenditure. In addition, they kept a careful eye on particular areas of naval finance, initiating a range of further debates.

Such was the situation in June 1819 when Ridley put forward a motion demanding a £0.2m cut in naval spending. Another area of contention was the continued payment of war time level salaries to the first and second secretaries in the Admiralty, with a second debate forced upon the government in February 1817. A further issue, and one that had clear links with the economical reform movement which had its roots in the 1780s, was the number of commissioners appointed to the Board of Admiralty. This now began to be raised on an annual basis by Ridley. In the debate that arose from an address directed to the Prince Regent (and seeking him to give direction for the number of junior lords to be reduced by two) it is interesting to note that among those who spoke in favour of the motion was future First Lord, James Graham. At the time he was a relatively new M.P., having been elected to represent Hull one year earlier.

In giving his reasons for presenting the address, Ridley stated before the House of Commons, on this latter occasion, that it was inexcusable to have the same number of junior lords as there had been in 1797. On that former occasion, as he pointed out, the navy had consisted of 1000 ships and 120,000 men, while in the current year it had declined to 137 ships and 20,000 men.[7] Graham, in entering the debate, pointed out that he did not wish to diminish the just patronage of the Crown but contended that, of late, it had been unjustly extended. As regards the junior lords, he considered that their only responsibility in war time was that of signing papers. As such, he did not see how they were occupied during a time of peace. According to Graham, the number could be easily reduced but that the government chose not to do so because through

the disposal of a multitude of such offices only could a majority of votes in that House be secured by an administration that had lost the confidence of the country which wished to see these offices diminished. He wished an

end put to this system - he wished to see a government which trusted rather to public opinion as its strength than to the power of giving away such offices.[8]

The tenor of criticism changed during the 1822 parliamentary year, with the initiative seized by a small group of radical M.P.s. led by Joseph Hume. Unlike the Whigs in previous sessions of Parliament, they chose not to concentrate on certain specified areas of expenditure but chose to force a direct vote on every single item of public expenditure. Their objective, not unnaturally, was to bring every aspect of government expenditure into full public view. However, this minute scrutiny of every part of the estimates failed to ignite the sympathy of most Whigs. As for Tory waverers, who were also unhappy with the degree of retrenchment demanded, their enthusiasm similarly dissipated. Not surprisingly, those supporting Hume gave considerable attention to the Navy vote. On 1 March 1822, sufficient support was collected together to ensure success for a motion put forward by Ridley to cut the navy estimates by £2000 - so forcing a reduction in the number of junior lords at the Admiralty. Again, reference was made to the reduced amount of work of the Board since the end of the war, but Ridley's main objection was the undue patronage which the Ministers of the Crown were bent upon retaining.[9]

Such visible successes, whether achieved under Whig or radical leadership were, on the whole, few and far between. Furthermore, they were of only limited importance when compared with changes which appear to have been forced upon the government as a result of concern that larger numbers of their own supporters might vote against them if a wider range of economies were not undertaken. In 1818, for instance, as a result of constant opposition sniping, and the fear of future defeat in Parliament, the salaries of the two admiralty secretaries were reduced to their

original peacetime levels.[10] This, as previously mentioned, had been an issue highlighted by the Whigs that previous year. Similarly, other opposition demands were also acted upon. In 1822, the establishment of clerks at the Admiralty was severely reduced while the Navy Board was stripped of two commissioners.[11] Furthermore, the workforce in the dockyards, despite a severe backlog of ships needing to be repaired, was not only drastically pruned but restrictions were placed upon the number of hours that might be worked.[12] As for the purchase of essential stores, these seem to have fallen well below normal levels, with Comptroller Martin, on several occasions, pointing out that the available sum voted by Parliament was too small to purchase any store 'except timber'.[13] In February 1817 Martin, who appears to have been more than a little concerned by this state of affairs, expressed to Melville and Croker, his 'doubts as to the estimates covering our wants for the year even at the reduced hours of work'. According to Martin, the current estimate would be exceeded by at least £464,592 'without purchasing any article of store except timber'.[14] It must, however, be admitted that Martin was adept at fighting for his corner and prone to exaggeration.

There can, of course, be no certainty, that the government of the day might have introduced these cheeseparing economies unprompted. But such a scenario seems most unlikely. Instead, it would appear that the frequent parliamentary attacks, mounted by various elements of the opposition, were influential in forcing the government to make greater savings than it might otherwise have done. In the past it had been normal, with the exception of St Vincent's tenure at the Admiralty, for the government to rely heavily upon the expertise of the various professional boards, allowing them to spend the sums considered necessary for the upkeep of ships and yards. However, as noted in the foregoing chapter of this thesis, Lord Liverpool in January 1818, suggested to the Navy

Comptroller that it might be appropriate to reduce amounts then expended upon the improvement of dockyards. Indeed, it was this continuing opposition campaign, and clearly acknowledged as such, that led one government department choosing to take drastic action in order to cut its own expenditure. This was the Treasury which, feeling itself under pressure, decided upon a cut-back in the number of clerks employed together with a reduction in the salaries of those who were to remain. Of importance for the civil branches of the Navy, was a subsequent minute, issued by the Treasury on 10 August 1821, and directed to the Admiralty and various other departments of state. This noted recent opposition moves to bring about a reduction in the numbers employed within the various civil departments and requested that careful consideration be given to this very matter. The Admiralty was therefore desired to

cause to be made out and communicated to My Lords [of the Treasury] as soon as practicable, and at any rate before 10th October next, such plan for the reduction of their respective establishments as they may think most expedient, with a view of providing for the efficient execution of the duties of their several departments, at the smallest expence to the public.[16]

As for how this might be brought about, the minute went on to suggest:

1st. That every office was to be restored to the situation, in respect to the number of persons employed and of their respective emoluments, in which it stood in 1797, unless some adequate cause continued to exist which rendered some alteration necessary.

2nd. That where increase of business, or the more correct and efficient execution of the public service, rendered it necessary to preserve establishments either created or enlarged since 1797, the emoluments of the officers composing those establishments should be assimilated, as nearly as the change of circumstances will admit, to those received by persons in similar situations in 1797.

3rd. That if any office, existing in 1797, was found to be no longer necessary to the public service, or that its emoluments might be properly reduced, such office should be

abolished, or reduced in value, as the case
might admit.[17]

In his examination of this particular minute, Roseveare points out that although issued to over forty departments, it could not be seen as a directive.[18] Indeed, the Treasury had no real authority at that time. This was something that would come later. Nevertheless, it did sting the Admiralty into initiating a range of economies that were to be encoded into an Order-in-Council of 17 January 1822. Encompassing not just the Admiralty Office, but also the Navy and Victualling Offices, a reduction of nearly fifty clerks was undertaken while salary cuts were also implemented. As regards the reduction in numbers, this was mainly achieved through amalgamation of several branches although the establishment itself was also trimmed 'to the very lowest scale consistent with the due execution of public business'.[19] Roseveare also went on to apportion credit to the radicals for prompting the Treasury into the issuing of this minute. He goes on to conclude that it was their persistent 'sniping', combined with 'their crushing indictment of anomalous accounting' which both 'stiffened the Tory resistance but also brought its rewards'.[20]

It is not impossible that it was this long-drawn out campaign, first under Whig and then radical leadership, that was responsible for directing the thoughts of one high ranking official within the Navy Office. This was George Smith, the Board's secretary. Between 1817 and 1829 he addressed a long series of memoranda to the Board, all of them proposing potential economies or detailing related observations. These ranged from improved methods of keeping the accounts to that of introducing a more accurate measurement of work performed within the dockyards. Most sweeping of his recommendations was a proposal to reduce the establishment of the various yards by retaining only the most skilled

of the work force. Activities performed by those employed in the lesser trades, so he contended, could be undertaken by contract labour, a move that would save the payment of continuous, and sometimes unnecessary, wages. On 20 June 1827, Smith noted that 'in the neighbourhood of Dock Yards, there are persons of all trades to whom recourse could be had for all minor works'. Although the Board chose not to act upon the vast majority of the schemes put forward by their secretary, it does indicate the extent of attention directed towards economising. For the Navy Board, this was a relatively new phenomenon, as previous attempts at reducing costs had gone little further than accepting the lowest tenders from competing contractors and the refusal to raise the wages of the work force. The connection between the vigorous opposition campaign in Parliament and the existence of this internal discussion must count as something other than mere coincidence.[21]

This sixteen-year post-war opposition campaign may also have come close to forcing the government to undertake extensive changes to the structure of the navy's civilian administration and one only slightly less radical than that later carried through by the Whigs. The combination of a retrenchment minded opposition and a government that itself was attempting to economise, prompted thought to be given to even further reductions in the naval budget. However, the peculiar structure of the navy's administration meant that the body responsible for undertaking expenditure - the Navy Board - was sheltered from the direct gaze of parliamentary scrutiny by members of the Admiralty. As a result, it was fairly easy for the inferior Board to resist many of these demands. Despite this situation, the working relationship between the two boards, remained comparatively good, but it was clear that the inferior Board's continued expenditure, although watered down by a few less painful cuts, was unacceptable. However, the Navy Board, with its expertise and ability to

massage the accounts, could invariably squeeze larger sums out of the government by various declarations of urgency and need. For this reason, both Melville and Cockburn mooted the idea of a separate controlling body that would be in a position either to check such claims or remove those officers considered to be obstructing their cause.[22]

As for the continuance of the opposition campaign, the final onslaught was heralded by an obvious weakening of government strength that was brought about by the death of Liverpool's liberal successor, Canning. In turn, Wellington took the reins of power, rising to the premiership in January 1828. His efforts at achieving economies were deemed by the Whigs to be inadequate and, for this reason, they planned a well orchestrated attack upon a government already internally divided. The recognised leader of this renewed opposition onslaught was Sir James Graham:

The leaders of the Whig party were overjoyed that Graham was willing to assume the leadership in a task which to many of them was highly onerous, and Graham, himself believing implicitly in retrenchment, careless alike of praise or blame and independent of party ties, was glad to bear the brunt of such an attack.[23]

The first round of this renewed campaign was opened on 12 February, with Graham using the annual Supply Bill to move for a reduction in the salaries of all officials. If successful, this would have had an automatic effect upon the various branches of the Navy. However, it was defeated by a small majority.[24] Of even greater significance for the civil departments was a further unsuccessful resolution put forward by Graham, in which he called for the office of the Treasurer of the Navy to be combined with that of the Paymaster. This, so he claimed, would lead to an immediate annual saving of £3000. In presenting his case, Graham pointed out that since 1782, there had been several occasions in which the

post of Treasurer of the Navy had been combined with such other offices as that of the War Department, Board of Trade and President of the Board of Control. In such circumstances, the post-holder had received but one wage. Graham then went on to point out that the government already had 'too many placemen in the House' and that their number constituted a majority on every occasion.[25] Later that same month Graham directed himself to the office of Lieutenant-General of Ordnance (which he wished to see abolished) while in May he was giving thought to the pay of Privy Councillors.[26]

3.2 The Whigs Return To Power

The fall of Wellington's ministry in November 1830 was to presage a series of radical changes to the Navy's civil branches and culminated in the abolition of the two inferior boards. Carried out within the space of two years, such a superficial summary would appear to suggest that the civilian branches of the Navy had been subjected to a carefully planned programme that had been finalised during those earlier years of opposition. This, however, was by no means the real situation. The Whigs appear to have taken a typically pragmatic approach, implementing various reforms as and where the need became obvious. All that appears to have been planned beforehand was that the civil boards were to be consolidated with the superior board of Admiralty, a plan that might have been suggested to Grey some thirty years earlier by St Vincent. To ensure that these reforms were to be carried through effectively, the rising star, Sir James Graham, was appointed First Lord. Grey appears to have been assured of his competence as a result of Graham's handling of the attacks mounted against Wellington's government; all of his speeches were clearly backed by extensive research and preparation.

But does this really explain the reason for Graham's appointment?[27] In fact, there is every likelihood of a more important reason for Graham's appointment to the Admiralty. This was to do with the previously explained grudge that Grey held against the two inferior Boards and his own inability, through pressure of work, to oversee their abolition. For this reason, he needed someone at the head of the Admiralty whom he could manipulate. How else can the appointment of the young and inexperienced Graham be really explained? Certainly a number of contemporaries were mystified. According to Graham's most recent biographer,

Not everyone shared Graham's [own] pleasure in his appointment: Brougham thought it 'prematurely high' and Grenville considered Graham 'too inconsiderable'. Sydney Smith was also surprised: 'The appointment is excellent,' he told Lady Grey, 'but I would have thought that there must have been so many great people who would have been clamorous.'[28]

The Tory 'Quarterly Review' appears to have been more than usually pertinent when it commented, 'The parts . . . seem to have been oddly cast . . . Sir James Graham, because he had made the subject of finance his particular study, was made First Lord of the Admiralty; Lord Althorpe, who . . . would have been a fit and acceptable person at the Admiralty, was selected for Chancellor of the Exchequer . . . '[29] Finally, if a return to Henry Brougham is made, it is interesting to see that this leading Whig saw Graham as nothing more than 'a puppy'.[30]

In this first Cabinet post to be held by Graham he was most certainly that previously described 'puppy'. Perhaps the word 'puppet' might have held even greater appropriateness, with Grey the man who pulled the strings. Throughout the following months that led to the abolition of the civilian boards, Graham directed a series of letters to the premier. Many of them dealt with matters that would clearly have been handled in

totality by a more experienced minister. The flavour of these letters can be gleaned by one that was sent to Grey in February 1831. It dealt with the problems that the First Lord was having with the Comptroller, Sir T. Byam Martin. Graham had earlier requested information on matters connected with the naval estimates, but the latter had first chosen to send a copy of the correspondence, together with his reply, direct to the king:

I had proposed this inclosed Draft of an answer to the King; it contains the truth; but whether at this moment you may consider it prudent to send it, is a question, which I submit to your better judgement, I will alter this answer . . . which you may direct.[31]

That the civilian boards were eventually abolished undoubtedly resulted from Grey's promptings. If reference is made to a previously quoted statement by Graham, it will become clear that Grey was attempting to impose his own ideas. According to Graham, when standing before the Select Committee on the Board of Admiralty, Grey 'expressed his belief' that experience would lead 'to the conclusion that concentration was necessary'. [31] Given, therefore, that Grey had chosen to make such a remark and that Graham, as a newly appointed inexperienced minister leaned heavily upon the premier for advice, it is hardly surprising that 'concentration' was to become the final outcome.

However, before considering the precise nature of the administrative arrangements that were to replace the civilian boards, attention must first be given to a range of additional reforms. All of these preceded abolition of the civilian Boards and are, in themselves, of considerable importance. To simplify matters they will be broken into three component units for purposes of orderly consideration. First of these was a series of economies that Graham imposed upon the Navy as a whole, many of these directly affecting the civilian departments. To be

examined in more detail towards the end of this present section, these economies were primarily a continuance of the Whig campaign, while in opposition, to achieve a general cut back in government expenditure. Thus Graham, very much working within his own area of expertise, oversaw the cutting of numerous official salaries (including his own) together with a general reduction of clerks and officers. Of much greater importance, and forming a second component, were changes introduced to the way naval estimates were presented to Parliament. Finally, and forming a third component, was the introduction of a system of public accountability. Under this, actual naval expenditure had to be presented annually both to the House of Commons and an independent Board of Audit.

Upon taking up the appointment of First Lord, Graham had conducted a careful investigation into the workings of the civil boards. Many of his findings, particularly the transfer of money from votes sanctioned by Parliament into other projects, were brought to the attention of the House of Commons during his speech made on 25 February 1831. At the same time he also informed the House exactly how the commissioners of the civilian Boards had cobbled together the various sums,

his predecessors in office had reduced practically, the estimates for timber, and the materials for building ships, and for keeping our arsenals in such a state as that war should not take us at a disadvantageous surprise; that is, the estimates voted for these specific purposes by that House were not entirely expended under these heads, and the difference between the sum actually expended and that voted, was appropriated to other items . . . the actual expenditure under which exceeded the sums specified in the voted estimate.[32]

As an example, Graham cited the estimates annually submitted to Parliament for timber and building. Over a period of four years, £3.7m had been requested by the Navy Board and voted by Parliament but actual expenditure

had only been £2.675m over this same period. The annual surplus appropriated to other items and "the general outlay under the head 'Naval Departments', was thus made to square one way or another".[33]

During this same speech Graham also chose to explain his understanding of the background to this misappropriation of voted sums. He began by referring to the Appropriation Act "one of the first Acts that succeeded the Restoration". In laying down the right of the House of Commons to sanction appropriate amounts to particular branches of the public service, Graham appears to have suggested that:

By this Act the Commons obtained for themselves, not alone the right of fixing the whole quantum of Supplies, but likewise, a recognition of their right to appropriate it to particular branches of the public service.[34]

Graham then went on to quote John Hatsell, the former clerk of the House of Commons whose "Precedents" had become a standard work of reference.

But Hatsell in his Precedents says, the Navy was an exception to the general rule; and it appeared, that down to 1795, when his book was published, the Naval Estimates differed from other Supplies, and Hatsell assigns as a reason for this, that there is always great difficulty in forming the Naval Estimates, from the very nature of the Service, which is exposed to more casualties than any other. There was the difficulty in obtaining information respecting ships on foreign stations; the quantum of repair needed by such vessels; and the many unforeseen circumstances against which there could be no provision, which were continually liable to arise . . . [35]

However, that exemption to which Hatsell referred, was actually brought to an end in 1798. In that year Parliament finally extended the Appropriation Act to encompass the Navy. From that time onwards, Parliament began to regularly vote money to the Navy under various heads, with this money, theoretically, spent accordingly,

But although Parliament had declared,

legislatively, that there should be no difference, yet practically this had been disregarded, and the gross sum was, as before, applied to the service generally.[36]

Having brought all this to the attention of Parliament, Graham was performing an essential task. It was his intention to ensure that the procedures laid down by the Appropriation Act would now be enforced and that the Navy would not only bring forward its estimates under separate heads but would also spend accordingly. As Graham stated,

the time was arrived to give full effect to the change which took place in 1798; and that the authority of Parliament should be enforced, in the regulation of Supplies for the Naval Service, in the same manner as it was in other services.[37]

This approach which Graham took to the estimates cannot technically be considered a reform. He was merely correcting an abuse by bringing the various naval branches into line with pre-existing laws. However, he did make a few significant changes. Most important of these was that of making a clear distinction between monies allocated to the Navy and Victualling Boards. In addition, Graham also classified under distinct heads the expenditure of the several sub-branches of these two departments. Previously, monies voted to the various branches within the two Boards had been treated as a total sum that might be used by either Board as deemed necessary by the commissioners who composed the two Boards and without making further reference to Parliament. On this point, Graham informed members of the lower chamber,

At first this appeared to him [Sir James Graham] a matter of minor importance; but when he came to investigate the accounts and papers submitted to him in his own office, he was led to believe that it was a wise and salutary measure, as it prevented much inconvenience from the intermingling of accounts, and militated against the practice of throwing the surplus of one department into the deficiency of another.[38]

In preparing this new approach to the naval estimates, Graham had

already met with a degree of opposition. Both Chetwynd Stapylton and Sir Isaac Woolley, Chairman and Deputy Chairman, respectively, of the Victualling Board had indicated in a report sent to Graham that the putting together of accurate estimates was really not possible.[39] With regard to this report, Graham indicated some of its content, the two representatives of the Victualling Board indicating it to be their belief,

that the naval service was of that peculiar nature, so dependent upon contingencies, that it would be impossible to specify beforehand the actual outlay under each head, and that the thing must be done, in a manner, in the gross; the surplus of one item making good the deficit of another, and thus the whole expenditure squaring with the sum of the estimate.[40]

Sir George Clerk, a former Commissioner on the Board of Admiralty, took a similar view when replying to Graham's speech on 25 February. Clerk drew attention to a similar attempt made by the American Congress and consequently 'abandoned as impracticable',

The American Congress was even more jealous with respect to the administration of the public money than was the House of Commons, and yet they had abandoned the schemes which the right hon. Baronet [Graham] was now about to try.[41]

To ensure that sums voted were expended under the correct heads with only small amounts transferred between votes, Graham also turned his attention to the matter of accountability. In order to allow comparison between departments, for instance, he had moved the calculation of the balance from 1 January to 1 April [42], so bringing the Navy in-line with the majority of other departments.[43] Of even greater importance, was a decision to lay out the naval accounts in a different way. This automatically prevented a direct comparison being made with naval expenditure under previous administrations while outwardly appearing somewhat intricate. It was a point that members of the Opposition latched upon. Croker, for instance, declared it to be 'perfectly impossible to have a more complex or a worse system' believing the previous system to

have been 'clear, concise and accurate'. Although on this occasion, Graham merely stated that the new styled lay out had 'an appearance of intricacy and confusion' which would disappear in future years, he had already answered the point in a previous speech. When first announcing the new system in February he had stated that if the House would

insist upon this estimate being drawn in the same way for the future, and then, in every subsequent year, compare the items, and demand how each individual sum had been expended, every hon. Gentleman would be able henceforth to understand the Navy Estimates, which was more, he believed, than any hon. Gentleman could say he had been able to do in former years.[44]

A further aspect of this accountability, and forming a second component in the series of pre-abolition reforms was the actual laying before Parliament of the naval accounts at the end of each year. Surprisingly, this was something not previously undertaken by Parliament, with all departments of state merely required to submit their estimates for a vote. Graham himself admitted some surprise at the situation when announcing this important innovation:

He [Graham] was now about to state something, in which, no doubt, his hon. friend, the Member for Middlesex [Joseph Hume], would fully agree with him. They had often together fought the estimates when announced for the current year, but they had omitted one thing, of the necessity of which their long sitting in Opposition ought to have convinced them, they had omitted to insist on the means of knowing what was the actual expenditure.[45]

To his mind therefore, the only remedy,

was to lay before the House annually a balance sheet, in which would be specifically placed under each head, the actual expenditure of the Navy and Victualling Boards.[46]

Despite the pioneering nature of this move, with naval expenditure received in the fashion described two years later, Parliament was slow to

recognise the importance of the move. Despite the obvious increase of power, the lower House singularly failed to press other departments to make a similar voluntary gesture. Indeed, it was not until 1846 that further departments, in the form of the Ordnance and War Office, allowed their accounts to be so reviewed.[47]

The presentation of the Navy accounts in February 1832 not only allowed the House to review actual expenditure but presented Graham with the opportunity of showing his critics that the Navy estimates could be brought forward with the degree of accuracy which he claimed. On 13 February he told the Supply Committee that,

The Supply voted last year had been more than sufficient to cover the expenditure; and only in two particulars had the Estimates been exceeded.[48]

As for the two areas in which an excess of expenditure was shown to have occurred (victualling, timber and materials) Parliament had been asked for an additional vote to cover the shortfall. Previous administrations, on the other hand, would simply have indiscriminately transferred the money from any branch seen to be under-spending. Thus Graham had proved it to be perfectly possible to produce estimates that, in a normal year, would allow the various branches of the Navy to run efficiently without a wholesale transferral of sums. In addition, this same set of estimates allowed Graham to achieve a second important objective, that of beginning the financial year in April. Most departments, so it was realised, had, by the end of the normal year, sufficient sums available to carry on the navy service for those additional three months. As a result, the Navy year for 1831 began on 1 April and was so continued.

Of course, Graham was no miracle worker. All this had been achieved through the simple expedient of presenting a set of deliberately

estimates. However, it was the constitutional approach and the one that Graham preferred. While it may have meant an immediate increase over the previous year's estimates, as presented by the soon to be ousted Tory administration, it at least meant that any expenditure undertaken had received parliamentary approval. As it happens, the accounts, once produced, and as might be expected when spending was overseen by a committed economiser, showed that actual expenditure was considerably down upon previous years. It just meant that during his first full year Graham had to endure Opposition complaints that, when the approved estimates were considered, he had failed to make any real savings.

As for the actual economies that were made, and as it happens there were a great many, several of these resulted from changes in the running of the civilian branches. These form the third and final component of Graham's pre-abolition reform package. As a starting point, it should be mentioned that the First Lord reduced the number of Navy Commissioners by two while cutting back on clerks employed with the Navy Office. The two commissioners removed from the Board were one of the two surveyors and the Superintendent of Transports. Both were logical reductions for an economically minded administrator. That the Navy Board possessed two Surveyors was a clear extravagance, few earlier Boards possessing joint Surveyors during any period of extended peace. Indeed, the Order-in-Council of 1829, which had introduced a number of changes to the Board's composition had sanctioned only one Surveyor.[49] That this had not been enforced resulted from an agreement that neither of the two Surveyors should actually be dismissed, but that upon one of them retiring he should not be replaced. Graham merely speeded up the process, allowing Joseph Tucker to retire on a generous pension.[50] To Parliament, once the new arrangement had been finalised, Graham announced himself convinced that all the efficient duties of the two were performed by the present

Surveyor.[51] In preparing for the retirement of one Surveyor, the number of clerks in the Surveyor's office was reduced by two, leaving a chief clerk and one third class clerk.

A similar process was followed with regard to the Superintendent of Transports: Courtenay Boyle also retired and was not replaced.[52] He had been the least hard-worked of all the Navy Commissioners, because the government now made considerably less use of hired vessels for the transport of supplies, convicts and military personnel. Prior to his retirement, Boyle had overseen the closing down of his own particular branch of the service, the ten clerks employed within the branch having been removed, by the end of 1830, to other branches of the service.[53]

Other savings were also made at the expense of the Navy Board and its commissioners. The salary of the Deputy Comptroller, fixed at £1200 per annum in 1829, was reduced by £200 in 1831.[54] In addition, the salary paid to the Comptroller was saved in its entirety upon the removal of Byam Martin from office. Although he was replaced by G.H.L. Dundas, the latter, already paid as a Commissioner on the Board of Admiralty, received no further remuneration. A point of interest here is that Dundas' appointment, created a formal link between the two Boards and ensured Admiralty control of the inferior Board.[55] Finally, it should be noted, reductions were made in the Civil Architects branch, with the post of draftsman to the Civil Architect abolished and the salary of the second draftsman reduced by £150 per annum.

A similar range of savings was carried out within the Victualling Office. As with the Navy Board, the Victualling Board was reduced by two commissioners: the Deputy Chairman and a medical commissioner. The role of the Deputy Chairman had been primarily that of dealing with accounts.

However, as the appointment was usually given to a former naval officer, with the holder of the post, Isaac Woolley, no exception, Graham considered this a most inappropriate arrangement. For this reason he chose to abolish the commissionership, creating instead the office of Accountant General. This allowed him to appoint an experienced accountant to undertake the work previously performed by the Deputy Chairman. The first and, as it turned out, the only holder of this post, was J.T. Briggs, Graham's own private secretary and former Assistant Secretary to the Victualling Board's Cash Committee. The reduction of one of the Board's medical commissioners was made, according to Graham, partly as a result of his own belief in individual responsibility. This was explained in a parliamentary speech:

Now the theory for which he [Sir James Graham] had contended . . . was, that the best security which the public had for the good conduct of its servants was undivided responsibility. Upon coming into office, he had found two Medical Commissioners, and, considering that number just the most improper one, and finding that one of them was ready to resign, it had been thought proper not to fill up the vacancy which this resignation made.[56]

It was also the case that Graham felt two medical officers to be superfluous. The duties performed by these two commissioners in peace time years were limited, with a second medical officer necessary only to visit the out ports. On such occasions, the other would remain in London to continue the work of the Board. However, Graham overcame this small problem by instructing the Victualling Board that they were to call upon the services of one of the two physicians at Greenwich Hospital for inspection of medical facilities in the out ports.[57]

The nature of two other offices connected with the civilian administration of the Navy was radically altered during this period,

namely those of Treasurer of the Navy and Paymaster and Deputy Adjutant of the Marines. Graham was able to achieve a considerable economy with regard to the Treasurer of the Navy when he carried out an earlier desire, as expressed in a parliamentary speech made in March 1830, of amalgamating the post of Treasurer with that of the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade.[58] In the case of the Paymaster and Deputy Adjutant of the Marines, a post that involved both civil and military duties, this was logically split into its two constituent parts. In other words, the civil duties, as performed under the guise of Paymaster, were taken over by a clerk experienced in accountancy. For this reason a new branch was created within the Navy Board, that of Marine Pay, with a former second class clerk, William Robinson, given the title Paymaster of Marines. The salary of the new post holder was fixed at £400 per annum.[59] As for the purely military duties of the Deputy Adjutant, these were incorporated into a new post, that of Inspector-General of Marines and at a salary of £1000 per annum.[60]

A final economy of note was a reduction in salaries paid both to the First Lord and to the two secretaries belonging to the Board of Admiralty. Both the First Lord and Second Secretary saw a reduction in their salaries of £500 per annum, the former being announced in February 1831 and the latter in March of that same year. Thus, during the debate on Naval estimates held in the House of Commons on 25 February 1831, the reduction in the Second Secretary's salary was known while the other was not. This allowed Sir George Clerk to make the following point:

He [Clerk] recollected, that in a speech which the right hon. Baronet [Graham] had made from the Opposition side of the House last year, he had said, that if there was one salary more than another which required reduction, it was the salary of the First Lord of the Admiralty.[61]

However, Clerk went on to point out that he was not, himself, in favour

of such a move. Alluding to the recently announced reduction of the Second Secretary's salary, Clerk intimated that the Government had done more than simply reducing it by twenty-five per cent 'they had reduced the dignity of the office'.[62]

In reply to Clerk's observations, Graham went on to assure

the right hon. Baronet [Sir George Clerk] and the House, that his [Graham's] opinion on the subject had undertaken no alteration; and further, that it was not owing to any omission on his part that his salary had not been reduced. He had already stated, as he was sure the House would recollect, that the salaries of all the ministerial offices in Parliament were under the consideration of a Committee. Under these circumstances, and considering he was not the most proper person to fix the amount of his own salary, the amount of that salary remained unchanged; but he begged to assure the House, that he should consider any salary which might be awarded to him as larger than any humble service of his could deserve.[63]

The Committee to which Graham referred was the Select Committee on Reductions of Salaries, this body giving consideration to a wide range of ministerial salaries. Not only did it recommend the reduction of Graham's salary by £500, so giving the First Lord an annual salary of £4,500 but it also recommended that the First Secretary of the Admiralty should have a salary reduced by £1000. As with the first recommendation, this was also accepted, with the newly appointed First Secretary, the Hon George Elliot, receiving £2000 per annum but with a provision for his receiving an increase of £500 after five years service.[64]

3.3 The Civil Boards Abolished

On 1 June 1832 the fate of the Navy and Victualling Boards was finally sealed when the Naval and Civil Departments Bill was officially placed on the statute books. This piece of legislation not only abolished the two remaining civilian boards but also established future arrangements for administering the navy's civilian facilities. In essence, the Admiralty was now to have direct control, with actual management of those areas once the responsibility of the two Boards, placed in the hands of five principal officers. These officers, who formed neither a separate board nor were members of the Board of Admiralty, consisted of the Surveyor General, Accountant General, Storekeeper General, Superintendent of the Victualling Department and Superintendent of the Medical Department. Each was to be appointed by warrant and superintended by one of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty. To facilitate this latter arrangement, the Board of Admiralty was increased by one member so that it would consist of the First Lord and five commissioners.[65]

Before carrying out a more detailed examination of the new structure that was introduced by this legislation, it is interesting to speculate on just how long the plan had been in existence. It is not inconceivable, for instance, that such an idea had been initially posited by St Vincent. If so, it may have been passed on to Grey prior to his own tenure at the Admiralty when he might have hoped to have introduced the scheme some three decades earlier. The evidence for such an idea comes from Sir John Barrow. As a long-serving Second Secretary, for he had first taken office in 1804, Barrow must be considered a well informed witness. Furthermore, given that he was politically neutral, trusted by Tory and Whig ministers alike, he must also be regarded as an extremely reliable witness to passing events. Doubtless, then, he was calling upon knowledge gleaned at some earlier point in time when he declared in his

autobiography that Grey, when himself First Lord, had hoped to introduce a plan suggested to him by St Vincent 'but to accomplish which he either found the difficulties too strong, or could find none ready to second him effectually'.[66] Barrow makes no clear reference as to what Grey contemplated at the time but does comment as follows upon Grey's return to office in 1830,

Lord Grey, however, it was said, had now come into office, as First Minister of the Crown, with an understanding - or at least a determined resolution - that the changes suggested by Lord St Vincent should be accomplished.[67]

However, in having verified Barrow's reliability, it must be stated that his own recollection of events seemingly conflicts with those held by Graham and subsequently presented to a Parliamentary Select Committee of 1861. This looked into the workings of the Board of Admiralty, with Graham informing members that upon his first appointment to the Admiralty, Grey had given him a free hand, with the new First Lord merely informed that he would probably settle upon 'concentration' as the most likely solution to an efficient administrative system. However, this said, it remains more than likely that Barrow's statement is the more correct. After all, when he made this statement he had no particular axe to grind, merely wishing to set down on paper the truth as he saw it. Graham, on the other hand, who by 1861 was a statesman of considerable standing, would have been less inclined to admit that he had once been totally subservient to Grey. Furthermore, by the time that he had appeared before that Select Committee, a period of nearly thirty years had elapsed. Finally, Barrow's autobiography offers one more piece of evidence. In a conversation with Graham, which Barrow claims took place upon the former's appointment to the Admiralty, Graham is quoted as having spoken in the following terms:

I may mention, that the whole of the Civil Boards at Somerset-House are to be abolished,

and various changes to be made in all the departments of the naval service.[68]

Barrow, himself, in continuing this conversation, went on to observe that former Admiralty Boards (Melville's was an example) had mooted the possibility of combining the Victualling and Navy Boards. "No; that is not sufficient," came Graham's reply. Barrow continues to quote him,

Lord Grey and the Cabinet have detailed, that they shall all be abolished, as Boards, and that the Navy Board and all others shall merge in the Board of Admiralty.[69]

Barrow then indicates that he questioned Graham as to what provision would be made for the superintendence of the 'detail'. However, choosing not to wait for an answer he suggested that 'perhaps it is meant that each branch of the naval service shall have a separate superintending officer, to be charged with his own individual responsibility?'

"You have exactly it," he [Graham] said, apparently pleased; "that was precisely Lord Grey's idea, expressed to me nearly in the same words - 'individual responsibility' - instead of the combined and often contradicting acts and opinions of a Board of eight or ten persons; and on this basis," he added, "I must beg you to sketch out the outline of a plan." [70]

All this, of course, raises the issue of Barrow's own involvement in the scheme that eventually replaced the civilian boards. If the Second Secretary's account is to be believed, and there seems little reason to doubt it, then he must have produced much of the detail to the outline seemingly handed to Graham by the Prime Minister. Indeed, the question might well be asked as to whether Graham had any real involvement, other than that of acting as the messenger between Grey and the civil servants employed within the Admiralty.

As for that final plan, this appears to have been completed by the end of the following year. For, in December 1831, a thirteen page document, outlining most of the points subsequently incorporated into the

Naval Civil Departments Bill, was submitted to Lord Grey. In the accompanying letter, which was signed by Graham, the premier was asked to return the document 'with his opinion and suggestions' before it was submitted to the King.[71] The document begins with a simple reiteration of the need for the civilian Boards being 'placed under the direction and superintendence of one superior and undivided authority.' In giving reasons, it was stated that the existing system,

is in direct contradiction to the principle of undivided responsibility; and the whole history of the Civil concerns of the Navy, from the first establishment of the Dock Yards to the present time, exhibits the fatal effects of clashing interests and rival powers.[72]

References were then made to the civil Boards having disregarded orders which, in turn, had led to over-expenditure, wastefulness and abuse, while great inconvenience had been experienced

from the Comptroller of the Navy and the Chairman of the Victualling Board, on a change of administration, not sharing the fate of their political friends and leaving office with them.[73]

Indeed, it was noted that members of the subordinate Boards, because of their appointment by Patent, were inclined to see themselves as independent of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty.

Having established the urgent need that existed for a radical change in the civilian administration of the Navy, the writer went on to consider a number of practicalities. It was stated that a combining together of all three naval departments would be necessary, with 'all three consolidated Departments' under one roof, so that ready and easy communication might at all times take place. It was noted that for such purposes the Admiralty, being in close proximity to Downing Street and Horse Guards, should have its office space increased. This, so it was felt, could easily be achieved if the houses currently occupied by the

First Secretary and four naval lords were dispensed with and these officials given either new accommodation at Somerset House or a salary in lieu of a house provided at public expense.[74]

As regards the authority of those appointed to future Boards of the Admiralty, this would be secured in the following way:

The patents appointing Commissioners of the Navy and Victualling must be revoked and henceforth no Commissioners in the Naval Service, excepting the Boards of Admiralty, should bear this title.[75]

As a result, the Commissioners of the Admiralty would take responsibility for all duties previously performed by the two inferior Boards.

Tackling the problem of how the Admiralty, during war time, would be able to perform both its normal duties and that of overseeing the civilian facilities, the writer indicated that a large portion of the business of each of the Boards consists in correspondence with the others - this interchange of correspondence has been ascertained to amount to one Eighth of the whole.[76] It was also indicated that business would be carried out more efficiently if the division of labour was also removed for,

with the division of labour arises also a clashing of authority, which the union would effectually remove, and business, now transacted with difficulty, would flow smoothly without the jar of opposing interest.[77]

To undertake the work once performed by the civilian Boards it was proposed to divide the whole consolidated business into five departments and to be under the immediate superintendence of the Board. The five departments were listed as follows:

1. The Department of the Surveyor of the Navy

2. The Department of the Accountant for Cash
3. The Department of the Accountant for Stores
4. The Department of the Accountant for Slops and Pursers Accounts
5. The Medical Department

As for the principal officers who were to be appointed to head each of these departments they were to be without a seat at the Board; and each of them to be superintended by one Lord of the Admiralty [two was a suggested alternative] who will daily report to the Board most matters arising in his department as he shall deem proper.[78]

The document, itself, does not end at this point, going on to consider such detail as to who should be appointed to manage the various departments and which members of the Board of Admiralty would oversee each of the principal officers. However, further consideration of these points will be given in a later examination of the workings of the new system. All that needs be added here is that the document also gave consideration to management of the outports, it being considered that the various resident commissioners, also appointed by patent, had often held themselves to be co-equals of their own boards and inclined to question the orders they were given:

It would be in vain, amidst such a conflict of passions and of interest, to expect that degree of zeal and assiduity in the discharge of public duties which can only be obtained from the Servants of the Crown when acting in due subordination, they are directed by one Supreme authority, which regulates their appointment and controls their conduct.[79]

For this reason, so it was proposed, the commissioners of the dock and victualling yards were to be replaced by those holding the new rank of superintendent and appointed by Admiralty warrant.

If Grey did make any detailed comments, these appear to be no longer in existence. Certainly there is no record of correspondence on this matter held either among the Graham papers in the Cumbria Record Office nor the Howick collection held at Durham University. But given that there are few changes between the discussion document and the framing of the final bill, then Grey was presumably quite happy with Graham's written submission. Things, though, could hardly have been otherwise, given that Graham was following his master's instructions and would undoubtedly have received a good deal of verbal advice and encouragement during the period in which the document was framed.

The Navy Civil Departments Bill introduced in the House of Commons was given its first reading on 14 February 1832. In his opening speech, Graham directed himself to the problems that existed between the Admiralty and the two inferior Boards:

Doubtless the King could revoke the patent of either of them, whenever the Crown was so advised, but it was unusual. These two Boards appeared to hold their existence by a similar tenure, though different from the Board of Admiralty, and they had been at all times held to be subordinate to that Board; yet, nevertheless, those subordinate Boards had at all times continued to divide the power and thwart the views of that Board presumed to be set in authority over them.[80]

Having, therefore, outlined the basic reason for the bill, Graham then went on to highlight areas in which the civilian Boards had carried out expenditure upon its own authority rather than that of Parliament or Admiralty,

The individual who brings forward the estimates is, I am well aware, responsible for their correctness; yet when they have once been voted, the Admiralty has no control over the expenditure of those sums; they are issued by the Treasury on the requisition of the Navy and Victualling Boards.[81]

To illustrate this point, Graham made reference to the Melville naval hospital at Chatham and the Cremil Victualling Yard which, between them, had seen unauthorised expenditure amounting to £230,096.

Although a few points were raised against the Bill during the first reading, the opposition embarked upon a concerted campaign during the second reading which took place on 27 February. Spearheading this attack was former First Secretary J.W. Croker. He made a particularly eloquent and reasoned speech, highlighting several areas in which he thought the new arrangements to be weak. The mainspring of his argument however, was that the five principal officers would be recipients of power without responsibility. As Croker pointed out, all of them would be experts in their own field reporting to a group of senior naval officers whose own expertise was limited to that of strategy together with the handling of men and ships. In fact, it would be surprising if any of them really understood the principles that underlay the dockyards, contracting or medical matters. As a result, they would be at a distinct disadvantage when called upon to assess the work of their subordinates:

If such a system was attempted, he [Croker] knew very well what must happen. The subordinate man would do all the business. It could not be otherwise. And then, if he [Croker] was correct in this position, might he not ask, whether it would not be better to give the subordinate responsibility, as well as the business? [82]

Additionally, however, Croker brought attention to a range of other shortcomings that he called upon Graham to explain. Among these was an apparently farcical arrangement whereby each member of the Board of Admiralty had absolute authority when it came to taking decisions but had to call upon a second member of that same Board to sign papers required for the putting of these same instructions into practice. As Croker explained,

One Lord was to be enough to decide all questions - to execute the whole practical service; but to do the formal part of the business, in which there was no discretion or responsibility whatsoever, two Lords were to be necessary.[83]

As for an appointed member of the Board of Admiralty taking responsibility for financial affairs, Croker was particularly pertinent when he proclaimed,

But the most important of the whole, was the accounting branch. For his own part, he had not been lucky enough to meet with many naval officers who would condescend to turn their attention to a thing so much beneath them, or at least so remote from their habits and their usual duties, as the mysteries of book-keeping; and, at all events, he might safely assert, that there were very few men of any but the mercantile profession, who were capable of keeping accounts with that accuracy and technicality which would be necessary for such an important office.[84]

Because of the various difficulties that he outlined, and the likelihood that real decisions, as regards the civilian facilities, would be taken by the principal officers, Croker felt it necessary to suggest that these five subordinate individuals be formed into a distinct Board:

If the rt. hon. Baronet [Sir James Graham] would constitute these inferior officers into a Board of five, the whole would equally come under the general superintendence and control of the Board of Admiralty. The proposition would make no alteration to the rt. hon. Baronet's plan, except the placing the responsibility where it really should lie.[85]

To strengthen his case, Croker also pointed out that both France and the U.S.A. had recently established their own navy boards on very similar lines to those which Graham was now threatening to abolish,

It was but a few years ago, that the French established a Board similar to our Navy Board, which was called the Council of Admiralty. It had, he believed, some of the duties of our Admiralty Board to perform; but it had all of the duties of our Navy Board . . . America had also within a few years established a Navy Board. He had

that day looked at the Act of Congress. Yet, when that was the case - when our nearest neighbour and more frequent enemy, and our youngest and greatest naval rival, were both establishing Navy Boards; we, rejecting their experience, and our own, took the first opportunity of pulling down that most ancient and admirable establishment, which those other nations were endeavouring to imitate. [86]

A second Opposition speaker on this occasion was Sir Thomas Byam Martin. He drew attention to the increased amount of work which fell upon the Admiralty under this arrangement, suggesting that the work load would create an impossible situation. He drew the attention of his fellow M.P.s to the immense amount of documentation, which he estimated to be in excess of 150,000 letters, papers and account books, handled by the two civilian Boards. Under this new arrangement, all of this would now fall on to the lap of the Admiralty,

but it was absolutely impossible that they should use them - they must send them to the Navy Office before they did. To give an idea of the magnitude of the correspondence, he would merely state to the House that the postage had amounted to no less a sum than 4601 in one day. [87]

A further attack upon the bill was mounted during the committee stage, 6 April 1832. Martin once more entered the fray, returning to the issue of the Admiralty becoming overwhelmed with documentation:

How the same Board could perform all the duties of the present subordinate Boards, with only the addition of one Lord of the Admiralty, he would have Mr Barrow to explain, as it was said the plan of the rt. hon. Baronet had the sanction of that gentleman. [88]

A greater part of this second speech however, was also directed to the issue of defending the Navy Board against the numerous charges made by Graham but especially those concerning the use of public money,

Another complaint which had been raised by the Rt. hon. Baronet was, that works had been undertaken without the sanction of

Parliament, but that was no censure on the Navy Board, for they were done by orders from the Admiralty. He challenged the rt. hon. Baronet to establish one instance of resistance or disobedience to the orders of the Admiralty on the part of the Navy Board, and he would ask the rt. hon. Baronet whether he or any other person at the head of that department would submit to any dictation or disobedience from the Navy Board? [89]

Cockburn, during the committee stage, also reiterated the difficulties involved in members of the Board of Admiralty taking direct responsibility for such an increased work load. He felt that this, in turn, would throw much of the decision making back upon the principal officers:

Allowing, however, that the Lords of the Admiralty were most anxious to attend to all detail, it would be impossible for them to do so, and properly discharge their other duties, especially in war time, when the movements of the fleet would necessarily occupy so much of their attention. He was certain, therefore, that the plan must, in this case, be so far modified, as to place responsibility in the persons of the subordinate chiefs of departments, or the whole service would soon come to a standstill. [90]

Henry Goulburn, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Wellington's administration, raised a point that related to the frequent changes that took place at the Board of Admiralty. During the committee stage he said of the bill that it stated,

that everything should be done at the Admiralty. Why? The Admiralty was a Board necessarily changed with every change of Administration. What then would be the situation of the Medical and Victualling Departments, for instance, of the naval service? The Victualling service was to be intrusted to a Lord of the Admiralty. He had no doubt that a Gentleman coming into that department, and applying himself with zeal and assiduity to a knowledge of his duties, might soon master its details; but by the time he acquired that knowledge, or even before, he might, from official changes, be removed, and another individual would have to learn the

details of the office. [91]

Graham, during both the second reading and committee stage produced a reasoned, though somewhat partial, defence of the bill. This may, of course, have been due to the large number of specific criticisms made against the new arrangements or, alternatively, through a simple lack of argument. Most certainly, Graham never countered a number of the very specific points raised by both Croker and Cockburn during the debate on the second reading. Instead, he tended to dwell upon the seemingly safer area of why the reforms were necessary in the first place, once again ridiculing the civilian boards for their mis-use of funds. Proving the rare exception however, was Graham's attempt at the seemingly impossible task of explaining how Admiralty commissioners would be able to undertake both the new tasks of overseeing the civilian facilities while also conducting the work that they had previously carried out. Yet, even with regard to this, he was less than convincing, flippantly declaring that much of the work that had been independently performed by one civilian board had simply created work for the other. In the committee stage, rather than expanding upon that earlier statement, he appears to have been carried away by his own rhetoric, when he informed those present that,

forty clerks would be sufficient to do the business, instead of seventy, as at present, so that the expense of thirty clerks would be thus saved to the public, besides introducing a degree of promptitude into the proceedings which the machinery at present tended much to check. [92]

On a further point Graham also chose to make a reply, tackling the suggestion that a separate board might be created. This, so he informed Croker, would contain much of the present system and would open the door for an insufficiency of control on the part of the Admiralty. It would be the shadow of the plan he advocated, but, the substance would partake too much of the old arrangement. [94] Yet, in making this reply Graham,

once again, side stepped the entire issue. Croker, of course, had not elaborated on the idea, but both he and Graham were aware that any new board could easily have been restricted as to the amount of power it possessed. In addition, the civilian boards, by right of long tradition, had heaped upon themselves a great deal of additional authority which could also have been stripped from this new board. Finally, if such a board had been created, then it would have freed the Admiralty of its future heavy involvement in the material side of naval affairs. That the period which immediately post-dated the reforms was one of peace was, for Graham's future reputation, markedly fortunate. Any sudden entry into a long drawn out conflict, as subsequently demonstrated by the Russian War, would have shown the claims made by Cockburn, Croker and Martin to have been correct. Furthermore, given the hostility that these three felt towards Graham, it is unlikely that they would have held back from reminding him of their earlier claims. However, such a war did not break out, with Graham's reforms surviving intact for approximately two decades. By that time, and for reasons to be explained, the system as instituted in 1832 was neither condemned nor entirely abandoned. During those intervening years of peace it had been made to work, a factor for which Graham, an enthusiast for the minutiae of administrative detail, was primarily responsible.[95]

In all, Graham's parliamentary performance in defence of the Navy Civil Departments Bill, while eloquent and forceful, was nevertheless seriously flawed. He simply could not sustain a convincing argument in the face of so many experienced opponents to the scheme. For this reason, he was continually forced to return to the one issue where credibility was his, that of the earlier mis-use of public funds. As for the reasons behind this weak parliamentary stance, this arose from Graham having willingly agreed to the request of his mentor, the 2nd Earl Grey, to

accept the post of First Lord for the purpose of consolidating the navy's three administrative boards. In single-mindedly pursuing this task, he passed over a wealth of experience, not only ignoring the views of Croker, Cockburn and Martin, as expressed in Parliament, but also those of Lord Melville.[96] Between them, these four individuals possessed some 75 years direct experience of naval administration. Clinging, instead, to the views of an ageing premier, he was exposed to the views of a man whose own experience of government office, given the position he now held, was unusually limited, encompassing as it did a mere six months at the Admiralty - and that twenty-five years earlier.

The Bill had yet to be brought before the Lords. Here, Lord Auckland was responsible for its introduction, moving the second reading on 23 May. He was another who lacked experience of naval administration, for at that time he had neither been, nor was currently, a member of the Board of Admiralty. Not surprisingly, therefore, especially in view of the number of Admirals and serving naval officers who constituted the upper chamber, Auckland's speech was short and to the point. In fact, he did little more than claim that 'the advantage of this arrangement would be increased despatch in the business, and a considerable saving of expense'. Among those who spoke against the bill was Lord Ellenborough. He took up the issue of expertise, pointing out that it was impossible for 'any naval man' to be as good an accountant as those 'whose education had been calculated for such duties'. [97] Lord Napier, on the other hand, supported the bill and chose to take issue with Ellenborough. He considered professional men 'to be as capable of conducting the business of the country as any member of the Lordships' House'. [98]

Having, therefore, passed through the various stages necessary, the Navy Civil Departments Bill was placed on the statute books. Graham, for

his part, having successfully steered this piece of legislation through Parliament, had now to turn his attention to other matters. In particular, he had to attend to the practicalities of disassembling an organisation that could boast a continuous existence of more than 170 years and replacing it with an untried alternative.

NOTES (Chapter 3)

1. Hansard (3rd ser) II, 952.
2. HC 125 p.1 (1816) XIII, 167. Although the salaries paid to the two Admiralty secretaries had been reduced upon the cessation of hostilities in 1814 a subsequent minor conflict with Algiers had resulted in this being declared a period of war, with salaries returned to wartime levels. Later, the 1816 Order-in-Council made this a permanent arrangement. See, also the 'Times' report of the debate in Parliament in which the Whigs attacked the increase at a time when everyone else's 'emoluments' were being reduced.
3. 'Times', 21 Mar 1816, 2c.
4. *ibid.*
5. 'Times', 26 Mar 1816, 2c.
6. *ibid.*
7. *ibid.*, 18 Feb 1817, 2c.
8. *ibid.*
9. *ibid.*, 2 Mar 1822, 2d.
10. PRO PC2/204, f14-23.
11. *ibid.*
12. *ibid.*
13. BM Add Ms 41,400, 2 Feb 1817. Notes on a private conversation.
14. *ibid.*
15. *ibid.*, 24 Jan 1818. See page 127 of this thesis.
16. Treasury Minute of 10 Aug 1821 on reduction and alteration of Department Establishments and control of superannuation. PP(1822) xvii, 5-10 re-quoted from Roseveare (1973), 161.
17. *ibid.*, 162.
18. *ibid.*, 67
19. PRO PC2/204 f14-23.
20. Roseveare (1973), 67.
21. The various memorandums presented to the Board by George Smith are held in the Public Record Office as ADM106/3571. Further, and more detailed, references to these papers will be made in Chapter 4.
22. Cockburn's proposal is mentioned on page 140 of this thesis.
23. Erickson (1952), 66.
24. 'Times', 13 Feb 1828, 2c.
25. *ibid.*, 13 Mar 2a.
26. Erickson (1952), 66.
27. Rodger (1977), p98 does put forward an alternative reason for Graham's appointment, but in the light of chronology this is quite implausible. According to Rodger, 'The First Lord, Sir James Graham, was a young and inexperienced politician, whose service on the committee which had planned the Reform Bill had sufficiently impressed Grey to gain him a Cabinet post'. This committee, however, did not sit until after Graham's appointment!
28. Ward (1967), 96.
29. Erickson (1952), 78.
30. Ward (1967), 97.
31. CRO 2 Feb 1831, Graham to Grey.
32. Hansard (3rd ser) II, 952. 25 Feb 1831.
33. *ibid.*
34. *ibid.*, 948.
35. *ibid.* 'Precedents' were made up of 4 volumes, these published in 1776, 1781, 1785 and 1796. It is to this latter date, when the three earlier volumes were also reprinted, that Graham probably referred. None of Hatchell's books were actually published in 1796.
36. *ibid.*, 949.

37. *ibid.*
38. *ibid.*, 948.
39. *ibid.* The report now appears to have been lost. Certainly it is not to be found in the most obvious placement, that is PRO file ADM1/3475 or 3476. However, the former does contain a good deal of related correspondence between the Victualling Board and Admiralty, the members of the inferior Boards indicating the difficulties of presenting the estimates on a double system of entry as requested by Graham. The Board was not averse in principle to the idea, it simply felt more time was required. See PRO ADM1/3475, 3 Jan 1831.
40. *ibid.*, 953.
41. *ibid.*, 958.
42. *ibid.*, 27 Ju 1831, 374.
43. In 1832 the Government clarified the entire situation when it determined that the financial year for all departments should start in April. See account of Parliamentary debate of 13 Feb 1832.
44. Hansard (3rd ser) II, 975.
45. *ibid.*, 954.
46. *ibid.*
47. Roseveare, makes the point that the Royal Commission on Public Accounts (1831) argued that the House should appoint an investigating committee to review such annual accounts. See Roseveare (1973), 71 and Roseveare (1969), 139.
48. Hansard (3rd ser) X, 280.
49. PRO PC/210, 30 Jan 1829.
50. PRO ADM 7/821 f59.
51. Hansard (3rd ser) II, 25 Feb 1831, 952.
52. PRO ADM 7/821 f61.
53. *ibid.*, ff 66, 69, 71, 75, 77, 81, 87. Both Tucker and Boyle counted their retirement from 1 Mar 1831.
54. *ibid.*, f59.
55. While it is tempting to say that this innovation might, if introduced earlier, have solved some of the difficulties that existed between the two Boards, such would not have been the case. The Comptroller would still have been a permanent appointment, while the post of Lord Commissioner of the Admiralty would not have been. Upon a new government taking office, the old problems would simply have re-occurred.
56. Hansard (3rd ser)II, 25 Feb 1831, 971.
57. *ibid.*, 972.
58. 'Times', 13 Mar 1828, 2a.
59. Robinson had previously been employed in the Marine Pay Department as managed by the former Paymaster and Adjutant, being thus experienced in the duties of overseeing the payment of Marines.
60. PRO PC2/211. 31 Jan 1831.
61. Hansard (3rd ser) II, 25 Feb 1831, 964.
62. *ibid.*, 965.
63. *ibid.*, 968.
64. HC 322 p.3 & 8 (1830-1) iii, 452. Report of Select Committee on Reduction of Salaries. See also HC 375 p.3 (1830-1) vii, 495. Treasury Minute, 15 Apr 1831.
65. 2 Gulielmi IV Cap XL. An Act to amend the Laws relating to the Business of the Civil Departments of the Navy, and to make other Regulations for more effectually carrying on the Duties of the said Departments. 1 June 1832.
66. Barrow (1847), 65.
67. *ibid.*, 66.
68. *ibid.*, 498.
69. *ibid.*, 409.
70. *ibid.*

71. CRO Graham Papers. Consolidation of the Navy and Victualling Boards, 6 Dec 1831.
72. *ibid.* 3
73. *ibid.*
74. *ibid.*, 4
75. *ibid.*
76. *ibid.*
77. *ibid.*, 5
78. *ibid.*
79. *ibid.*, 3
80. Hansard (3rd ser) X, 349.
81. *ibid.*, 799
82. *ibid.*, 795-8
83. *ibid.*, 797
84. *ibid.*, 798
85. *ibid.*, 800
86. *ibid.*, 803. In 1815 the Congress of the United States created a 'Board of Navy Commissioners' and commonly called the Navy Board. This, for the first time, gave professional Navy officers a definite share in the administration of the Navy Department.
87. Hansard (3rd ser) X, 819.
88. *ibid.*, XI, 1342. Does one detect a hint of venom in Martin's reference to Barrow?
89. *ibid.*, 1341.
90. *ibid.*, 1336.
91. *ibid.*, 1359.
92. *ibid.*, 1347.
94. *ibid.*, X, 815.
95. This point will be fully discussed in chapter 5 of this thesis.
96. As already demonstrated Melville favoured the setting up of an intermediary board on the lines of that proposed by Cockburn. However, he did not choose to speak in Parliament. Both Melville and Graham were on good terms and it seems likely that the matter of reforming the navy's civilian administration would have been discussed. Even if no discussion took place, this does not invalidate the point. Melville was the former First Lord and was available for his expertise to be drawn upon.
97. Hansard (3rd ser), X, 815.
98. *ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CIVIL DEPARTMENTS WITHIN THE ADMIRALTY

4.1 Introduction

Saturday 9 June 1832 gave the outward appearance of being a normal day for the commissioners appointed to the navy's two remaining civilian boards. As on any other business day, these individuals were to be seen making their respective ways to the west side of Somerset House where the two boards had their meeting rooms. But for the two groups of commissioners, the meeting that ensued was far from typical of the many thousands that had been held since the reign of Charles II. On this occasion, and for both boards, there was but one item of any real importance. This was the matter of their imminent demise.

Earlier that same day two letters, one addressed to the Commissioners of the Navy and the other to the Commissioners for Victualling, had been written and dispatched from the Admiralty Office in Whitehall. Both had been signed by Second Secretary John Barrow and they informed the members of the two long standing boards that the patents by which they had been appointed were now revoked with management of all civilian branches of the Navy to be transferred to the Board of Admiralty. It further pointed out that their attendance at meetings of the two inferior boards was no longer required and that their respective secretaries, George Smith for the Navy Board and Clifton Waller for the Victualling Board, were to take charge of all books, accounts and other papers. These, in turn, were to be forwarded to the new principal officers who were to be responsible for administering the duties formerly carried out by the two boards.

These letters were, of course, a mere formality. The commissioners

who constituted the inferior boards were more than aware that the Navy Civil Departments Bill had passed through all the necessary stages in parliament and had, only eight days earlier, been given royal assent. As a result, the commissioners of the two boards, upon having the letter read to them, chose not to debate the matter, but only to place on record a few matters pertinent to the immediate extermination of the boards. In particular, they wished to recognise the work of their respective secretaries and departmental clerks, some of whom were to be retired, while others would be transferred to the re-arranged departments to be established under the aegis of the Admiralty. Most succinct was the wording adopted by the Commissioners of the Navy. The Board's final minute, number 1064 for that year, simply declared,

The Board having received intimation that the duties of the respective Commissioners composing it will cease and determine this day, take the opportunity before they leave office to express the satisfaction they have always felt and do now feel in having observed the attention and the alacrity which the gentlemen in the office have performed their various duties and they now beg the gentlemen to have their best thanks, and acknowledgements for the assistance they have on all occasions received from the Chief Clerks and every clerk in the office in conducting the public duties of this department. [1]

Subsequently signed by Commissioners Dundas, Thompson, Middleton and Seppings, together with Byam Martin, who appears to have been specially invited to attend this final board meeting, it was circulated around the office and initialled by each chief clerk.

The Victualling Commissioners, for their part, chose to mark their passing in a very similar fashion:

The Board cannot separate without leaving testimony to the zeal, attention and good conduct generally of the officers and clerks of this department and they especially desire to record their approbation of the conduct of the first and second class clerks of this office.

The Board have, at all times received from those gentlemen the most ready attention to their directions and the most cordial co-operation in all arrangements that they have made with the department and they desire, in according this opinion of the gentlemen of the Victualling Office to wish them health and success with their future position whether employed within public service or other occupation of life. [2]

In addition however, the secretary, Clifton Waller, who had served in that office since January 1822, was allowed to make his own comments, these also placed into the minute book,

The office which I had the honour to fill for between ten and eleven years of secretary to the Victualling Board being about to expire by the abolition of the department. I cannot quit the office without expressing to all the gentlemen belonging to it my deep appreciation of their merits as zealous and faithful public servants and my warmest acknowledgements for the cordial and able co-operation I have received from them in conducting the duties of the department.[3]

Thus the Navy and Victualling boards ceased to have any further say in the running of the civil departments of the Navy. Grey had achieved his long cherished plan of removing a group of individuals whom he considered as neither constructive nor particularly efficient. However, the Tories had argued that the arrangement introduced for the replacement of these two boards could hardly prove any more satisfactory. To this charge, the last chapter of this thesis will be directed. First, however, attention must be given to the precise nature of the new arrangement.

4.2 The New Administrative Arrangement

The Board of Admiralty, in assuming its new role of directly managing the civil departments, itself became subject to extensive reform. First and foremost, changes had to be introduced for efficiently managing the various branches and sub-branches of the former navy and victualling boards. At no point was it intended that any form of replication of the former boards should be introduced. For this reason, the Commissioners of the Admiralty retained all decision making powers. However, it was also recognised that the Admiralty had a wider remit than merely supervising the civilian departments and that the commissioners would be unable to undertake all of the tasks involved. For this reason five completely new offices were created; they were designated as superintending posts, with each holder responsible for one area of civilian naval service. To offset any chance that they might acquire a degree of authority similar to the now defunct inferior boards, it was determined that these officers should neither meet as a body nor acquire powers in excess of those necessary for overseeing the day-to-day running of their respective departments. Above all else, none of these officers was to be responsible for policy decisions, this right being retained entirely by the Board of Admiralty. Usually referred to as 'principal officers, the new post-holders were designated as follows:

1. Surveyor of the Navy
2. Accountant General
3. Store-Keeper General
4. Comptroller of Victualling and Transports
5. Physician of the Navy

To ensure that none of the appointed principal officers would 'betray their trust'[4], each had a naval lord placed over him and having authority over him. It was to this commissioner that the principal

officer was to report, bringing to his attention all matters either of importance or requiring a decision. In turn, this same commissioner, in attending the daily board meetings, was to report to the Board such matters arising in his Department as he shall deem proper to be brought before it'.[5]

The principal officers, for their part, might well be seen as precursors of the modern civil servant. Unlike the navy and victualling commissioners they were neither allowed to enter parliament nor let their own partisan viewpoint influence the work they performed. However, as with those former commissioners, they did hold office by permanent tenure. In doing so, it was considered that they would supply continuity when administrations changed and the commissioners of the Admiralty were superseded.[6] In Parliament, while introducing the Navy Civil Departments Bill, Graham alluded to this particular point, indicating that the principal officers would, over time, obtain 'a competent knowledge of their duties' that could be used with benefit under succeeding administrations.[7] Similarly, in the important policy document that was submitted by Graham in December 1831 to the Prime Minister it was stated that 'the general routine of the business would never be interrupted, the directing control alone would follow the change of Administration, and be naturally guided, as it ought to be imperceptibly by the General Policy of the Government'.[8]

To accommodate the new arrangements, the number of commissioners composing the Board of Admiralty had to be increased from four to five junior lords. This was so that one junior lord might head each department, so leaving the First Lord to undertake a more general overview. This allocation of specific duties had, in the past, always been rather ill-defined. In fact, the only clear division of duties had

been between the professional and civil lords. The former, because of their naval background, were always given tasks relating to the Fleet while the latter were assigned the routine business of signing documents.[9] As for the increase in the number of junior lords, this had to be carefully defended in Parliament. One of the Whig successes during their years in opposition had been that of bringing about an overall reduction in the numbers appointed to the Board of Admiralty, reducing it to four junior lords.[10] Graham, speaking before the House of Commons indicated that it was necessary to appoint a further junior lord in order to ensure an equitable distribution of the work involved. It was a strong case for increasing the number of commissioners, bearing in mind the overall savings that would result from the dismissal of the various commissioners of the two inferior boards. For this reason, no doubt, Graham had little hesitation in going on to recollect

when he sat on the other side of the House, that he and his friends fought a very hard battle, in order to reduce the number of Commissioners from six to four, and they succeeded. He now wished, for the reasons which he had stated [and outlined above] to have five officers, one at the head of each department, who, with the First Lord, would form six functionaries.[11]

In appointing a sixth commissioner a legal nicety had also to be confronted. In 1822, when the number of junior lords was reduced, it had been enacted that not all items of business need be brought before the entire Board, it only requiring two lords to execute many of the more routine items. However, this same Act also stated that should there be six or more commissioners appointed, then the execution of such business would have to be undertaken by a minimum of three commissioners. While this, undoubtedly, was considered a valuable safeguard, it was inappropriate for a Board that had been expanded for the adoption of specific additional duties. The decision to allow two commissioners to conduct naval business was certainly approved in the December 1831 policy

document when it was stated that orders appertaining to the civil departments should be signed by two commissioners and then countersigned by the respective principal officer.[12] However, no reference was made to the earlier Act and it may have been the case that Graham (or Barrow) in framing this particular document, was unaware of the legal ramifications of increasing the number of commissioners to six. Eventually, though, this difficulty was recognised and a clause inserted into the Civil Departments Bill which stated that as a result of the increased duties 'it is expedient to authorise the Execution of any of their [the Commissioners of the Admiralty] Duties by two commissioners only, even when such Commissioners shall be Six or more in Number'.[13]

Despite the appointment of a sixth commissioner to assist in overseeing the work of the principal officers, very little attention was given to how these duties were to be carried out. It has already been noted that, during the debates upon the Bill, Graham avoided this particular question. He seemed unable to explain how a group of individuals, frequently changed for political reasons, were to acquire the necessary knowledge to correct any failings on the part of the permanent officials placed under them. Attention, at one time, was given to the idea of having two lords responsible for supervising each department.[14] However, such a system would not have created the need for ten junior lords as each would also have shared responsibilities for two of the civil departments. While the idea would not have solved the lack of expertise among members of the Board, it would certainly have ensured that any junior lords appointed in the mid-term of an administration would not be solely responsible for one department. Instead, they would be in a position to learn from the other commissioners with whom they jointly worked. In addition, as Graham pointed out, 'this arrangement would habituate the Lords to the details of a more extensive range of business

. . . [and] would provide for occasional absences of some members of the Board. [15]

This whole question of providing effective supervision does not really appear to have been solved even after the principal officers had taken office. Certainly, during the period up until 1845 members of the Board of Admiralty never appeared to be in a position to exert the degree of control for which the Whigs under Grey appear to have striven. Partly this was due to the immensity of experience possessed by those appointed to the increasingly complex tasks of managing the various civil departments. Additionally, a degree of lethargy might have been involved. This was one factor highlighted by Barrow in his autobiographical memoirs and published two years after his retirement. He noted that, during the earlier period of the new scheme it was customary for the junior lords to visit, perhaps once a week, the offices of the civil departments which were situated in Somerset House. Barrow considered such visits extremely useful:

View them in no other light than as mere inspections of the different offices, they would have their advantage. "The eye of the master" was thought in older time to spur the attention of the servant.[16]

However, despite their usefulness, Barrow noted that as the years passed, such visits became less frequent. As a result, the departments were left more to their own devices, with the superintending officers also called less frequently to Whitehall and asked, instead, to make reports only in writing.[17]

The difficulties of supervising the civil departments when the commissioners, themselves, were based in a separate building, was recognised at an early stage. In the December 1831 policy document it was noted that the Admiralty building, as it stood, was too small. It

simply could not accommodate the five civilian departments. On the other hand, the Board of Admiralty, together with its office, could not transfer to Somerset House, as this was too distant from Whitehall and Horse Guards.[18] In September 1832, with the scheme to consolidate the departments of the Navy having been in operation for three months, Barrow submitted a memorandum on the subject. He noted two alternative solutions: that of constructing an additional wing to the Admiralty building or that of moving the Board of Admiralty, without the First Lord, to Somerset House. Having aired both these ideas, he then went on to reject both. He felt that the first proposal would be both expensive and inconvenient while the latter would suffer from the disadvantage of having the First Lord frequently absent from Board meetings.[19]

Yet Barrow was far from pessimistic. He took the view that the split site was a positive advantage. The decision to retain both the Admiralty Office and civil departments within the buildings they had long occupied meant that a potentially difficult period of re-adjustment had gone more smoothly than might have been expected:

Nothing indeed could be more regular, nothing more easy and expedient, than the mode in which the Civil Affairs of the Navy are now administered, while the respective localities of the Board of Admiralty and its subordinate Departments maintain their places, and the arrangement as to the several offices left undisturbed, and preserved nearly as they stood previous to the change.[20]

Secondly, and regarded by Barrow as a long term advantage, was that the separation of the Board from the civil departments ensured the need for written instructions. Barrow was fearful that should there be too much personal association, then important changes to the civil affairs of the Navy would be carried into effect as a result of passing conversations. As Barrow put it,

. . . if the supreme Board was too intimately blended with the subordinate departments, and the intercourse too frequent and unreserved, such cases would more commonly occur, especially if there should be a disposition to act upon conversation or even unwillingly to issue orders, or adopt measures, that might appear of too trifling a nature to wait upon the Instructions of the Board.[21]

At the time when Barrow was writing this memorandum, the scheme was still in its infancy, with those responsible for its implementation still members of the Board of Admiralty. It was later members of the Board who were to cease carrying out these regular visits to which Barrow was witness. Nor did the second secretary admit to understanding why they should end. Indeed, he saw every reason for their continuance, believing the 'walk along the Strand from Charing Cross' or 'to be landed at Somerset House in a boat from Whitehall Stairs' as anything but a toil, regarding it as an interesting break from the routine duties of office.[21] Clearly, the later members of the Board did not agree with their physically active secretary!

* * * *

The actual duties of the five principal officers, which will be given more detailed consideration in the next section, were not dissimilar in some ways from the Navy and Victualling commissioners whom they replaced. Indeed, two of the new office holders were former commissioners whose responsibilities were to remain virtually identical to those held prior to the abolition of the boards upon which they had served. In another two cases, former commissioners were also retained as principal officers but taking slightly different tasks. In the fifth case however, that of Surveyor General, the officer responsible for dockyards and ship repairs, the new appointee had had no former experience in this role.

The two former commissioners who retained similar duties were Dr William Burnett and John Thomas Briggs. The former had been one of two medical commissioners who sat on the Victualling Board and he became Physician of the Navy. As such, he continued to take responsibility for the appointment of naval doctors, the ordering of medical supplies and the running of naval hospitals. John Briggs, who had also been a member of the former Victualling Board, had held the post of Accountant General. This title he retained, although he now had a slightly more extensive remit, taking responsibility not just for victualling and medical accounts but also those relating to the purchase of dockyard stores.

James Meek and Robert Dundas were the two commissioners retained but given differing responsibilities. Meek had been a member of the Victualling Board with responsibility for the pursers' department. His duties, upon being appointed Superintendent of Victualling and Transport, were now much increased. Whereas previously he had had a rather restricted role on the Victualling Board he was now to take responsibility for all victualling matters not just those associated with the pursers' department. The appointment of Robert Dundas to the post of Storekeeper General is rather intriguing. Related, as he was, to Viscount Melville, the former First Lord, he does not appear to have been an obvious choice for a Whig administration. Yet Dundas showed himself willing to keep himself aloof from party politics and was being rewarded for the efficiency in which he had performed the duties of Deputy Comptroller. As Storekeeper General, he assumed the identical duties carried out by the Navy Board's own Storekeeper-General. The holder of that post was John Deas Thomson, who had been a commissioner for thirty-three years. In line for retirement, Thomson had not really expected to retain that post once the Navy Board had been abolished.

The most controversial figure to be appointed was that of William Symonds. Given the post of Surveyor General, he assumed responsibility for the dockyards and ships in ordinary. It was a post similar in scope to that formerly held by Robert Seppings, the Navy Surveyor. The Whigs, however, wanted a new man in that post, being unhappy with Seppings approach to the design of ships. Despite the wide choice of possible candidates, the Whigs elected to appoint a man with only limited experience of ship design and absolutely no familiarity with dockyard administration. This explains the controversy that was associated with this particular appointment.

Although actual areas of responsibility might have been similar to those of the former commissioners, the nature of the duties of the five principal officers differed markedly in two respects. First and foremost, and this is a point that has already been made clear, the principal officers lacked the same decision making role of their predecessors. Secondly, they also had a much greater supervisory role and were expected to become fully involved with the running of their departments and the overseeing of clerks. The Navy and Victualling commissioners, while also expected to fulfil a supervisory role, were much more inclined to rely upon others to undertake this aspect of their work. In particular, the secretaries of the two boards had been heavily involved in such work while most of the main branches had a chief clerk. Commissioners, therefore, chose not to duplicate this work, believing it to be amply covered by senior members of their own staff. Upon abolition of the two boards, not only were the two secretarial posts abolished, but opportunity was taken to retire most of the chief clerks. It was a move that not only reduced the overall sum paid in salaries but also emphasized the supervisory role that the principal officers were expected to perform.

4.3 The Principal Officers and their Departments

In June 1832 the principal officers took up their posts. On that occasion they were each presented with a set of 'Skeleton Instructions'. [23] These came in two sections. The first was a series of generalised commands that were applicable to all five officers. For the most part concentration was upon matters of routine. The second was much narrower in scope, outlining the duties that were specific to each of those appointed. Although the instructions, both specific and general, were somewhat slender in content, they did ensure that each appointee knew both the extent of his duties and the limits to his authority.

To those responsible for framing the new legislation, it was imperative that such guidelines should be laid down. Any confusion might lead to these officers acquiring the same independence once accorded to the former Navy and Victualling commissioners. This concern is clearly reflected in the issued instructions. An analysis reveals that 40% of their content is concerned with limitations to the authority of the principal officers. A further area of concern reflected by the 'Skeleton Instructions' was the need for economy. In all, 35% of the numbered paragraphs that make up the specific part of these instructions either mention the need for economy or state how the officers should achieve a reduction of expenditure within their departments.

In outlining the various limitations to the authority of each of the principal officers, the 'Skeleton Instructions' make it clear that they were not to act independently of the superintending commissioner placed over them. To this end, they were informed that they were not to be allowed to issue any general instructions, order stores and

equipment or discipline or appoint those employed within the departments. All this lay strictly within the province of the Board of Admiralty. In matters of correspondence, each was told that he was allowed to write to others holding posts within the various naval departments but only upon minor matters. The Surveyor General was informed that

in all professional details of matters connected with his duties in requiring information or requiring explanation on professional points he will be at liberty to correspond directly with the respective officers of the yards but he is not to issue orders of a general nature, nor to enter upon any part of the general correspondence with the superintendents of the yard . . . [24]

Similarly worded instructions were sent to all five officers, it being further pointed out that any general correspondence should be conducted through the Board "by their secretaries".[25]

In the general instructions, a very specific procedure was also laid down for the treatment of in-coming letters relating to the civil departments of the navy but not in response to correspondence initiated by one of the five principal officers. All such letters were to be

addressed to Admiralty Commissioners and such of those relating to the civil service will be sent from the Admiralty, in a box, to the Principal Officer relative for acting upon. For this purpose a messenger is to be appropriated to each department.[26]

The replies to such letters, providing orders were not required, were

to be dated "Admiralty" and the answers thereto are to be addressed to him and put under cover to the Secretary to the Admiralty with the name of the department which they belong printed or written on the lower corner of the cover. Copies of all such letters are to be written into books with suitable indices, open to the inspection of the overseeing Lord of the Admiralty whenever he may think fit to call for them and the replies to such letters to be registered in a convenient manner to be referred to if required.[27]

As part of the duties to be performed by the Surveyor General, Physician

of the Navy and Comptroller of Victualling, was that of ensuring the dockyards, hospitals, victualling yards and various storehouses were functioning properly. To this end, it was expected that they would carry out regular inspections. However, these same officers were not allowed to determine, without reference to the Board of Admiralty, when such tours of inspection were to be made. The reasons for this final injunction are unclear. It might have been to prevent more than one officer being absent from Somerset House at any one time. But given that the principal officers were highly competent individuals, then it seems likely that they would have been able to co-ordinate such a task for themselves. Far more likely perhaps, was that this necessity to ask permission was simply a means of reinforcing Admiralty authority.

Throughout these sets of instructions issued by the Admiralty were a whole series of generalised statements that made it clear that all decisions were to be made only by the Board. Many of the areas itemised were those that had previously fallen into the province of the civilian boards and where the Admiralty, in the past, had been unable effectively to enforce its own will. In the case of the Surveyor General, whose predecessor the Navy Surveyor had once reigned supreme in matters of warship design, the instructions declared that he was

to offer such remarks and explanations either on his own drafts or others that may be submitted to him as may enable the Board to judge of the propriety of adopting or rejecting them.[28]

The Comptroller of Victualling also ceased to have the same independence once possessed by the Victualling Commissioners. The 'Skeleton Instructions' issued to this particular officer blandly stated:

He is to represent in due time through the superintending lord the supply of provisions . . . accompanying his statement with all the information necessary for the Board to decide on the propriety of ordering the

whole.[29]

Similarly, it was required of the Physician of the Navy that

He is to prepare a statement to be laid before the Board previous to the annual estimates being made up of the state of the medical stores and the medicines on hand and the annual average consumption to establish the quantity that might be required. Consulting with the superintending lord as to the propriety of the quantities to be contracted. [30]

As for the Accountant General, his former independence with regard to accountancy matters was now much reduced. In one clause it was stated that

If in the execution of his duties it should appear to him that any improvement may be made in keeping the ledger or reduction in labor in the examination of accounts and vouchers he is to suggest the proposal to the Board thereof through the superintending lord. [31]

Finally, the Storekeeper General,

In all supplies of every article for shipbuilding and more especially timber and spars he is to consult with the Surveyor General of the Navy through the superintending lord who will assign the proper quantities and dimensions to be purchased. [32]

Even with regard to the arranging of matters within their own departments the principal officers had surprisingly little authority. The clerks and messengers working immediately under them were to be neither appointed nor discharged by them, this power being vested in the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty.[33] However, the exchange of clerks between departments might be arranged by the principal officers, but this did not extend to the promotion of clerks. Such a change of status had to be approved by the superintending lord. However, the principal officers were allowed to grant leave of absence to their clerks, but this might not exceed five weeks in any one year.[34]

In general, the five principal officers were all of equal standing,

with none of them having seniority or authority over another. To emphasise this equality of status, each was paid the identical salary of £1000 per year and all were entitled to accommodation within the Somerset House complex. All five principal officers might claim similar amounts for travelling and subsistence when working away from London, these amounts were assessed at the rate of two shillings per mile and thirty shillings per day to cover board and lodging. In addition, their right to superannuation was the same. This was based, as with the former Navy Commissioners, upon the number of years served. Further, they had the same degree of job security, only to be dismissed if they misbehaved in some way. Finally, as the general section of the 'Skeleton Instructions' pointed out, in the case of absence from their office, either due to sickness or official business, 'each of them, on such or any other occasion, should act for the other, and sign all such papers as may be necessary'. [35]

Yet it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the Admiralty commissioners considered the Surveyor General to hold a uniquely important position. To begin with, his office was always listed first while the areas for which he was responsible were those that most interested the professional lords. Despite its importance for the running of the navy, few of those lords had any real interest in accountancy, victuals purchased or medicines but all were passionately interested in the design and efficiency of the warships that comprised the Fleet. As a result, the appointment of this individual would, at all times, be more carefully discussed and open to controversy than any other appointment. Whoever was appointed would achieve that position, not simply because of proven ability, but also because his opinions clearly reflected Admiralty philosophy towards particular types of warship or design feature. In terms of controversy however, matters reached an all time peak with the

appointment of William Symonds.

Symonds, unlike any of the Surveyors who had been appointed to the Navy Board, was a naval officer. Having entered the service in 1794, he had risen fairly slowly through the ranks. Although he had obtained his lieutenancy after the not excessive period of eight years, he had failed to find promotion to the rank of Captain until a further twenty-four years had elapsed. However, he was not without influential patrons. In 1805 he was promoted first lieutenant of the 36-gun frigate Inconstant through the influence of Lord Barham, whom Symonds later described as 'a crony of his father'. Later, in 1819, he was posted Captain of the Port of Malta due to his having served under Admiral Maitland, who was then the island's governor.

It was while resident at Malta that Symonds began a career of designing warships, an interest that eventually resulted in his appointment as Surveyor General. His basic premise was that British warships sailed badly when compared with those of the French. While on active service he had more than once found himself in a situation when enemy ships had simply out-manoeuvred those of British construction and so avoided inevitable destruction. Turning his attention initially to yachts, he built the Nancy Dawson, a craft with excellent sailing qualities. In his subsequent 'Memoirs', Symonds explained the conclusion that he reached as a result of this success:

I was led to believe that I had hit upon a secret in naval architecture; and after trying my hand upon four or five others of smaller description, which answered beyond my warmest expectations, I was confirmed in the success of my principles by these experiments. Great breadth of beam and extraordinary sharpness are the characteristics of my system. [36]

This interest in naval architecture led him to develop his ideas in a

tract entitled, 'Observations Upon Naval Architecture &c' which was printed upon his return to England in 1824. In it, he claimed thirty years of naval experience had taught him 'a theoretical and practical knowledge of his profession'. Choosing to compare the master shipwrights of England and France, he accused the former of following 'the old beaten paths' while the latter saw each vessel as an invention. As a result, so he claimed, French warships combined the most desirable properties as to stowage, draft of water at the best sailing trim, the situation of the masts in accordance with the form and nature of the vessel. Attempts by English shipwrights to copy French models generally failed as modifications, 'to bring them in line with the existing systems of classification, destroyed at once the principle of imitation.' [37]

In November 1824, Symonds was invited to become First Lieutenant of the King's yacht and to command 'ex officio' Calliope (10), an appointment he took up at the beginning of 1825. He also, at this time, gained an Admiralty promise that he should build a sloop-of-war to his own design and that he should command her during trials. According to Symonds, and not incorrectly, as it happens, the Navy Board 'exhibited feelings of illiberal jealousy, and were exceedingly jealous' of his tract on 'Naval Architecture'. [38] Although gaining the sympathy of both Cockburn and Melville, the Navy Board

kept back my work. They went so far as to insist on Mr. Vernon's signing a bond for 20,000L; which he indignantly refused. [39]

The Mr Vernon referred to was the Hon G Vernon, an influential naval officer and yachtsman who had much admired the Nancy Dawson. He was one of a fraternity of similarly placed individuals who was keen to improve the quality of British warships and wished to create every opportunity for the emergent Symonds. As it happens, Vernon's influence was sufficient to have the payment of a security pushed aside, with the sloop, named

Columbine, launched at Portsmouth in 1826. More important, from the point of view of Symond's progress in the world of marine architecture, was that Vernon was responsible for introducing him to William Cavendish-Bentinck, fourth Duke of Portland. It was he who was to become Symonds's most influential and committed supporter.

In the normal course of events it must be considered unlikely that Symonds would have received the post of Surveyor. During the entire history of the Navy Board, those appointed to this exalted position had always been drawn from among those with extensive dockyard experience. Yet, despite the similarity of titles, the task presented to the Surveyor General was subtly different from that once performed by the Navy Surveyor. Whereas the latter had been primarily concerned with the design, building and repair of warships, this was not the case with the Surveyor General. Admittedly, the design of new ships might fall into his province, but he was no longer to consider this to be his single principal role. Instead, he was to evaluate the actual needs of the navy, advising the Admiralty commissioners as to the best ship and designs that would best fulfil current policy. While his own designs might be placed before the Board, he was expected to accept those produced by other naval architects. In addition, it is worth noting, the Surveyor General still had responsibility for the general running of dockyards, but he no longer shared this task. In the past, some of this work had been performed by the Comptroller, but under the Surveyor General, the old Navy Board post of Surveyor and Comptroller had been combined. As such, this goes some way to explaining why someone of naval rather than dockyard experience should be appointed. For, unlike the Surveyor, the Comptroller had always been drawn from among the ranks of serving or former naval officers. Such an individual not only possessed the requisite knowledge of naval needs but was felt to be more competent to handle the dockyard

workforce. Those previously employed in the yards were simply not trusted effectively to enforce discipline among their former colleagues. Such a point however, should not be pushed too far. The 'Skeleton Instructions', as already demonstrated clearly indicated that a naval architect was required to fill this post while any enforcement of discipline was now under the direct aegis of the Board of Admiralty. For these reasons it would seem appropriate to look elsewhere for a more precise reason as to why Symonds was appointed to this particular post.

For their part, Tory opponents to the reforms were truly aghast at the selection of Symonds to the post of Surveyor-General. Numerous attacks were mounted upon him, both in the Tory press and by various parliamentary spokesmen, with the appointment becoming a central issue of the debate. In the House of Commons, it was Byam Martin who made the most vehement attack, describing Symonds as 'an unprofessional man, who knew nothing about the business.' In elaborating upon this, Martin went on to point out that

He had a high opinion of Captain Symonds as an able seaman, and as good an officer as ever walked the quarter deck of a British ship; but although that gentleman was capable of producing the form of a vessel admirably calculated for fast sailing, as had been done by several other persons, for he himself had commanded a very fine frigate, the outlines of whose form had been designed by a watchmaker, yet he had no doubt, that Captain Symonds would himself allow that he knew nothing of the business of a practical shipwright. [40]

A taste of the ensuing debate can be gleaned from the words of Lord Napier, a Whig supporter. During the debate on the second reading held in the upper chamber, he

felt himself bound to say a few words in consequence of some remarks made in another place, deeply affecting the professional character of a gallant and intelligent friend of his, who neither was nor could be present to defend himself. The attack upon

that gallant officer's character had gone throughout the country, and he was, consequently, suffering a degree of obloquy equally severe and unjust. He alluded to what had been said in the other House by that highly respected and gallant Admiral who conducted the business of the Navy Board for many years. It had been stated by the late Comptroller of the Navy, in reference to his gallant friend, Captain Symonds, who had been lately appointed to the office of Surveyor of the Navy was altogether ignorant of the duties of his office. That, in this great maritime country, a reforming Administration should have appointed a man to superintend the construction of ships, upon which the security and honour of the country depended . . . [41]

Napier then went on to produce evidence to contradict the suggestion of the former Comptroller, pointing out that Vernon, a 50-gun frigate designed by Symonds, when she went to sea in 1827, 'was by far the best' of a squadron of newly launched vessels. [42]

A prime factor in their hostility towards Symonds was that many Tories felt that Sir Robert Seppings, the outgoing Surveyor, was the most obvious candidate for the new post. With regard to Martin, it might be claimed that this was simply the result of loyalty towards a colleague with whom he had had a long association. But there was more to it than that. Seppings had a quite outstanding reputation, having pioneered a great many innovations that had resulted in the general strengthening and improvement of British warships. In particular, he had introduced diagonal bracing, which had allowed vessels to be lengthened, while his round bow and stern permitted a larger number of guns in the hitherto poorly armed fore and aft areas.

However, from the Whig point of view, Seppings was far from ideal. He was seen as one who would be less amenable to the reforms under way and he was recognised as an ally of those displaced by the new administration. In particular, he was closely associated with Byam Martin

and described by Grey as having governed the former Comptroller 'with respect to everything in his department'.[43] Moreover, Seppings was an easy target. As Grey discovered shortly after his elevation to the premiership, the King was one of those who opposed the continuance of Seppings as Surveyor. William IV, in particular, was one who disliked the round bow and stern, feeling that they did little to enhance ships of the Royal Navy. Finally, it should not be forgotten that Seppings was of an age where retirement, in itself, was not an unreasonable move. In that June of 1832 he had reached his sixty-fifth year, having given fifty years of service to the civil departments of the navy. Thus he was able to retire on a generous pension that continued to be paid until his death in 1840.

Yet none of this really explains the reason for Symonds's appointment. While it must be admitted that he had, as well as Columbine, several successful designs to his name together with the pamphlet he had written on naval architecture, there were others who could make claims that were just as significant. Furthermore, there were a number of aspiring naval shipwrights who would be able to bring their experience of the royal dockyards into play. Finally, as already mentioned, it was not absolutely necessary that a naval man be appointed, especially in view of the Admiralty's more direct control over matters appertaining both to the dockyards and the interpretation of naval needs.

At this point, reference could also be usefully made to the School of Naval Architecture some of whose graduates had, at one time, been promised the very post to which Symonds had been appointed. For the most part, those who had graduated from the School were much younger than those traditionally appointed to such office, for the school had only accepted its first class in 1811. Nevertheless, if accelerated promotion had been

allowed, such candidates, who were now in their mid-thirties, might not have been beyond consideration.

The actual School, which was based at Portsmouth, had been established as a result of a recommendation by the the Commission of Revision. At the time it had been strongly felt by Lord Barham, then First Lord, that senior dockyard shipwrights lacked a sufficient scientific background. The normal method of training was by attaching them to working shipwrights and allowing them to learn through observation and practice. Many of these shipwrights, themselves, had only limited reading skills and little knowledge of Maths. Some apprentices, always referred to as servants, did go through a process of selection and were appointed to train under those already appointed to high office. It was assumed that by working under those who had already proved themselves, they too would acquire the necessary skills to achieve high office. However, the method of selection was most unsuited to the situation, based primarily on the ability of the young aspirant to find the necessary funds that would ensure the patronage of an existing master shipwright. As can be imagined, such a haphazard method of selection and training rarely resulted in the country getting the best from the skilled artisans it had available. To correct this, the Commission of Revision had recommended the setting up of a special school to provide the necessary mathematical and scientific training for the 'superior' class of shipwright apprentices. The numbers admitted in any one year were carefully restricted and were never more than ten. Those entering the School were already perceived as likely to reach high office, with the prospectus of the new school as issued in the first year, making the declaration that 'from these the appointment of superior officers of HM Dockyards and Surveyors of the Navy shall be made.'

However, the school and its various graduates were to meet with a great deal of opposition over the years. Furthermore, with the dockyards locked into a system of promotion based on experience, none of the early graduates of the school had, by 1832, reached higher rank than that of foreman. Many, of course, having been promised a sparkling career, had chosen to leave the yards and were enjoying success elsewhere. The opposition referred to consisted of two distinct groups: older shipwrights and naval officers. The former, of course, had much to fear from these well trained youngsters, seeing their own future promotion jeopardized. On the other hand, naval officers recognised that graduates of the School had a good theoretical background but, in common with all shipwrights, lacked the experience of taking a ship to sea. Not surprisingly, Symonds was one who had expressed this latter point of view:

. . . students became clever analysts, and wrote valuable papers on the theory of ships but, in spite of daily practice to be acquired in the dockyard, they wanted that experience in managing them at sea which is as essential as the test of theory and without which its deductions are so much waste paper. [44]

The result of such ill-feeling towards the School, combined with the success of the practical seaman as characterised by the promotion of Symonds, was its closure in 1832. The graduates who remained within the dockyard service were, in future years, to dominate the upper levels of yard administration: but it took them an undue length of time to reach such heights because of this prejudice.

As regards the post of Surveyor General the various alternative candidates, whether naval architects, senior shipwright officers or graduates of the School of Naval Architecture, lacked one particular advantage. Symonds possessed the patronage of the Fourth Duke of Portland. It will be remembered that Vernon was responsible for bringing the two together, Portland also having an interest in the design of naval

warships. Indeed, the Duke possessed his own ship yard at Troon and, within a short time of their first meeting, had ordered the laying down of two brigs designed by Symonds.

Portland however, was much more than a titled ship yard owner. His father had twice held office as Prime Minister (1783 and 1807-9) while his own political connections were not unimportant. Under Canning, to whom Portland was related by marriage, he served as Lord Privy Seal and under Goderich he had served as Lord President of the Council. By tradition however, Portland felt much more at home in the Whig camp. Yet his loyalty could not be guaranteed. In order to obtain his initial support for the Reform Bill a deal was struck. Graham appears to have played a crucial role, agreeing to allow a naval warship, designed by Symonds, to be laid down in a government yard. The vessel, eventually built at Woolwich, was the frigate Vernon. [45]

That Symonds went on to achieve the post of Surveyor General was probably a result of the continuing reform crisis. Portland, together with his connections in the Commons, might easily be lost and to ensure continued support, it appears to have been necessary to bestow a further favour upon the Duke's protege. This view has support in the early announcement of Symonds's appointment. Although the principal officers were not to take office until June, the name of the new Surveyor was announced in February 1832. Given the controversy it created, made more certain by the dismissal of Seppings, it seemed an ill-advised move. With the Navy bill yet to be passed, it ensured the Opposition were given a very public platform from which to make their critical observations. For this reason, it would have made political sense to delay the announcement. That Graham chose not to would suggest the existence of a far more pressing motive.

On appointment to the post of Surveyor, Symonds received, in common with the four other principal officers, a set of the 'Skeleton Instructions'. These confirmed the changed areas of responsibility that have already been discussed. Yet, as indicated, the Surveyor still had a role in the design of ships. This is confirmed under the first head of the specific part of the instructions where Symonds was informed that one of his duties would be 'to prepare drawings of such ships and vessels as may be ordered to be built'. Lambert, in his book 'The Last Sailing Battle Fleet' (1991) makes the assertion that Symonds had no such role. According to Lambert's view, the Surveyor 'was not appointed to design ships, and the fact that he was merely an amateur served to confuse the issue'.^[46] To support this statement, Lambert makes reference to the 'Skeleton Instructions' but studiously avoids mentioning the first paragraph of these instructions. Given the previously quoted wording, 'to prepare drawings' which is followed by a corollary contained in the second paragraph that he was 'to offer such remarks [to the Board of Admiralty] and explanations either on his own drafts or others', it is hard to follow Lambert's reasoning.

While the Surveyor had a distinctly altered role, a point highlighted by Lambert, he was still a designer. Indeed, Graham himself confirms this when, in the House of Commons, he describes the role of the Surveyor General 'pretty much as now'.^[47] In other words, upon appointment, Symonds would take up much the same duties as once possessed by Seppings. In fact, it would be difficult for the Surveyor General to be anything other than a designer, when the new postholder's only claim to fame was in producing drawings for new styled warships.

That the Surveyor also had wider responsibilities for the dockyards

is clearly demonstrated by these same instructions. The fifth paragraph detailed his duties with regard to management, giving to the Surveyor General duties that would at one time have been more frequently performed by the Navy Comptroller:

He is to visit the dockyards occasionally with the sanction of the Board and inform himself on all points connected with the duties of the several offices and in what manner they are executed, of the mode in which their superintendence is exercised, of the distribution of the workmen and in particular of the classification of the shipwrights or their division in gangs to see that they are so classed according to their respective abilities as to be most beneficially employed . . . [48]

The third paragraph informed him of the duties he was to perform as regards the purchase and ordering of dockyard stores. He was

To submit for the consideration of the Board the nature and dimensions of Timber for shipbuilding and of spars for masts and yards and the quantities of each that may be advisable to purchase in each year after due consultation with the superintending lord as to the classes of ships likely to be employed and with the Storekeeper General not only with regard to timber but also as to the nature and quantity of every kind of shipbuilding material that may be required [49]

As the Board's advisor on all dockyard matters, the Surveyor General was to become

thoroughly acquainted with the state of the several works connected with the building or repair of ships that are carrying on in the yards and to suggest for the Board's consideration to which of them it may be most advisable . . . to give preference. [50]

Other paragraphs contained within the Surveyor's Instructions concentrated upon re-iterating some of the points which appeared in the general section, with several of them reminding him that he was not to issue any general orders, to direct much of his correspondence through the Board and to 'advise and consult' with the Lord of the Admiralty 'who shall be

appointed to superintend the department placed under his charge".[49] So far ignored were a number of highly specific points, mainly dealing with the need for economy, but these will be addressed at a more appropriate moment.

With the post of Surveyor General established it had been determined by the already much-quoted policy document of December 1831 that the holder should be supervised by the senior lord of the Admiralty. Not surprisingly, this particular commissioner was always chosen from among the ranks of the most distinguished and experienced sea going officers, with the then post-holder being Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy. As now, he was a household name, the only officer of rank present at all three of Nelson's great victories. Neither he, nor his successors to this post, were chosen for their theoretical knowledge of design. Instead, it was believed that a seagoing officer with a depth of experience would be able to correct any failings within the Surveyor General's conclusions as to the best design for a new ship. Furthermore, this belief in the value of experience was also extended to the running of the dockyards, where it was assumed that senior naval lords would be similarly adept in countering any false assumptions on the part of the Surveyor.

As for the remaining four principal officers, there was little or no controversy associated with their particular appointments. This is not really surprising. All four were former Navy and Victualling Commissioners with three of them appointed during preceding Tory administrations. Even the exception, John Thomas Briggs, had long associations with Somerset House, having held the post of Assistant Secretary to the Victualling Board for over twenty years. As a result, Croker and Byam Martin, the two individuals most likely to mount an

attack, would have been criticising their own colleagues. Furthermore, they would then have been faced with the possible charge of having sanctioned the appointment of individuals who, by their own admission, were found to be wanting. Finally, such an attack might have paved the way for a longer and more protracted public examination of unsanctioned amounts of expenditure undertaken by the two Boards during the preceding decades.

Undoubtedly, when considering the five principal officer posts, Graham considered the Accountant-General to be the most important of the three primarily concerned with book keeping. For this reason he chose to appoint Briggs to this post, a man in whom Graham appears to have had absolute confidence. As noted, Briggs could already boast a long term connection with the civilian departments, having been appointed Assistant Secretary to the Victualling Board in 1809. However, this was not the sum total of his experience. Between 1806 and 1809 he had been secretary to the Commission for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy in which capacity, according to Laughton, 'he was the virtual author of the voluminous reports issued' during this period.[51] At some point, Briggs' skills were brought to the attention of Graham, with Briggs appointed the First Lord's private secretary upon the new administration arriving in office.[52] However, within a fortnight, Briggs underwent a further move, being placed on the Victualling Board as Accountant General.[53] To facilitate this move, one of the most senior and aged members of the Board, Sir Isaac Woolley, had been encouraged to retire on the promise of a pension.[54]

It seems likely that between the period of the Whigs taking office and the abolition of the civilian boards, both Graham and Briggs worked closely together. As Accountant General for Victualling, Briggs was

well placed to provide the various papers that Graham used to highlight the shortcomings of the Victualling Board. In addition, Briggs was also responsible for providing a range of carefully stated accounts that allowed for the setting of accurate estimates. As an indication of Graham's feelings, the First Lord noted Briggs' skill as an accountant to be superior to that of Dundas. [55]

The duties of the Accountant General, as set out in the 'Skeleton Instructions' were defined as that of keeping all books and accounts connected with the receipt and expenditure of the navy, including those relating to the Victualling, Medical and Marine establishments. In addition, he was responsible for seeing that all accounts were examined and supported by proper vouchers, that all stores supplied were in conformity with the terms of contract and the preparation of payment of claims made by the Paymaster General.[56] The Accountant General was not empowered to go beyond the simple recording of expenditure, the payment of bills and the examination of accounts. The widening of his authority might well have proved an additional bonus. There would have been distinct advantages if he had been allowed a watching brief over actual expenditure as compared with approved estimates. Indeed, it was a necessary alteration to his duties and one that was not to be permitted for thirty-seven years. [57]

It was for the purpose of supervising the work of the Accountant General that a sixth member of the Board of Admiralty was created. The new position was to be held by a lay lord, with Henry Labouchere the first to take up the appointment.[58] Labouchere was not an experienced accountant having achieved a Classics degree at Oxford while expressing an interest in the law.[59] Furthermore, upon entering the House of Commons in June 1826, he directed his attention neither to financial matters nor to the

navy. That he was to be offered a post at the Board of Admiralty is probably explained by certain external factors which were often associated with government patronage. Apart from Labouchere being a supporter of Whig interests, it cannot be without importance that his father, Peter Caesar Labouchere, was a partner in the financial house of Hope of Amsterdam and had married into the Baring family. [60]

Turning to the post of Storekeeper General we move into the domain of the powerful Dundas family. Despite the fact that Lord Melville, then senior member of the Dundas family, had been forced to vacate the post of First Lord, others in his family remained well situated. His second son, initially given the post of Deputy-Comptroller, took up the appointment of Storekeeper General upon the abolition of the civilian boards. In addition, Melville's youngest son, George Melville, was already on the Board of Admiralty, having been appointed second naval lord upon the change of administration. More intriguing was that the younger Dundas, by virtue of his position on the Board of Admiralty, was made responsible for supervising the work of his elder brother. [61]

Melville was, indeed, careful to ensure the survival of his two sons. While Robert, a successful naval officer and Whig MP was fairly secure, the older son might well have lost his position upon the change of administration. Indeed, it is not impossible that some kind of deal was struck. Certainly Graham and Melville were on intimate terms and a private arrangement was not beyond the realms of possibility. If so, then ensuing events would suggest that it ran upon the lines of Melville agreeing not to criticise the administration, receiving, in return, the promise of advancement for his elder son. Despite his being a likely critic, Melville never once attacked the reforms, failing even to put in an appearance during debates in the upper house upon the Civil Departments

bill. In addition, the Whigs would not have been adverse to allow some of their patronage to end up in the hands of the Dundas family for, in return, they might reap the benefit of the parliamentary votes that Melville managed through his considerable connections.

As Storekeeper General, George Dundas had responsibility for the ordering and maintaining of a sufficient stock of stores to be held in the dockyards. These stores, which encompassed all necessary materials for the building, repair and maintenance of warships, included everything from huge pieces of oak timber through to items minute by comparison such as candles and pintles. However, these supplies did not include victuals, this being within the province of the Comptroller of Victualling. Furthermore, it was not the Storekeeper General's task to make the payment of the accounts submitted upon the supply of these items, this being the duty of the Accountant General.

Once the stores arrived in the dockyards, it was the Storekeeper's task to ensure that they were properly stored and legitimately used. To this end he was expected regularly to visit the dockyards for the purpose of inspecting the state of the storehouses 'to see that they are kept clean, the stores well and conveniently arranged and the room properly ventilated.' However, it was unlikely that the Storekeeper would be a regular visitor to the dockyards as most of his work was confined to book keeping. In particular, he received regular accounts from the dockyards which indicated not only 'the exact state of the stores' but also the amounts issued from the storehouses. From these, a ledger of stores was compiled and it was made possible to see that they were being properly used. A further element to this procedure was the conducting of occasional surveys 'to ascertain whether the actual remains agree with the balances as they appear in the ledger'.[62]

The Storekeeper General's responsibility for stores was simply restricted to their use within dockyards. It was also extended to the ships on which they might be used. To this end, the 'Skeleton Instructions' directed him to 'examine all demands for stores from HM ships . . . and to take care that the establishment is not exceeded.' Furthermore, under the fifth head he was informed that it was his duty 'to represent to the Board any irregularity or deficiencies that he may discover in the captain's or commander's store accounts.' [63]

Within the instructions laid down, nothing was said about controlling the quality of stores supplied. As regards delivery, this was in the hands of dockyard officers, these being informed that they were to attend deliveries and accept nothing that was sub-standard. In the past, goods delivered into the yards had been the subject of abuse, with merchants sometimes bribing officers in order to ensure acceptance of goods of poor or unusable quality. The rigorous surveying of materials upon delivery at the dockyards was not inappropriate. However, the Storekeeper General could hardly be expected to be present at every yard whenever items were to be delivered. Far more useful, would have been a general inspection of stores received, with a survey of items so as to ensure that sub-standard items had not somehow slipped into the dockyards.

Furthermore, no thought was given to achieving an improvement in the quality and nature of supplies. It was not impossible that alternative and better raw materials existed than those already in use. Thus, hemp from a part of the world other than the Baltic or alternative timbers might have proved advantageous. While such alternatives were occasionally examined, there was no established mechanism, it often being left to well meaning individuals using their own initiative. Far more

sensible would have been for the Storekeeper to have been called upon to have set up such a mechanism with rewards available for those responsible for a successfully introduced innovation.

The post of comptroller of Victualling was filled by James Meek, a former member of the Victualling Board. He was to be supervised by the third naval lord. In June 1832 this was Captain Samuel Brooke Pechell, whose particular naval interest was that of gunnery. Indeed, Pechell had been responsible for producing, in 1812, what Laughton described as a valuable pamphlet on the subject and entitled 'Observations Upon the Defective Equipment of Ships Guns'.[64]

The duties of the Comptroller of Victualling may be briefly described as that of 'providing, issuing and duly accounting for the whole of the provisions of the Navy . . . convict service, transport service and foreign stations.[65] Most of his work was devoted to book keeping, with much of his attention given to examining the accounts of the various stores together with those of ships' pursers. Any discrepancies found were to be reported to the third sea lord. The exception to this book work was the requirement that he be present at the examination of stores purchased by sample, taking 'care that proper officers conversant with the different species' should also be present. [66]

The fifth of the principal officer posts was that of Physician of the Navy, with this position given to Dr William Burnett, one of the two medical commissioners who had sat on the Victualling Board. It was directed that he should be supervised by the fourth naval lord who was, at that time, the Hon George Barrington. A naval man who had reached the rank of captain in 1826, Barrington's own position on the Board of Admiralty was as a result of family connections. Through marriage with

Caroline Grey, the third daughter of Earl Grey, he was the Prime Minister's son-in-law.

From the general instructions given to Dr Burnett it was clear that, as Naval Physician, his new post differed little from the former. The single greatest alteration was that Burnett had now to report directly to a member of the Board of Admiralty rather than to his colleagues on the Victualling Board. Furthermore, he now had no one of equal status with whom he could share the burden of work. On the other hand, Barrington was as little versed in medical matters as those (apart from the second medical commissioner) who had once made up the Victualling Board while a steady reduction in the size of the Navy meant that it was now easier for the work to be undertaken by just one individual.

As with the post of medical commissioner, Burnett was charged with having responsibility for 'all medical stores and medicines and medical instruments and duly account for the same'.^[67] To undertake this side of his work, the post holder had to undertake a good deal of book work. In particular, he had to examine both the accounts and journals of all naval surgeons and to prepare statements for the Board of the average annual consumption. This latter was necessary for the preparation of estimates to be laid before Parliament. However, unlike those other principal officers involved in book keeping, his own non-accountancy skills were of equal importance. As Physician of the Navy he had to carry out medical examinations upon all invalided officers. In addition, he was to report to the Board upon all candidates applying for the post of assistant surgeon while it was upon his advice that the Admiralty appointed surgeons to HM ships. Another aspect of his work was that of examining all samples of medical supplies. Finally, he had to carry out regular tours of inspection of all shore-based medical facilities, these not only including

the large naval hospitals at Portsmouth, Chatham and Plymouth but the smaller surgeries in both the dockyards and marine barracks.

4.4 The Outstation Superintendents

Apart from extensive changes to the central administering offices in London, the Navy Civil Departments Bill also heralded changes to those appointed to supervise the outstations: the naval hospitals, dock and victualling yards. A simple reading of the Act, as regards these more localised areas of management, would seem to imply minimal changes. In fact, the only alteration to the system explicitly stated in legislative form was that the out station commissioners would cease to exist, replaced by new post holders who would be known as 'superintendents'. The Act then went on to specify that these new officers would perform the same duties as the commissioners they were replacing:

such Superintendents from Time to Time to be appointed shall have full Power and Authority to do, execute, and perform all and every the Duties, Matters and Things which by any Act or Acts of Parliament now in force any Commissioner of the Navy or Victualling resident at any Naval or Victualling Yard or Establishment . . . [68]

The abolition of the title commissioner was, in fact, a much more important move than the Act implied. Those in the dockyards holding this title were much more than mere supervisors of the out-stations as they were also members of the Navy Board itself. As such, continuance of the title commissioner would have been meaningless, referring only to a body that had now ceased to exist. But there was more to this move than the simple up-dating of the title to keep abreast of administrative changes elsewhere. The introduction of the new title also meant that all those individuals styled as commissioners would now cease to hold office. In turn, this meant that the Whig administration, in one sweep, could replace those existing office holders with individuals of their own choice.

Totally omitted from the Act was one more important factor: the newly appointed superintendents were to retain naval rank. Like the former commissioners, they were to be drawn from serving naval officers, but unlike commissioners they were not to lose their seniority. For this, there were sound reasons. Those who had been appointed, frequently found their authority undermined when working with those of naval rank, the latter sometimes countermanding their instructions. The point is ably made in the already frequently quoted policy document of December 1831:

They should have a Commission from the Admiralty, giving them authority afloat, according to their rank as on full Pay - thus preventing the improper interference of junior officers in commission, of which the Civil Servants in the Dock Yards have too frequently complained - their rank should not be stopped but they should proceed by seniority to the Flag, as if serving at sea
. . . [64]

To legalise this particular point and also to establish the salaries to be paid to the various selected offices an application was made by the Admiralty to the King in Council. After requesting authorisation for the appointment of various officers to the superintendent posts, the order, which was approved, continued in the following terms:

. . . and that it may be further authorised to assign to each said superintendent such duties and to give them such instructions as the service over which they are respectively appointed may appear to us to require and as it appears that it may be conducive to the better discipline and management of Your Majesty's Dock Yards and other naval establishments if the said superintendents . . . were put in commission by which they would be able to exercise a more extended and complete authority . . . [70]

Finally, the Order laid down the salaries to be paid to each officer. These were set at the same levels as those of their predecessors, with each of the superintendents of the dockyards

granted a salary of 1000 a year with the exception of the Superintendent at Portsmouth Dock Yard to whom we would recommend a salary of 1100 per year as at present negotiated by the Commissioner of that Dock Yard the said sums to include all the pay and allowances which a flag or pendant would give to such of the superintendents who may be put in commission . . . [71]

As regards the superintendents of the Victualling Yards, they were to be allowed 'the salary of eight hundred pounds a year'. [72]

At this point in time, no opportunity was taken to amend the duties of the Superintendent as compared with those issued to his predecessors. Detailed instructions had already been laid down in the second report of the Commissioners for Revising and Digesting the Civil Affairs of the Navy, with these brought into force during the immediate post-war period. Clearly, members of the Admiralty were not unhappy with these instructions, merely concerned that they should be enforced. Thus, one of the injunctions placed upon the Surveyor General was that he should 'inform himself on all points connected with the duties of the several offices and in what manner they are executed.' [73] The Comptroller of Victualling was not, as it happens, given specific instructions for the purpose of ensuring that the superintendents of the victualling yards also carried out their duties. However, it was pointed out that he had a similar role to the Storekeeper General who was told to inspect storehouses in the dockyards. It must therefore be assumed that, in the case of the Comptroller of Victualling, the requirement was implicit.

Some minor alterations were, from time to time, necessary for the purpose of dovetailing earlier instructions into the new arrangements. These mainly came in the form of individual letters indicating procedural changes. To the superintendents of the victualling establishments, for example, John Barrow was instructed to inform them of the following:

In making arrangements for carrying into execution the measures authorized by the recent Act of Parliament abolishing the Navy and Victualling Board it has been deemed expedient to confide to the Comptroller of Victualling under the directions of My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, the duty of providing Supplies and Provisions and other Stores for the different Branches of Service entrusted to his care, and of distributing them to the several Victualling Establishments at home and abroad; and as in the execution of this highly important duty it shall become necessary that he shall correspond with you, and convey to you from time to time such arrangements as are requisite for carrying their Lordships intentions into effect I have received their Lordships commands to signify their directions to you to pay the same regard and attention to all communications addressed to you by him relative to this Branch of the service as if they proceeded direct from themselves.

[74]

The superintendents of the dockyards also received separate instructions informing them of some important changes in routine. Most of these related to correspondence. On 6 June, immediately prior to the appointment of the new superintendents, those in charge of the dockyards were informed that all letters relating to naval service were no longer to be addressed to the Navy or Victualling Office. Instead, they were to be addressed to the Secretary of the Admiralty. If this correspondence related to accounts however, such letters were to have printed in the lower corner of the cover one of the following words: Surveyor, Accountant, Storekeeper, Comptroller of Victualling or Physician of the Navy. [75] To this, a slight amendment was made on 11 June, with the superintendent informed that they were to place correspondence for the five principal officers in separate covers. [76]

Not surprisingly, with the opportunity arising of making so many new appointments, the government took the opportunity of retiring some of the older commissioners and appointing, in their place, aspiring officers of an acceptable political persuasion. As a result, a number of

Whig supporters were placed in offices that would not normally have been available at this time. The dockyard commissioners at Portsmouth, Devonport and Chatham, were all dismissed and replaced by new superintendents. However, not all existing appointees were relieved of office. John Hill, Commissioner at Deptford yard since 1820 was retained as was Captain Henry Garrett at the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard, Portsmouth. Of the more interesting new appointments, those of John Chambers White to Portsmouth dockyard and Phipps Hornby to Plymouth victualling yard and naval hospital are particularly worthy of mention. Both had strong Whig connections, White through his marriage to the daughter of Admiral Fanshawe (a one time favourite of the Earl of St Vincent) while Phipps Hornby was the brother-in-law of Lord Derby. As it happens, Hornby had once had a very promising naval career, having gained his captaincy in 1810 following a mere thirteen years of service. However, he had clearly fallen out of favour with the Tory controlled Board of Admiralty, having failed to find any employment after 1822. Good fortune returned upon the elevation of Graham to the Admiralty. The Derbys were one of the families to whom Graham wished to return earlier favours, included the support of the 12th Earl during Graham's first bid to gain a parliamentary seat. Furthermore, Graham's own political fortunes were to become closely tied with that of the future 14th Earl, the two both resigning office in 1834 and going on to serve under Peel. Thus, it is hardly surprising that Phipps Hornby, related as he was to the Derby family, should be promoted out of unemployment by Graham.

NOTES (Chapter 4)

1. PRO ADM106/2745. 9 June 1832.
2. CRO D/G/N/3/1/9. 6 Dec 1831. Consolidation of the Navy and Victualling Boards, f.5.
3. *ibid.*
4. Barrow (1847), 417.
5. CRO D/GN/3/1/9. *op cit.*
6. *ibid.*, f.6.
7. Hansard. 14 Feb 1832. f.358.
8. CRO D/GN/3/1/9. *op cit* f.6.
9. Barham, in 1805, when First Lord, did lay down certain guidelines for demarcation of work among commissioners. The first sea lord had, as his main duty, attending to the correspondence of the day and, with the First Lord's approval, the disposition of all ships on home and foreign stations. The second sea lord dealt with papers belonging to the civil board while the third sea lord dealt with appointments. The civil lords, on the other hand, were to sign all orders and other papers issued from the Admiralty office. Laughton (1909) Vol III, 76-9.
10. See p. 45 of this thesis.
11. Hansard. Vol X, 358. 14 Feb 1832.
12. CRO D/GN/3/1/9. *op cit* f.7.
13. 2 William IV c40, f.129.
14. CRO D/GN/3/1/9. *op cit* f.5.
15. *ibid.* This comment was made in the form of a marginal note that was initialled by Graham.
16. Barrow (1847), 417-8.
17. *ibid.*
18. CRO D/GN/3/1/9. *op cit.* f.4.
19. PRO ADM1/3478. 11 Sept 1832.
20. *ibid.*
21. *ibid.*
22. Barrow, *op cit.*
23. PRO ADM1/3477. 9 Jun 1832. Skeleton Instructions.
24. *ibid.* Instructions for Surveyor General.
25. *ibid.*
26. *ibid.* General Instructions.
27. *ibid.*
28. *ibid.* Instructions for Surveyor General.
29. *ibid.* Instructions for Comptroller of Victualling.
30. *ibid.* Instructions for Physician of the Navy.
31. *ibid.* Instructions for Accountant General. In former times the Admiralty would have had nothing to do with accountancy matters, the Navy Board having complete independence. The Accountant General, for his part, would obviously have discussed such changes with the Comptroller, but it was generally accepted that the Accountant General was an expert in such matters and such notification would have been a mere courtesy.
32. *ibid.* Instructions for Storekeeper General.
33. *ibid.* General Instructions.
34. *ibid.*
35. PRO ADM1/3477. 9 Jun 1832. Order-in-Council, general instructions to the principal officers.
36. Symonds (1858), 46-7.
37. *ibid.*, 118.
38. *ibid.*, 66.
39. *ibid.*
40. Hansard XII, 27 Feb 1832. f.817.

40. Hansard XII, 27 Feb 1832. f.817.
41. *ibid.*, 23 May 1832. f.1370-1.
42. *ibid.*, f.1371.
43. CRO Graham papers. Grey to Graham, 4 Feb 1831.
44. Symonds (1858), 47.
45. Lambert (1991), 68-9.
46. *ibid.* A point of interest is that the figurehead represented the Hon G. Vernon and not the more famous admiral.
47. Hansard. Vol X. 14 Feb 1832
48. PRO ADM1/3477. Skeleton Instructions. *op cit.*
49. *ibid.*
50. *ibid.*
51. D.N.B. Briggs entry. Contributed by J.K. Laughton
52. Sainty (1975), 65.
53. PRO ADM114/63. 11 Dec 1830.
54. PRO PC2/212. 23 Feb 1831.
55. CRO. DG/N/3/1/9. *op cit.*
56. PRO ADM1/3477. Skeleton Instructions.
57. An Order-in-Council of 14 Jan 1869 vested the Accountant General with the power of criticising the accounts of both the Storekeeper and Comptroller of Victualling. In 1879 it was laid down that he was to be consulted before any expenditure was incurred.
58. PRO C66/4407.
59. DNB. Although a member of Lincoln's Inn he was never called to the bar.
60. Hind (1972), 1.
61. CRO. DG/N/3/1/9. *Op cit.*
62. Skeleton Instructions.
63. *ibid.*
64. DNB. Pechell entry. Contributor: J.K. Laughton.
65. Skeleton Instructions: Comptroller of Victualling.
66. *ibid.*
67. *ibid.* Physician of the Navy.
68. 2 William IV c40 Ch X.
69. CRO D/GN/3/1/9 *op cit* f.11
70. PRO ADM1/3477 9 Jun 1832.
71. *ibid.*
72. *ibid.*
73. Skeleton Instructions: Surveyor General. *Op cit.*
74. PRO ADM1/3477. 11 Ju 1832. Draft of a Special Instruction.
75. NMM CHA/H/1. 6 Ju 1832.
76. *ibid.*, 11 Jun 1832.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CREATION OF A MYTH

5.1 Introduction

The reforms overseen by Sir James Graham during the time he served under Earl Grey as First Lord of the Admiralty have generally been regarded as a success. Criticisms have, on occasions, been levelled at certain aspects of the package, but such remarks have done little to damage the overall impression.

That Graham achieved something seemingly beyond reproach first becomes clear when consideration is given to the attitude of contemporary politicians. Admittedly, the likes of Croker and Byam Martin had given the Navy Civil Departments Act a rough ride through Parliament, but this had only to be expected. In paving the way for the introduction of the reforms, Graham had been highly critical of the earlier administration, with both Croker and Martin supposedly culpable for a good many of the proclaimed failings.

On the other hand, the various changes brought about by the Act had been given the full sanction of the governing coalition. Furthermore, such support had not been restricted merely to mainstream moderates, but had also included the radical wing. Thus, Wade's 'Extraordinary Black Book' of 1832 carried the declaration that,

Sir James [Graham] by improvements in the civil administration of the navy, and reduction in the estimates nearly to the amount of a million, has almost silenced Mr Hume, and set a splendid example to the heads of departments.[1]

Once the reforms had been established, they not only continued to retain the support of radicals such as Joseph Hume, but also acquired a

cross party allegiance. Following the brief re-emergence of a Tory government in 1834, Lord Ashley, in presenting the annual naval estimates to the lower house, felt constrained to state that the present good management, which party loyalty led him to claim had been started by Wellington,

. . . had been followed up most successfully by the rt. hon. Baronet, the member for Cumberland [Graham], who had introduced a spirit of economy into every branch of this part of the public service, and who at the time of his quitting office, had left the department over which he presided, in the most effective state.[2]

That Ashley should so freely make such a declaration was probably not unconnected with Graham's change of loyalties. Soon to be recruited into the senior echelons of the Tory party, Ashley was not inclined to undermine the work of his one time opponent.

In fact the change of party loyalties on the part of the former First Lord, with Graham working closely with Peel from about 1837 onwards, might go some way to explain why so few parliamentarians ever questioned the general benefits of the series of reforms imposed upon the civil departments during Graham's period of office. Neither Whig nor Tory politicians would have felt greatly inclined to offer anything more than limited criticism for it could easily reflect upon themselves. After all, it had been a Whig administration that had overseen the reforms while an attack by the Tories would only result in the standing of their new leading front bencher consequently diminished in the eyes of the public.

Outside of Parliament there was also a general acceptance that the reforms had proven a success. In his published memoirs of 1847, John Barrow had little hesitation in placing his seal of approval upon the navy reforms,

On the whole, I can venture to say with

great confidence, and after the experience of fifteen years since the plan was put into operation, under half-a-dozen Boards of Admiralty, Whig and Tory, that it has been completely successful in all its parts . . . [3]

Barrow, it need hardly be added, was far from impartial in this matter. As Second Secretary under Graham he had been consulted on a number of pertinent matters, with many of his own ideas incorporated into the general reform package. To attack the reforms would have been an admission that he had, at this earlier stage, been wrong. But this is not to deny a certain importance to Barrow's writings. The product of a highly respected individual, they played a further part in the creation of a general myth that Graham's reforms were definitely beyond reproach. Many of those who later went into print were either influenced by Barrow's point of view or chose to quote him extensively. Even at the end of the century, when many of the original tenets of Graham's reforms had been largely overhauled, commentators upon the workings of the Admiralty were still taking the line laid down by Barrow. In 1896, former First Lord Vesey Hamilton, in producing a monograph upon the workings of the departments of the navy, chose to quote Barrow's acclamation of the reforms as positive proof of their success before adding his own view that,

. . . the merit of the reorganisation effected by Sir James Graham is not to be estimated by the pecuniary saving it made possible, but by the fact that it struck at the root of abuses of long and slow growth which endangered our naval efficiency.
[4]

In the following year, John Henry Briggs, a junior clerk of the Admiralty during the reform period, wrote an account of the various administrations under which he served. Of relevance is this passage,

The system laid down by Sir James Graham has proved to be not only sound in theory, but to have worked successfully when put to the test of practical experience.[5]

Although Briggs did not overtly rely upon Barrow, his evidence is equally suspect. As the son of Sir John Thomas Briggs, the Accountant-General appointed by Graham, he may well have had a desire to defend the reforms, aware that his father had enjoyed a consultative role. Many of the changes that affected the accountancy side of the departments came about as a result of his father's suggestions. Nor should it be forgotten that this same Sir John Thomas Briggs, had been one of Graham's favourites, receiving three promotions during the first twenty-one months of Graham's arrival at the Admiralty. [6]

However, by the latter part of the century, despite the comments of Briggs and Hamilton, the system as laid down by Graham had already shown itself to be badly flawed. At the time of the Russian War, the Admiralty commissioners had been unable to devote sufficient time to strategy while the individual departments were clearly overworked. To help solve the latter problem, a separate Transport Board was temporarily established. However, no attempt was made to rectify the first of these two problems.

Should a reference be made to Croker's attack upon the Navy Civil Departments Bill during its second reading, then it is clear that he, for one, would not have been surprised that such problems should have surfaced. At that time he had, with prescience, declared,

we ought to take care how we overloaded the public servants, lest, when the real time of difficulty arrived, it should be found that they broke down under the weight imposed upon them . . . [7]

Despite the emergence of clear evidence that Croker's earlier prediction was now a fact, the years following the Russian War saw little undertaken to rectify matters. Admittedly, a limited degree of rationalization took place, but this would not really have helped the Admiralty handle a future war. Primarily, these changes resulted in both the Surveyor-General and

Accountant-General being accorded greater powers while a separate contracts and purchasing branch was established. This had little effect upon the supreme problem, that of the overloading of the board with a mass of detail. As a result, those experienced in matters primarily concerned with seamanship and strategy were perpetually called upon to adjudicate upon the complexities of dockyard management, food nutrition and medicine. Croker had also been aware that this was likely to be the result of Graham's reforms. In that same parliamentary speech he went on to ask,

What was to become of the natural occupation of these naval officers? They would be wearied with the details of duties they could not understand, and incapacitated by fatigue and confusion, for those which they did.[8]

Another of the problems that gained some attention was that of the limited powers accorded the First Lord during board meetings. This came under careful consideration during the late-1860s, with the then current First Lord, Hugh Childers, successfully seeking an Order-in-Council to strengthen those powers.[9] Prior to the introduction of the order, the First Lord could only assume a position of authority, unable to draw upon any documents that verified his seniority. While Graham, through forcefulness of character, had easily overridden his colleagues, others had been less fortunate. Furthermore, with decisions often reached as a result of general discussion held either during board meetings or in private, it was not always clear where responsibility lay. Although Croker, drawing on his own experience of board meetings, had not fully drawn attention to the issue, he did pursue the related matter of Graham insisting upon two lords of the Admiralty signing all orders and accounts,

so, when the objects of the Lord who presided over the stores were to be carried into effect, he must say to the medical Lord, or any other Lord who might be at hand, and who would know nothing about stores or accounts, or any department but his own, "Hollo! come, put your name to this order." [10]

Although many of the problems that related to the reformed

Admiralty system were now apparently recognised, the dominant belief that Graham had achieved a remarkably successful series of reforms remained in force. Neither Briggs nor Hamilton, as shown, were overtly critical, with the latter merely seeing Childers' reforms as part of an essential evolutionary process. First to dwell, in detail, upon the very real problems that had been inherent within the introduced changes was Sir Oswyn Murray, Permanent Secretary to the Board between 1917 and 1936. Shortly after retirement he produced a history of the Admiralty which was published in 'Mariner's Mirror'.^[11] In giving consideration to Graham's reforms, he devoted considerable attention to the question of responsibility and the powers vested in the First Lord. Although, in doing so, he gave no consideration to the extensive additional duties that so hindered Board members. Indeed, he seems to have seen the imposition of detail upon the Admiralty as a positive merit, or at least this is the impression given by his statement relating to Graham's reforms that

. . . it became the duty and honour of the Board of Admiralty, to swallow the Navy Board as the inferior Board.^[12]

Despite this recognition that Graham's reforms were not entirely satisfactory, the earlier myth continued. Both of Graham's twentieth century biographies are free of any criticism when it comes to discussing the naval reforms. Erickson, writing in 1952, felt comfortable in stating,

Perhaps the greatest achievement of Graham as First Lord was his reform of the civil departments of the Navy . . . ^[13]

Similarly, in 1967, Ward, without alerting his readers to any of the problems subsequently encountered, simply wrote,

The Admiralty thus took over the duties of the civil administration, generally with success. ^[14]

However, this is not to say that the problems encountered during that

mid-century period have been completely ignored by more recent historians. An interesting account of Graham's second period at the Admiralty, which also encompassed the first year of the Russian War, is given by C.I. Hamilton in the Historical Journal. He felt that the British navy's failure to achieve anything beyond the mediocre, related primarily to the excessive burdens placed upon each individual commissioner, so preventing consideration of wider issues:

It is hard not to believe that the naval war would have been better planned if there had been some sort of permanent body whose task it was to consider tactics and strategy. [15]

Following publication of Hamilton's paper came Rodger's more general account of the Admiralty. There are signs that he was influenced by Hamilton's research, for he also directs himself to the board's inability to consider general strategy,

The burden was very great and growing all the time. A relentless flow of administrative questions, many of them detailed, came before the Board and claimed its attention. The larger questions of policy and strategy which the First Lord and his principal naval advisers were especially charged with were at first neglected, and then forgotten. [16]

Nor did Rodger neglect the second major problem that had created concern following the adoption of the reforms,

Graham intended that the Board should provide a mechanism for mutual discussion and information without impairing individual responsibility. It is possible that the scheme might have worked if the volume of business had remained very small . . . [17]

Where consideration has been given to Graham's naval reforms, it has invariably been directed to the abolition of the inferior boards and the assumption of their duties by the Board of Admiralty. Relatively little attention has been given to other areas of the package such as management of the dock and victualling yards, financial planning and the implemented economies. From a careful analysis of the additional reforms

it will be shown that these can also be seen as generating serious problems. Indeed, when consideration is given to all the reforms that Graham introduced, then the entire programme can be seen as nothing less than disastrous. As a result of these reforms, the Board of Admiralty was unable to perform efficiently, the dockyards entered into a period of chaos and financial management was more a creature of fiction than fact.

Yet none of this need have occurred. It has already been shown that Croker, in his attack upon the civil departments bill during its second reading, clearly predicted the outcome. If Graham had simply been prepared to enter into an open and free discussion with those his administration had ejected, then he would soon have been apprised of the harmful effects that his reforms were likely to have. But this did not happen. Graham was, at this time, highly suspicious of all those loyal to the opposition, trusting to his own judgement. This, in many respects, was nothing less than supreme arrogance. In pursuing his own ideas, he was discarding a whole generation of expert naval administrators.

A second factor in this process was Graham's position as regards Earl Grey. Having been given a Cabinet post, much against public expectations, he would have been little inclined to introduce any system of which the Prime Minister disapproved. For his part, Earl Grey was determined to see an end to the civil departments and appears to have presented Graham with an outline plan. Grey's experience of naval affairs, restricted to a seven month period as First Lord, certainly did not make him an expert. However, having entrusted his plan to Graham, he did not even choose to give thought to the likely implications. As a result, an inexperienced politician, working in semi-isolation, foisted upon this major government department a scheme of administration that was close to being unworkable. For the Admiralty, therefore, many

of the subsequent decades were characterised by a quest for solutions to overcome the numerous problems created by Graham's reforms.

5.2 Consolidation and Simplification

For Earl Grey, consolidation of the civil departments was at the very heart of the reforms imposed upon the navy's administrative structure upon the accession of his government in 1830. The premier's interests, occupied as they were by the Great Reform Bill, appear to have broadened little beyond this single requirement. Admittedly, he probably imposed upon his First Lord a scheme that had already been mapped out by St Vincent, but once Graham showed a willingness to pursue this scheme, then Grey appears to have taken little further interest. Matters of detail, therefore, were left to the First Lord to oversee.

Graham undoubtedly viewed this as an advantage. It was an area in which his real skills lay. He was not one to initiate the dream but one who would make sure it worked. On points of detail, Graham was very much in his element, noted for the bludgeoning of his colleagues into submission over various minor points by the presentation of facts which were thoroughly researched. Marx, in later years, described him as one of Peel's bureaucrats, while the 'Morning Chronicle' saw him as a busy body. [18] Neither remark was designed to be flattering.

In matters of reforming the civil administration of the navy, the detail to which Graham directed himself was that of furthering the process of simplification that would follow upon the adoption of a more general plan of consolidation. While Graham was involved in the process, care must be taken not to exaggerate his role. As a newly appointed First Lord, he did not know the civil departments sufficiently well to

mastermind all of the changes. Furthermore, he had a great many tasks in hand, not least of which was that same over riding pre-occupation with the Reform Bill that concerned all other government ministers. For this reason, Barrow's declaration as regards his own considerable involvement in the creation of the adopted arrangements, and previously discussed, must be taken at face value.[19] Most likely, Barrow indicated which branches could be reduced or amalgamated, with Graham ensuring that such proposals were politically acceptable. No doubt, the two of them frequently discussed the issue but the final product reflects a mind that was thoroughly briefed in the workings of the civilian departments.

Graham's influence, therefore, would have been that of direction. It was he who would have instructed Barrow to use this opportunity not only to consolidate but also overhaul and streamline the entire administrative structure. It was also a process that Graham would undoubtedly have liked to have seen furthered in all other government departments. In Parliament, for instance, during the first reading of the civil departments bill, Graham stated that he held unity and simplicity 'to be the very essence and life of public service.'[20]

In making such a declaration, Graham showed that his views, in at least this respect, closely resembled certain conclusions reached by the Finance Committee which had reported in 1828. Established during the previous year, this committee had examined the principles and details of expenditure in the Army, Navy and Ordnance. Graham had been a member of the committee, the first prestigious appointment to which he could lay claim. As a member of parliament of only three years standing, it seems unlikely that he was a major contributor to its conclusions.[21] However, he himself took on board the Committee's views, with his 'unity and simplicity' belief, closely reflecting the Finance Committee's similarly

held principle that was declared in the following terms:

. . . the Committee confidently expect that some departments, or branches of departments, will be found to admit of being so consolidated as to relieve the public service from the disadvantages which arise from their having been constituted at a period when the principles of banking were unknown . . . [22]

It should also be noted, with reference to the Finance Committee, that the various other objectives pursued by Graham during this period also followed upon the principles laid down by that Committee. But given that the minutes of evidence presented to that Committee no longer appear to exist, then it is impossible to say just how the committee went about reaching its conclusions. While it is a point of only passing interest, the person or persons responsible clearly had some influence, together with St Vincent, Grey, Barrow and Graham, upon the nature of the reforms introduced by the Navy Civil Departments bill.

In turning to the question of effectiveness, it would have been difficult for the introduced reforms not to have met with at least some degree of success. Naval administration, as it existed prior to the election of the Whigs, had a complexity that would have been difficult to rival. The simple operation of commanding a warship to sea required not only a policy decision at the highest level but the co-operation of four separate boards: Admiralty, Navy, Victualling and Ordnance. In turn, the commissioners of each of these boards had to correspond separately with their own junior officers, awaiting their replies before giving a likely date for undertaking their part in preparing the designated ship for sea service. Never were those locally placed representatives allowed to correspond among themselves, having to direct themselves only through their immediate superiors. Thus, simple consolidation of the civil departments within the Admiralty brought an immediate end to much unnecessary delay and letter writing.

However, consolidation and simplification, as described in the report of the Finance Committee, would seem to imply something more than the simple abolition of the two boards. Within each of the attendant offices there were numerous branches which, in themselves, might also be simplified. Bringing about, as it would, the additional advantage of reducing overall government expenditure, it was an area to which Graham must have given much thought. After all, his greatest personal achievement in parliament, prior to his Cabinet appointment, had been based on criticising unnecessary expenditure on the part of the previous government. As regards the branches that should be scaled down or reduced and those which ought to replace them, these matters were properly left to Barrow.

Central to the entire reform package was the replacement of the former commissioners of the Navy and Victualling boards by principal officers. This not only ensured that the Board of Admiralty had full control of the civil departments but had the additional advantage of allowing savings to be made in payment of salaries. Whereas the thirteen commissioners received annually £12,400, the combined income of the five principal officers totalled £5000. Admittedly, the difference of £7,400 was by no means the amount saved, as all of the commissioners whose services were no longer required, each now received a pension based on their years of service. This particular payment, which amounted to approximately £4,500 per annum, has to be offset against that saved. Furthermore, for reasons explained elsewhere, a sixth junior lord was added to the Board of Admiralty, his annual salary of £1000 per year further reducing the amount saved.

Nevertheless, when it is considered that those pensioned

would, in time, have been eligible to a pension, then it is clear that the savings made, in this particular area, were not inconsiderable. But this did not prevent some criticism being levelled at Graham, the suggestion made that further savings could have been achieved. In the debate on naval estimates in 1834, Ruthven speaking before the Supply Committee, claimed that the addition of a sixth member to the Board of Admiralty had been unnecessary. He also called for a reduction in salary paid to the First Lord. [23]

Such demands were easy to make, particularly from one such as Ruthven who was unfamiliar with the workings of the civil departments. There was little amiss with his claim that Graham's salary might be reduced. All government ministers, at this time, were drawn from among the ranks of the wealthy, and did not look upon the payments they received as a pre-requisite for taking office.[24] Methven's other claim however, would have proved more difficult to substantiate. It must be assumed, as no explanation accompanied the criticism, that Methven expected the First Lord to oversee one of the principal officers. This could only have been achieved if Graham, and his successors, reduced the amount of time they devoted to their respective areas of duty. In other words, the First Lord would have had to make fewer appearances in Parliament, attend Cabinet meetings less often or devote less time to co-ordinating the work of the junior members of the Board.[25]

Moving away from the higher echelons of naval administration, consolidation of the civil departments also allowed savings to be made in salaries paid to the clerical staff. Once again, numbers employed could be substantially reduced, although any savings had to be offset by an increase in the number of pensions paid out. To begin with, some consideration should be given to George Smith and Marshal Clifton Waller:

secretaries to the Navy and Victualling Boards. Neither was offered an alternative post, with George Smith only a year or two from natural retirement. Combined, their salaries amounted to £2,200 with Smith receiving a pension of £1,020 while Clifton Waller (as a result of fewer years service and a smaller annual salary) received £660. As a result, the immediate saving that resulted from the abolition of the two posts was £564 per annum. However, in view of Smith's imminent retirement, which would almost certainly have occurred within the next two years, then a greater saving can be considered to have taken place. At such time he would have been entitled to a similar pension with a new secretary having also to be appointed. While Smith, for his part, was not particularly unhappy with the arrangement, it proved less than suitable for Clifton Waller. He could potentially have worked for another ten years and would then have been entitled to a pension of £833. To assuage his difficulties, for he had a young and sizeable family to support, the pension awarded to him had been slightly enhanced. [26]

Much more impressive were the savings that resulted from the dismissal of forty-seven clerks: 23 belonging to the Navy Office, 14 from the Victualling Office and 10 from the Navy Pay Office. This resulted in a reduction in payment of annual salaries of £22,026 and an immediate increase in pensions of £11,153. Those dismissed, in all but two cases, had been employed within the naval service for twenty years or more, and would soon have been eligible for superannuation. Indeed, 55% of that number were within five years of automatic retirement, if it is considered that naval clerks rarely worked for more than forty years.

Yet, when assessing actual savings to the naval service, it might be noted that 89% of those dismissed clerks received enhanced pensions. These were the clerks who had worked intermediate years between periods

used for the reckoning of a pension. Since the introduction of superannuation for clerks, pensions were paid at the rate of one-twelfth of the final salary for every five years of service following the first ten years. A clerk who had worked 39 years received, therefore, nine-twelfths of his final salary and would only be eligible for ten-twelfths if he worked into his fortieth year. On this occasion the Admiralty, having first gained the Treasury's sanction, put forward a request to the King in council, that any intermediate years might also be considered reckonable. This same request also covered the case of Clifton Waller together with one of the former navy commissioners. The rough draft of this proposed order was prepared towards the end of July 1832 and gave supporting reasons as to why the request was thought necessary. It first listed the numbers of dismissed clerks before going on to state that,

as all these clerks have been deprived of their situations, not from any neglect of duty or misconduct of any kind but from abolition of office, for the convenience of the Public Service, we would most humbly submit for your Majesty's most gracious approval that the rule of granting superannuation wholly in accordance with the Superannuation Act, which in fact does not contemplate reduction or abolition of office, should not be applied in the cases above, but taken only as a guide, and that the number of intermediate years between any of the two periods mentioned in the said acts, should be allowed to reckon as so much time served and the fractioned part of those years estimated in calculating the retired allowances of the several clerks who have, by the change of system, been deprived of their offices . . . [27]

It then included a separate request relating to Clifton Waller and former Navy Commissioner J.D. Thompson, pointing out that the Lords of the Treasury had already sanctioned,

that Mr Thomson be allowed a retiring pension of £750 per annum instead of £666 which his service strictly calculating would only entitle him and Mr Clifton to a pension of £660 per annum instead of £583. [28]

While forty-seven clerks were dismissed from naval service, a total of 158 were retained. For the most part they continued within the same branch of the service and undertook similar duties to those which they had previously undertaken. The most noticeable difference was that the branch in which they now served was encompassed within a differently named department and headed by a principal officer and not a commissioner. As for the exact number of clerks attached to each department, these were as follows:

Navy Surveyor	03
Accountant General	88
Storekeeper General	24
Comptroller of Victualling	34
Physician of Navy	09

In addition, there were 47 clerks belonging to the Navy Pay Office and who had been transferred to the Treasury. [29]

Despite the retention of such a seemingly high number of clerks, it soon became clear that a number of departments were under a great deal of strain. From the accounting branches, in particular, there were frequent complaints that they could not check and dispose of the accounts as fast as they might wish. In order to process matters more quickly, many of the surviving clerks had to be expensively employed in working extra hours. By 1837 it had been necessary to employ an extra twelve clerks, a move that would have been unnecessary if fewer experienced clerks had not been dismissed in the first place. [30]

Other departments under pressure were those of the Surveyor and Comptroller of Victualling. Within the victualling department, the Comptroller was desirous of making numerous important changes within his department. However, in June 1834 he felt forced to admit that the

preparatory work for such changes was impossible to undertake because of the necessity of 'transacting current business'.[31] The implication being that there were only sufficient numbers for any immediate work, with no spare clerks available. As with the accounting departments, considerable overtime was being given, eventually amounting to regular stints of three hours per day for each clerk.[32] By 1842, five extra clerks had been added to this department, with another added in 1845.[33] As for the Surveyor's department, Symonds was writing to Hardy, as early as July 1833, of the press of work in his office 'consequent on the establishment of a clear system of classifying the masts and yards.'[34] A further clerk had been added to this department by 1837. [35]

The increase in the number of clerks, combined with increasing overtime, was soon reflected in the estimates. Whereas the financial year 1831/2, the last full year of the two inferior boards, had seen the combined estimated expenditure upon administering offices belonging to the Admiralty, Navy and Victualling to have been £119,714 this had been dramatically reduced to £104,551 for the 1834/5 financial year. [36]

From the foregoing, certain conclusions can be reached as to the success of this area of consideration: consolidation and simplification. Certainly, consolidation was carried through, with the Board of Admiralty gaining direct control over the civil departments. Yet, the claimed financial savings were clearly limited, with the re-arranged branches suffering a period of inefficiency as a result of severe cuts in the numbers of clerks employed. In particular, as has been demonstrated, large numbers of clerks had to be used in extraordinary amounts of overtime, their financial remuneration consequently greater than would have been the case if more clerks had been retained in the first place. Indeed, the high level of savings that were recorded in 1833 were

completely wiped out within the next five years, with the costs of running the civil departments standing at more or less the same amount in 1841 as had been the case ten years earlier.[37]

5.3 A Board of Detail

Prior to the abolition of the civilian boards, the Commissioners of the Admiralty had possessed a general superintending role over all matters connected with naval affairs. In the words of the Commissioners on Fees,

The Business of the Board of Admiralty is to consider and determine upon all Matters relative to Your Majesty's Navy, and Departments thereunto belonging: to give Directions for the Performance of all Services that may be required, either in Civil or Naval Branches thereof; to sign, by themselves or by their Secretaries, all Orders necessary for carrying their Directions into Execution; and generally to superintend and direct the whole Naval and Marine Establishments of Great Britain.[38]

This, in effect, meant that the Board of Admiralty devoted most of its attention to the wider issues of running the navy. In particular, the professional lords were expected to advise the First Lord on matters of strategy, the number and type of vessels that should be made available in any one year together with the size and location of the various support facilities. Once these decisions had been taken, attention could be given to budget requirements and preparation of the estimates. A great many additional matters were referred to the Admiralty Commissioners, but the existence of the inferior boards meant that the majority of these might be referred either to the navy or victualling commissioners. Thus, matters connected with pay and pensions of both seamen and civilian workers, hire of transports, condition and progress of works at the outstations (including hospitals), appointments of artisans and clerks were among matters to which the Admiralty commissioners might give only limited

attention. Only when these same issues became of more general concern was it necessary for members of the superior board to give them full attention.

However, with the passing of the Navy Civil Departments Act, much of this changed. While the Board of Admiralty did not lose any of its former duties, it now took on all those tasks once performed by the navy and victualling commissioners. Admittedly, the every day^s side of such duties was to be handled by the newly appointed principal officers, but all decisions were to be taken by this single remaining board. Thus every routine matter requiring a decision was now brought directly before the Admiralty commissioners, inevitably resulting in prolonged discussion, increased paper work and less time for those matters to which the Board had previously directed time. Graham, for his part, had blandly claimed, during the second reading of the bill, that members of the current Board of Admiralty,

were all of opinion that, by the direct control which the proposed plan would give the Admiralty over the Subordinate Departments, its labours would not be increased, but diminished.[39]

In making this declaration, Graham

stated unequivocally to the House, that he introduced this measure with the unanimous consent of all his colleagues at the Admiralty, given after they had had fifteen months experience in the toils of office.[40]

As to how it would lead to saving in time, this was subsequently explained, with Graham going on to claim,

that a large part of their [the Board of Admiralty's] present occupation arose from the confusion produced by the erratic motions of the Navy and Victualling Boards, and he accordingly expected that when this source of employment was cut off (for the present arrangement seemed to provide, that the various Boards should make work for each other), that the Admiralty would have sufficient time to attend to the increase in

duty that would be thrown on them by this plan.[41]

But if Graham genuinely believed this, then he greatly misunderstood the nature of the work performed by the inferior boards. Much of the routine work was never referred to the Admiralty. Once a decision had been taken as to the amount of money available, it was the commissioners of the inferior boards who determined on the ships that would be repaired, the quantity and quality of supplies to be ordered, negotiated with contractors and oversaw the verification of vouchers and accounts, wages paid and pensions to be allowed. Thus, in reply to Graham's rather startling claim, William Douglas, a former Admiralty Commissioner and member of the Council under the Lord High Admiral, briefly indicated the extent of the work that would now fall upon the Board of Admiralty. He then went on to emphasize the particular problems attached to the matter of naval stores:

For the future, all contracts for the supply of the Navy were to be effected by the Admiralty Board; but when the extent of those contracts were reflected on, and how complicated and multifarious they were, he must confess that he looked at any such proposition as that of confiding them to the Board of Admiralty to be totally impracticable, and likely to produce the worst results.[42]

Douglas then went on to remind the House that,

the principal object contemplated in instituting that Board was, to have an efficient controlling power connected with the Ministry over the whole of the naval service, so as to render it effective to all branches, and easily applicable to any service . . . [43]

In his opinion, and as a result of the increased load placed upon it, the Board 'would speedily find itself overwhelmed with a mass of business'.[44]

Members of the opposition who spoke against the bill were not necessarily arguing for a retention of the inferior boards. They were

genuinely concerned that there would be a very real increase in the work expected to be undertaken by the Admiralty commissioners, so making it impossible for the Board to work efficiently. Yet, at the same time, they also recognised the need for change. Many of those who had previously served on the Board of Admiralty had themselves witnessed the difficulties of imposing commands upon an intransigent Navy Board. For this reason, rather than completely rejecting Graham's argument, those on the opposition benches were now favouring the scheme put forward by Sir George Clerk in 1828.[45] At that time he had suggested the establishment of a single subordinate body that would possess a limited degree of executive authority. Among those now taking this line was J.W. Croker. As with the Board that Graham headed, he could also speak with a degree of experience. However, unlike the fifteen months of which the First Lord had spoken, Croker could claim twenty-one years 'experience in the toil of office'. For this reason, if for no other, his views should not have been so readily dismissed.

Perhaps, in some respects, damage to the Admiralty's administrative machinery was worse than these opposition speakers predicted. The new scheme, once implemented, gave the appearance of being workable and, for this reason, remained unchanged for a number of decades. In part this resulted from the continuance of the long period of peace and the consequent reduction in the pressures that might at other times be placed on the navy. In turn, the Admiralty commissioners fell easily into the routine demanded of them, becoming less aware of the lack of attention given to overall planning. Thus, the system to which Croker, Clerk and Douglas rightly objected, became the accepted norm. The minor reforms that were introduced were designed not to dismantle a flawed system but to ensure its survival.

An early indication that all was not going according to plan, can be gleaned by reference to the increase rather than diminution of correspondence directed to the Admiralty. According to Barrow, who unwittingly provides the evidence in his memoirs, the secretary revealed that there was a 33% growth in letters received and despatched from the Admiralty during the period 1827 to 1833.[46] Graham, as has already been noted, believed the opposite would take place.

As for the extraordinary amount of detail now attended to by commissioners, this was highlighted by evidence presented in 1836 to the Royal Commission of Inquiry that examined the civil administration of the Army. At the time, thought was being given to reforming the Army's administrative structure, with some individuals favouring a scheme similar to that introduced by Graham at the Admiralty. Among those giving evidence was John Barrow. He was asked to comment upon the individual duties of the five superintending lords. While it is not necessary to reproduce his answer in full, it is worth taking a look at statements he made relating to the First Sea Lord. As the senior professional lord on the Board, he was constantly called upon to advise the First Lord while overseeing all matters relating to the Fleet. At the same time, and as a result of the reforms, he was also supposed to attend Somerset House three days a week to superintend the work of the Surveyor of the Navy. While Barrow, at no time, suggested that these duties were excessive, it is difficult to see how the then First Sea Lord, Charles Adams, efficiently carried out these varied tasks. Such a suspicion is enhanced by Barrow's description of his supervisory role:

when a ship ordered to be fitted out for a particular service, Sir Charles Adam has the charge of seeing that she is properly fitted; he consults with the Surveyor of the Navy how ships shall be distributed to the different ports, or in the different docks, and how the artificers shall be distributed upon them, in

order to bring them forward in succession, or simultaneously just as they may be wanted. Sir Charles arranges with the surveyor the mode in which ships shall be stowed as to their holds, and fitted and stored as to their provisions, &c., and what quantity of powder they shall take, what guns they shall carry, and so on.[47]

While some matters certainly fell into the correct province of a senior naval lord, others would have been much more effectively dealt with by the Surveyor in consultation with other members of his own department. In particular, the Surveyor was best qualified to deal with the distribution of artificers, the appropriate use of docks and the stowing of ships. On the other hand, while the First Sea Lord should correctly have an interest in ordnance, his thoughts would be best directed to the introduction of new and better guns rather than the determining the quantity of powder and guns on a particular ship at a particular port.

Possibly the most surprising revelation presented by Barrow to the Commission of Inquiry was that of the trivial detail that had now to be brought before the Board. A reference to the Admiralty minutes books soon confirms this, with the commissioners frequently having to determine matters relating to pension claimants, the state of footpaths adjoining naval property and the rights of parishioners to use a newly constructed dockyard chapel.[48] However, Barrow's example is far more effective in proving the point, for it more clearly demonstrates how little real power was delegated away from the Board. The instance given, is hypothetical in nature and concerns the questioning of an account submitted to the accountant-general's office,

. . . the captain [of a warship] goes into a foreign port and finds himself short of a little rope, and he is obliged to buy it; he gives an order to the purser to go and buy it; whatever he purchases must be attested by two respectable merchants of the place that it is purchased at proper prices: the captain is authorized to do this, but then it may become a question whether,

in the first place, it was necessary, and, next, whether it should be allowed or not, and that is decided by the Board of Admiralty and not by the accountant general . . . [49]

In giving this example, Barrow was merely clarifying the state of affairs as it then existed. He was certainly not criticising the system, but at least one of those listening to this statement felt the need to question the Board's involvement in such a seemingly trivial matter. Barrow was therefore asked whether such detail did not lead to 'a great accumulation of business'. Barrow was fairly candid in his reply,

So we have, a vast deal; but it is thought better that these things should be kept with the Board than allow the superintendents or clerks to settle matters of this kind. A Lord of the Admiralty would do it if it was no great extent, and he would put his initials to show that he had done it . . . [50]

A few years later a subsequent First Lord did choose to draw attention to the complexities of detail that he felt to be overburdening the Admiralty commissioners. This was in 1841 when the Earl of Minto, then retiring from office, wrote a memorandum on the subject. He pointed out that

The labour at present required from the Lords to enable them to conduct the business satisfactorily is very greatly beyond the degree of exertion to be generally found or expected . . . [51]

Despite this observation, he neither questioned the supervisory role of the commissioners nor the nature of business brought before the Board. In his words, the existing system was necessary so as to ensure 'efficient direction or control' over the subordinate departments. To reduce the amount of work performed by individual commissioners, Minto proposed that an additional member of the Board should be appointed. Upon this person 'would devolve the superintendence of the dockyards, and the Surveyor of the Navy, and some portion of the stores'. [52] As Minto explained, this would allow the senior sea lord to be relieved of the excess of work

placed upon his shoulders, so allowing him to give greater attention 'to the proper duties' of his particular office.[53] In the event, Minto's recommendation was not pursued, although in later years the problem was tackled in a slightly different way, the Surveyor elevated to the Board and so no longer requiring superintendence.

It was when called upon to operate under the pressures of war that those opposed to Graham's administrative reforms expected them to be placed under such excessive pressures that the system would simply collapse. Croker had certainly suggested this during the second reading of Graham's bill [54] while Byam Martin had also made a similar point,

The very beginning of a war (I wish Sir J. Graham may be the First Lord of the Admiralty when it takes place) will convince the Admiralty that they are utterly helpless without the assistance of an inferior department to attend to all the detail and drudgery of the duties of the civil branch of the service. The Admiralty will have quite enough to do to give a sort of general supervision over the inferior department, and to attend to all the general directing duties which belong to them with reference to the fleets in all quarters of the globe.[55]

It was not for some twenty-two years that the system was called upon to operate under such conditions. By that time, Graham's reforms were firmly entrenched into the constitutional mechanism with fewer people able to draw a direct comparison with what had gone before. As a result, although the system proved inadequate, its entire removal was not to be contemplated nor were Graham's changes to be blamed in any way. Furthermore, in comparison with the inept performance of the Army's own administrative machine, where the accumulation of the correct amount of supplies in the most advantageous geographical location proved a near impossibility, the system operated by the Admiralty was seen as something worth adopting on a wider scale.[56]

During the period of hostilities that lasted from 1854 to 1856 the Admiralty appeared to lack any definite war aim. Hamilton's analysis of the Baltic campaign of 1854 shows that a fleet under Napier was originally intended to blockade Russia's Baltic coastline.[57] However, lack of a distinct strategy and the failure of Graham, who had been re-appointed First Lord, to procure adequate advice, resulted in this campaign turning into a major onslaught upon entrenched coastal fortifications. In doing so, Graham found warships quite unsuited to this task. The existence of naval lords, unhampered by a myriad of administrative duties, would have allowed him to make better use of their considerable professional expertise. As Hamilton went on to state,

by summing up the judgement of the majority of the older officers that battleships could not possibly face well-manned batteries, they could have made the First Lord somewhat less insistent on Napier leading his ships before Sweaborg. [55]

The general conclusion that Hamilton reaches is that Graham's reforms of 1832 were a backward step. He indicated that the Board of Admiralty, prior to the changes, might have had many faults and was often seen as a comfortable home for retired sailors,

But if it had continued, this might have been its strength. Leisure gives at least an opportunity for self improvement, even if this is rarely taken. The demands of war might have turned an administrative luxury into a kind of planning body that was so badly needed.[59]

Modification of the system did take place in the years that followed the Russian War. In particular, attention was given to the problems of the senior naval lord having to supervise the rapidly expanding and technologically complex duties performed by the Surveyor-General. Initially however, the problem was made worse. By an Order-in-Council of 23 January 1860, the Surveyor's duties were considerably expanded, by his having been given enlarged powers as regards the management of the dockyards. In recognition of this, the Surveyor-General

also took on a new title, from that date known as the Comptroller. Inevitably, this led to further attention being given to the proper supervision of his department by a naval lord.[60] Given, however, that no ordinary political appointee could possibly perform the job adequately, it was decided by Hugh Childers, First Lord between December 1868 and March 1871, that the Comptroller should be elevated to the Board itself. The result was that the Comptroller was constantly available to enhance the technological discussions that frequently arose, able to provide immediate answers to questions that might otherwise have caused undue delay in the furtherance of business. Furthermore, he now took on the supervisory duties once performed by the senior naval lord, able by his technical expertise to perform the task much more effectively.[61]

Initially, the Comptroller's elevation to the Board lasted for only three years, being returned to his previous status in 1872. At the time, much concern had been expressed at having a permanent non-political appointee on an otherwise politically chosen body. However, the success of the experiment led to a reversal of that earlier decision, with the Comptroller returned to the Board in 1882.[62]

By this change, the senior naval lord could concentrate upon matters more closely concerned with the fleet. The remaining members of the Board, excluding the First Sea Lord, retained their supervisory roles, although with the creation of many new departments, they were no longer restricted to the overseeing of a single principal officer. The Controller had under his authority the directors of the dockyards, naval construction, naval ordnance and stores together with Engineer-in-Chief and Expense Accounts Branch while the Junior Sea Lord supervised the directors of Transports, Medical Departments, Victualling and Stores as well as the Chaplain of the Fleet and Intelligence Department. In

addition, there was the Civil Lord who oversaw the Directors of Works and the Director of Greenwich Hospital with a Financial Secretary supervising the Accountant General together with all departments having a financial involvement. As for the First Lord, he continued to have overall responsibility for all naval business, his powers including those of initiative and veto. [63]

However, none of this got anywhere near to solving the far more important problem of preventing excessive amounts of detail throttling the Board's ability to plan a coherent naval policy. Indeed, if anything, the problem was getting worse. Having to absorb the tremendous technical advances of the age combined with a consequent growth in the size of the civilian work force (both manual and clerical), the Board became even more stretched than ever. As Rodger pointed out in his general history of the Admiralty,

By 1896 nearly one fifth of all government expenditure went on the Navy. A quarter of a million people worked for or in the Service, or in industries which directly depended on it, which was 2.25 per cent of the total work force of the country. The Admiralty built and maintained an enormous fleet, it specified, designed and often manufactured every variety of stores from chamber pots to torpedoes. It fed, clothed and supervised its officers and men from boyhood to the grave, and to a considerable extent their wives and children with them. In an age when the state hardly impinged on the affairs of most of its citizens, and was only beginning to interfere in the economic life of the nation, the Admiralty represented a complete society, and a welfare state half a century before the state itself assumed the role.[64]

The solution was not to come until the midst of World War One when the mass of administrative detail having to be undertaken by the Board was clearly having an effect upon the conduct of the war. The failure to secure a clear cut victory at Jutland, the disastrous

Dardanelles campaign and the horrendous merchant shipping losses can be traced back to a lack of any system to provide clear planning at the highest level. Marder, in his much acclaimed study of the navy during the first two decades of the 20th century, devotes considerable attention to this issue. He begins by pointing out that the Admiralty was ill-equipped to plan operations due to 'excessive centralization'.[65] Matters were made no better by the Board of Admiralty not only undertaking the work once performed by the civilian boards but also having the 'exclusive control of operations'. According to Admiral Dewar, a member of the Admiralty staff between July 1917 and February 1918, and quoted extensively by Marder, members of the Board,

instead of confining their attention to important questions of policy and the general direction of affairs, they immersed themselves in a flood of routine and current business, much of which could have been decided without reference to the Admiralty.[66]

In fact, the situation was so bad that one national newspaper felt it necessary to alert the public to the dangers inherent in the existing system. On 30 April 1917, the Daily Mail informed its readers that the present Board was 'a collection of heads of departments all so fully occupied with departmental work that they have no time for hard thinking that is required in war'.[67] Admiral Sir Herbert William, described by Marder as the intellectual leader of a group of junior officers known as the 'Young Turks of the Grand Fleet', felt that the Board had too much to do and was concerned with 'inconsequential little matters', and the junior lords were too immersed in their own work for efficient command of the war.[68] William felt that the Board should be reconstituted with a supreme Board brought into existence, this to be free of administrative chores and able to devote itself to broad lines of strategy.[69] It was a suggestion that the Tory opponents to Graham's original reforms might well have approved.

It was the appointment of Sir Eric Geddes to the post of First Sea Lord in July 1917 that heralded the all-essential change that was to solve this particular problem as created by the 1832 abolition of the civilian boards.[70] Having taken up an earlier appointment to the post of Controller, Geddes already had an understanding of the workings of the Admiralty with an even clearer understanding of the changes that he felt necessary. In September he produced a paper in which he indicated that the Board was too large to retain proper control over policy. To achieve this objective, he divided the Board into two separate committees: Operations and Maintenance. The former (which consisted of the First Sea Lord, Deputy First Sea Lord, Fifth Sea Lord [responsible for the air service] and Deputy Assistant chiefs of Naval Staff) was responsible for directing policy and operation of the fleet. The Maintenance Committee on the other hand (made up of the Second, Third and Fourth Sea Lords together with the Controller, Civil Lord and Financial Secretary) took responsibility for the Navy's material needs and so performed a task similar to that once undertaken by the long since abolished inferior boards. It was a point that was not lost upon Marder,

to sum up, under the reforms of May 1917, the Admiralty organization reverted to a modified form of the pre-1832 system. It was divided more distinctly into two sides, Operations and Administration, restoring what had been lost in the 1832 reforms.[71]

Following a period of no less than eighty-five years, recognition had finally been given to the views of Croker and those other former naval administrators who had spoken against the original bill. At that time they had pressed the need for a separate committee to take responsibility for the civilian departments and this had now come about. During those intervening years the manufacture and supply side of the navy had so dominated the Board, that direction and policy had taken second place.

During those eighty-five years, and as a direct result, the navy had performed dismally during the Russian War and come close to defeat during the Great War. On both occasions, the material side of the navy had been in good order and ready to take on the enemy. In this respect the Board had done well - it could not have done otherwise. Yet the placement of these materials, and whether they were best suited for the war in hand, were the areas in which the Admiralty constantly under-performed. With renewed direction coming about as a result of Geddes reforms, the navy went on to play its full part in ultimately bringing an end to the war that had been proclaimed as ending all wars.

5.4 The Principle of Individual Responsibility

According to John Barrow, when writing his later 'Memoirs', the reforms of the naval department introduced in 1832 'hinged on two words'. These words, he declared, were 'individual responsibility'. While there can be little doubt that the principle to which he alluded was of importance, it is also the case that Barrow was guilty of exaggeration. The purpose of the reforms, the matter upon which they really 'hinged', was that of giving the Admiralty, as a board, absolute authority in all matters relating to the administration of the navy. That individual responsibility featured was a result of a need to ensure that the introduced reforms would work as well as possible. There was, in other words, little point in abolishing the two civilian boards if the administrative structure that superseded them was, in itself, fundamentally flawed.

Returning, for a moment, to Barrow's statement, it is possible to see why he should credit this one principle with the importance that he considered it to have held. He had been charged, as already noted, with

producing the detailed arrangements that would underpin the entire reform package. His concern was neither that of consolidating the Admiralty and civilian boards nor determining where executive power should lie. All this had been done for him and was probably based on an idea first worked out by St Vincent and then adopted by Grey. Instead, Barrow was entirely concerned with the internal running of each branch. In working upon a scheme that would meet with general approval, Barrow had been informed that it must encompass the principle of individual responsibility. Assuming, therefore, this to have been the case, then it is also easy to see why Barrow, unconcerned with the wider issue of consolidation, should credit this particular principle with such overriding importance.

That Graham, as First Lord, and the man charged with overseeing the introduction of the scheme in its entirety, held individual responsibility to be of importance cannot be denied. In the Supply Committee of the House of Commons, during the debate on the Navy Estimates, Graham indicated his belief that individual responsibility was 'the best security which the public had for the good conduct of its servants'. [72] Furthermore, during the committee stage of the Civil Departments bill he indicated that the proposed reforms were designed to enforce this one principle 'as completely as it could possibly be enforced.' [73]

Yet the Civil Departments bill, despite Graham's declared commitment to individual responsibility, both on the occasions quoted and at other times, was not as complete in this area as it might have been. [74] Certainly, it did not enforce the principle 'as completely as it could possibly be enforced', since it failed to bestow upon those individuals in executive authority a clear and unarguable responsibility for decisions taken. The Act, as introduced, merely declared the former authority of the navy and victualling commissioners 'to be transferred to

the Commissioners for executing the Office of Lord High Admiral. It made no mention of individual responsibility and even insisted that all 'Authorities, Duties, Matters and Things' to be executed by the Board should only be 'valid and effectual' if 'executed or performed by two or more of the said commissioners of the Admiralty'. [75] In other words, all commissioners should act in concert, unable to take decisions unless supported by another, and therefore bereft of individual responsibility. As for the way of overcoming this, that of having the commissioners acting as a board of advice and the First Lord taking responsibility for all decisions, this too was precluded. According to the Letters Patent, by which all members of the Board were appointed, and continued to be appointed for several more decades, the First Lord had no greater authority than any other member of the Board. [76]

It is with the philosopher Jeremy Bentham that the principle of individual responsibility is most closely associated. In a series of essays that eventually culminated in his 'Constitutional Code', Bentham laid down a series of rules for the exercise of good management. [77] Applicable to both government and joint stock enterprises alike, they encompassed not only individual responsibility and general management practice but also the style of architecture, modes of work and the size of work force that was best suited to efficient management. As regards the principle of individual responsibility, its main advantage, so Bentham claimed, was that it encouraged maximum exertion. [78]

Over the years, an increasing number of decision makers came into contact with Bentham's ideas, adapting and developing them to their own needs. Among them, so it can be argued, were St Vincent and Grey, the two individuals most hostile to the continued existence of the Navy Board. Neither, however, were committed Benthamites. [79] Both chose to accept

only the principle of individual responsibility. That they did so, according to Chester in his study of the English administrative system, relates back to an intriguing experiment that was conducted within the royal dockyards.[80] In 1796, Samuel Bentham, younger brother of the philosopher, was appointed to the post of Inspector-General of Naval Works. This was a short-lived office and one that was established by the Admiralty as a result of their increasing belief that the Navy Board was not keeping pace with their own needs. To this end, they directed Samuel Bentham to consider all matters which related to

the improvement of the building, fitting out and arming of . . . ships and vessels as well as what may conduce to the better navigating and victualling of them: the construction of docks, slips, basins, jetties and other works subservient to the construction and equipment of the ships and vessels; together with the due choice, preservation and economical employment of the several stores and provisions made use of in the navy.[81]

Although Jeremy Bentham had yet publicly to express an interest in the value of individual responsibility, it was a principle to which his younger brother was already fervently committed. This was apparent in the way he ran the office to which he had been appointed. According to Morris,

Bentham emphasized that though furnished with assistants . . . he was the only person responsible for every part of the business and that, as his reports were not countersigned by his assistants, they could not cover his errors nor screen him from responsibility. [82]

Among the schemes that Samuel Bentham pioneered during this period was the appointment of a timber master to each of the royal dockyards.[83] The duties of this new officer were those of receiving and inspecting newly arrived timber, ensuring its proper storage and overseeing the later use of this commodity. In producing a set of instructions for the new officer, Samuel Bentham included the solemn warning that "the blame of any bad management (though it may appear to arise from [his subordinates'] neglect or unskilfulness) will always fall heavily upon him; more

especially if he should have omitted any opportunity of bringing to light their misconduct.[84]

Although, in later years the timber master was to become a clear asset to the management structure of the dockyards, these appointments initially created a serious problem. In particular, the timber masters rejected large quantities of timber before it entered the yards, claiming it to be quite useless for the needs of shipbuilding. Some doubt exists as to whether such amounts should have been rejected, the Navy Board taking the view that the timber masters were simply over-cautious. Moreover, if timber continued to be rejected with such regularity, then those responsible for the supply of timber would cease to enter into future contracts. Consequently, in October 1801, the Navy Board directed 'that justice may be done to the merchants as well as the public'.[85] That the timber masters had been so cautious, so it was suggested by one group of contractors in a letter to the Navy Board, was a result of the fierceness with which the principle of individual responsibility appeared to be enforced. It was pointed out that the timber masters 'consider themselves responsible even to the loss of their situation for the receipts of any timber which might be found to have any defect at a future distant period in the opinion of another person'.[86]

For his part, St Vincent lost faith in neither the timber masters nor the principle of individual responsibility. Believing, as his correspondence shows, that the dockyards were nothing less than dens of corruption, he was not surprised by the large quantity of timber rejected. Nor would he listen to the pleas of the merchants and the commissioners of the Navy Board. He was convinced that in earlier years quantities of sub-standard timber had been allowed into the yards either through laxness on the part of dockyard officers or as a result of bribery. In

either case, the timber masters held responsible for the receipt of all timber, would eventually force the contractors to supply timber of adequate quality. As a result, it is not surprising, that St Vincent continued to adhere to the principle of individual responsibility, converting Grey to its value in any future reform programme that might be instituted.[87]

While this early experiment in the royal dockyards had convinced at least two Whig parliamentarians of the value of individual responsibility, others were to join forces in the years that followed. Finer, in his essay on the transmission of Benthamite ideas, identifies three processes: irradiation, suscitation and permeation. The gist of his argument is that through discussion and other forms of consciousness raising, many of the ideas common to the apparently small group of Benthamites were transferred to a large proportion of the nation's leaders.[88] Few of them, as previously indicated, accepted all of Bentham's ideas, taking on board only those with which they felt most comfortable. In this respect, Graham is a case in point. While in opposition he was noted for his fierce attacks on government expenditure and mis-management. For this reason, he was likely to look favourably upon some of the general ideas expounded by Bentham. However, instead of accepting them as part of a completely integrated system, he appears to have adopted a much more pragmatic approach. As with many contemporary politicians, he occasionally picked out Benthamite principles as and when he felt they might best apply.[89]

That individual responsibility had become generally accepted some thirty years after that first experiment in the royal dockyards can be shown by way of reference both to the first report of the Finance Committee of 1828 and its subsequent adoption by the Navy Board during the

following year. The Finance Committee, of which it will be remembered that Graham was a member, proclaimed itself to be fully in favour of the principle. In that first report it was stated

The Committee are of opinion that where there is a collective responsibility, each individual is disposed to consider himself as in a great degree relieved from personal responsibility; but that where there is individual responsibility, no such feeling can exist; responsibility is then brought home to each individual, and is a constant motive to render him faithful in the discharge of his public duty. [90]

As an indication of its value attention was drawn to the Ordnance Department where it was pointed out that each member of the Board was solely responsible for one area of administration. Here,

the advantage of a prompt and consistent administration is secured by a personal responsibility, on the other the tendency which there always is, when power is vested in a single person, to abuse it, is effectually restrained by the continued checks of the controlling authority of the Board and Master General. [91]

To a certain extent, individual responsibility, as practised by the Ordnance Board must be considered a rather spurious example. It was certainly true that members of the Board each had a separate and distinct duty but it was also the case that all important matters were brought before the entire Board for a collective decision. Confirming this was the report of a Parliamentary Committee of 1837:

The whole of the Business is distributed amongst the three Board Officers of the Ordnance, namely the Surveyor-General, the Clerk of the Ordnance, and the Principal Storekeeper. Each of these has his own separate and distinct duties; but, as all acts are done in the name and authority of the Board, all important questions are brought before it, and every member of it is expected to have a general knowledge of the business transacted in each separate division. [92]

Seen in these terms there was surprisingly little difference between methods used at the Ordnance Board and that practised by the Navy and Victualling Boards prior to the introduction of the committee system in 1796. As will be seen by reference back to chapter one of the thesis,

each commissioner of the navy's civilian boards had authority over specific areas of administration with all important decisions collectively taken at board meetings.

Following the report of the Finance Committee, attention was given to the introduction of individual responsibility into the existing administrative framework of the naval departments. First to receive attention was the Navy Board, with the committee system disassembled in 1829 and replaced by a body of titled commissioners, each having responsibility over his own department. Once again, as with the Ordnance, they met together as a general board. However, unlike the system that had prevailed prior to 1796 they could now be held responsible for any mistakes within their own department. It appears that nothing specific was placed on paper, although Byam Martin has left his own notes of a conversation with Lord Melville. On the occasion of that conversation, Byam Martin was informed that each commissioner should himself execute and so far be responsible for the duties of his own branch, instead of there being left as before, in the management of the Secretaries of the Committees or Chief Clerk.[93]

It was within three years of the introduction of the new procedure that the navy's two remaining civilian boards were abolished. At that time, the Navy and Victualling commissioners were operating under two entirely different systems. Whereas the navy commissioners were working a system of limited individual responsibility, the victualling commissioners were still operating the older committee system. In both cases, upon the appointment of principal officers, each of whom was to be held responsible for the department he headed, the move towards full individual responsibility was clearly furthered. However, as already noted, the Board of Admiralty, itself, despite Graham holding the post of First Lord,

was characterised by a decidedly collective form of responsibility.

Of course, it could be argued that the First Lord was really 'first among equals' and was, therefore, ultimately responsible for all decisions taken. In fact, Graham himself took this view, seeing it as entrenched by historical usage.[94] Yet such an argument was not easy to sustain. Apart from the existence of Letters Patent denying the First Lord supremacy, it has also to be remembered that many of the junior lords were, themselves, powerful individuals. The Civil Departments Act, for instance, allowed four of them to be Members of Parliament while the senior naval lord had a natural degree of authority that resulted from his normally exalted service career. Serving with Graham, for instance, was Sir Thomas Hardy: a national hero, and one whose name was better known than that of the First Lord. It could not have been easy for Graham to overrule the views of such a personality.[95] A further factor operating within the Board of Admiralty, and encouraging a more collectivist approach, was that other than the First Lord and senior naval lord, none of the other members of the Board had their own private room. Instead, they were expected to conduct business in a common room, a factor that militated against individual decision making or confidentiality.

Fundamentally, of course, it was very much to do with character. Those with a strong personality, and it appears that Graham was one of these, had little difficulty in ruling the Board. On the other hand, those of weak character would not find it so easy. A Select Committee of 1861, which looked into the workings of the Board, found that at least one of Graham's successors had not found mastery of the Board an easy task. Sir John Pakington, First Lord between 1858-9 and 1866-7, indicated that his supremacy had been questioned by some of his more able colleagues. Pakington further informed members of the Select Committee that there was

‘a want and an absence on the part of any one member of the Board of that sense of individual responsibility’ upon which he considered ‘the satisfactory conduct of public business mainly depends’[96]

In order to ensure that individual responsibility existed in something more than name only, some radical changes were introduced by H.C.E. Childers shortly after his appointment to the office of First Lord in 1868. Giving thought to the undeclared authority of the office he now held, Childers not only sought an order-in-council that would enhance his position as head of the board, but would also sweep away many aspects of collective decision making as handed down by Graham. The changes, which came before council in January 1869, made it clear that the First Lord was responsible ‘to Your Majesty and Parliament for all the business of the Admiralty’. As for the navy and civil members of the Board, they were to ‘act as his assistants’.[97] A further aspect of the order-in-council was the dividing of the business of the Board into three principal branches and the elevation of the Controller (formerly the Surveyor-General) to the post of Third Naval Lord. As such he now became a full member of the Board. In making these changes it also allowed the Board to see a reduction in membership, the Board now consisting of the First Lord, First Naval Lord, Third Naval Lord and Controller, the Junior Naval Lord and the Civil Lord. In addition, there were also the two secretaries who were now designated the Parliamentary Secretary (formerly First Secretary) and the Permanent Secretary (formerly the Second Secretary). The three areas of responsibility, as laid down by the order in council, were set out as follows:

A. The First Naval Lord to be responsible to the First Lord of the Admiralty of so much of the business as related to the “Personnel” of the Navy, and for the movement and condition of Your Majesty’s Fleet. The Junior Naval Lord to assist the First Naval Lord in the division of

the business.

B. The Contoller of the Navy being, as we have proposed the Third Lord, to be responsible to the First Lord of the Admiralty for the administration of such business as relates to the "Material" of Your Majesty's Navy i.e. to the building and repairing of ships, to guns, and to naval stores.

C. The Parliamentary Secretary to be responsible to the First Lord of the Admiralty for the "Finance" of the Departments, and the Civil Lord to act as an Assistant to the Secretary.[98]

Although not sanctioned by the order in council, for it was a matter of internal procedure, Childers also brought an end to the daily meetings of the Board. Instead, each of the three senior naval lords were to report individually to the First Lord, so ensuring an end to common discussion and jointly taken decisions. Further encouraging this move to individualism was that of each naval lord now having his own private office and ceasing to work in a shared common area.

Childers gave an explanation of these changes to Parliament shortly after the order had been sanctioned. In particular, he pointed out that under the new arrangement 'the business of the Admiralty is conducted in the same manner as in the other principal departments of Government'.[99] This however, was disputed by H.T. Corry, a former Tory First Lord,

He [Corry] had always been of opinion that, in consequence of special circumstances connected with naval administration, it was impossible to conduct the business of the Admiralty in the same manner as that which was applicable to other Departments of the Government.[100]

The reason, he went on to state, was that whereas in departments such as the Treasury the head of that department, namely the Chancellor, was well acquainted with the business, this was not the case with the First Lord,

It was not going too far to say that the First Lord could hardly be acquainted with one-ninth of the details that had to be dealt with at the Admiralty.[101]

For this reason he needed advice from the junior lords and the arrangement of the Board had once allowed for this. One aspect of the reforms that caused Corry particular misgivings was that of allowing the Controller the direct ear of the First Lord,

As a rule, the Controller of the Navy was thoroughly conversant with the details of the business in which he was engaged; and when, as a Lord of the Admiralty, he made a proposal to the civilian First Lord, who would probably have a very superficial knowledge of the subject, the latter would be completely in his hands. His subordinates would be merely nominal, for the First Lord would have to deal with him without the assistance of anything like a Board . . . [102]

Referring to the system as it had previously existed, Corry explained that questions relating to the design of ships would certainly have been settled by the First Lord, but at that time he had the benefit of hearing the views of several competent naval officers. Under the change, Corry was afraid that the Controller, 'being a permanent officer and consequently without recent naval experience, was apt to get into grooves, and those grooves might not be in a direction leading to the best results.' [103]

While Childers' reforms had created a structure that allowed for the adoption of individual responsibility, some of the more radical aspects of his reforms were removed. In 1871, soon after his appointment to the office of First Lord, George J. Goschen chose to modify the system. He reintroduced the practice of daily Board meetings while also removing the Controller from the Board. However, a subsequent order in council confirmed the First Lord as 'responsible to Your Majesty and Parliament for all the business of the Admiralty' and that all members

of the Board 'responsible to the First Lord of the Admiralty' for the administration of business.[104] Although the Controller was no longer a member of the Board, he was still to be responsible to the First Lord

for the administration of so much business as relates to the material of Your Majesty's Navy. The Controller to have the same right to attend the Board and to explain his views whenever the First Lord shall submit to the Board for his opinion, Designs for ships or any other matters emanating from the Controller's department.[105]

However, in not continuing the Controller as a member of the Board, yet in allowing his frequent attendance at meetings, it was soon recognised to be a rather absurd situation. The only objection to his being a member of the Board was at a time when the Board had ceased having regularly meetings - but this was no longer the case. To regularise the state of affairs, a further order in council was introduced in 1882, this reintroducing the Controller as a full member of the Board:

. . . the officer filling the post of Controller of Your Majesty's Navy should, during such period as may from time to time be sanctioned by Your Majesty's letters patent, notwithstanding the said order in council, be appointed to be an additional Navy Lord of the Admiralty, and during such time an additional civil lord of the Admiralty may be appointed, who shall possess special mechanical and engineering knowledge, as well as administrative expertise to assist the Controller in the Administration of the Material of Your Majesty's Navy.[106]

In effect, therefore, the principles upon which Barrow had claimed the original reforms had hinged and Graham regarded to be of great importance, were now enforced in a format that was both workable and meaningful. The First Lord, who no longer held sway through force of character, had a position of power codified by order-in-council. That of 1869 had paved the way, confirmed by the wording of a second order presented to the council in March 1871. A further step, taken in 1871 and by then no more than a formality, was alteration to the Letters Patent

which appointed the various members of the Board. These were now re-worded so as to confirm the authority of the First Lord. With these various changes therefore, the Board of Admiralty was transferred from a body of individuals which appeared to require some sort of collective agreement to one in which the First Lord was responsible for all decisions and the junior members constituted a board of advice.

5.5 Financial Accountability

Prior to the abolition of the civil departments, Graham had introduced a series of reforms that were aimed at bringing about greater financial accountability. In particular, he was concerned at the process by which those who managed the civil departments treated the various items voted by Parliament as a general sum available to the credit of the naval service. Although defended by Byam Martin and others as being an unavoidable expediency, considering it an impossibility accurately to predict forthcoming expenditure, Graham disagreed. He saw this method of accounting as a simple misappropriation of public funds, reinforcing this view with detailed references to items of expenditure that had not even been brought to the attention of Parliament.[107]

To ensure that the wishes of Parliament were to be more closely adhered to in the future was not conditional upon the introduction of new legislation. All that was required was a simple willingness on the part of administrators to work within the terms of existing legislation - namely the appropriation acts. Yet Graham felt that the form in which the estimates were presented to parliament were, in themselves, a crucial (and undesirable) element of the prevailing system. The composition of many of the votes was often confusing, with unrelated items combined together for convenience. Worse still, the estimates showed no breakdown between

the navy and victualling departments, with the commissioners of the victualling board never in possession of the precise sum available for the purchase of victuals and medicine. Thus, Graham regarded it of considerable importance for the estimates to be presented in a new format. As introduced in February 1831, they were divided into twenty-one separate heads, these clearly relating to distinct areas of expenditure.[108]

Of equal importance were two other changes introduced by Graham during this period. The first of these concerned a change to the financial year, with naval accounts to run from the twelve months that began in April instead of January. A major reason for this, so Graham explained, was to give Parliament more time to discuss the estimates. As it stood, naval estimates were usually presented to the lower house after the year had started, forcing the legislature to agree to expenditure that had already taken place.[109] In addition, Graham also announced that in the November that followed the ending of each financial year a balance sheet would be placed before the House in which would be specifically placed under each head the actual expenditure of the Navy and Victualling Boards. Upon the eventual abolition of these two boards, the presentation of a balance sheet was retained, enforced by the same Act of Parliament that was responsible for reforming the civil departments. The wording of the Act left little room for any later administrator to attempt to confuse the members of the house by re-formulating the balance sheet in a way that differed from the original estimates. According to Section 30 of the Act, the account of expenditure was to be formatted 'under the several Heads of Naval Service, as expressed in the Appropriation Act or Acts for that Year'.[110]

The Naval Civil Departments Act, while confirming that the

principle of presenting a balance sheet would be retained, also introduced a further element to the overall package of greater financial accountability. The Board of Audit, previously holding rather limited powers, was now required to examine the accounts and vouchers for naval expenditure, comparing these with the votes and estimates. Having completed this task, the Commissioners of this Board were to certify thereon as to the correctness of the said account as compared with the vouchers, and noting under each Head whether the Expenditure has exceeded or fallen short of the sum voted by Parliament for the naval service of that year . . . [111]

Yet, in reality, all these changes were little more than cosmetic. Despite Graham's stated desire to bring about greater financial accountability within the naval departments, he achieved very little. At best, perhaps, he created a system that was little more than a minor improvement over that which already existed. Furthermore, it is difficult to understand how Graham could believe that a change in the way these estimates were presented could affect members in quite the way he believed. In the debate held before the Supply Committee on 25 February 1831, he stated himself to be fully confident

that if the House would pass it, insist upon this estimate being drawn in the same way for the future, and then, in every subsequent year, compare the items, and demand how each individual sum had been expended, every Hon. Gentleman would be able henceforth to understand the Navy Estimates, which was more, he believed, than many hon. Gentlemen could say he had been able to do in former years.[112]

But whether it was Graham's inexperience, or mere wishful thinking, a simple change in the way the estimates were presented was unlikely to make any real difference. Factors such as those of time and individual willingness, ability and experience to tackle such matters were also required. The House contained few members with the single-mindedness of a

Joseph Hume or the thoroughness in financial matters of a James Graham. Until something was done that would make it easier for members to direct their attentions to naval expenditure, then there could be no real improvement.

Turning, for a moment, to the way the Estimates were presented, it will be possible to make this point clearer. Upon the changing of the financial year, it now became essential that the planned expenditure of the navy departments should be approved prior to the beginning of April. However, these same estimates were only placed on the table of the House once the new session of Parliament had begun in mid-January. Because of this, members of the house had only about eight weeks to read and familiarise themselves with a highly technical forty-five page document that contained in excess of 1000 items. If the object had been to allow members merely to peruse its contents, then this was not impossible. However, if the object was to read, assimilate, make comparisons and knowledgeably question certain aspects of the following year's costings, then difficulties clearly abounded. According to Cobbett, who spoke on this matter during the debate on the naval estimates in 1834, members of the house 'had hardly time to look at the estimates before they were called upon to vote'. In his own case, unless he had

done something on the Sabbath, he could not have read through all the items, and he should think himself guilty of a great crime if he voted away the money of the people, without proper time to look at all of them. [113]

Cobbett also made an additional point of some substance. He pointed out that the timing of the Estimates debate was far from appropriate. He felt it should only come after an agreement had been reached upon the matter of a taxation policy. Admittedly, during the debate of February 1834, he was directing himself to the whole issue of government expenditure and the

collection of money, but the general thrust of his argument was clearly relevant to the government's presentation of the naval estimates. According to Cobbett,

it was well known that a motion was to be made for the repeal of the Malt-tax, and he trusted that the landowners would show, that they understood their own interest, by insisting upon the repeal of that tax; but how could the House call upon Ministers to take off the Malt-tax, if they voted establishments which could not be supported without the produce of the tax? [114]

Cobbett then went on to add,

The old-fashioned mode of doing business was to consider the grievances of the country before voting the supplies; now, however, the practice was reversed, - the supplies were granted first, and the grievances of the people talked of afterwards. [115]

It was also the case that, by scheduling the estimates debate into a contracted period of about two months, time available for discussion of issues was sometimes forcibly curtailed. With the House not returning until mid-January, following a two month recess, it was frequently the case that matters of pressing national import might have arisen during the interim. If this did happen, then it was not unusual for a debate on the naval estimates to be pushed back to the end of March. On such occasions, a lot of potential contributors might be muted by the government's insistence that the issue should be dealt with quickly. After all, the navy estimates were not the only financial question that had to be settled. In addition, this same protracted period was reserved for discussion upon the estimates of other government departments together with matters pertaining to revenue. Indeed, within the first year of Graham's completed package coming into force, this very situation occurred. Rather than devote time to the navy estimates, the House turned its attention to the far more pressing question of Ireland, with the naval estimates for 1833 not discussed until 12 March. As the pages of Hansard

show, the resulting discussions were brief to the point of absurdity.

To achieve the necessary parliamentary time while encouraging a more detailed consideration of the estimates, Graham might well have considered use of a standing committee. It was certainly the procedure adopted in a number of other countries, a point brought to the attention of the Admiralty commissioners at the beginning of 1833. This was the result of a report, produced by Accountant General Thomas Briggs, following a fact finding visit to France during the preceding year. On that occasion he had examined various aspects of the French naval administration, identifying a number of features that might usefully be applied to Britain. Of the use of committees by the French lower chamber, Briggs noted that, upon the naval estimates being first drawn up, they were submitted to a number of specialist committees, each examining a separate area of financial expenditure. Subsequently, the chairman of each committee submitted a report to the lower chamber, and it was this report that formed the basis of any discussion or debate within the lower house as a whole. A printed copy of Briggs's report may be found at the Public Record Office, located with a collection of general papers relating to the internal administration of the Admiralty during this period. Although one of several identical copies, it is of peculiar interest because of a series of comments placed in the margin. The originator of these notes cannot be definitely identified, but the location of the document indicates him to have been an admiralty commissioner. As such, they provide an indication, in a blunt and clear form, the feelings of at least one high ranking member of the Admiralty. Regarding the reference to the French use of specialist committees, the writer makes this somewhat revealing remark, 'God forbid this practice should be introduced into our chambers. What (sic) could committees tell what was or was not necessary - suppose Joseph Hume chairman!' [116]

Within a few years of the Admiralty receiving Briggs's report, members of the British legislature were also putting the case for a select committee. Not surprisingly, the prime mover was the dreaded Joseph Hume. On this occasion Graham, who was no longer a member of the government, was able to put his own views on record as to the use of committees on such occasions. Surprisingly, given his own reputation for careful scrutiny of Parliamentary accounts, mainly gained during his earlier years in opposition, the former First Lord was against the idea. Instead, he declared himself to be in favour of the naval estimates being brought before a Committee of the Whole House. In giving a reason, he suggested that,

. . . if he wished the details passed slightly over - if he wished to conceal a job, to exclude the public from all knowledge of the mode in which the estimates were prepared, and the efficiency of the person by whom they were submitted, by far the most likely method of effecting those ends would be to have the estimates referred to a Select Committee upstairs.[117]

Yet, in making this statement, Graham was surely ignoring the fact that the committee would not only be able to concentrate on points of detail but a subsequent report would be produced. This, in turn, would be submitted to Parliament, with any aggrieved member of the committee able to draw his grievances to the attention of Parliament in a debate upon the committee's report. This simple fact would alone annul Graham's belief in the committee could hide matters from public gaze; similarly, Graham reminded the House that upon such a committee 'the executive Government supported by a majority, must practically exercise a commanding influence'.[118]

The precise issue that had prompted Hume to raise the possibility of having the naval estimates sent to a select committee was his belief

that the estimates presented in that year were concealing far more than they revealed. In an opening speech, he pointed out that the estimates,

did not show the number of officers required in any particular branch of the marine service. He could not obtain from them the number of Colonels, Lieutenant-Colonels, and other officers employed.[119]

Illustrating the problem, he referred to a previously moved Return,

By that Return, which was dated the 7th June 1834, he found that the number of officers in the naval service at that date was 5,300, of whom only 460 were on full pay, yet during the year it appeared that there was considerable promotion within the navy. Now he thought that the House ought to have the opportunity of knowing why there were so many promotions from day to day, while there were nearly 4000 pensioners, very many of whom would willingly serve.[120]

In conclusion, Hume pointed out that the legislature of several other countries, including Belgium and the U.S.A., made use of committees when examining the estimates for the Navy, Army and Ordnance.[121]

Another who favoured the use of committees was Sir Henry Parnell. Again, he brought attention to the lack of detail included in the naval estimates and made reference to the estimates laid before the French chamber. In the latter case, so he indicated, they were far more detailed, consisting of 'no less than fifteen different chapters, occupying 140 pages embracing every species of information'. As for the problems of continuing to debate the estimates before a committee of the whole house, Parnell said

it was impossible for the House generally, and especially for new Members to do justice to their constituents in sifting the multifarious details . . . while it would greatly contribute to the satisfactory arrangement of the general business, and more particularly with reference to matters of expense, if the rule was laid down and the practice established of referring the estimates to a Committee up stairs.[122]

Although Hume's original motion received the support of 66 members of the lower house, it was defeated by 14 votes.[123]

Graham had also made considerable claims for the value of submitting to Parliament a final balance sheet of naval expenditure. This was intended to prevent under spent votes being used to support other areas that were overspending while also bringing to an end all forms of unauthorised expenditure. Although, once again, an improvement on the system whereby Parliament had absolutely no check on how the naval departments were using the monies voted, it had many shortcomings. Among them was a simple lack of Parliamentary time. By not, once again, transferring the balance sheet to a committee, there was simply not enough time to do justice to the information given. Furthermore, such a committee, with a chairman whose expertise might increase with each passing year, would have the advantage in creating at least one more expert in examining these annually presented figures.

But this was only one of many problems associated with the submitted balance sheets. Their very briefness was a further problem. What were members to make of the immense sums spent on dockyard wages? In the estimates as presented, they were merely informed:

Expenditure, £775,488.

Grants, including appropriation, in
aid of supplementary estimates,
£752,457.[124]

To this should be added the failure of the submitted balance sheets to produce a complete picture for any one year with amounts between differing years often confused. As a result, when submitted to Parliament it was extremely difficult to relate the given information to the amounts appropriated some 18 months earlier. As an example, it is worth making reference to the amounts voted for half pay. According to the vote for

the financial year beginning April 1833 it was stated that a sum not exceeding £785,507 16s 4d be granted to His Majesty to defray the charge of Half-pay to Naval Officers for one year, to 31st March 1833.[125] The wording is both precise and clear and leaves little room for misinterpretation, yet in reality the navy did not adhere to this scheme of things. Instead, the customary practice was retained, with payments being made for amounts due for the last quarter of every financial year out of the vote for the subsequent year. Consequently, only 75% of the sum voted for half-pay related to the year which it supposedly covered. In this instance, it was clear that if Graham had genuinely wished Parliament to receive true statements of the expenditure of money strictly according to the purposes and for the periods in which it was voted, then it would have been necessary to discontinue the practice of voting money as if sufficient to pay the half-pay up to the end of the previous financial year.[126]

This was not the only example of the balance sheet failing to produce a complete picture. A similar problem existed as to the wages of seamen. Once voted, this amount was applied to pay the arrears of ships that might have been at sea for periods of two or three years. In addition, every ship's company was kept six months in arrears, resulting in pay voted for the current year being paid out of amounts that were not to be voted until the following year. As the principles upon which the estimates were framed were based upon the wages of the officers and men composing the number actually voted for that year, then it was only by chance that the sum voted in the estimates would match the amount paid out.[127]

With regard to victualling and stores, a similar problem existed in that ships serving on foreign stations were often returning with accounts

that were several months old. However, a much greater problem, that of making payments for all stores on 60 day vouchers was discontinued from 1831 onwards. It was part of Graham's general reform package and showed that he was aware of the difficulties accruing from allowing payments for services in one financial year to be paid in another. If the 60 day vouchers had not been replaced by ready money vouchers, then victualling payments during the first two months of any new financial year would have been dominated by purchases made during the previous year.[128]

Aware, as he might have been, of the problem, Graham never pursued it sufficiently to eliminate it more generally. In his report on the French administrative system, Briggs brought the commissioners' attentions to the matter, indicating that the French had a much more regular practice:

The money is in all cases voted to meet the actual expenditure for the period mentioned in the vote, and both the expenditure and the accounts of such expenditure accord with the votes in all instances, except such deviations as will of course occasionally arise.[129]

While in matters of pensions and half pay, regularisation was relatively easy. As for the paying of wages to those serving on ships abroad, this was solved in a somewhat novel way. According to Briggs, every ship's book was made up to the end of the financial year, whether the crew was paid or not,

If not paid, (owing to the ship being abroad, for instance,) the amount due upon the books so made up, is paid over to the fund at the Hospital of Invalids, called "Caisse des Gen de Mer," where it remains for two years, liable to the claims of the Officers and Seamen, after which, whatever remains unclaimed is appropriated . . . [130]

For the most part, those serving on the Board of Admiralty could not see any real necessity for the regularising of accounts. Partly this resulted from a lack of knowledge and general interest in accountancy but

the majority were not particularly interested in making an examination of the accounts clearer to members of the legislature. To confirm this, it is worth making reference to the comments placed upon Briggs printed copy of his report into the French administration of the navy. Here, the anonymous writer confirms a lack of knowledge on matters of accountancy when, with regard to the payments of half-pay one quarter in arrears, he freely admits 'this is quite beyond my comprehension' and as for the half pay not covering the year for which it was voted, he notes that 'this appears to be stating a difficulty where none exists'. Quite simply, the writer did not understand, nor chose to try and understand, the principles involved. Finally, it is clear that he had little sympathy with those who questioned naval expenditure, he felt they 'contend themselves with, often unreasonably, endeavouring to cut down the estimates'.[131]

With regard to matters so far considered, it might well be claimed that Graham was at least true to the principles he had pursued prior to coming into office. So far, reforms discussed in this section, were at least moves that were designed to bring about greater accountability. That they failed to live up to their expectations could be put down to the novelty of the experiment undertaken. Previously, governments had taken little interest in ensuring the accountability of public funds, with Graham working in something of a vacuum. For this reason, the First Lord had no way of realising that, unless he adopted a number of far more radical proposals, then the cause of financial accountability before parliament would make no real advance. However, this argument totally falls when consideration is given to the matter of obtaining parliamentary sanction for expenditure allowed for in the original vote contained within the Appropriation Act to be exceeded.

In 1831, Graham had made it quite clear that he would strictly

adhere to each head as voted in the estimates. If however, there should be an amount required for any item which was in excess of the vote, he stated that it was his intention to apply to the House for its sanction. Given the recent revelations that both the Navy and Victualling Boards had found little cause to inform parliament of how they were using public funds, then this was an extremely important issue.[132] Yet Graham failed to remain faithful to his original statement. No reference to the principle was made in the Navy Civil Departments Act, Graham thus failing to ensure that future administrations would be bound by this important principle. Even more serious was Graham's own blatant disregard of this same principle. In November 1833, when the first balance sheet was submitted to Parliament, it was revealed that Graham had allowed expenditure on 13 out of 29 heads to exceed that which had been sanctioned by the Appropriation Act for the financial year 1831-2.[133] Furthermore, no request had been laid before Parliament to permit the additional payments. Not surprisingly, therefore, subsequent naval administrations freely exceeded the original vote. Indeed, in 1841, when Peel's government was asked to defend a range of over-spent votes, they used the example of excesses in Graham's first balance sheet as the foundation of their defence. In presenting the estimates, which also required a sum to be set aside to cover the shortfall of the previous year, it was simply stated that the government was following 'in the steps of the right hon. Baronet the father of naval reform.'[134]

Of course, examination of naval accounts was not simply placed in the hands of Parliament. Graham had also increased the powers of the public auditor, with all naval department expenses and receipts submitted to the Board of Audit. Carried out on a daily basis, two clerks from the Audit Office were in regular attendance at Somerset House. This procedure was considered preferable to an end of year audit, as the latter would

have necessitated the retention of something in excess of 50,000 vouchers, all of them having to be set aside for future scrutiny. The task of the auditors was not only to examine these vouchers and check them against ledger entries but also to ensure that they were signed by the Accountant General and approved by his superintending lord.[135] While this might well serve a useful purpose, ensuring that all monetary transactions were properly carried out, it did little to prevent the navy departments exceeding their votes or applying the money elsewhere. While the auditors matched each item of expenditure under the head upon which they were voted, they could not prevent unauthorised payments. Their only power was to comment upon the fact and then include such remarks in the report that was, together with the completed balance sheet, submitted to Parliament.

This weakness of the public auditor was not helped by a similar limitation of power placed upon the Accountant General. He, too, was a mere book keeper, with duties limited to the examination of accounts, recording expenditure and paying bills. Yet he, more than any other individual within the offices of the navy, could have undertaken financial control. Instead of simply duplicating much of the work of the auditors, he could have had a more general authority over expenditure and estimates. Furthermore, he could have used the accounts in his possession to report to the Board on any material variance taking place between sums paid and the estimated prices. With regard to the dock and victualling yards, he could have performed another important duty, that of establishing levels of efficiency. To do this, he need only have reported on the costs of differing manufacturing operations, so determining the most efficient and cost effective method. Yet, as the situation stood, nobody was carrying out such duties, with departments allowed to prepare their estimates unrestrained by the need for either cost effectiveness or any other form of financial control.

Briggs, judging by some of the proposals that accompanied his report on the French administrative system, certainly saw the advantage of placing the Accountant General in a more commanding position. However, Graham and other lords of the Admiralty, believed such a move to be far too radical. Instead, Briggs had to contend himself with undertaking a series of much more limited reforms. These, over the following months and years, were to see the implementation of a uniform method of accounting (including the full adoption of double entry book keeping) and a greater use of local auditing, thus reducing the amount of paper work that passed through Somerset House. As for an increase in the powers of the Accountant General, this was not to be brought about until later in the century. From 1869, the holder of this post was given powers to criticise naval accounts followed, in 1879, by something approaching effective financial control.[136] From that time onwards, the Accountant-General became involved in all questions of expenditure, his department responsible for scrutinizing all proposals that required a financial outlay.

5.6 The Outstations

In abolishing the Navy Board, the Admiralty acquired undisputed authority over the running of the dockyards, victualling yards and naval hospitals. These were the establishments in which the majority of the civilian workforce was employed and, from this point onwards, will be collectively referred to as the outstations. The importance of this increase in Admiralty authority cannot be underestimated. It was certainly of great historical importance, control of the outstations having been at the heart of numerous disputes that had once taken place between the Admiralty and the inferior boards. In particular, the

confrontation that had occurred while St Vincent was First Lord, was very much a dockyard related affair. In that dispute, and as an indication of its seriousness, the two boards ceased all forms of verbal contact, communicating only in writing. As a result, a whole host of additional problems were soon created. However, a more detailed examination of these particular difficulties has already taken place.

Regarding, Graham's attempt to create a rationalization of authority, this was only one small aspect of the overall reform package. He was particularly concerned at the high cost of maintaining these outstations which, between them, absorbed approximately 40% of the annual naval budget. Furthermore, the shielding of these establishments by the aggressively protective inferior boards had prevented earlier governments imposing the type of economies that might otherwise have been expected. Even the recent Tory administration, which had successfully pruned most areas of government expenditure, had found it near impossible to achieve the full range of cut-backs that had been planned for the naval outstations. Thus, with the removal of the Navy and Victualling boards, it was Graham's intention that the outstations should become subject to extensive economies. Partly, so he believed, this could be brought about by a reduction in numbers employed, but much could also be achieved by cutting down on wastefulness and improving overall levels of efficiency.

Given the importance of the outstations within terms of the overall programme, it is surprising that more attention was not given to the means by which the Board of Admiralty should impose the power it now possessed. While Graham, for his part, frequently re-iterated a belief in uniformity and simplicity of management, he singularly failed to ensure that such would be the case with regard to this important area of naval administration. Authority for the dockyards was hopelessly divided

between four of the five appointed principal officers. Furthermore, with each of these overseen by a separate superintending lord, then eight individuals were collectively responsible for the management of these yards. In such a situation where no one, apart from the overworked First Lord, had a general co-ordinating role, it is difficult to see how any form of uniformity was to be achieved. Instead, one of these principal officers, most properly the Surveyor, should have possessed an overseeing role. To carry out this task, he should have been divested of the numerous (and overwhelming) specific duties accorded to him. These, in turn, could have been given to others. As overall co-ordinator therefore, both those appointed to carry out the specific duties associated with the surveyor, together with the other principal officers, whose authority involved the dockyards, should have directly reported to him. In this way, many of the problems created by Graham, within this area, would have been removed.

The following section, therefore, will elaborate upon this failure to implement the principles of uniformity and simplicity. Initial attention will be given to the dockyards, where the problem was most severe. However, neither the victualling yards nor the hospitals were free of such administrative failings, with a further area, that of co-ordinating the awarding of contracts and the purchase of supplies, creating a range of additional problems.

a. Central Management of the Dockyards

Of the principal officers referred to, the one most closely connected with the dockyards was the Surveyor-General. Between the establishment of the new office in June 1832 and his retirement in 1847, this post was held by the controversial figure of William Symonds. In the

skeleton instructions issued to him, the new Surveyor was informed that he was to be responsible for the design and building of all warships entering naval service while advising on all matters connected with the building and repair of naval vessels. In addition, it was to be expected that he would regularly visit each yard, ensuring that all officers correctly performed their duties, that the workforce was beneficially employed and individuals capable of performing the duties to which they were assigned.[137]

Combined, and bearing in mind that there were seven home yards that employed in excess of 6000 men, these duties were too much for one man to perform. In essence, the Surveyor-General was expected to have extensive seafaring abilities, the qualities of a shipwright, the skills of a draftsman and the dexterity of a manager. Few individuals could claim all these and Symons was no exception. An able seaman and former naval captain his background proved adequate for some of these tasks but quite hopeless for others.

Prior to the abolition of the Navy Board, these same tasks had been performed by three separate individuals: the Comptroller and two Surveyors. The former took responsibility for overall co-ordination of matters pertaining to the yards while taking a special interest in the performance of duties of both yard officers and the workforce. As for the two Surveyors, the senior post holder directed himself towards the design of ships together with building and repair work, with the second Surveyor undertaking frequent inspections of each of the seven home yards. Not surprisingly, with these various duties having now devolved on one individual, some of them were neglected. In particular, Symonds was no longer in a position to inspect each of the yards on an annual basis, resulting in a failure to detect more obvious infractions within the

yards.[138]

The other principal officers who shared responsibility for the dockyards were the Storekeeper-General, the Physician of the Navy and the Accountant-General. The former was in charge of all stores held within the dockyards. These consisted both of materials used in the actual construction of ships (such as timbers) and items that would be taken on board immediately before the ship sailed (anchors, lanterns, buckets &c). For the most part it was left to the Storekeeper-General to determine the precise amounts that might be ordered in any one year, this based on an annual statement of stores drawn up for this purpose. However, when it came to the ordering of timbers he was expected to confer with the Surveyor. As indicated by the Skeleton Instructions, such consultation was only to be carried out through a superintending lord of the Admiralty.

Appointed to the office of Storekeeper-General in June 1832 was Robert Dundas. As former Storekeeper to the Navy Board, he brought a wealth of experience to the new office. However, his book keeping abilities were not considered to be one of his greatest strengths, this resulting in his failure to improve upon a number of weaknesses within the department he oversaw.[139] Furthermore, a number of clerks in that department were also limited in these same skills, many of them unable to use such basics of accountancy as double entry book keeping. It was the existence of these sorts of problems within the department that resulted in a slowness and lack of preciseness with regard to many of their dealings. In particular, as noted in one report, the dockyards often suffered from sudden shortages of essential materials. That this should happen was a simple result of poor book keeping, the accounts frequently showing the storehouses to be better stocked than was often the case. Should the department have been more efficient, with an annual stocktaking to verify

the accounts, then such a problem would not have arisen. Similarly, the use of stores, once they left the storehouses, provided another example of a failure within the system. Issued by one department for use by another, attention to economy was non-existent. The Surveyor had little interest in making savings, for it was not his task to draw up the estimates, while the Storekeeper had no influence upon the use of these same items once they left the storehouses.

The third principal officer with a dockyard connection was the Physician of the Navy. Appointed to this post in June 1832 was Dr William Burnett, one of two medical commissioners who had served on the Victualling Board. Although the bulk of his duties focused upon the seagoing navy and the various shore-based hospitals, a small amount of his time had to be devoted to the small surgeries that existed within each dockyard. It was Burnett's responsibility to recommend to the Admiralty those who might best serve as dockyard surgeons while also ensuring that those surgeries were adequately supplied. Once a year, Burnett was expected to visit these surgeries, a duty that he combined with a lengthier visit to any nearby naval hospital. According to the original instructions issued, Burnett was not expected to contract directly for naval supplies, having to inform the storekeeper of likely needs for the coming year.[140] However, as a result of the specialist nature of most of these items, Burnett had successfully argued that this duty could be best carried out by himself direct.[141]

Finally, reference must be made to the Accountant-General. He was charged with all books and accounts belonging to the dockyards it being his duty to ensure that all entries tallied with vouchers issued for payment. Once this had been satisfactorily proven then he consented to the release of cash payments to those who had either supplied materials to

however, that he possessed no influence over the estimates nor had any other form of economic control, then his position within the administrative structure made little sense. Instead, a far more useful arrangement would have been that of integrating his office into that headed by the Storekeeper-General. The individual appointed to the post was John Thomas Briggs. Formerly, Briggs had been Accountant-General of the Victualling Board and possessed considerable financial skills. Indeed, Graham considered him to be a much better accountant than Dundas and was not to be disappointed in his choice. Over the following two decades, Briggs introduced numerous improvements while insisting that double entry book keeping should be used throughout.[142]

Although these four principal officers were all involved in administering the yards, lack of an overall co-ordinator prevented a general uniformity of management. This might have been eased if the various officers had been encouraged to hold joint discussions. Yet this is something that Graham went out of his way to prevent. The instructions, and this has been mentioned already, laid down that the principal officers were not to meet together independently of a superintending lord. For this, there were reasons. The Whigs, aware of the power once possessed by the Navy and Victualling boards, wished to prevent any similar board or committee emerging. That this was unlikely, given the differing terms by which these officers were appointed, seems to have escaped Graham's notice. Instead, each principal officer was to work in isolation, reporting only to the Admiralty lord placed above him. [143]

Of course, it would not be difficult to argue that the Board, itself, could have carried out that vital role of co-ordination. But, in reality, this was just not possible. For a start, the various superintending lords did not have the necessary time. All of them had

other Admiralty duties, while most of them were holders of parliamentary seats and generally active in supporting the government of the day. In addition, given that they were all appointed on a limited tenure, none of them had the possibility of gaining the necessary experience effectively to carry out such a role. Indeed, there are numerous examples of the superintending lords failing to understand the duties that they did perform. A case in point concerns the detailed report on French methods of accounting. The various marginal notes written by a member of the Board show a considerable prejudice against the whole accounting profession. Furthermore, it is a prejudice based on ignorance. Throughout, the writer demonstrates his failure to understand the principles behind the various suggestions made by Briggs, even dismissing the importance of closing the dockyard accounts at the end of each financial year.[144]

In the first few decades that followed upon the implementation of the reforms, the problems of limited managerial co-operation with regard to the dockyards went largely unnoticed. Instead, attention was directed to that of easing the excessive work load that had been placed on the shoulders of the Surveyor. Gradually, as the years went by, John Edye, the chief clerk, took on a greater burden. From being a mere clerk, Edye soon became the unofficial assistant surveyor, his right to this post confirmed in 1839.[145] However, problems still remained. The overall burden of work was still beyond that of two individuals while there was no clear delineation of duties.

Further attention was given to the matter upon the resignation of Symons in 1848. As well as appointing Sir Baldwin Walker his successor, it was also decided that two assistant surveyors should be now placed in office. For this latter purpose, John Edye was retained with Isaac Watts

filling the newly created third post. Both Edge and Watts had been trained as draftsmen, with Watts having graduated from the School of Naval Architecture at Portsmouth. Given, therefore, that both the assistant surveyors had such qualities, while Walker had been drawn from the ranks of serving naval officers, then it was becoming clearer as to where the precise lines of duty might lie.[146] In fact, upon Walker's appointment, Lord Auckland, then First Lord, chose to give a clearer definition of their duties. Disregarding the earlier 'Skeleton Instructions', he informed Walker that he was not to be principally involved in preparing 'the detailed lines of ships and vessels ordered to be built'. Instead, this was to be left to his two assistants. As an experienced naval officer, Walker was however to comment upon the plans produced by the two assistants. Such comments were then to be passed on to the Board of Admiralty for a final decision.[147]

With the design aspect taken out of his hands, the Surveyor was to concentrate far more upon the dockyards. As laid down by Lord Auckland, the principal duties of the newly appointed Surveyor were 'to take the general superintendence of the material of the navy; to prepare and submit to the Board a programme of the work for the next year, and to fix the yards with reference to the artificers and stores in which it can best be executed'. [148] In keeping with these duties, the value of making regular inspections of the yards was now emphasised, with Walker expected to visit each dockyard annually. Under Symons, such inspections had become less frequent, the first appointed Surveyor-General feeling it incumbent upon him to remain, whenever possible, centred upon London. The appointment of two assistant surveyors now meant that, at all times, one or other would always be available to remain in London for the purpose of receiving and replying to correspondence.

Thus, within a period of only sixteen years, matters had come full circle. Prior to the Whig reforms of the naval departments, three officers had been collectively responsible for managing the duties given to the Surveyor-General. Graham, in his excessive zeal for economy, had forced one individual to carry out the work of all three. The result, as any one could easily have predicted, was a much over-worked Surveyor-General. With the appointment, in 1848, of one Surveyor and two assistants, the damage to the administrative structure had been repaired. Once more, three individuals were undertaking work that seemingly required three individuals. The only element missing, and this was not to be corrected for two decades, was the co-ordinating role once performed by the Navy Comptroller.

As regards the appointment of Sir Baldwin Walker to the post of Surveyor, this did beg the question as to his ability to perform the tasks now expected of the holder of that post. A large body of opinion held the view that only a dockyard shipwright could possibly undertake this work. Certainly, at the time of Symonds appointment, there was considerable surprise at the elevation of a naval man to such an important civil office. Again, this question came to the fore upon the appointment of Walker. Among those who expressed disapproval was J.S. Tucker. He was the son of St Vincent's former private secretary, Joseph Tucker. As noted elsewhere, the Tuckers had long been involved in the civilian administration of the navy, with J.S. Tucker representing a further generation of interest. His disapproval of Walker's appointment came in the form of an open letter addressed to Auckland's successor, Sir F.T. Baring. In particular, Tucker concentrated upon the lack of managerial skills possessed by one who had only held command on a King's warship,

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"hands, make sail!" or "hands, reef topsails!"
[149]

While more will yet be said on this particular matter, suffice it here to point out that Tucker might not have been far from the truth. Certainly, as regards Symonds, his period of overseeing the dockyard workforce left many deep scars. Among the changes he introduced was a disastrous scheme for classifying the workforce. Similar, in many respects, to that in operation on board naval ships of war, it created a less than harmonious working atmosphere within the yards. Many of the younger artisans, dissatisfied with their treatment, chose to seek employment elsewhere. Although, in his autobiography, Symonds claims the scheme as a success, he neglects to mention that, within eight years of its introduction, it had been completely abandoned.[150]

Returning to the problems created by having several different officers responsible for varying aspects of dockyard management, this was partly addressed in 1860. In that year, the Surveyor-General was given increased powers and received the new title of Controller. Nine years later he was given a seat on the Board of Admiralty and his responsibilities once again increased. Instead of overseeing just one aspect of the yards, he was now responsible for all areas of construction (this resembling his previous duties) together with stores and ordnance. Admittedly, the appointment of the Controller to the Board was, on that occasion, short lived. His place on the Board was taken away in 1872, only to be returned in 1882. On that occasion, his duties were again expanded, the former Surveyor now charged with a wide range of civilian branches that included design and construction, naval armament, dockyard administration and work, naval stores and dockyard expense accounts.

In this final change, the disastrous reforms introduced by Graham were totally expunged. Apart from anything else, the former office once headed by the Surveyor was now appropriately manned. Indeed, it had been divided into two separate departments, that of Construction and Dockyards. Each was headed by a separate Director who also had his own assistants.

b. Central Management of the Victualling Yards and Naval Hospitals

In creating a new system for the centralized management of the outstations, Graham had pursued the simple expedient of abolishing the boards and reducing the number of managers in senior administrative positions. In most other respects, he chose to retain the same infrastructure. As shown with the dockyards, the resulting system was a complete failure. These yards had previously been managed by the commissioners of the Navy Board working in concert. By removing this board, Graham had destroyed the only body responsible for co-ordination of activities. In respect of the victualling yards and hospitals, where a similar expediency of abolishing the co-ordinating body and reducing the number of managers was also followed, damage to the administrative structure, although severe, was not as critical as that of the dockyards.

With abolition of the inferior boards, the management of the dockyards had been parcelled out among four separate principal officers, This was not the case with the victualling yards and hospitals. Instead, each of these sets of establishments received one dedicated manager. In the case of the victualling yards this was the Comptroller of Victualling while for the hospitals it was the Physician-General. In both cases, the appointed managers (or principal officers), James Meek and Dr William Burnett respectively, had been members of the Victualling Board

immediately prior to its abolition. Because of this, the ill co-ordinated arrangement of the dockyards was not duplicated in any way. Both Meek and Burnett had total responsibility for the outstations that fell within their province. In their respective instructions, both principal officers were informed that they were responsible for undertaking regular tours of inspection, ensuring that those who were employed carried out their proper duties and that the stores were correctly used. Both officers were responsible for the ordering of stores and ascertaining that they were of the correct quality once they had arrived. In addition, both Meek and Burnett were required to keep their own accounts. Finally, as an addition to his work of overseeing the victualling yards, Meek was also responsible for the procurement of all transports used by the Army, Navy and convict service.

The extensiveness of these duties did however, create one very marked problem: both were overworked. Once again Graham, in creating this new system, had taken the matter of economy to extremes. The Victualling Board, which previously undertook all these duties, had consisted of seven commissioners. Now, two principal officers were asked to undertake duties once performed by three times their number. Indeed, as regards Meek, the situation was slightly worse, for five out of those seven commissioners had originally undertaken the duties he was now given, while Burnett was undertaking the work of only two medical commissioners. As an indication of the difficulties that these two officers would now confront, it is useful to make brief reference to how some of these duties had been performed by the Victualling Board. To begin with, the work of inspecting the outstations was considered sufficiently burdensome as to be given over to two separate individuals. Of those appointed to the Victualling Board, one commissioner was responsible for inspecting the yards and a medical commissioner for inspecting the hospitals.

Furthermore, the supplying of hospitals was shared by two commissioners; the overseeing of accounts was the work of a committee of three while the ordering and control of stores was also the work of a similar sized committee.

Not surprisingly, the two commissioners were soon overwhelmed. Although neither were ill-prepared to work hard, the sheer vastness of their duties meant that much was pushed to one side. In particular, visitation and inspections of the outstations were considerably curtailed, with both officers always believing it to be essential that they should return to London as quickly as possible. In the case of the victualling yards, the more distant establishments of Portsmouth and Plymouth were soon being inspected on a bi-annual rather than annual basis. Frequent delays in the completion of office work and the replying to letters from the yard commissioners were a further symptom of the immense demands now placed upon the shoulders of these two officers.

However, the real test for the new system came with Britain's entry into the war with Russia. Graham had created a system in the midst of long period of peace. His economies were designed solely to reflect the situation then in existence. While this might have been acceptable in other departments of state, the navy needed to be treated differently. At all times it had to be ready for war. To this end, it was necessary that those who administered the navy were not, during times of peace, so completely overstretched that they could not meet conditions of hostility. Yet, in mid-Victorian Britain this was the situation that Graham created. Neither the Victualling Commissioner nor his medical counterpart (who in 1848 was re-titled Director of Medical Services) was in a position in undertake any expansion to their duties.

As could so easily have been predicted, the Commissioner of Victualling was the hardest pressed. Responsible, as he was, both for the victualling yards and the procurement of transports, he was soon unable to achieve either in a satisfactory manner. The latter, in particular, took up most of his time. Even so, the procurement arrangements completely broke down, leading to this duty being taken out of the hands of the Controller of Victualling. For the remainder of the wartime period, procurement of transports was overseen by a specially formed board, with the separate post of Director of Transports subsequently created.

There can be little doubt that should Graham have been desirous of both keeping the work load of the principal officers in check while improving the overall administrative arrangement, then this could well have been achieved through the creation of a principal officer responsible for purchasing and contracts. This alteration to arrangements did, in fact, come about in 1869 when a separate department of purchasing was created. This not only took responsibility for the purchase of all victualling and medical stores but also all materials destined for the dockyards. It meant that the whole system was standardized with the officers previously undertaking such duties in a position to give attention to the proper storage and use of stores.

Earlier attention to such a reform should really have been one of Graham's priorities. Instead, by an adaptation of the existing system, he created three purchasing officers. Each of them, through the removal of the co-ordinating boards and the strictures placed upon joint meetings, were totally isolated from one another. Furthermore, they were undertaking duties for which they were not particularly experienced and which took them away from the main duties of their office. The result was

a less than satisfactory arrangement for the purchase of naval stores. To begin with, there was no uniformity in the conditions of contract while the individual principal officers sometimes competed against one another upon the open market for the same items of stores.

However, the simple creation of a sixth officer responsible for purchasing and contracts might, in itself, have proven a backward step unless the post holder was given more freedom to meet with his colleagues. After all, he could do nothing until those responsible for the determining of stores had first informed him of either their needs or likely needs. Only then could he enter into the open market for the purpose of initiating orders.

c. Localised Management

Turning to the localised management of the outstations, the Navy Civil Departments Act proved only to be a starting point. In fact, the Act itself imposed only one immediate change, replacing the existing commissioners of the dock and victualling yards with superintendents. The Act then went on to explain that these new officers would perform the same duties as the commissioners they were replacing,

such superintendents from Time to Time to be appointed shall have full power and Authority to do, execute, and perform all and every the Duties, Matters and Things which by any Act or Acts of Parliament now in force any Commissioner of the Navy or Victualling resident at any Naval or Victualling Yard or Establishment, or at any Naval Hospital, at Home or Abroad, is authorized or required to do. [151]

The abolition of the title commissioner was, in fact, a much more important move than the Act would seem to imply. Those in the dockyards holding this title had been much more than mere supervisors of these

particular outstations. They had also been members of the Navy Board. As such, continuance of the title commissioner would have been meaningless, referring only to a body that had now ceased to exist. But there was more to this move than the simple up-dating of the title to keep abreast of administrative changes elsewhere. The introduction of the new title also meant that all those individuals styled commissioner (be they in the dockyards, victualling yards or hospitals) would now cease to hold office. In turn, this meant that the Whig administration, in one sweep, could replace those existing office holders with individuals of their own choice.

Totally omitted from the Act was one more important factor: the newly appointed superintendents were to retain naval rank. Like the former commissioners, they were to be drawn from the ranks of serving naval officers, but unlike commissioners they were not to lose their seniority. For this, there were sound reasons. Those who had been appointed frequently found their authority undermined when working with those of naval rank, the latter sometimes countermanding their instructions. The point is ably made in the already frequently quoted policy document of December 1831:

They should have a Commission from the Admiralty, giving them authority afloat, according to their rank as on full Pay - thus preventing the improper interference of junior officers in commission, of which the Civil Servants in the Dock Yards have too frequently complained - their rank should not be stopped but they should proceed by seniority to the Flag, as if serving at sea . . . [152]

To legalise this particular point and also to establish the salaries to be paid to the various selected officers an application was made by the Admiralty to the King in Council. After requesting authorisation for the appointment of various officers to the superintendent posts, the order which was approved, continued in the following terms:

. . . and that it may be further authorised to assign to each said superintendent such duties and to give them such instructions as the service over which they are respectively appointed may appear to us to require and as it appears that it may be conducive to the better discipline and management of Your Majesty's Dock Yards and other naval establishments if the said superintendents . . . were put in commission by which they would be able to exercise a more extended and complete authority . . . [153]

As advantageous as this change might have been, neither the Act itself, nor any related alterations to the system, attempted to correct other aspects of the complex and inefficient management structure existing within the yards. Something, in fact, could have been done to increase the powers of the newly installed superintendents. As it stood, before they could issue instructions they had to refer all matters to the Board of Admiralty. Not surprisingly, this caused frequent delays in the overall progress of works.

Also a problem and one that could have been tackled was that of the managerial disunity that existed at the level immediately below that of superintendent. This was particularly marked within the dockyards. Despite the fact that all workers in these yards had, as their objective, a series of inter-related tasks leading either to the construction or repair of warships, there were three different managerial chains that artificially divided the workforce. Heading these chains were the Master Shipwright, Master Attendant and Storekeeper. The first of these had authority only over those workers involved in the repair and building of ships when in the yard while the Master Attendant had authority over these same vessels when afloat. This, in itself, seems of little significance until it is realised how it affected the workforce. While certain groups of shipwrights, caulkers and labourers came under the authority of the Master Shipwright others, of this same class, came under the Master

Attendant. The division between a ship in dock or in harbour was fairly artificial as frequently the same sort of repairs were required regardless of the amount of water under her keel. Finally, the Storekeeper, whose province was the storehouses, also had to use large numbers of labourers to transport the stores around the yard as well as specialist tradesmen, such as shipwrights and caulkers, for the actual issuing of stores.

A further problem with this system related to the dry docking of newly arrived warships. Considerable co-operation was needed between the Master Attendant's office and that of the Master Shipwright, for those employed under the former would be responsible for bringing the vessel into dock while those of the Master Shipwright's department would take charge of the vessel only when it was securely inside the dock. Similarly, there had to be an agreement over the undocking and launching of newly built vessels. Finally, of course, consultation with the Storekeeper had to take place, it being impossible to build or repair a ship without adequate materials.

Prior to the introduction of these new reforms, the old system, despite its complexities, had worked reasonably well. Everyday, the superior officers of the yard had met, under the supervision of the commissioner, 'at a certain hour . . . to hear the orders read, and consult together upon the orders of the day.' [154] However, from July 1833 onwards, as a result of the issuing of a new set of instructions to all officers of the yard, these meetings were to cease being of a consultative nature. Instead, the superintendent was merely to read the orders of the day as received from the Admiralty, with the officers immediately despatched for the purpose of disseminating 'to their respective subordinates all such directions as it shall be found necessary to give them.' [155]

In bringing to an end the consultative nature of these meetings, the dockyard superior officers, as with the principal officers at Somerset House, found themselves in isolation. Unable to share their problems with each other, they were forced to approach the superintendent as individuals, communicating with him in private. As was noted by Bromley, a senior clerk of the Admiralty who had been commanded by Lord Auckland to examine into the workings of the dockyards in 1846, these meetings not only prevented the superior officers from working in concert, but created 'petty jealousies' among those same officers.[156]

A further retrograde step created by the issued instruction of 1833 was the ending of the regular daily meetings that once took place between the superior and inferior officers of the yard. The issued instructions, in the section directed to the Superintendent informed him that these officers were 'on no account to assemble them [the inferior officers of their departments] at their offices, as has been the practice to the great interruption of their superintending duties.'[157] This, as was later noted by Bromley, was greatly detrimental to the yards, the inferior officers unable to benefit from 'the concurrent judgement of the executive officers.'[158] Furthermore, so Bromley noted,

According to the system at present pursued at some yards, the foremen do not see the Master Shipwright for days together, but receive their instructions from him on a slip of paper! [159]

One final point, also connected with the issued instructions of 1833, was that they arrived in the yard in book form. It appears that each yard was limited in the number received, with only the superior officers taking possession of a copy. As a result, the various assistants and inferior officers had to make what arrangements they could for ascertaining their duties under the new regime. Clearly, many were

unsuccessful. Leastways, there are several reports post dating 1833 that indicate that many were quite unfamiliar with their duties. As Bromley pointed out, all that was really required was that these instructions be divided so that each officer might be furnished with that part of them that relates to his own particular duties.[160]

Moving down the chain of command within the dockyards, another series of reforms resulted in the introduction in June 1833 of a new group of officers known as inspectors. Each was to be placed over a division of thirty workers and would take responsibility for inspecting the quality of work performed. They stood mid-way between foremen and leadingmen. Foremen provided more general supervision and were usually placed over groups of sixty workers while leadingmen worked among much smaller groups and were charged with correcting any shortcomings pointed out to them by the leadingmen.[161]

The introduction of inspectors into the chain of management was as a result of a new work scheme by which all workers were to be paid a basic day wage. Prior to this change, most groups of workers were paid piece rates. These, when applied to the dockyard, were known as task and job work, the former referring to work on warships under construction and the latter to ships being repaired. Although working by task and job had been the norm since the mid-18th century, it had come under increasing criticism. From the beginning there had been the fear that the quality of day work had been sacrificed, with workers rushing to complete their tasks to secure higher earnings. Furthermore, the complex scheme by which various components of the work in hand (particularly when ships were under repair) were broken down for purposes of financial remuneration, meant additional groups of administrators had to be employed. Known as measurers, they were constantly employed in estimating the exact amounts

of work undertaken, with each man employed by task or job having his subsequent payment dependent on their findings.[162]

In fact, it was excessive numbers employed in dockyard management that had caught the attention of the politically radical compilers of 'The Black Book',

The expenditure in the Royal Dock-yards and arsenals is most lavish in storekeepers, clerks, chaplains, surgeons, measurers, master-attendant, master-shipwright and others, many of whom are apparently kept up for mutual superintendence, and forming a gradation of office and multiplication of expense wholly unnecessary. Not a single trade is carried on without a master; there is a master-smith, bricklayer, sail-maker, rigger, rope-maker, painter and others
. . . [163]

Yet, in removing that tier of supervisors known as measurers, no real reduction in the number of inferior officers was achieved. This was because those who had been appointed as measurers also carried out a number of additional supervisory duties, reporting on any shortcomings to the foremen of the yard. The discontinuance of measurers, therefore, created a reduction in overall supervision, with members of the Board of Admiralty deciding upon the creation of inspectors. Many of those formerly appointed measurers, were among those who found themselves elevated to this new supervisory echelon.

However, if more notice had been taken of an earlier report into the management structure of the yards, then a very real saving in costs might well have been achieved. This report, emanating from within the Admiralty and dating from November 1831, indicated that the lowest tier of supervisors, that of leadingmen, provided little real benefit:

. . . and although every tenth Workman is called a Leadingman, and if a shipwright is allowed 2s 6d a Week extra, he is not held responsible for the rest nor is he relieved

from the performance of his full share of labour. [164]

In stating this, the report then went on to suggest that this level of management be abolished and that supervision be carried out by full time administrators who were to be known as inspectors. As already observed, inspectors were subsequently introduced but, quite illogically, leadingmen were also retained. Thus, any potential saving was immediately jettisoned.[165]

That a major change in work methods operating within the yards was contemplated was clearly communicated to Symonds upon his first taking up the post of Surveyor-General. In his set of the 'Skeleton Instructions' he was informed that he was,

immediately to examine and report on the present system of task and job and compare the result of it with work done by day pay, stating his opinion which of the two under all circumstances appears to be conducive to efficiency and economy supposing his opinion on those of the Master Shipwrights and their Assistants where they agree and when they may be at variance assigning the grounds on which he differs from them and reporting the results of the investigation to the Board.[166]

By April 1833, the Admiralty, possibly as a result of Symonds' initial report, had broadened their objectives. No longer were they merely questioning the continuance of task work, but the whole ethos by which those in the yard were paid. Members of the Board of Admiralty had now discovered that the shipwrights, who normally worked in gangs of 20 or 30, were paid not as individuals but as members of the gangs to which they belonged. The hardest working shipwright, when any of these gangs was employed on task work or job, would automatically be subsidising members of the same gang who were either unable or unwilling to work at the same level of industriousness. To this end, therefore, Symonds was now instructed to prepare

a more regular and uniform system of labor than has hitherto prevailed . . . and so arranged that each man may reap the benefit of his skill and industry, and not be called upon to contribute any portion of his Earnings to the less active and more incapable workmen. [167]

The Surveyor was faced with no easy task. He could not simply propose a return to day pay, the original means of paying dockyard workers prior to the introduction of task and job. This was recognised as being seriously flawed with those employed by day inclined to work at a slow and effortless pace. If such a scheme was to be re-introduced, then it would be necessary to provide some form of insurance that would prevent a less productive work output.

The solution that Symonds hit upon was that of classifying the workforce into one of two classes, with one class receiving a lower rate of pay than the other. Entry into the higher, or first class, would only be allocated to those artisans who had a proven record of enthusiasm and efficiency. Furthermore, those in the first class would only retain their exalted position by a continued high standard of industry. In all, so Symonds proposed, the first class would be composed of one-third of all artisans in each yard, the remainder restricted to the second. New entrants into the yard would also be placed in the second class, with all eligible for promotion once vacancies occurred. These proposals were subsequently circulated, with the superintendents and superior officers of the yard asked to comment. Most accepted the idea, but a number of them individually suggested the addition of a third class. This was subsequently accepted as a useful addition to Symonds' original scheme, with those allocated to this class to receive an even lower level of remuneration. As for its purpose, it was supposedly a punishment class and only for those who were considered to be working with insufficient effort. As with the second class, movement to a higher level was always to

be possible.

The Admiralty, in accepting Symonds' proposals, decided that it should also be imposed upon the victualling yards and hospitals. The result, was that in August 1833, the workers in both sets of outstations were shoaled into three classes. Despite the hopes held out for it, the scheme was not well received by the men themselves. To a certain extent this should not have surprised Board members. Any change in working conditions, particularly in the dockyards, had always brought about a degree of hostility. However, something that must have given them cause for concern was that opposition to the scheme was not simply limited to those who received the least benefits. Those placed in the first class, and so receiving a not unreasonable guaranteed wage, were also unhappy with the new scheme. Indeed, they joined with other members of the workforce in mounting a campaign of opposition.

This discontent with the scheme of classification lasted many years. Over the next seven years it was to be the main complaint voiced by the artisans and labourers of the yards, the bulk of them fully supporting a well co-ordinated campaign of petitions and public meetings. The Admiralty, for its part, chose to resist this massive onslaught, believing that classification would eventually be accepted. However, with an increasing number of younger skilled workers deserting the yards, the Admiralty found itself under very real pressure to attend to this major grievance. In May 1840, as part of the on-going campaign to end classification, two shipwrights from each yard (together with thirteen Members of Parliament drawn from the dockyard towns) were allowed to put their point of view to the Admiralty. According to the Rochester Gazette, 'the deputation strongly protested against its [the scheme of classification] continuance'.^[168] In particular, they drew the Board's

attention to the increasing numbers who were seeking work outside of the yards. One of the shipwrights from Portsmouth strongly urged an answer favourable to their demands,

. . . as he represented a body of six hundred of excellent workmen as could be found; and added that he did not wish to hold out anything in the shape of a threat, but he would tell his Lordship that 70 of them, and he was amongst the number, had resolved - unless something satisfactory was done - to quit the service, and they could at once obtain employment in a foreign country at double the rate of wages they were now receiving.[169]

While the Admiralty might be able to resist the pressure created by petitions and public meetings, this was altogether different. They simply could not afford to see their most skilled workers continuing to leave the yards. As a result, the Admiralty announced in September of that year that the scheme of classification would be brought to an end.[170]

In addition to the introduction of classification, other reforms directly affecting the workforce in all of the outstations were introduced during this same period. The most important of these established a new set of working hours and a five day working week; the ending of automatic pensions for retiring workers and a new scheme for the admission of apprentices. On the whole, each of these schemes caused some form of damage, whether it was that of lowering efficiency or further increasing the rise of hostility that the workforce clearly felt towards those responsible for the introduction of so many unsettling changes.

For the workforce, superannuation was one very positive advantage of employment in the naval outstations. Artisans, either employed within the dockyards for thirty years or incapacitated by injury directly resulting from their employment, were entitled to a pension. Originally, when these pensions were first established during the previous century,

the amount was not ungenerous.[171] Varying in amount between trades, shipwrights and caulkers were entitled to £25 per annum while the lesser trades such as joiners, sailmakers and riggers received £20, £15 and £10 respectively.[172] This, in all cases, had represented 60% of the standard day wage. However, with no increase given to amounts received under superannuation - despite increases in the given day wage together with a general rise in the cost of living - the value of these pensions had declined quite considerably. By 1833, and the phasing out of the scheme, their value had fallen to about 30% of the then current day wage.[173]

Surprisingly, the workforce was fairly muted in their condemnation of the Admiralty decision to end the payment of superannuation. The reasons for this are fairly simple to discern. First, and foremost, the decision was only to affect those entering the yards and hospitals from 1 May 1833.[174] Those already employed, including those soon in a position to claim the benefit, were not to have their future financial security threatened. Secondly, and coming within a few months of the announcement over superannuation, the workforce found themselves graded according to the new scheme of classification. This rapidly became an issue in which all other grievances paled into insignificance. However, the loss of superannuation was not forgotten. In the vast majority of petitions submitted on the issue of classification, the desire for a continuance of superannuation was invariably included. It was also an issue frequently alluded to in the public meetings and by the delegates allowed to address members of the Board of Admiralty either in the yards or in their London offices.

Given that the combined effect of low wages, the grievance over classification and the loss of pensions led to considerable difficulties

of recruitment, it was decided that superannuation should be re-introduced just six years after its removal. This decision was made easier by Graham no longer being First Lord and a change in the nature of the governing administration. With Melbourne at the head of a more traditional Whig administration and the Earl of Minto as First Lord, the practice of paternalism, as represented by pensions, was considered in a more favourable light. Thus, a perceived need to placate the workforce by the re-introduction of a scheme that would care for those who had given a life times service was seen as highly justifiable. After all, the leading Whigs of this administration ran estates where their own elderly would be similarly cared for. Graham, for his part, had not come from a traditional Whig background, did not hold such beliefs and had seen the end of superannuation as a means by which further governmental economies might be achieved. Furthermore, this truly Whig dominated Board went further than merely adopting the previously existing scheme. Aware that the amount to be claimed under superannuation had greatly fallen, it was decided that a number of increases were called for, with several orders-in-council overseeing such arrangements. [175]

The new apprentice scheme introduced while Graham was at the Board of Admiralty was a further addition to the grievances of which the workforce complained. Under it, all apprentices entering the yards were bound to the government. Previously they had been bound to officers. However, actual instruction was carried out by selected deserving workers termed instructors. It was they, rather than the officers who received, as their reward, part of the pay earned by an apprentice. This was a much sought after perquisite, but owing to the limited numbers of apprentices engaged, only a small number of artisans benefited.

The objective behind the change was that of improving the quality

of apprentices entering the yards. It was felt that the instructors rarely had the ability to properly train the young boys with many of them, following their seven year period of indenture, unable to carry out even some of the more basic skills of their chosen trade. Under the new scheme, which was introduced in November 1833, it was now the task of the various superior officers, leadingmen and foremen to ensure that proper instruction was given. Furthermore, each apprentice was to be subject to a quality report, in which he was to be assessed as regards his general conduct and attendance. Any apprentice, at the end of his seven years, could not expect automatic admission to the service if his conduct was open to question.

The new system did have some clear advantages. Each apprentice was now guaranteed some form of practical training rather than directed to undertake a series of menial tasks only vaguely related to the skills of the trade he was learning. On the other hand, theoretical training remained either weak or non-existent. No arrangements existed for the removal of dockyard apprentices to the classroom, leaving the youngsters unlikely to acquire anything more than a rudimentary understanding of mathematics, naval architecture and geometric principles. Even the dockyard shipwrights themselves appreciated this aspect of the problem and submitted frequent petitions requesting the establishment of some form of school within each of the dockyards. The majority of these petitions favoured a voluntary school that would allow both apprentices and those who had served their indentures to attend. In order that it might not disrupt the normal routine of the yards, the suggested time of opening for this school was Saturday morning.[176] Among those in the official hierarchy, albeit in a lowly position, who supported the idea was John Edye. However, he was very much a lone voice, for both Graham and Symonds opposed such an arrangement. Symonds, somewhat illogically, claimed that

such a voluntary school, once established, would be seen as compulsory. Instead, he felt that those in the dockyard should obtain what knowledge they could free from the inducement of special favours that attendance at such a school might bestow.[177]

Once again, a very real improvement in the arrangement of the dockyards, had to await certain administrative changes. Giving the importance of providing apprentices with a broader background than only formal education could provide, the resultant delay was fairly short. In 1842, as a result of the effort of Sir Sidney Herbert, First Secretary in Sir Robert Peel's administration, it was decided to institute day time schools in all of the dockyards. Established solely for apprentices, individuals undertaking their indentures were expected to attend the school for a part of each day. Here they studied a very broad curriculum that was designed to improve both their reading and arithmetical skills, with time set aside for prayer and religious teaching together with lessons in geography and history.

A further element to theoretical training within the yards was the existence, up until 1832, of the School of Naval Architecture. This was officially established within the grounds of the naval dockyard at Portsmouth in 1811 for the purpose of training a 'superior' class of shipwrights. Those who entered the school, and the number eligible was restricted to twenty-four in any one year, undertook a formalised programme of education in all matters connected with the science of shipbuilding. In effect, the school was really an advanced academy, that concentrated upon a small elite group, chosen by examination, to provide the future designers and senior managers of the yards. Once the apprentice, upon the completion of the normal period of seven years training, left the school he would enter into yard service as an

inspector. However, although his immediate entry into the yard hierarchy was much higher than the 'ordinary' apprentice might attain, promotion from that point onwards was painfully slow. As much as anything, this resulted from a high degree of opposition from older shipwrights who resented this more youthful competition for the most prized positions. Dyson, in a study of British naval architects, sums up the situation in the following terms:

The ex-apprentice of the old tradition had good cause to dislike the new men, and to fear that they would seriously injure his chances of promotion. They never did the manual work of the ordinary shipwright, (although they learned the use of the traditional adze and saw), they never worked as ordinary shipwrights . . . and they had the promise at least on paper that ultimately the highest civilian professional offices would be filled from their ranks. [178]

Dyson goes on to suggest that it was probably this rivalry that led to the suspension of recruitment to the school after 1822, although he accepts that firm documentary evidence is lacking. As a result, by the time of Graham's arrival at the Admiralty in 1830, the school was moribund:

It is little wonder that, confronted with the spectacle of a school with no students (the last having left in 1829), he should take the advice of his senior full-time officials, who were and always had been hostile to the school, and close it officially.[179]

In addition, Dyson further suggested that Graham was,

no doubt supported in this action by his newly appointed Surveyor of the Navy, Captain William Symonds, the first naval officer in this post for many years, and a man with a reputation for scorn and ignorance of science.[180]

However, in closing the school, Graham left the dockyards without any formalised means of providing theoretical training. A large number of those who later went on to obtain the more exalted positions both at Somerset House and within the dockyards were frequently graduates of the school. Indeed, one of the rising stars already mentioned as later

serving under Symonds, Isaac Watts, the third member of the Surveyor's office, was a graduate of the School of Naval Architecture. Having completed his apprenticeship in 1820, he immediately entered the dockyard at Portsmouth as an inspector. Following two decades of service, he was called to Somerset House where he was to remain for the rest of his career. On later becoming Chief Constructor, the first to hold that title, he went on to design Warrior, the world's first ironclad battleship.

Perhaps the only outstation reform in this period that could be considered as anything like a success was that of the introduction of a specialised police service. Established in 1834, it was responsible for all aspects of yard security. Prior to the setting up of this body, security in the yards had been in the hands of a specially appointed group of workers. Known as warders, watchmen and roundsmen they had, since 1686, undertaken all of the basic duties necessary for the securing of the yards. While roundsmen undertook regular nightly patrols, watchmen remained on duty at various watch boxes and porters did duty on the gate during the day. The problem with this arrangement was that for most of them, this was not their main duty. Watchmen and roundsmen were drawn from yard labourers, undertaking these night time duties in addition to their normal day. Although any single individual might only be called upon once or twice during the week, the matter of fatigue cannot be ignored. Certainly, whenever inspections were carried out, it was not unusual to find at least one watchman asleep in his box. In addition to this, these watchmen and roundsmen might find themselves confronting their fellow workers when trying to prevent a misdemeanour. As such, this seems one possible reason why so few workers were apprehended for the vast quantities of items that were seemingly removed from the yards during this period.

As for the specialised force, this was kept distinctly separate from the workers in the various outstations. Provided with separate accommodation and distinctive uniforms, they were a relative efficient security force. Their duties entailed not only nightly patrols, supporting the porter at the gate but also carrying out searches of premises near the yards that were suspected of harbouring stolen property. The establishments at each of the yards naturally varied according to the area of the site to be patrolled and the numbers employed. However, the new force at each establishment would be headed by one inspector. At Sheerness dockyard, for instance, there was one inspector, three sergeants and thirty constables. Each of the constables received a weekly wage of nineteen shillings.

This first specialised force within the outstation was however, to prove relatively short lived. Whereas the system of warders, watchmen and rounders survived intact for almost a century and a half, the new force lasted only until 1860. In that year it was superseded by a specially created branch of the Metropolitan Police. The reason for this change was not really a reflection upon the old body, but resulted from the emergence of new ideas in policing. The Metropolitan Police, a well organised and independent body, had shown that careful selection of recruits and attention to training had produced an efficient agency for reducing high levels of crime. In order that the naval dock and victualling yards should fully benefit from these same advances, it was decided that the Metropolitan Police should also take responsibility for the naval outstations. A number of those employed in the body previously responsible for policing the dockyards were allowed to join the new force, although a large number of others were also dismissed on account of their age being beyond that found acceptable.

Despite the belief, held for many years, that Graham's reforms were a success, the evidence presented would not appear to support such a view. In virtually every area of outstation administration, where a change was made, these proved to be failing of quite catastrophic proportions. Each damaged the outstations in some way. Either they brought confusion to the existing managerial structure or undermined the morale of the workforce. Indeed, it could be argued that the resulting inefficiencies, were directly responsible for the poor state of the yards in the 1860s, resulting in considerable pressure to bring to an end government administration of such establishments, with all warship repair and construction work handed over to private yards. These, at the time, were felt to be much more efficient.

NOTES (Chapter five)

1. Wade (1832), 537.
2. Hansard (3rd ser) XXVI, 990-1. 13 Mar 1835.
3. Barrow (1847), 424.
4. Hamilton (1896), 22-3.
5. Briggs (1897), 40.
6. Collinge (1978), 88.
7. Hansard (3rd ser) X, 801. 27 Feb 1832.
8. *ibid.*, 800.
9. PRO PC/269 f100ff, 14 Jan 1869.
10. Hansard (3rd ser) X, 797-8. 27 Feb 1832.
11. Murray (1937-9).
12. *ibid.*, XXIV, 352.
13. Erickson (1952), 109.
14. Ward (1967), 128.
15. Hamilton (1976), 109.
16. *ibid.*
17. Rodger (1979), 99.
18. Ward (1967), ix
19. Barrow (1845), 409. See also p.187 of this thesis.
20. Hansard, 14 Feb 1832, f358
21. Although Graham was first elected to Parliament in 1818, he retired from politics in 1821, eventually returning in 1826. See Ward (1967).
22. Finance Committee. 2nd Report (1828). See Bonner-Smith (1945)
23. Hansard, 17 February 1834, f445-6.
24. The salary paid to the First Lord had, as it happens, been reduced in 1832 as the result of a Parliamentary report.
25. Graham, in replying to Methven, defended the appointment of five principal officers by stating that under the scheme of consolidation 'each presided over a separate department which required daily attention'.
26. PRO ADM1/3466, 16 Jul 1832.
27. PRO ADM1/3477, 24 Jul 1832.
28. *ibid.*
29. PRO ADM1/3477 20 Jun 1832. It should be noted that the established number of clerks for the department headed by the Comptroller of Victualling was 35, but the number employed at this time was 34.
30. Evidence presented by Sir John Barrow before the Inquiry into the Civil Administration of the Navy. HC (1837) XXiv (pt 1), 105-200.
31. PRO ADM114/38, 10 Jun 1834.
32. *ibid.*, 16 Jun 1845.
33. *ibid.*
34. PRO ADM222/3. 27 July 1833.
35. Inquiry into the Civil Administration of the Navy, *op cit.* By 1837 the overall number of clerks had been increased by 8:

Surveyor General	4	+ 1
Accountant General	100	+ 12
Storekeeper General	20	- 5
Victualling	34	+/- 0
Physician	10	+ 1
36. Hansard, 25 Feb 1831 f947f; 16 Mar 1834.
37. Budgetary overspending and the inability to make real savings during their period of office was not simply restricted to the naval departments. Crosby [Crosby (1976),18] notes that the Whigs, upon handing over power in 1841, had acquired a budget deficit of 6m.
38. Fees, 3rd Report, 105

39. Hansard (3rd series) Vol. X, 27 Feb 1832, 809.
40. *ibid.*
41. *ibid.*, 814
42. *ibid.*, 816
43. *ibid.*
44. *ibid.*, 817
45. SRO GD18/3335, 8 Feb 1832.
46. Barrow (1847), 418
47. Minutes of Evidence. Inquiry into the Civil Administration of the Army (1835-7), 2
48. *ibid.*, 2-4
49. *ibid.*, 4
50. *ibid.*
51. NMM ELL/239. Minto Papers.
52. *ibid.*
53. *ibid.*
54. Hansard (3rd ser), Vol X, 800-1
55. Hamilton (1901), 391-2
56. The most consistent advocate for the extension of the system used by the Admiralty being extended to the Army was the former premier's son, the third Earl Grey (1802-94). He spoke in favour of the system when called before several committees investigating the Army's administrative system while also advocating it during speeches he made before both Houses. While Grey never served at the Admiralty, he was Under Secretary for War and the Colonies (1830-2), Secretary at War (1835-9) and Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1846-52). Among the relevant speeches given in the House of Lords was that of 18 May 1855 when he stated his belief in Boards being ideal for the administration of the Army, going on to allude to the Board of Admiralty. See Hansard (3rd ser), Vol CXXXVIII, 757.
57. Hamilton (1976), 89-91
58. *ibid.*, 111
59. *ibid.*
60. Hamilton (1896), 24-5
61. *ibid.*
62. *ibid.*
63. *ibid.*, *passim*
64. Rodger (1979), 117-118
65. Marder (1970), IV, 134.
66. *ibid.*, 171.
67. *ibid.*, 172.
68. *ibid.*, 173.
69. *ibid.*
70. Geddes was an engineer by training who, at the beginning of the war had, while holding the title of Director-General of Military Railways, had organised railway transport in France. He first came to the Admiralty in April 1917 when he was given responsibility for the material side of the navy. For this purpose the title of Controller had been revived, it having latterly become a mere sub-title for the Third Sea Lord.
71. Marder, *op cit.*, 178.
72. Hansard, 25 Feb 1831. f971.
73. *ibid.*, 6 Apr 1832. f.1348.
74. In his speech on 25 Feb 1831, Graham had made the point that while in opposition he had also 'contended' the principle of individual responsibility (Hansard, f971). During the first reading of the Civil Departments bill, Graham made the point that it would bring about 'undivided control and a due responsibility'

- (Hansard, 14 Feb 1832. f358).
75. 2 William IV. Cap 39 f126.
 76. PRO ADM116/3453.
 77. Hume (1989), 209.
 78. *ibid.*, 158.
 79. Pool (1966), 116-37; Morris (1981), 226-9; Chester (1981), 253.
Chester is the most specific in arguing the connection, but it is clear from the works cited that both St Vincent and Grey were clearly aware of the principle and its advantages.
 80. Chester (1981), 253.
 81. 17th Report of the Select Committee on Finance, App. G5, 342.
 82. Morris(1981), 229-30.
 83. *ibid*, 231; Hume (1989), 159-61.
 84. Hume (1989), 159-60 (note 190).
 85. PRO ADM106/2513, 15 Oct 1801.
 86. PRO ADM106/1883, 8 May 1804.
 87. Chester (1981), 253.
 88. Finer, S.E., 'The Transmission of Benthamite ideas 1820-50' in Sutherland (1972).
 89. The usage of Benthamite ideas is covered in greater detail by David Roberts in his paper on that subject. See: Roberts (1958-9).
 90. Re-quoted from Bonner-Smith (1949), 155.
 91. *ibid.*
 92. HC Sessional (1837) XL, 253.
 93. BM Add 41,398. 8 Jul 1829.
 94. PRO ADM116/3453. Answer #803 to questions placed to Graham when called before the Select Committee of the House of Commons (1861).
 95. Graham was adamant that the First Lord was supreme. In answer to a question put by the Select Committee of 1861 on this subject he stated that the First Lord was supreme by virtue of his being 'head of the Board and as a Cabinet minister has the power to change the Board'. PRO ADM116/3453 #994.
 96. *ibid.*, #1388.
 97. PRO PC2/269 f100. 14 Jan 1869.
 98. *ibid.*
 99. Hansard (3rd ser) CXCIV, 304f. 25 Feb 1869.
 100. *ibid*, CXCV,53. 2 Apr 1869.
 101. *ibid.*
 102. *ibid.*, 54.
 103. *ibid.*, 55.
 104. PRO PC2/275 f398. 19 Mar 1872.
 105. *ibid.*, 399.
 106. PRO PC2/308 f883. 10 Mar 1882.
 107. Hansard (3rd ser) 25 Feb 1831, col 947-993. See also BL Add Ms 41,368, 22 Jan 1831. Letter from Sir James Graham to Sir T. Byam Martin on this same subject.
 108. Hansard, *ibid.*
 109. *ibid*, 13 Feb 1832.
 110. 2 William IV cap 40, Section XXX
 111. *ibid.*
 112. Hansard (3rd ser), 25 Feb 1831, col 975
 113. *ibid.*, 17 Feb 1834, col 424.
 114. *ibid*, 425
 115. *ibid.*
 116. PRO ADM1/3479. Report on the French and English System of Public Accounts, Chiefly in the Naval Departments (1 Jan 1833), f.2.
 117. Hansard (3rd ser) 16 Mar 1835, col 1042.
 118. *ibid.*
 119. *ibid*, 1031

120. *ibid.*
121. *ibid.*, col 1031-2
122. *ibid.*, col 1041.
123. *ibid.*, col 1046.
124. Tucker (1849), 60. These figures relate to the financial year 1846-7
125. PRO ADM1/3479. Report on the French and English System . . . f.15
126. *ibid.*
127. *ibid.*, 16-17.
128. PRO ADM1/3749, 19 Jan 1831.
129. *ibid.*, 16-18.
130. *ibid.*
131. *ibid.*, *passim*.
132. Hansard (3rd ser) 25 Feb 1831, col 974-5.
133. Hansard (3rd ser) LVI, 1 Mar 1841, col 1179-82.
134. *ibid.*
135. Evidence given by Sir John Barrow before the Committee of Inquiry into the Civil Administration of the Army, 1834-6. Minutes of evidence, f.1-2.
136. Hamilton (1896), 124.
137. PRO ADM1/3477. 9 JUNE 1832. Skeleton Instructions to the Several Heads of Departments.
138. Although standardised hours for the dockyards had been laid down, the level of overall supervision was such that Symonds failed to detect that some of the yards were not keeping to these set hours. More frequent inspections of the yards would certainly have revealed this particular irregularity.
139. CRO D/G/N/3/1/9. 6 Dec 1831. f.5.
140. Skeleton Instructions. *op cit.*
141. PRO ADM105/70. 7 June 1832.
142. DNB: Briggs, Thomas.
143. Skeleton Instructions, *op cit.*
144. PRO ADM1/3479. 1 Jan 1833. Report on the French and English System of Public Accounts.
145. Lambert (1991), 36.
146. Unlike Symonds, Walker had no pretensions to be a naval architect. Symonds, on the other hand, was a rarity, both a professional seaman and architect. This resulted in a less than clear delineation of duties during the time he served as Surveyor-General.
147. Tucker (1848), 25.
148. *ibid.*
149. *ibid.*
150. Symonds (1848),
151. 2 William IV c40 ch.X
152. CRO D/GN/2/1/9 *op cit* f.11.
153. PRO ADM1/3477. 9 Jun 1832.
154. PRO ADM1/3480. General Instructions for the Principal Officers of H.M. Dockyards, July 1833.
155. *ibid.*
156. Bromley (1846). Lord Auckland held the post of First Lord in 1834, 1835 and 1846-1849.
157. *ibid.*
158. *ibid.*
159. *ibid.*
160. *ibid.*, 489.
161. Skeleton Instructions, *op cit*; NMM CHA/H/6. 21 Jun 1833.
162. NMM POR/G/5. 15 Jun 1822.

163. Wade (1832), 376.
164. PRO ADM1/3475, 22 Nov 1831; NMM CHA/H/6 21 Jun 1833.
165. *ibid.*
166. Skeleton Instructions. *op cit.*, Surveyor-General, #6.
167. PRO ADM1/3391, 7 May, 25 Apr 1833.
168. Rochester Gazette, 28 Apr 1840.
169. *ibid.*
170. *ibid.*, 15 Sep 1840.
171. Pensions were first introduced in 1764 for shipwrights and caulkers, eventually extended to all trades. By 1802 they were universally enjoyed. See Morriss (1981), 99.
172. NMM CHA/E/27, 4 Oct 1771.
173. PRO ADM1/5511, 4 Jun 1841.
174. NMM CHA/H/6, 11 Apr 1833.
175. PRO PC2 series, *passim*.
176. PRO ADM222/5, *passim*.
177. *ibid.*, 6 Oct 1834.
178. Dyson (1978), 26-7
179. *ibid.*, 28.
180. *ibid.*

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The various reforms of the navy's civilian departments, including abolition of the Navy and Victualling Boards, as undertaken by the Whigs during Graham's first tenure of office at the Admiralty, must be viewed as an unmitigated disaster. In various parliamentary speeches, the Whig First Lord claimed that the changes he had instituted would have a number of clear advantages of which he appears to have considered economic management, simplicity of structure, individual responsibility and effectual control to be the most important.[1] Yet, in each of these separate areas, the result can be seen as either abject failure or the creation of severe problems in other areas of naval administration where none had previously existed.

In chapter five, where the outcome of the reforms is considered in detail, it was shown that despite Graham's claims, the economic advantage gained by abolishing the civilian boards was negligible. Indeed, by 1841, when the Whigs handed over the reins of power, the cost of running the navy's civilian administration was approximately the same as it had been prior to the introduction of those same reforms. In fact, the dismissal of so many clerks and senior officers, all with enhanced pensions, meant that the reforms actually produced the necessity of annually paying out large sums of money earlier than would otherwise have been required. Furthermore, there was the additional expense of having to employ a number of new clerks upon the realization that the civil departments had been excessively pruned.[2]

As for simplification, this must be considered a spurious claim when the two unified managerial boards were replaced by five isolated

principal officers. Whereas the out-going Boards had been responsible for co-ordinating the work of the naval hospitals, victualling and dockyards, this ceased to be the role of the principal officers. Unable to enter into discussion among themselves, they had to rely on the superintending Admiralty commissioners undertaking this work on their behalf. From this point of view, the system was potentially more complex. The principal officers, were not present, when members of the Board were discussing any proposals they might have made. As a result, their ideas were put forward by those who rarely had great knowledge of the subject under discussion and consequently were unable to defend the idea if it failed to meet with instant approval. Only if the principal officers had either been given a certain degree of executive authority, permission to meet together or able to be present at Board meetings, could the new system have been deemed simpler.

As for individual responsibility, Graham frequently claimed that the reforms would enforce the principle 'as completely as it could possibly be enforced'.^[3] But, in reality, he oversaw the introduction of a system of administration that favoured only that of collective decision making. Admittedly, each member of the Board was initially given one area of responsibility as represented by the principal officer that he superintended, but this was as far as the principle strayed. The Civil Departments Act, itself, made no mention of individual responsibility, insisting that all 'Authorities, Duties, Matters and Things' to be executed by the Board should only be 'valid and effectual' if 'executed or performed by two or more' commissioners of the Admiralty.^[4] As for the powers of the First Lord who, in theory, might have been held responsible for all decisions taken, this was precluded by the Letters Patent that appointed the various commissioners. According to these, the First Lord had no greater authority than any other member of the Board.^[5]

Finally, there is the claim that the naval reforms permitted the Admiralty effective control over the civilian-run facilities. This, in point of fact, cannot be denied. By removing the intervening tier and denying the principal officers any form of power, then the Board of Admiralty had absolute control over naval hospitals, dock and victualling yards. Yet the resulting cost was unimaginably high. To maintain this authority, virtually every meeting of the Board was dominated by the the minutiae of running these increasingly complex establishments. No longer were those appointed to the Admiralty, whether naval officer or civilian, in a position to give proper attention to the real duties of the Board, that of strategy and planning. Resulting from this, was the navy's dismal performance in the Russian War and near-disaster in the First World War.

While a clearly recognised need had existed for a change in the means by which the civilian facilities of the navy were managed, the approach adopted by the Whigs was both heavy handed and unnecessary. To simply destroy everything that had gone before was also to wreak destruction upon an administrative framework that had the proven ability to work even when placed under extreme pressure. The effectiveness of the British navy during the twenty years of conflict that had finally culminated in the defeat of Napoleon was clear evidence of this simple fact. Throughout that period, the civilian administrators, and the system they oversaw, had never once failed in the essential task of allowing the world's largest and most formidable sea-going force to remain at sea. Nor should such a task be underestimated. While navy's of all other nations might count their ships in tens and twenties, the Royal Navy finally peaked at a force of over eight hundred vessels.[6] Furthermore, nearly two hundred of these were battleships and carried a complement of sailors

and officers that was in excess of five hundred. The logistics of keeping just one of these ships at sea, much less a combined fleet of thirty or more, almost defies the imagination. Finally, it might also be mentioned, these same ships were not simply restricted to home waters, the Navy and Victualling Boards having to establish facilities throughout the world for the repair, maintenance and supply of the ships with those same bases having responsibility for the care of the sick and wounded.

No other civilian enterprise of comparable scale had ever previously existed. In every aspect of management, the civilian administrators of the navy were pioneers. At their peak, the civilian boards had at their disposal capital sums in excess of twenty million pounds per year on top of the fixed assets as represented by the numerous hospitals, dock and victualling yards that were located in every single one of the world's inhabited continents.[7] As for numbers employed, the seven home dockyards combined shared a workforce of 15,500 while the dockyard at Portsmouth, admittedly the largest, was employing in excess of 4,000.[8] Outside of the navy's civilian support services, no employer could match such size. Pollard, in his survey of British industry during this period, refers to some of the cotton mills of Lancashire employing in excess of a thousand workers.[9] This, in turn, is supported by Fitton, who indicates Arkwright, in 1814, to have employed 1,900 work people in his various mills, with only three other employers exceeding 1,500.[10] At the same time, reference might be made to the employment of hand loom weavers. Bythell, refers to Dixons of Carlisle employing 3,571 weavers. However, these employees were not organised in anything other than individual production units scattered, in the case of Dixons, throughout the Border counties and northern Ireland.[11] While considerable organisation was required to keep these workers fully

employed and the loss of... employed, the problems generated were markedly different from those to be confronted by the employment of a mass of workers on the same site. Furthermore, with regard to both cotton spinners and weavers, the employment of such large numbers was, during the early 19th, a fairly recent development. In fact, both were the product of the mechanization of mills, a process that had taken place from about 1770 onwards: the former working in those mills and the latter expanding in number so as to absorb the increased amount of spun cotton.[12]

Because of the pioneering nature of the work undertaken by the navy's civilian boards, problems inevitably existed. No ground breaking organisation can hope to get anything right first time. Yet, the sheer longevity of the navy's large scale civilian enterprise had ensured that many of the difficulties to be associated with large scale enterprises in the public sector had long since been solved by the civilian boards. In particular, difficulties over recruitment, training, retention and disciplining of labour had all been overcome while considerable attention was given to the most effective ways of improving both accountancy and accountability. As for the private sector, there is considerable evidence that a number of large-scale companies, as a result of an inability to successfully meet such difficulties, declined and failed as a result. In particular, reference can be made to various mining and canal companies.[13]

In completely sweeping away the highly successful civilian boards, Graham replaced them with an untried and ultimately unworkable system. The Board of Admiralty, in having to take over the extensive responsibilities previously overseen by the civilian boards, was quite incapable of maintaining these same high standards. Furthermore, matters were made no better by the severe reduction in the numbers of clerks

employed and the loss of ten highly experienced civilian commissioners. To begin with however, this decline in efficiency was hardly noticed. The reforms had come in the midst of a period of peace and the demands placed on the civilian facilities were minimal. The only complaints heard resulted in the slowness of bringing accounts up-to-date and delays in replying to letters.[14] Only upon the outbreak of the Russian War did it become obvious that Graham's system was not all that it should be. Shortly after the outbreak of the war it became necessary to form a new Transport Board while the supply side of the Navy was hard pressed in maintaining supplies to ships destined to operate in the relatively restricted geographical areas as represented by the Baltic and Black Seas.

Nevertheless, despite the success of the navy's civilian administrative structure, the Whig government that came to power in 1830 was still entitled to think in terms of reforming the civil administration of the Navy. For one thing, the commissioners who sat on the civilian boards had become far too powerful. Difficult to remove from office, they were in the habit of openly defying the Admiralty, using a variety of ploys either to delay or completely prevent any change with which they did not agree. In the 18th century, and on several separate occasions, the supposedly inferior and subordinate civilian boards, chose not to implement direct Admiralty instructions. Invariably, they used a combination of prevarication and procrastination, safe in the knowledge that at some point a change in political fortunes would result in the removal of those who composed the superior board. Possibly, indeed, an opposition grouping would achieve actual power, with some of those appointed to the inferior Boards invariably owing allegiance (if not their original appointment) to the newly accredited government. At the very least, those appointed to the new Board of Admiralty, unable to compete with the wealth of experience possessed by the commissioners of

the inferior boards, would place to one side many of the unimplemented injunctions sought by their immediate predecessors.

Admittedly, in the period that immediately preceded the return of a Whig government in 1830, the tension that had once existed between the Admiralty and the civilian boards had been removed. Primarily this resulted from the unusually long period in which one parliamentary grouping held office. As a result Melville, the longest serving of all First Lords, had been in a position to appoint a large number of those who served on the two inferior boards. Of particular importance, was that both Thomas Byam Martin and Chetwynd Stapylton, respectively chairmen of the Navy and Victualling Boards, were his appointees. As a result, there was a reduced likelihood of political friction. On the other hand, owing to the lengthy period of peace that also characterised these years, the commissioners of the inferior boards were opposed to the constant demands that they should reduce overall expenditure. Indeed, even Melville was unable to enforce his demand that numbers employed in the dockyards be reduced to 7,000. On top of this, and ably exposed by Graham in Parliament, was the mis-use of public funds, whereby the commissioners of the two Boards had directed money to projects not approved by Parliament.

Yet, complete abolition of the two remaining civilian boards was only one of several options open to the new government which took office under Earl Grey. Of particular importance was a proposal put forward by Cockburn in 1828 and subsequently given a public airing by Croker. This consisted of amalgamating the two remaining civilian boards and having this one single body completely under the control of the Admiralty. This latter, of course, could be simply achieved by changing the terms of appointment, with the civilian commissioners able to be removed by the First Lord if he should so choose. The result would have been a

much simplified system of administration that would also have dispensed with the worst aspects of a semi-independent body responsible for administering one half of the affairs of the Navy. The civilian administrators appointed to the new body would have been responsible for overseeing the day to day running of the outstations together with the other duties once performed by the inferior Boards. This, in turn, would leave the superior Board in a position where it could continue to concentrate upon forward planning and strategy. In fact, Cockburn's suggestion can be taken as one of great significance, for if introduced at that time it would have prevented the numerous difficulties subsequently encountered. Indeed, so commendable was this particular idea that a similar scheme was introduced by Geddes towards the end of World War One. This, as it happens, proved to be the final stepping stone in the long journey to cleanse naval administration of the various difficulties created by the reforms introduced by Graham between 1830 and 1834.

NOTES (Chapter six)

1. Hansard (new series) X, 349-58
2. See p.261-3 of this thesis.
3. Hansard (new series) X, 6 Apr 1832, f.1348.
4. 2 William IV. Cap 39. f.126.
5. PRO ADM 116/3453
6. Morriss (1983), 12
7. Among overseas bases in use during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic War period were Rio de Janeiro, Malta, Gibraltar, Antigua, Bombay, Simons Town Bay, Halifax and Bermuda.
8. Morriss (1983), 12.
9. Pollard (1971), 24.
10. Fitton (1989), 146.
11. Chalklin (1968), 145. Chalklin indicates that during the 1660s the total workforce at the three Kentish naval dockyards (Chatham, Deptford and Woolwich) stood at 1,340 rising to 3,275 by the year 1704.
12. Bythell (1977), 29-30
13. Pollard (1971), 24. Pollard specifically cites both the Albion Steam Mill Company and the Carron Company as having problems that resulted from a failure to overcome some of the difficulties mentioned in the text.
14. See p.261-3 of this thesis.
- 14.

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ADM 83/4-35 Instructions to Surveyor-General, 1832-50

ADM 105/1-31 Victualling Board, Medical Branch, 1817-32

ADM 105/69-73 Entry books of Dr Burnett, 1832-44

ADM 106/2880-5 Navy Board Minutes, 1830-32

ADM 109/85-91 Letters from victualling yards to Victualling Board, 1830-31.

ADM 111/255-67 Victualling Board Minutes, 1820-32

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